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Landscapes of Conquest: Patrons and Narratives in the seventeenth-century

Deccan c. 1636 - 1687

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Subah Dayal

2016

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Landscapes of Conquest: Patrons and Narratives in the seventeenth-century

Deccan c. 1636 - 1687

by

Subah Dayal

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2016

Professor Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Committee Chair

From 1636 to 1687, a paradoxical conquest unfolded in the Deccan region (south central India). The Mughal empire sought to annex peninsular India while its independent, regional Indo-Islamic courts – the sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda - expanded towards the Karnatak frontier. This dissertation investigates the slow, extended, and contradictory processes of a nested, matrioshka of conquest, beyond and below the well-known political narratives of the Deccan sultanates and the Mughal empire. It focuses on a stratigraphy of cultural encounters and negotiations between imperial and regional courts, which shared a common frontier and had a long history of cohabitation and borrowing. It investigates fractures and fissures in patronage networks during and literary representations of conquest within southern India's layered political and polyphonic linguistic landscapes.

This study culls together materials produced in very different philosophical and linguistic traditions - Persian, Dakkani, and Dutch - to arrive at a stereoscopic view of the Karnatak conquest. In particular, it draws on two largely unexamined bodies of materials from the early modern Deccan. First, to explore new experiments in writing the history of conquest, it draws on the genre of *razmīyah masnawī* or battle poems in Dakkani, a form of ‘early’ Urdu from southern India. Through the practice of conquest ethnography, poet-historians articulated volatile affective and material ties between allies, friends, and rivals in the Deccan frontier. Second, this study incorporates provincial-level Mughal documents from the Deccan, to build an empire’s portrait from the frontier’s vantage point. Regional sultanates mitigated the Mughal empire’s precarious presence in an attrite frontier, fueling a protracted and uncertain conquest. Lastly, through the Dutch East India Company’s records from southern India’s coasts, this study investigates conflicts and negotiations within households of Indo-Muslim patron-commanders who controlled critical routes across the eastern and western Indian Ocean that fed into the frontier’s consolidation.

The process of conquest was never one of absolute political opposition between polities of different scales, but a much deeper phenomenon that entailed cultural shifts and constant negotiations between courtly elites, literati, and military personnel. Non-imperial regional polities tamed and constrained imperial ambitions in frontier zones. Together, the social operations and representations of conquest reveal self-similarity and co-constitution across regional and imperial courts of early modern South Asia and the Indian Ocean world.

The dissertation of Subah Dayal is approved.

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2016

For N. P. Kaura

(1924 – 2016)

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Note on Maps

Most maps of the Deccan in the 17th century show the Mughal Empire's neat territorial border that gradually moved southwards in the years 1605, 1656, and 1687 in the reigns of emperors, Akbar, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb respectively. Rather than marking neat territorial boundaries of each political unit, I have made four maps that illustrate layers of the Deccan frontier. I have plotted the pathways of conquest according to sites and routes mentioned in Persian chronicles, Mughal documents, Dakkani poems, and European archival documents. Instead of contiguous spatial domains, these layers overlapped temporally and spatially throughout the seventeenth century.

Note on Transliteration

All translations are my own unless otherwise noted. I indicate all long vowels and the letters *ayn* and *hamza*. With the exception of direct transliterations, diacritics have been eliminated in proper names (excluding the *ayn* and *hamza*). Vowel sounds for Persian and Urdu include the following:

a ا
ā آ
i اِ
ī عی
u اُ
ū او
o او
au او
e اے
ai اے
'ع
'ء

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“Introduction” to *The Relations of Golkonda with Iran 1518-1687* by M.Z.A. Shakeb. New Delhi: Primus Books, 2016.

Chapter One

A Matrioshka of Conquest

The half-century from 1636 to 1687 occupies a contradictory position in the relatively fallow but growing field of Deccan history. During this fifty-year period, historians have understood the independent regional Deccan sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda as objects of Mughal conquest and imperial ambition. The year 1636 marked a prime, eventful break from the previous century – the Deccan sultanates signed a deed of submission or *inqiyād nāmah* through which the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan ended the sovereign status of these independent, regional Indo-Islamic polities of southern India. At the other end, in the year 1687, after a final conquest, the Mughals militarily dismantled the Deccan sultanates.¹ In contrast, the Deccan in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century has received substantial scholarly attention from disciplines as wide as art history, history, the study of religion and literary studies.² From the latter part of the seventeenth century, however, an overwhelming constellation of visual and textual materials from this region remain unexamined, difficult to force into large generalizations of seventeenth century ‘decline’ - narratives of the rise of the Mughals and the fall of regional Indo-Islamic states in the southern Indian peninsula.

That the Mughal army attempted to subdue and annex the Deccan between the years 1636 to 1687 may be self-evident, but it is this study's contention that this conquest was never pre-given nor inevitable. What did a series of incomplete, unrealized imperial and regional conquests in the seventeenth century Deccan look like? How did those who participated in them - patrons,

¹ H. K. Sherwani, Chapters VI and VII, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty* (Delhi: Munshilal Manoharlal Publishers, 1974). John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golkonda*, Chapter III, (Clarendon Press, 1975), 34-51. D.C. Verma, *History of Bijapur* (Delhi: Kumar Brothers, 1974), 195-213. Richard M. Eaton, Chapter 7, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300 – 1700* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 177-201. Sarkar, Chapter XXXVIII, *History of Aurangzeb, Vol. 4*, 41-42.

² I shall review these chronologically and thematically in this opening chapter.

soldiers, commanders, poets, and chroniclers - memorialize their ambitions in historical-writing? Through which new modes of expression did they apprehend new and old rivals and enemies across the Deccan? How were bonds and affinities on the one hand, and discord and antagonism on the other, expressed within and across these circuits during a period of conquest? Such questions lie at the center of this dissertation. This inquiry investigates the slow, extended, and contradictory process of the Karnatak conquest between 1636-1687, beyond and below the well-known political narratives of the Deccan sultanates and the Mughal empire. It focuses on a stratigraphy of cultural encounters and negotiations between imperial and regional courts, which shared a common frontier and had a long history of cohabitation and borrowing.³ At the heart of this conquest lay patron-conquerors who moved, down the southern Indian peninsula, along with their circles of friends, kinsmen, literati, along conquest pathways in the lower Deccan (See Maps 1 and 2).

Along with examining various historical representations of this paradoxical moment of conquest, this dissertation turns to one key institution that transformed during this period - patronage. It demonstrates that the process of conquest and the politics of patronage were interrelated phenomenon. Patronage, extended across literary, familial, military networks in regional and imperial states, produced co-constitutive rather than distinct, neat, hermetically sealed political entities, actors, affinities and ambitions in the Deccan and Mughal Hindustan. Just as conquest was not a question of absolute political opposition between polities of different scales such as region vs. empire, the social circuits of those who conquered - commanders,

³ 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 (2004): 357-389.

soldiers, historians and poets - were far from uniform, but internally fractured, fraught and rapidly evolving under the volatile conditions of conquest.

Methodologically, this study culls together historical evidence produced in very different philosophical and linguistic traditions - Persian, Dakkani, and Dutch - to arrive at a stereoscopic view of the conquest of the Karnatak from 1636 - 1687. Such an approach is, by no means, without precedent. This study finds inspiration in models beyond South Asia to understand the nested, intermittent, and contingent character of conquest across the early modern world. Foremost among these are works on the eastern and northwestern frontiers of Qing China, including the work of John E. Wills on the seventeenth-century Qing conquest of Taiwan and Peter Perdue's study of the conquest of Central Eurasia at the intersections of three early modern empires – the Manchu Qing, the Muscovite-Russian and the Mongolian Zunghars.⁴ Working across many different linguistic registers, Wills captured the unique relationship of provincial officials and their networks in facilitating conquest while forging diplomatic and trading relations with European traders in southern China.⁵ In a collaborative sequel to his first book with Jonathan Spence, the complex layers of Qing conquest were unraveled, as well as the limits of the category of 'conquest' itself, undoing a neat periodization and political divide across the Ming-Qing transition.⁶ In areas away from the imperial center, autonomous provincial officials and their households were willing to negotiate with commercial and political competitors for the acquisition of resources necessary to make war and conquest.⁷ In a similar vein, this dissertation,

⁴ Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005)

⁵ John E. Wills, *Pepper, Guns and Parleys: The Dutch East India Company and China 1622 – 1681* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), 11-12, 25-28.

⁶ Jonathan D. Spence and John E. Wills Jr., *From Ming to Ch'ing: conquest, region, and continuity in seventeenth-century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979)

⁷ Wills, *Pepper, Guns and Parleys*, 149 – 157.

while casting a regional viewpoint upon conquest, seeks to collapse the divide between imperial and regional histories and historiographies of the Mughal Empire and the Deccan sultanates. It does so through an analysis of both the representation and operations of patron-conquerors and their networks across these polities.

At the level of historical artifacts from the seventeenth century Deccan available to us, this dissertation is organized around one critical genre in particular - historical *masnawī* or battle poems written in the regional vernacular of Dakkani - that recorded this multivalent conquest and commented on the activities of patrons and rivals. All chapters of this dissertation revolve, in one way or another, on three major battle poems from the seventeenth century, which have remained relatively unknown and beyond the purview of political histories of the Deccan sultanates and the Mughal empire.⁸ Through a close reading of these poems, I intervene in one major debate in the historiography of the Deccan sultanates - the question of language, ethnic identity and court culture - an issue that has animated scholars of the Deccan for decades. Eschewing categories such as “Deccani” “Iranian” “Afghan” and “Mughal” and a clearly defined linguistic basis for them, I show that all of these putative groups were internally fragmented and far from cogent in the seventeenth century Deccan. Eventually, the question of social identity remains less intriguing to this project than the question of how histories were produced, which languages were used to record them and how they were debated among patrons, poets, and rivals. It asserts that the question of identity cannot pre-figure the task of understanding of how practitioners of multiple languages and literary techniques experimented with and debated ways of recording

⁸ A 16th century predecessor to this three poems, Hasan Shauqī’s *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāh* has been discussed in Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Courtly encounters: translating courtliness and violence in early modern Eurasia* (Harvard University Press, 2012), 34-102 and Jameel Jalibi, *Diwān-i Hasan Shauqī*, (Karachi: Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu, 1971), 1 – 68.

conquest. The practice of conquest ethnography in these new types of history-writing, I show, articulated sectarian and social differences in context-specific ways, rather than according to preconceived social categories.

I should add here that my reading of these materials ‘follows’ the texts closely, but does not indulge in the kind of literary analysis that has recently begun producing new insights in the field of Indo-Persian studies.⁹ At the same time, I am not interested in using these battle poems to verify or fill up the factual sequence laid out in most conventional sources - Persian court chronicles and in their natural historiographical corollary, political histories of early modern South Asia. In what follows, I have largely avoided revisiting Mughal chronicles from the period under review so as to avoid regurgitating what has already been recounted about the Deccan in narrative histories of the Mughal empire.

For instance, Chapters Two, Three and Five of this dissertation examine the social world of three conquerors across the Deccan. I supplement my reading of Dakkani battle poems with Persian chronicles from the Deccan to understand the shared socio-cultural realms and circuits of connoisseurship of these two tongues, along with an analysis of the limits of patronage relationships in these circuits. In Chapter Four, to tackle the vexed question of the Mughals in the Deccan, I turn to a different but less studied set of materials on the Mughals - provincial documents from the Deccan, especially from the reign of Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan (r. 1628 - 1658). Through these materials, I reconstruct a profile of the Mughal imperial army stationed in the Deccan frontier. I unveil a picture of the empire far less cogent and stable than the one we

⁹ Rajeev Kinra, “Cultures of Comparative Philology in the Early Modern Indo-Persian World,” *Philological Encounters* 1, no. 1-4 (2016): 225-287. Hajnalka Kovacs, “The tavern of the manifestation of realities”: The “Masnavi muhīt-i azam” by Mirza abd al-qadir bedil (1644–1720), PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2013. Prashant Keshavmurthy, *Persian Authorship and Canonicity in Late Mughal Delhi: Building an Ark* (Routledge, 2016)

find in Persian court chroniclers produced in capital cities like Delhi. Regional sultanates set limits on the depth of Mughal conquest in the Deccan, which was never fully formed nor static but always uncertain within the contingent, precarious landscape of a layered frontier. Chapter Five of this dissertation presents an analysis of a final Dakkanī battle poem of the seventeenth-century Deccan. It intervenes in debates about sovereignty and political loyalties that has been the focus of work on the eighteenth century Deccan.¹⁰ Once again, through the analysis of a particular narrative of history writing, this chapter explores, the many meanings of affinity, rivalry, loyalty, betrayal and above all, sovereignty, in a period of unpredictable conquest.

Why the Deccan matters?

Before proceeding further, I should clarify the terms used throughout this dissertation. The geographic term Deccan here refers to south-central India. The area of conquest, Karnatak, refers to the interstitial area between the Krishna and Pennar rivers. The Karnatak conquest's coastal limits stretched from Malnad to Coromandel, referring to the western and southeastern coasts of the Deccan region. The linguistic term Dakkanī refers to the language spoken, written and heard across urban areas in the Deccan region in the period from 1500 to 1700. This language, written in Perso-Arabic script, was a distinct predecessor of Urdu, the modern language used across the subcontinent today. In the early modern period, Persian in the Deccan, like north India, was the *lingua franca* of regional Indo-Islamic courts and its users – speakers, writers, listeners, and readers – came from many different social groups.¹¹ The political terms “Foreigner” or *gharībān* and its various sub-signifiers referring people of Central Asian origin

¹⁰ Andre Wink, *Land and sovereignty in India: agrarian society and politics under the eighteenth-century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986)

¹¹ Muzaffar Alam, “The culture and politics of Persian in precolonial Hindustan,” in Pollock ed., *Literary cultures in history: Reconstructions from South Asia* (2003): 131-198.

(Irani, Turani, Afghan etc.) and the term “Deccani”, invented in 20th century scholarship, are not uniformly applied in the fifty-year period covered in this dissertation nor held to be synonymous with a neatly defined ethno-linguistic identities.

The Deccan’s unique geographic, linguistic, and political contours only partially explain why the region matters to the histories of Mughal Hindustan, South Asia and the Indian Ocean world at large.¹² Any book on the Mughals begins with checking off the empire’s (nationalist) credentials in two things - gaining legitimacy and adapting its Islamicate and Turco-Persian heritage and institutions to an ‘Indian environment’. But what if we begin with spaces that were, from the outset, never part of Mughal Hindustan, even if they eventually came to be incorporated into with it? What if, we instead, explore regional political entities that, at least upon first appraisal, have little relevance to the teleological narratives of an effortless transition from empire to nation-state? Though such a task does not call for reinventing the wheel, it does require reorienting the relationship of spatial categories, in this case, frontier zones, to temporal categories such as ‘early modernity’.

Two iconic essays that appeared in the same journal volume in 2004 – Digby’s ‘Provincialization of the Delhi sultanate’ and Alam and Subrahmanyam’s ‘The Deccan Frontier’ offer two very different starting points but a convergence in methods to de-center imperial and nationalist historiographies.¹³ Digby laid out a pioneering template for the fourteenth century, on the question of bi-lingualism and historical ‘state-formation’, which bears upon all subsequent

¹² P.M. Joshi, “Historical Geography of Medieval Deccan,” in *History of Medieval Deccan: 1295–1724*, ed. H.K. Sherwani and P.M. Joshi (Hyderabad: Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1973), 1-28.

¹³ Simon Digby, “Before Timur Came: Provincialization of the Delhi Sultanate through the Fourteenth Century”, *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 47, No. 3, Between the Flux and Facts of Indian History: Papers in Honor of Dirk Kolff (2004): 298-356. Alam and Subrahmanyam, “The Deccan frontier and Mughal expansion”

regional studies of early modern South Asia.¹⁴ More closer in time to the present inquiry, Alam and Subrahmanyam suggested testing the limits of Mughal power, not in Delhi, but in a region where multiple political players, accumulated a cross-section of agrarian, military, and maritime resources, for a much longer duration than the northern Indian, agrarian imperial heartland. Further, if we are to consider the question of early modernity, then why must it invariably begin with empires? Perhaps we can regionally disaggregate this question and reject a pan-South Asian coeval origin for the features and intensity of early modernity. I am not suggesting, by any means, that the Deccan is exceptional. But rather, that its early modernity may share less with its presumed, natural north Indian counterpart – the Mughal empire - but appear more akin to regional, maritime formations such as Aceh and Johor of Southeast Asia.

The Deccan matters because it fits, rather awkwardly, and at times, not at all, into the ideal form of Mughal Hindustan, its colonial successor British India, and the post-colonial nation-states of modern South Asia. Discussions on the discursive production of southern India's past focus on the political and literary geographies that bore a dialogical imprint of nineteenth century Orientalist frameworks.¹⁵ But if we go a few centuries back, Persianate thinkers had already begun playing with territorial and abstract ideas of the Deccan, perhaps as early as Muhammad Qasim Hindushah Firishta's political geography in his chronicle completed around 1612.¹⁶ And even when sticking within the colonial period, we come across curious southern Indian Muslim bureaucrat-antiquarians such as Maulvi Bashiruddin Ahmad, who meticulously gathered multi-lingual documents and inscriptions in Telugu, Persian, and

¹⁴ Digby, "Before Timur came", 330.

¹⁵ Lisa Mitchell, "Knowing the Deccan: Enquiries, Points, and Poets in the Construction of Knowledge and Power in Early nineteenth-century southern India" in Thomas R. Trautmann ed. *The Madras School of Orientalism: Producing Knowledge in Colonial South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2009), 161-162.

¹⁶ Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 46-49.

Kannada, along with oral legends of the Deccan, and wrote about them in Urdu, with little or no regard for what the Orientalists were up to in other parts of peninsular India.¹⁷ Most recently, moving away from the standard developmentalist narratives of colonial India, scholarship on princely Hyderabad (1724 – 1948) convincingly elucidates the resilience of Islamicate sovereignty as well as the inter-regional concerns and connections of its intellectual circuits in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.¹⁸ Taking these lessons back further then, one modest contribution of the present inquiry is to elucidate the role of the region – the Deccan sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda – in a simultaneous unraveling and co-constitution of the Mughal empire in a conquest period when they were only nominally incorporated into imperial political institutions.

Regional states were powerful enough to not to get swallowed up by the Mughals but not powerful enough to pose a tangible military threat or alternative to empire. What did it mean then, to be in an agrarian empire's shadow? I pivot the answer to this question on two inter-related themes – practices of experimental history writing that recorded conquest and the complex operations of patronage networks that cut across both region and empire during conquest. Tracing the evolution of these two themes over a fifty-year period reveals a principle of self-similarity, a reciprocal relationship of competition between empire and region and a social stratification of the conquest's cultural processes. Rather than viewing conquest as a horizontal process where one political unit displaced the previous one, I develop a vertical stratigraphy of conquest between polities of different scale and size. In these layers we find poly-

¹⁷ Bashiruddin Ahmad, *Wāqi 'yāt Mamlakāt-i Bijāpūr*. Vol. I-III (Agra: Mufid-i-Aam Press, 1915)

¹⁸ Eric Lewis Beverley *Hyderabad, British India, and the World: Muslim Networks and Minor Sovereignty, c. 1850–1950* (Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Kavita Saraswathi Datla, *The language of secular Islam: Urdu nationalism and colonial India* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2013).

vocal representations of conquest and a distribution of the social roles of patrons. The principle of self-similarity was not just a matter of co-sharing sovereignty or expanding territorially at the same time. The smaller dolls in this progressively larger paradigm – the Deccan sultanates – exhibited features such as the consolidation of non-imperial institutions of governance and a set of sub-imperial elites more entrenched in the maritime world of the Indian Ocean. These capacities of regional early modern polities restrained and interlocked the larger doll – the Mughal empire - into the frontier, setting limits on the depths of imperial rule in the Deccan.

Foundations

In the following section, I will provide a synoptic, chronological overview of the political, commercial, cultural, literary perspectives that have framed the study of the Deccan, specifically the regional sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda in the seventeenth century. An auxiliary but crucial intervention of this dissertation is to integrate a large body of Urdu-language historiography with the well-known English-language historiography of the Deccan sultanates and Mughal north India. This dissertation remains indebted to a generation of scholars and Urdu historiography written on the Deccan sultanates, which has not been taken seriously in English-language studies of early modern south India. This is unfortunate because it not only presents a very different view of the medieval and early modern Deccan but also offers the most useful leads into the unwieldy but abundant repositories, archives and museums of Hyderabad and the Deccan. In a final section of this overview, I will trace the evolution of Urdu studies on the Deccan sultanates and how certain bodies of historical materials, used in this dissertation, were processed in the 20th century.

The Deccan has an embarrassment of riches when it comes to manuscript materials that cut across political divides and our modern-day linguistic limitations. The division between

‘historical’ vs. ‘literary’ sources across different languages also manifests itself in the periodization of different polities according to this divide.¹⁹ At the outset, I should add that given the sultanate-centered narrative which drives this dissertation, my historiographical discussion here will not attempt to account for everything that preceded and existed around these regional Indo-Islamic kingdoms, that is the Bahmani period (c. 1347 – 1527) or the rich body of work on the Vijayanagara empire (c. 1336 – 1646) and its numerous ‘successor’ states or for the very late-seventeenth century, well-known scholarship on the Marathas.²⁰ This dissertation remains sultanate-driven and delves with the materials left behind by these political entities. Instead of skimming a superficial first layer of materials in Marathi, Telugu or Kannada, I have chosen to leave them out, even though these were contemporary to and produced at the same time as Persianate materials produced by the sultanates. Needless to say, much more remains to be analyzed and studied across the poly-vocal contexts of the early modern Deccan for the period from 1500 to 1700.

Here, I will first lay out the historiography in chronological sequence, then address arguments and problems that bear upon this dissertation. I locate this dissertation within political, commercial, and literary historiographies of the Deccan in order to point to three sets of gaps. First, a chronological imbalance in the historiography, which has focused overwhelmingly on the sixteenth rather than seventeenth-century Deccan, especially a tendency to avoid the period with Mughal presence after 1636. And when it has moved beyond the sixteenth century,

¹⁹ Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 40. Subrahmanyam, when discussing disagreements over accounts of 1565, cites Venkata Ramanayya and Nilakantha Sastri's *Further Sources of Vijayanagara History*, focused on literary sources, which are often posited against versions of this battle in Persian chronicles produced in the Sultanates.

²⁰ Joshi and Sherwani, *History of the Medieval Deccan*, Vol. I & II. Nilakanta Sastri and N. Venkata Ramanayya, *Further sources of Vijayanagara history*. Vol. 1 (University of Madras, 1946). N.C. Kelkar and D. V. Apte ed., *Shivaji Nibandavali* (Pune, Bharat Itihasa Sanshodhana Mandal, 1930)

historiography of Deccan in the seventeenth century suffers from Mughal-centricity, regardless of the sources used. Everything in Deccan is meant to explain why the Mughals conquered the southern Indian peninsula at the end of the seventeenth century. Lastly, I will show here that just as empire and region have become two mutually exclusive, reified categories, scholars have forced certain preconceived notions of ethnicity and language upon 17th-century Deccan courts, with little regard for the specificity of conquest conditions.

The Deccan from the perspective of Mughal politics

The earliest political histories of Bijapur and Golkonda written in Urdu from the early twentieth century set a foundation for ruler-centered dynastic histories of these sultanates written in the 1960s and 1970s. One of the earliest scholars who worked, on what was then known as the ‘medieval’ period, was Shamsullah Qadri (d. 1953), who knew both European and Indian languages, and began to incorporate newly found materials in his work. He was the editor of a magazine called *Tārīkh* and also the publisher of his own books. His work laid a foundation for the field that later became known as ‘Deccan Studies.’ Long before Haroon Khan Sherwani, Abdul Majeed Siddiqi, and Mohiuddin Qadri Zore, Shamsullah Qadri was the first to incorporate newly found Persian chronicles and literary works in Dakkani into his work on the Deccan sultanates. Although his insights often surpass all those who came after him, English-language Deccani historiography has not paid attention to his work as he wrote entirely in Urdu.²¹

After Qadri, the next generation of historians produced work on the Deccan in response to India-wide early 20th century studies of the Mughals empire, including Jadunath Sarkar's

²¹ Qadri's *Tārīkh* was a precursor to journals such as *Islamic Culture*. His collection, deposited in the Idara-i Adabiyat-i Urdu, Hyderabad, has not yet received any attention. See Special Volume of *Sab Ras* on Shamsullah Qadri, Idara-i Adabiyat-i Urdu, Hyderabad, June 2011.

multi-volume *History of Aurangzeb* from 1912 and *House of Shivaji* from 1955.²² In these Mughal histories, the Deccan sultanates were merely incidental in that they had briefly shared territories with both the Mughals and the Marathas. The Mughals and Marathas have turned out to be far more integral to later regional and pan-Indian nationalist historiography and thus, have a much thicker body of scholarship than the Deccan sultanates. Just as large chronological gaps mark the study of the Mughals,²³ historiography of the Deccan sultanates in addition to being under the shadow of the Mughals is also bracketed with narratives of rise and fall, focusing either on the reigns of selected ‘golden age’ Deccan sultans or Mughal ascendance in the late seventeenth century. For the ‘Adil Shahi dynasty of Bijapur, studies focus on the late 16th and early 17th century, especially the reign of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (d. 1627), a contemporary of Akbar, whose “tolerance” and “syncretism” a previous generation of historians extolled.²⁴ In the case of the Qutb Shahs of Golkonda, similar heroic treatment is according to Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (d. 1611).²⁵

The year 1939 saw the publication, in Urdu, of Abdul Majeed Siddiqi's *Tārīkh-i Golkunda*, later translated into English in 1956, as *History of Golkunda*. To this earliest generation we may also add the work of Purushottam Mahadeo Joshi, more fondly known as Pir Muhammad Joshi, who never wrote a complete monograph on the Deccan but his unpublished dissertation from the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1934 remained the

²² Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, 5 vols. (Calcutta, MC Sarkar & Sons, 1912) and Sarkar ed., *House of Shivaji* (Calcutta, MC Sarker, 1955)

²³ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, “The Mughal state—Structure or process? Reflections on recent western historiography” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 29, no. 3 (1992): 291-321.

²⁴ For a cogent critique of such heroic castings of Ibrahim Adil Shah II of Bijapur, “the Akbar of the South”, see the dissertation of Keelan Hall Overton, “A Collector and his Portraits: Book Arts and Painting for Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II of Bijapur (r. 1580-1627),” PhD Diss., Department of Art History, University of California, Los Angeles, 2011, 3-6.

²⁵ M.Q. Zore, *Kuliyat Sultan Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah* (Ibrahimia Press, 1940) and H. K. Sherwani, *Muhammad-Quli Qutb Shah, Founder of Haidarabad* (Asia Publishing House, 1967)

unacknowledged foundation for many later political histories of the Bijapur sultanate.²⁶ He would cover more ground across the Deccan, when he collaborated with H. K. Sherwani for the seminal two volume, *History of the Medieval Deccan* in 1976. Moving towards the eastern part of the southern Indian peninsula, for the sultanate of Golkonda, Sherwani completed his monumental *History of the Qutb Shahi dynasty* in 1974. This work remains, to date, the finest monograph on any one of the Deccan sultanates. Sherwani was all too aware of the range of sources available to write the religious and cultural history of the Deccan, but nevertheless framed his work as a political history, as was the norm among his generation of historians.²⁷ For the western Deccan, D.C. Verma wrote a two-part political and cultural history of Bijapur.²⁸ Over and across all the Deccan sultanates, the critical work of T. N. Devare of Wadia College, Pune, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, was the first attempt to take stock Persian sources across four centuries and appeared in 1961.²⁹

The next generation of work that appeared in the Deccan responded to a wider trend of the study of foreign relations and inter-imperial dynamics across Islamicate empires. For pan-South Asia, foremost among these was Riazul Islam's *Indo-Persian Relations* from 1970.³⁰ Students of Joshi and Sherwani thus took up the task of locating the Deccan sultanates in the

²⁶ A. R. Kulkarni, "Dr. P.M. Joshi: A Historian of the Deccan" *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 49 (1990): 217. P.M. Joshi was a formidable and intimidating advisor but hilarious in the marginal comments he gave his students. His letters to Sherwani and Kulkarni, which his students have preserved, are filled with a larger discussion on how this newly merging Deccan historiography was different from the Marxist nationalist historians of northern India.

²⁷ Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam. "Introduction" in *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 19-21. P.M. Joshi, "H.K. Sherwani: Evolution of a Historian" in P. M. Joshi ed., *Studies in the Foreign Relations of India (From the Earliest Times to 1947): Professor H.K. Sherwani Felicitation Volume* (Hyderabad: 1975).

²⁸ Dinesh Chandra Verma, *History of Bijapur*, Kumar Brothers, 1974 and *Social, economic, and cultural history of Bijapur*, No. 37, (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1990)

²⁹ T.N. Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, Poona: Nowrosjee Wadia College, 1961.

³⁰ Riazul Islam, *Indo-Persian relations: a study of the political and diplomatic relations between the Mughul Empire and Iran*, Vol. 93, (Tehran: Iranian Culture Foundation, 1970)

constellation of a wider circulation of emissaries, statecraft and diplomacy across the Islamic world. For Golkonda, P.M. Joshi's student, Ziauddin Ahmed Shakeb, submitted his dissertation titled, *Relations of Golkonda with Iran 1518 - 1687* in 1976 to Deccan College, Pune.³¹ For Bijapur, and on the basis of Joshi and Verma's previous work, M. A. Nayeem wrote *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom*.³² Rather than looking at the Deccan through the lens of dynastic history, Shakeb located the Golkonda sultanate in a layered and complex web of foreign relations between empires and non-imperial states. As an archivist-historian, Shakeb was the earliest to move beyond dynastic history, see the sovereignties of imperial and regional states as co-constitutive, and one of the first to use the term 'early modern' (*ibtedāyī 'ahd-i jadīd*) for the period from 1500 to 1700 in his Urdu writings based on archival materials.³³

The 1970s was a particularly vibrant decade for Deccan studies across institutions in southern India. From newly organized archives and repositories, scholars across disciplines began to process different bodies of materials. Najma Siddiqua, for instance, took stock of all Persian language and literature in Golkonda in her dissertation from 1976.³⁴ Safavid sources in Indian libraries too, were processed, for instance, in the work of Najmunissa Begam, who wrote *A critical edition of Makātīb-i Shāh 'Abbās Safavī* in 1978 which unfortunately, to this day, remains unpublished.³⁵ Still others worked on the period preceding the sultanates, such as

³¹ See my introduction to M.Z.A. Shakeb, *Relations of Golkonda with Iran, 1518 - 1687*, (Delhi: Primus Publishers, 2016).

³² Muhammad 'Abdul Nayeem, *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom, 1489-1686 AD: A Study in Diplomatic History* (Hyderabad: Published for Sayeedia Research Institute by Bright Publishers, 1974).

³³ Ziauddin Ahmed Shakeb, "Muqaddimah" and "Introduction" to *Jami 'ul- 'atīyāt: A Compendium of feudal grants based on various works of Nawab Aziz Jung Vila* (Hyderabad, Villa Academy, 1974), p. alif, p. 7. Interestingly, given the context of the 1970s, Shakeb oscillated between the usage of medieval or early modern '*qarūn-i wastā yā ibtedāyī 'ahd-i jadīd*'

³⁴ Najma Siddiqua, *Persian Language and Literature in Golconda* (New Delhi: Adam Publishers, 2011)

³⁵ Najmunissa Begam, 'A critical edition of Makātīb-i Shāh 'Abbās Safavī', PhD diss., Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1978.

Najmuddin Ali Khan, who worked on the Bahmani sultanate in his dissertation titled, *The Islamic Educational System in the Deccan during the Bahmani Period from 1347–1500*’ from 1977.³⁶ This scholarship was not happening in isolation from Persian studies in Delhi and Aligarh. Students of Persian scholars such as Nazir Ahmed and S. A. H. Abedi expanded further on Bijapur’s literary history, one of whom was Rehmat Ali Khan who wrote on poetry in his 1979 dissertation, *The Progress of Persian Literature Under the ‘Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur 1489 - 1686 (Poetry)*.³⁷ A bit earlier, another comprehensive survey of Dakkani poetry for period from 1500 to 1700, *Dakan Main Urdu Shairi Vali se Pahle* (Urdu poetry in the Deccan Before Vali), was completed in 1963 by Mohammed Jamal Sharif (d. 1972). Sharif was an accountant by profession as well as an authority on Dakkani literature. Before his book was published in 2004, this dissertation had been sitting in the author’s family’s garage in Hyderabad for forty years.³⁸

In this stimulating intellectual environment of the 1970s, the first generation of non-Indian scholars who had begun visiting the Deccan in the 1960s now intervened and participated in the region’s historiography. The year 1974 saw John Richards’ *Mughal Administration in Golkonda* followed in 1978 by the publication of Richard Eaton’s *Sufis of Bijapur 1300-1700*. Eaton tapped into a large body of Urdu scholarship on Sufi Islam and well-known Persian court chronicles and reconstructed the social history of several Sufi households in Bijapur. Richards focused on the end of the seventeenth century, on the period of brief and incomplete Mughal

³⁶ Najmuddin Ali Khan, ‘The Islamic Educational System in the Deccan during the Bahmani Period from 1347–1500’, PhD diss., Osmania University, Hyderabad, 1977.

³⁷ Rehmat Ali Khan, *The Progress of Persian Literature Under the ‘Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur 1489 - 1686 (Poetry)*, PhD diss., University of Delhi, 1979.

³⁸ Shakeb, “Foreword,” and Najma Jamal “Sāhib-i kitāb kā t’aruf” Jamal Sharif, *Dakan Main Urdu Shairi Vali se Pahle* (A History of Urdu Poetry before Vali in Deccan), ed. Muḥammad ‘Ali Asar (Hyderabad: Idara-yi Adabiyat-i Urdu, 2004), 11-13, 23-22.

consolidation in the eastern Deccan from 1686 to 1724. He drew on a collection of Persian materials, the Nawab Inayat Jang Collection, which had at the time he began his archival work, been transferred from Hyderabad to Delhi. Since *Sufis of Bijapur*, Eaton has followed up this work with his 2005 monograph, *Social History of the Deccan 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives*.³⁹ Chronologically, Eaton's strength was the 16th century and Richard's the tail end of the 17th century.

Right from the outset, despite laying out a pioneering groundwork, the historiography of Deccan in the seventeenth century suffered from Mughal-centricity, regardless of the sources used. For most of the seventeenth century, the Deccan sultanates were just waiting anxiously for the Mughals to conquer it. Thus, Sherwani and Richards who used Persian sources nevertheless painted Golkonda's seventeenth century as one of 'decline'. Sherwani marked the period following Muhammad Qutb Shah's brief reign (1612-1626), under 'Abdullah Qutb Shah (1626 – 1672), as the beginning of a 'downward trend.'⁴⁰ At the other end of the seventeenth century, Richards focused on the period of brief and incomplete Mughal consolidation in the eastern Deccan from 1686 to 1724 to explain an empire's place in the frontier. For the period from 1626 to 1687, the 'document of submission' (*inqiyād nāmah*) of 1636, Shah Jahan's imposition of tributary state status on Bijapur and Golkonda, and the infamous episode of the disaffection of 'Abdullah Qutb Shah's prime minister, Mir Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani in 1656, were flagged as events that typified decline across the Deccan.⁴¹ In Bijapur, the period from 1636 - 1656 is generally understood to be of peace, but the rise of court factions, in the seventeenth century's

³⁹ Richards M. Eaton, *A social history of the Deccan, 1300-1761: eight Indian lives*. Vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 2005.

⁴⁰ Chapter VI, Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 431-600.

⁴¹ Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golkonda*, Chapter III, 34-51. Sherwani, *Ibid*, Chapters VI and VII. More recently repeated in M. Siraj Anwar, *Mughals and the Deccan: Political Relations with Ahmadnagar Kingdom*, (New Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation, 2007), 121-129.

second half, symptomatic of decline.⁴² According to Eaton, the iconic markers of decline included the nobility's defection to the Mughals, the sultan's ideological disposition, and factional splits in the court from 1646 to 1687.⁴³ Even the most recent and significant work on the Deccan, such as the intervention of Eaton and Wagoner's *Power, Memory, Architecture*, stops around 1600 effectively avoiding the messy question of the Mughals in the 17th century Deccan.⁴⁴ Nonetheless, this interdisciplinary study offers several useful correctives to Deccan historiography, as the authors challenge interpretations through the prism of religion alone and adopt a literary—cultural approach to investigate both history and memory in the Deccan.

In the intervening years since the 1970s, art historians rather than historians, have produced the maximum amount of work on the Deccan sultanates. This art historical scholarship culminated in several dissertations, a major exhibit on the Deccan in summer 2015 at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and two edited volumes by Navina Najat Haider and Marika Sardar published in 2011 and 2015.⁴⁵ Within the discipline of history, since Eaton and Richard's work in the 1970s, however, there have been just three dissertations completed on the Deccan sultanates. These include the work of Gijs Kruijtzter in 2009 from Leiden (upto the end of the 17th century), Emma Flatt in 2009 from SOAS (in the dissertation form ends roughly at 1600)

⁴² Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 30-31. Iftikhar Ahmad Ghauri, ““Regency” in the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda” *Journal of Pakistan Historical Society*, 15, 1, (1967): 19-37.

⁴³ Eaton, “Historical Setting: The Decline of Bijapur from 1646 to 1686,” *Sufis of Bijapur*, 177 - 191.

⁴⁴ Richard M. Eaton and Phillip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁴⁵ Haidar, Navina Najat, and Marika Sardar, *Sultans of the South: arts of India's Deccan courts, 1323-1687* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of art, 2011) and *Sultans of Deccan India, 1500–1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015). For a complete list of recent art historical scholarship on the Deccan, see Keelan Hall Overton, “A Collector and His Portrait: Book Arts and Painting for Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II of Bijapur (r. 1580-1627).” PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2011, 22-25.

and Roy Fischel in 2012 from University of Chicago (stops at 1636).⁴⁶ On the one hand, ‘golden age’ narratives of sultanates’ political ascendancy in the 16th century and on the other, the certitude of Mughal conquest at the end of the 17th century therefore bookend the period from 1636 – 1687.

Political and cultural decline held as coeval and the artificial divisions of language, identity, and ethnicity that we map onto the 16th and 17th centuries have a lot to do with our skewed assessment of twentieth-century historiography of the Deccan. Like the dearth of primary sources, it is also believed that secondary literature about the medieval Deccan is too thin. In recent studies, the pioneering work of H.K. Sherwani has been seen as the cornerstone of Deccan historiography.⁴⁷ But Sherwani was by no means the only one writing on the Deccan sultanates in the 1970s nor was he only interested in political history. Urdu literary scholars and a very long list of what we might call post-Sherwani historiography, a lot of it not in English and much of it unpublished, were invested in discovering, studying, and editing manuscripts in Persian and Dakkani from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Since the post-Independence period up to the late 1970s a wide range of manuscripts were edited and dissertations written in Urdu in institutions like Osmania University and Deccan College about the Deccan sultanates. A huge body of Persian to Dakkani translations from Bijapur and Golkonda were also edited.⁴⁸ I will draw on the insights of this Urdu scholarship on the Deccan sultanates in the final section of this opening chapter.

The Deccan from a Maritime Perspective

⁴⁶ Kruijtzter, Gijs, *Xenophobia in seventeenth-century India* (Leiden University Press, 2009)
Fischel, Roy S. “Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates, 1565—1636,” Phd diss., University of Chicago, 2012. Emma Jane Flatt, “Courtly Culture in the Indo-Persian States of the Medieval Deccan, 1450-1600,” PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, 2010.

⁴⁷ Fischel, “Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates, 1565-1636”, 24-35.

⁴⁸ David J. Matthews, “Eighty Years of Dakani Scholarship,” *Annual of Urdu Studies*, 8, (1993): 82-99.

At the same time that Persian sources on the Deccan sultanates were being tapped into for political history, a separate strand of historiography developed on the maritime frontier of these regional kingdoms drawing on Portuguese, Dutch and English archival documents. Sinnappah Arasaratnam, following Ashin Dasgupta's model for the port-city of Surat in western India, looking at south India's Coromandel Coast, too, cited Mughal intervention throughout the seventeenth century but especially after 1687 as the main reason for the Golkonda sultanate's decline and its main trading port on the east coast of India, Masulipatnam.⁴⁹ Joseph J. Brenning dated the decline of this important port to as early as 1661, suggesting that Dutch trade had reduced the share of local merchants by mid-century.⁵⁰ This historiography had sought to prove the resilience of Asian economic forms and to date their displacement to a later period. No doubt this work resuscitated Asian actors in the story of early modern commercial interactions. Subrahmanyam's "portfolio capitalists" and "Iranian abroad" were responses to this historiography that began to place different social groups in a comparative discussion on migration and circulation across the Indian Ocean.⁵¹ The story usually ended by the mid-seventeenth century, especially since the seventeenth century's second half was put under the

⁴⁹For Arasaratnam's engagement with the work of Sherwani, Richards, and others who worked on 'land' polities see Chapter Two, *Merchants, companies, and commerce on the Coromandel Coast, 1650-1740* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986)

⁵⁰ Joseph J. Brenning, "The Textile Trade of Seventeenth Century Northern Coromandel: A Study of a pre-modern Asian Export Industry", PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 1975, and "Textile producers and production in late seventeenth century Coromandel" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 23, 4 (1986): 333-355.

⁵¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Persians, pilgrims and Portuguese: the travails of Masulipatnam shipping in the western Indian Ocean, 1590-1665", *Modern Asian Studies*, 22, 3, 1988: 502-30. "Iranians Abroad: intra-Asian elite migration and early modern state formation", *Journal of Asian Studies*, 51, 2 (1992): 340-62. Also see the discussion in beginning of chapter five on Iranians abroad in Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400 - 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 175 - 179. The authors also cite the work of Jean Aubin, "De Kúbanán à Bidar. La Famille Ni'matullahi", *Studia Iranica* 20, 2, 1991. Also see Iftikhar Ahmad Ghauri, "Muslims in the Deccan: A Historical Survey" *Islamic Literature* 13, 1967.

ambit of Mughal and/or Maratha history. In a later section of this opening chapter discussing patronage, I will return to the utility of arguments of linking early modern Indian Ocean historiography with the above 'land-based' political histories of the Deccan sultanates.⁵² But not unlike political histories on the seventeenth century based on Persian materials, the entrance of the Mughals in the Deccan also bracketed the temporal limits of economic histories of the Indian Ocean based on European documents.

The Deccan from the perspective of Religious networks

Most recently, studies of religion in the Deccan have tapped into diverse genres such as hagiographies, biographies and didactic texts in Persian, Dakkani and Arabic, which were produced by and about Muslim elites in these regional kingdoms.⁵³ The question of different kinds of Muslim rulers, learned elites and social groups is closely linked to the question of confessional denominations, sovereignty, and religious disposition across the Deccan courts. The most important works on the Deccan after Sherwani remain, Richard Eaton's *Sufis of Bijapur 1300 – 1700* and *Social History of the Deccan 1300-1761: Eight Indian Lives* from 1978 and 2005 respectively. These two classic works have set the foundation and terms of debates on religious and ethno-linguistic typologies in Deccani historiography. According to Eaton, court factions in the Deccan, starting from the Bahmani period, corresponded with and acted according to ethnic, linguistic, and confessional identities, all the way to the late seventeenth century.⁵⁴ At the heart of this debate has been an imagined notion of a Deccani (or more broadly 'Indian')

⁵² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected histories: notes towards a reconfiguration of early modern Eurasia" *Modern Asian Studies* 31, no. 03 (1997): 735-762.

⁵³ Nile Green, "Making sense of 'Sufism' in the Indian subcontinent: A survey of Trends" *Religious Compass*, 2 (2009): 1044 – 1061. Scott Kugle and M. Suleiman Siddiqi ed. "Special Issue on Sufism in the Deccan," *Deccan Studies*, 7, 2, July-December 2009. For internal debates in this historiography, see K.A. Nizami's review of Eaton in *Islamic Culture*, 1979 and Ernst and Siddiqi's critique of Eaton in their first monographs.

⁵⁴ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 95-96, 188.

“composite culture” and the role and distance that each social group had in and from it. The problem with arguments about the “syncretic” character of the Deccan automatically assumes a thing called “culture” in which neatly defined, mutually exclusive realms of Foreigner vs. Deccani, Shi‘i vs. Sunni, Hindu vs. Muslim exist, merge with or contest each other. A modern-day Deccani nationalism of sorts underlies this debate, seeking to insert historical actors as social groups that fell in and outside of this space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Within this paradigm, another central trope of Deccani historiography has been to assert a neat correlation between the sultan's religious ‘psyche’ or the ‘state religion’ and the social and diplomatic orientation of the Deccan sultanates. Often, the Sunni Mughal empire is cast in absolute opposite to the Shi‘i Deccan sultanates, which looked towards Safavid Iran for recognition.⁵⁵ While it maybe true that there was a symbolic value in orienting themselves towards the Safavids to outdo the Mughals, it was not at all the case that the sultanates were homogeneously Shi‘i, even in the makeup of their nobility nor the case that the presence of certain groups, the *gharibān* or ‘Westerners’, built natural solidarities with Safavid Iran. At the other end, from the perspective of the Safavid court, the alliances with Deccan were just one of many complicated diplomatic relations that Iran had with the world at large.⁵⁶ Historians of the Deccan cannot therefore easily overemphasize the significance of Safavid Iran’s symbolic, intermittent (and quite calculated) support of the Deccan sultanates against the Mughals.⁵⁷

The sultan’s ‘psyche’, the religious environment of the kingdom and the confessional identities of social groups were not always synonymous. In the case of sixteenth-century Bijapur,

⁵⁵ André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-century Maratha Svarājya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 54-55.

⁵⁶ Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, ed., *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, London: I.B. Tauris, 2012.

⁵⁷ Colin Paul Mitchell, ‘Sister Shi‘a States? Safavid Iran and the Deccan in the 16th Century’, *Deccan Studies* 2, no. 2 (2004): 44–72.

Richard Eaton argued that due to Shi‘ism’s doctrinal antipathy towards Sufism (as manifested in Shi‘i Safavid Iran), fewer Sufi migrants moved to the ‘Adil Shahi court because of a shift in its religious orientation after 1583.⁵⁸ But looking at an earlier instance, we may take the case of the Sufi order of the Ni‘matullahis. This Shi‘i family of learned elites from Mahan, Kerman in Iran came to the Deccan at the request of Ahmad Shah Bahmani (d. 1436), after the death of Chishti Sunni Sufi, Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz (d. 1422). The teachings of Shah Ni‘matullah’s descendants in the Deccan were imbued with mystical Shi‘ism without publicly declaring to be Shi‘i and instead professed to be Qadiri and Sunni.⁵⁹ Kugle has rightly argued that in the Deccan, Sufi Sunni and Shi‘i piety often intersected through the figure of ‘Ali, the fourth caliph and his family, who were venerated across the board by sultans, learned elites, and mystics.⁶⁰ At the level of sovereigns and their political orientation too, these divisions cannot be evenly applied. In the case of Bijapur, the idea of an automatic solidarity with Safavid Iran due to the presence of a Shi‘i courtly elites remains unverifiable. For instance, both father and son, Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah (d. 1627) and Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (d. 1656) were Sunni but had a large number of “Iranian”, possibly Shi‘i courtiers, but rarely looked towards Safavid Iran for political legitimacy. For the period from 1636 to 1687, innumerable examples demonstrate the impossibility of mapping modern confessional identities and political orientations across the Deccan and Mughal India.

⁵⁸ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 69-71.

⁵⁹ Franco Coslovi, “About peculiarities of Sufism in India: Muhammad Gisudirāz and the Ni‘matullāh in the Dekkan” in A.L. Dallapicola & S.Z. Lallement eds., *Islam and Indian Regions Vol 1* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), 163. Most recently see, Peyvand Firouzeh, “The Dual Identity of the Kirmānī Sufis in the Deccan; Architecture of the Ni‘matullāhīs in Iran and its links with India”, 32. *Deutsche Orientalistentag*, Münster, September 2013.

⁶⁰ Scott Kugle, Chapter 6, “Transit-When Sufis meet Shi‘is,” in *When Sun Meets Moon*, (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2016), 120 -130.

Looking towards the eastern Deccan, at the case of Golkonda, which had a more homogeneously Shi‘i nobility,⁶¹ the question of a natural solidarity towards Safavid Iran again seems untenable. In an anthropological inquiry into these materials, Ruffle has pointed to the “vernacularization” of Shi‘i texts, devotional figures and rituals into a distinct idiom in the Deccan.⁶² Shifts in doctrinal debates among Shi‘i learned elites in Golkonda, after they arrived in the Deccan, deserves a separate line of inquiry. Nevertheless, we cannot line up changes in the sultanates neatly behind all developments in Safavid Iran. The production of certain genres of religious writing during this period cannot be understood without connections further afield, namely with similar theological production in seventeenth century Safavid Iran.⁶³ Shi‘i polemical literature and treatises on natural philosophy were also produced in Golkonda. There is some evidence in extant diplomatic correspondence that Shah ‘Abbas II sent Baqir Majlisi’s (1616-1698) work to ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, as is a noticeable increase in the circulation of Shi‘i jurisprudence and theological-legal writings within the intellectual circuits of the mid-17th century Deccan. Much closer attention needs to be paid to certain kinds of theological literature such as scholar-administrator, Ibn Khatun’s (d. 1649) polemical writings such as *Majlis-i Bahisht Ā’in* or *Kitāb al-Imāmāh*, execrations against the first three caliphs. Such texts follow theological and literary conventions of Shi‘i scholarly texts but have not been studied within the context of shifts in doctrinal debates in the Deccan and in ideas of Islamic sovereignty across South Asia in the 17th century. The discernable efflorescence of Shi‘i theological-political debates in the mid-

⁶¹ D.C. Bredi, “Shi‘ism political valence in medieval Deccani Kingdoms.” On the Golkonda rulers the author notes, “the sultans, though Shias and somewhat intolerant towards Sunnism, were not adverse to employing Sunni officials in their administration.” in A.L. Dallapiccola & S.Z. Lallement eds., *Islam and Indian Regions Vol 1* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1994), 152.

⁶² Karen Ruffle, *Gender, Sainthood, and Everyday Practice in South Asian Shi‘ism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011)

⁶³ Maryam Moazzen, “Shi‘ite Higher Learning and the Role of the Madrasa-yi Sulṭānī in Late Safavid Iran”, PhD diss., University of Toronto, 2011, 19-20.

seventeenth century Deccan again cannot be isolated from parallel developments in the intellectual circuits of Mughal Hindustan.

My purpose in citing this wider scholarship and the broader context of relations between Iran, Bijapur, and Golkonda is two-fold. First, larger generalizations about orienting the Deccan towards Safavid Iran have not accounted for the specificity of Shi‘i, Sufi, Sunni theological debates and intellectual history in both places. What changes occurred in the ideas and debates of Shi‘i religious elites after they arrived in the Deccan? Further, the debates emanating from such texts had a limited reception in the Deccan’s multivalent socio-religious context, which was different than Safavid Iran. These questions are beyond the scope of this dissertation.⁶⁴ Eschewing an ethno-linguistic-religious parochialism, for the purposes of this project, I do not presume equivalence between certain social groups, their purported homelands in Central Asia and their confessional affinities in the Deccan. Moreover, the monarch's religious disposition does not account for nor represent the wider circuit of sub-imperial courtly elites, let alone subjects in the Deccan, most of whom were non-Muslims anyway.

The politics of patronage in the early modern world and South Asia

Before turning to the regional specifics of languages and forms of history writing in South Asia, I will raise the question - for whom and for what purpose were these histories written? The case studies presented in this dissertation are wrapped around selected figures – patron-commanders – who moved down a path of conquest in peninsular India, with an enormous network of friends, literati and soldiers. The second goal of this dissertation is to understand the internally fraught, fragile, and contested nature of patronage during a period of

⁶⁴ Several of these will be answered in the forthcoming dissertation of Hunter Bandy, “Religion in the Empirical Age: Natural Speculation in the 16th and 17th Century Muslim Deccan” PhD diss., Islamic Studies, Duke University, 2017.

conquest. Patronage remains both an over-determined institution as well as an unexplained aberration in South Asia, as the editor of a recent important collection of interdisciplinary essays on it has very cogently argued in her introduction.⁶⁵ Surveying both anthropological work on contemporary issues and historical studies of patronage, Piliavsky rightly observes, “South Asian history is a parade of many different patrons.”⁶⁶ And yet, it remains understudied and the most under-theorized of institutions, especially in the discipline of history.⁶⁷ What do we do to go beyond ruler-centered theories of sacred kingship extracted from the normative artifacts of power? Well, as stated earlier, first we have to move beyond kings, which remains the norm even in the recent innovations in Mughal studies.⁶⁸ To the average European historian, this may seem completely passé and an obvious point. But apart from a few exceptions, South Asian history is, indeed, still light years behind Europe and China in terms of both materials and historiography. Early modern South Asia offers a rich but scattered body of materials for the study of sub-imperial courtly elites as patrons, such as those tapped into by Lefèvre in her study of patrons such as Abdul Rahim Khan-i-Khanan from the Mughal context.⁶⁹

One may take inspiration from contexts beyond South Asia, both to understand what is patronage and how we may study it. Systems of personal ties, obligations and networks that tied a superior and inferior were common across many different early modern contexts. The language

⁶⁵ Anastasia Piliavsky, “Introduction” to *Patronage as politics in South Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 5.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁶⁷ Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 14.

⁶⁸ Azfar A. Moin, *The millennial sovereign: sacred kingship and sainthood in Islam* (Columbia University Press, 2012) and Munis D. Faruqi, *The princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719*. (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

⁶⁹ Corinne Lefèvre, “The Court of ‘Abd-ur-Rahīm Khān-i Khānān as a bridge between Iranian and Indian Cultural traditions” in Allison Busch and Thomas de Bruijn eds., *Culture and Circulation: Literature in Motion in Early Modern India*, 75.

of patronage as well as the specific terms of these relationships, however, remains open to debate. Kettering's work on early modern France offers several useful definitions to understand the many different meanings of patronage. Rejecting the terms patron and client as anachronistic, Kettering begins instead with the terms *ami* and *amitié*, friend and friendship, which referred to multiple kinds of relationships with kinsmen, mutual exchange between a superior and an inferior non-relative, or ties to political associates of similar rank and status.⁷⁰ Historians of the Italian Renaissance make an important distinction between two kinds of patronage, *mecenatismo* or cultural patronage, especially relevant for literary patronage, between a single patron and individual poets, writers or artists versus *clientelismo* that bound inferior officials to multiple patrons, often studied from administrative archives.⁷¹ Patronage differs from both friendship and kinship in that the exchange between two individuals is obligatory. The language of fidelity, trust, loyalty, and devotion, often termed as friendship, can lead scholars to gloss over the material and political transactions that underlay patronage. Kettering cites a debate about privileging the affective, emotional language of patronage relationships at the cost of neglecting the economic basis of patronage obligations.⁷² The study of patronage may include an analysis of requests for patronage, gift giving and the expression of gratitude for favors as well as the actual workings and evolution of patronage relationships over time.

With these definitions in mind, we may return to the case of patronage in early modern South Asia. Historical studies of patronage in South Asia seem both ubiquitous and scarce. In art

⁷⁰ Sharon Kettering, "Friendship and Clientage in Early Modern France" *French History* 6, no. 2 (1992), 140 – 142.

⁷¹ Kettering, "Patronage in early modern France" *French Historical Studies* 17, no. 4 (1992), pp. 843-844. Richard S. Westfall "Science and Patronage: Galileo and the Telescope" *Isis* 76, 1, (1985): 11–30. Edward L. Goldberg, *After Vasari: history, art, and patronage in late Medici Florence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988)

⁷² Kettering, "Patronage in early modern France," 851, 853.

historical work the artifacts of patronage include portraits, iconic albums, and monumental architecture. Attribution of a body of works, whether literary or visual, to a patron has been put in terms such as “Akbar commissioned” or “the Mughals patronized.” The precise meaning of these attributions whether in art history or literary studies remains less clear, a generalization Overton has argued against in her study of the portraiture of sultan Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (d. 1627) of Bijapur. Instead of naturalizing the patron and the object produced for him, she points to the wider context of production and movement of artists, as well as shared conventions of portraiture copied, borrowed, and altered across the Deccan, Mughal India and Safavid Iran.⁷³ Further, combining formal analysis of architecture with literary references, Green has traced a diachronic arc of patronage and its role in tying mobile Sufi communities to territory in the Mughal Deccan after 1687. Variations and additions to portions of pre-existing mausoleums and shrines embodied political shifts and changes in the Deccan, as did the use and disuse of certain sites.⁷⁴ From a horizontal analysis of patronage, that is, the attribution of a certain text or building to a dynasty, ruler or Sufi order, we can move to a vertical analysis of patronage operations in synchronic historical junctures. We may also ask what are the limits of patronage relationships? Did a patron’s network operate smoothly and with no internal disagreements among its constituents?

In addition to recent innovations in art history, within early modern South Asia, linguistic patronage is one of the better-understood varieties of patronage. The choice of language has usually been put in terms of the broad values and cultural investments of political entities such as

⁷³ Overton, “A Collector and his portrait,” 315-318.

⁷⁴ Green, “The Patronage of Saintly Space in the early modern Deccan” in *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in early modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 158 – 159, 170 – 185.

the Mughal empire.⁷⁵ Representative of an earlier generation of scholarship, one volume on historical patronage followed this question through the ancient, medieval and modern periods of Indian history as a “culturally patterned” conception of power and authority.⁷⁶ Among the interventions made in this volume, Velcheru Narayan Rao’s analysis of representations and the purposes of multi-lingual patronage in Sanskrit, Kannada and Telugu in medieval Andhra is the most important for this dissertation.⁷⁷ Undoing a modern correlation between language and territorial identity, Rao was the earliest to argue for different kinds of patron-poet relationships, from discipleship to friendship, between non-Telugu rulers and Telugu poets.⁷⁸ Since the early 1990s, the study of literary patronage has witnessed some more revisions. Busch and Pollock have offered a critique of legitimation theory that was for a previous generation of scholars often the formulaic explanation for the patron’s relationship to the literature produced for him/her.⁷⁹ Undoubtedly, literary or artistic patronage cannot simply be understood as the poet or artist drinking the patron’s Kool-Aid or ideology for the purpose of ‘legitimation.’ And yet, ‘legitimising ideologies’ remain the cornerstone of the most recent scholarship on the Deccan.⁸⁰

With this, we may move onto the institutional contexts that produced patronage in South Asia – the household and family. In the Mughal case, Faruqui’s recent study offers a picture of the normative ideals of princely upbringing as well as the actual, deep internal contests within

⁷⁵ Audrey Truschke, “Cosmopolitan Encounters: Sanskrit and Persian at the Mughal Court” PhD diss., Columbia University, 2012.

⁷⁶ Barbara Stoler Miller and Richard Eaton, “Introduction” to *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3-4.

⁷⁷ Velcheru Narayana Rao “Kings, Gods and Poets: Ideologies of Patronage in Medieval Andhra,” 142-160

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁷⁹ Sheldon Pollock, *The language of the gods in the world of men: Sanskrit, culture, and power in premodern India* (Univ of California Press, 2006), 511-524.

⁸⁰ Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in seventeenth-century India*, 158.

imperial princely households.⁸¹ Rather than locating the moral and political decline in Mughal succession crisis, Faruqi, in the latter half of his book, shows that diverse groups of sub-imperial elites, from Bengal to the Deccan, partook and exploited princely rivalries to accumulate resources of their own. These friendships and alliances while rhetorically bound through a language of fealty and loyalty were hardly cogent in practice. Much earlier than Faruqi's book, in a different context of the eighteenth century, Sumit Guha had also identified kinship in South Asia as a much more resilient and potent political resource than kingship.⁸² A deeper history of the household in different regional contexts and specific historical moments enables us to move beyond the almost-perfect portraits of patrons we have often encounter in South Asian history.

This dissertation engages with these debates through two types themes of patronage. The first of these is literary patronage of certain kinds of history writing that carried literary representations of patrons and their friends during conquest. But, literary patronage casts an 'internal' lens upon the patron's world, putting certain limits on the kinds of questions we can ask from this body of materials. Patrons, the subject of representation in literature such as eulogies or panegyrics, were not necessarily the reason or inspiration for *choosing* to write a poem or commemorative text in a particular language. The choice of language had as much to do with broader contexts of debates and relations among literati working across different languages. Indo-Persian materials – eulogies, commemorative poems, court chronicles – when read for literary form unveil practices of reading, borrowing, writing across different linguistic registers

⁸¹ Munis D. Faruqi, Chapters 3-6 in *The princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504–1719* (Cambridge University Press, 2012)

⁸² Sumit Guha, "The Family Feud as Political Resource in Eighteenth-century India" in Indrani Chatterjee ed. *Family and History in South Asia* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 76-78.

in the Persianate world.⁸³ But given the nature of these materials, this world of literary patronage can also seem a bit too perfect and self-fulfilling. It is hard to believe that the world of courtly elites and court culture in South Asia was just about ‘norms of comportment’ such as literary connoisseurship, refinement, masculinity, and beauty.⁸⁴ In this world of absolute authority, etiquette and harmony, Narayana Rao has rightly cautioned us against reading highly stylized expressions and literary conventions as bereft of internal conflicts and tensions.⁸⁵

Where then do we turn to get a sense of the fractures and fissures within a patron’s world, which was by no means as perfect, as for instance, rendered in Indo-Persian literature? The second aim of this study, takes its cue from the aforementioned theories of patronage networks across the early modern world. For this purpose, we need to turn to an ‘external’ set of sources, namely, European archives, in Dutch, Portuguese, and English that offer a complex picture of the actual operations of patronage networks across maritime Asia over time. To begin to use these materials, as stated earlier, we can first draw lessons from the rich historiography of the early modern Indian Ocean world.

Studies of the Deccan from a maritime perspective settled debates about the presence or absence of capitalism in pre-colonial South Asia. This generation of scholars successfully restored the roles of local actors or patrons in controlling the outcome of European rivalries

⁸³ Sholeh Alysia Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (University of Utah Press, 2000) and Ali Anooshahr, “Author of one’s fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo-Persian histories” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 49, no. 2 (2012): 197-224.

⁸⁴ Daud Ali, *Courtly culture and political life in early medieval India*. Vol. 10 (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 143 – 201.

⁸⁵ Velcheru Narayana Rao, “Kings, Gods, and Poets: Ideologies of Patron-age in Medieval Andhra” in Barbara Stoler Miller ed. *The Powers of Art: Patronage in Indian Culture* (Oxford University Press, 1992): 147.

across maritime Asia.⁸⁶ The broad set of arguments and possible histories we can write from this body of materials has already been laid out.⁸⁷ When paired with ‘indigenous’-literary materials, this realm of evidence casts a very different lens upon the world of Asian patrons. Across a vertical cross-section of patronage networks, we can then see disagreements between a patron’s extended kinsmen, officeholders, rivals, and friends. Perhaps only ostensibly bound by trust and loyalty to the patron, these networks were never coherent internally nor just governed by the lofty ideals of friendship and honor. I draw on these administrative archives to arrive at a sense of the frictions and tensions within a patron’s circuit. A cross-reading of Persianate materials with European sources unveils a spectrum of the politics of patronage across the literary, economic and material lives of patrons in the 17th century Deccan.

Looking for patronage across two very different courtly and administrative (and linguistic) archives raises important questions on presumably separate institutional contexts, but ones that together illuminate affective and material ties within patronage networks. Kettering acknowledges that patronage relationships when tracked in administrative records are not any more ‘political’ than when the historian searches for them in courtly literature. But the terms used to describe them carry variable moral and material values. Part of the problem in the context of early modern France, she suggests is the limits of translating words such as *créature*

⁸⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce in southern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) and “The ‘Pulicat Enterprise’: Luso-Dutch conflict in south-eastern India, 1610–1640” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 9, no. 2 (1986): 17-36.

⁸⁷ Ashin Dasgupta, “The maritime merchant and Indian history” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 9, no. 1 (1984): 27-33.

and *fidèle* that appear interchangeably in non-administrative courtly context and administrative contexts but do not always denote ‘patron-client’.

To take this lesson further geographically, the innumerable terms for patronage in the Persianate context that appear in the ‘internal’ courtly archive maybe be put against the ‘external’ observations of these relationships in the administrative archives of European companies. In the Persianate literary works, several nouns and adjectives such as *ustād* (master), *farzand* (son), *murīd* (disciple), *muqarrab* (close one), *muhibbān* (loved one), *muvāfiq* (agreeable one), *dost* (friend), *nigahdār* (protector), *daulat khwāh* (well-wisher) signify relationships between a patron and his social circuit.⁸⁸ In the specific cases-studies of patrons in Chapter Two and Three of this dissertation, we can compare this Persianate vocabulary of patronage with the terminology that Dutch officials used to understand a large networks of a *hertog* (Lord), *vriendin* (friends), *zoon* (son) and the Portuguese administrators observed that certain provincial officials were creatures (*era feita sua*) of certain *senhor* (lord). Strikingly, both kinds of evidence convey the affective, emotional as well as material, pragmatic connotations of patronage relationships. This is not to say that the understanding of patronage networks we extract from courtly and administrative contexts are necessarily commensurable. In other words, even if comprehending a general framework of local patrons and their social milieu, Portuguese and Dutch officials did not always understand these relationships with the same specificity as the household’s members themselves. It goes without saying that, often, the many complex and specific terms of kinship relationships of local households were not always comprehensible to Dutch and Portuguese officials, who were often befuddled by the cross-cutting hierarchies, ties

⁸⁸ Nusrati, *‘Alī Nāmāh*, 7, 34, 40, 43.

and alliances within these unfamiliar Indo-Islamic courts. This may explain the limits of terms such as the Dutch word *zoon* or son often identified persons not necessarily related by blood.⁸⁹

Nevertheless, precarious material alliances that different levels of local Dutch, English and Portuguese officials forged with members of powerful non-royal households, set limits on the institutional context that each of the groups allegedly represented and operated within. For instance, the office of the *shāh bandar* or port keeper, often a close relative of the Prime Minister in the sultanates, forged alliances with foreign traders and often had the capacity to block the sultan's revenue and make the chiefs of European trading outposts miserable. Patronage networks that worked across maritime frontiers and the agrarian empires of Asia, and appear in courtly literature and the administrative archives of various early modern 'company-states,'⁹⁰ shared more than just geographic zones with early modern European actors operating between land and sea. Stern's 'company-state,' internally contested by rival officials and policymakers encountered and interacted with an extended network of Asian patrons and their relatives who were, in turn, not uniform nor a homogenous bloc, but always fraught with disagreements. We may then perhaps analyze a continuum of interactive institutions, be it the 'company-state' or local households that together shaped imperial and regional states across the early modern world. In doing so, we may raise the potential for reversing and exploring the maritime frontiers of Persianate sources and the agrarian frontier of European sources.

Vernaculars and history writing in early modern South Asia

⁸⁹ This was the case for instance for Mustafa Khan and Randaula Khan, who were allies at one point but never related by blood. Chapter Two, "Between bully and friend: Encounters with the Portuguese and the Dutch"

⁹⁰ Philip J. Stern, *The company-state: Corporate sovereignty and the early modern foundations of the British empire in India* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 11-15.

The layered institutional contexts of patronage hold the possibility of interweaving very different linguistic traditions just as it offers a way to test the two-pronged limits of bonds and affinities and fractures and disloyalty in the early modern Deccan. Patronage relationships were represented, expressed, and disputed in literary accounts of conquest. Having laid out the conceptual axes of this study, we may now turn to questions specific to South Asian historiography on the relationship between ‘classical’ and ‘vernacular’ languages and forms of writing history in the Deccan, where we find portraits of ‘patron-client’ relations.

Just as confessional identities cannot be distilled neatly, this dissertation also challenges the idea of Persian cultural hegemony and a distinct ethno-linguistic parochialism that marks studies of language and court culture in the Deccan. The idea that the Persian language integrated courtly elites and social groups into the Mughal empire raises a number of questions on the capacity of a “high” language to exclude those who did not know it.⁹¹ How are we to understand the Persian cosmopolis, its social world in the Indo-Islamic courts of south India and in Mughal Hindustan? Most of all, what did the choice of language have to do with writing the history of conquest? I will place my intervention on the interface between Persian and Dakkani within broader patterns across vernaculars of early modern South Asia and the specific articulation of forms of historical consciousness and historical referentiality in selected genres of other languages.

⁹¹ Alam, “The Pursuit of Persian,” *Modern Asian Studies* 32, no. 02 (1998): 317 - 340. Allison Busch, “Hidden in Plain View: Brajhasha poets at the Mughal Court” *Modern Asian Studies* 44, no. 02 (2010): 268. For a critique of an integretionist approach, see Sumit Guha, “Transitions and translations: Regional power and vernacular identity in the Dakhan, 1500-1800” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, no. 2 (2005): 23-31.

Dakkani or ‘proto’ Urdu occupies a curious position in studies of regional languages in early modern South Asia.⁹² In 1978, Richard Eaton pointed to Dakkani's role among Sufi households that adopted it to spread Islam in south India. Others have looked at Dakkani's distinct adaptations of Perso-Arabic forms such as *ghazal* (lyric poem).⁹³ One tendency in the historiography, although well meaning, reads back notions of tolerance and syncretism into the “character” of a pre-modern language. In the case of the pan-regional vernacular, Dakkani, and its social world, this problem is particularly acute. Dakkani stands in contrast to Persian as more “authentic,” a carrier of the composite, secular or “feminine” ethos of the vernacular.⁹⁴ Another often-repeated cliché about Dakkani, almost entirely misleading, is that it has extensive vocabulary from Marathi and Telugu.⁹⁵ Here we need to be careful about the definition of Dakkani. Under its characteristically extensive overlay of Perso-Arabic vocabulary, Urdu of all varieties is based on a dialectal base situated between Panjabi and Khari Boli Hindi. What makes Dakkani distinctive is the greater prominence of Panjabi elements as compared with the purer Khari Boli profile of northern Urdu.⁹⁶ The incorporation of elements from other languages, e.g. Telugu or Marathi, is by contrast very marginal in any texts that I have looked at.

Generally, the Indo-Islamic sultanates of south India have been roughly spatially identified with different linguistic territories -- the ‘Adil Shahs of Bijapur with Kannada-speaking, the Nizam Shahs of Ahmadnagar with Marathi-speaking, and the Qutb Shahs of

⁹² David Matthews, “Pem Nem: A 16th Century Dakani Manuscript” in Warwick Ball and Leonard Harrow eds., *Cairo to Kabul: Afghan and Islamic Studies*, 171, 175.

⁹³ Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 91-95. Petievich, “The Feminine and Cultural Syncretism,” 111. Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden*, 154.

⁹⁴ Petievich, *When Men Speak as Women: Vocal Masquerade in Indo-Muslim Poetry* (Oxford University Press, 2007), 8.

⁹⁵ Hutton, “The Pem Nem: A Sixteenth century illustrated romance” 45.

⁹⁶ I thank Christopher Shackle for pointing out this clear definition of Dakkani. ‘Abdul Majid Siddiqi, “Muqaddamah” in Nusrati, *‘Alī Nāmāh*, 25.

Golkonda with Telugu-speaking regions.⁹⁷ Dakkani occupied a pan-regional position, presiding over and across all of these sultanates in peninsular India, ‘below’ Persian but ‘above’ the regional vernaculars. Unlike southern India’s other regional vernaculars, Dakkani was orthographically cosmopolitan, descending directly from Perso-Arabic writing, but etymologically hybrid with its regional and local vocabulary. Yet, historians have failed to explore this unique courtly vernacular’s⁹⁸ evolution and relationship to Persian in a conquest period when these regional kingdoms expanded territorially and moved beyond well-defined linguistic zones.

Iconic works in Dakkani, especially poetry composed by sultans, such as the *Kitāb-i Naurus* of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II and the *diwān* of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah, have often been cited as evidence of syncretism and harmony in the Deccan.⁹⁹ A running trope of harmony and syncretism assumes two neatly defined worlds of all things “Muslim” and “Hindu” which converged or were manifest in the ‘psyche’ and policy of certain kings. Such a rendering often flattens out sectarian differences beyond and within these binaries. Eaton and Wagoner have offered a useful corrective to this approach in their recent survey of both the textual and material worlds of the Deccan prior to the 16th century.¹⁰⁰ They propose to look at the convergences and intersections between a Persianate and Sanskritic cosmopolis. Going further, Overton looking at the visual world of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II has argued that articulation of sectarian difference was

⁹⁷ Sherwani, *History of The Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 121.

⁹⁸ Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings*, 29-32.

⁹⁹ Nazir Ahmed ed. and trans., *Kitab-e-Naurus* by Ibrahim Adil Shah II Bijapur (Bangalore: Karnatak Urdu Academy, 1955 and 1998), M.Q. Zore, *Kulliyāt Sultān Muhammad Qulī Qutb Shāh* (Ibrahimia Press, 1940) and H. K. Sherwani, *Muhammad-Quli Qutb Shah, Founder of Haidarabad* (Asia Publishing House, 1967)

¹⁰⁰ Richard M. Eaton, “Introduction” to *India's Islamic traditions, 711-1750* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003.), 9-11. Richard M. Eaton and Philip B. Wagoner, *Power, Memory, Architecture* (Oxford University Press, 2014)

in fact context-specific and cannot be subsumed under anachronistic narratives of pre-modern syncretism.¹⁰¹ We may apply these to the case of a pan-regional vernacular like Dakkani and its evolution in the 17th century.

No doubt Dakkani evolved while constantly on the move through different regions across south India, gathering eclectic etymological foundations. But where was it heard, spoken or read? We may remind ourselves that the absolute number of readers of the Perso-Arabic script, in which Dakkani was written, was quite limited numerically, to courtly circles and spatially, to urban centers. We cannot preclude the possibility that rather than being read in the literal sense, commemorative texts such as the *fath nāmah* or victory poem were received and performed orally. For instance, at the end of major battles, poetry composed on these events would be recited in literary gatherings at court in the capital cities of regional sultanates. Or read to praise each battle's participants, in garrison towns and forts, located along conquest routes where itinerant literati, soldiers, courtiers and sultans periodically held court.

Further, I would argue that the context of conquest in which historical verse in Dakkani was produced and performed that this language was as much a marker of social and ethnographic difference as it may have been of the assimilation of different socio-cultural-religious worldviews. Scholars have too often cast Dakkani's closer proximity to social registers beyond and below Persian, and its etymological hybridity, as a mark of the Deccan's cosmopolitan, multivalent socio-religious environment. But the contrary also seems to hold true. During the Karnatak conquest, from 1636 to 1687, modes of expression such as battle poems in this pan-regional vernacular articulated ethnographic difference in context-specific ways rather than doing away with it. Unlike Persian and the chronicle form in it, which articulated kingship and

¹⁰¹ Overton, "A Collector and his Portrait," 309.

sovereignty, Dakkani, due to its eclectic generic borrowings and ways of composition, was a language more conducive to expressing intimate power relations between enemies and rivals in terms of social, linguistic, and religious difference while remaining spatially, ethnically, and confessionally ill-defined.

Now that we have laid out the spatial and temporal axes of Dakkani's evolution, I now compare it to parallel modes of expression in other parts of early modern south Asia. In recent years, a vibrant debate has unfolded on the evolution of regional languages across early modern South Asia and the relationship of these so-called vernaculars to 'classical' languages like Sanskrit and Persian. This debate has called into question the limits of 'high' languages and their ability to absorb, represent and articulate different social realities. Sandhya Sharma and Allison Busch have addressed these issues through two very different readings of Brajbhasha materials from Mughal north India.¹⁰² Further east in the subcontinent, we may draw close parallels between literary circuits in the Deccan frontier and Bengali Muslim patrons in the court of Mrauk-U in Arakan. D'Hubert has shown that patronage circuits of a regional vernacular and Persian intersected and bi-lingualism among poets was the norm rather than the exception.¹⁰³ The movement of literati, intertextuality across genres in different languages, and the dispersal of texts evince the persistent feature of circulation inherent across early modern literary cultures.¹⁰⁴

Lessons from Allison Busch's work on Brajbhasha in north India help elucidate the case of Dakkani in the seventeenth-century Deccan but there are significant differences between the two. First, the distance between Braj and Persian is far greater than the one between Dakkani and

¹⁰² Sandhya Sharma, *Literature, Culture and History in Mughal North India 1550 - 1800* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2011) and Allison Busch, *Poetry of kings: The classical Hindi literature of Mughal India* (Oxford University Press, 2011).

¹⁰³ d'Hubert, "Pirates, Poets, Merchants," 47-74.

¹⁰⁴ Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 90. Thomas de Bruijn and Allison Busch, "Introduction" to *Culture and Circulation*, 3.

Persian, given the shared orthography and etymological base of the latter two. Sociologically speaking too, for the most part, and here I follow definitions put forth by David Matthews – in south India, Dakkani was the literary language of Muslims.¹⁰⁵ The majority of its users in the Deccan were Muslims, participants in courts at major urban centers. This key distinction from all forms of Khari Boli and Persian in northern India lies in Dakkani's historical antecedents that go back to an earlier moment of conquest, that is, the expansion of the Delhi sultanate towards the southern Indian peninsula in the fourteenth century. It was unlike Persian, in the north Indian context, which represented the Mughal empire and users from many different social backgrounds, and Braj, used mostly by non-Muslims in northern India. But in south India, Persian and Dakkani emerge in the same courts and compete for the same circuits of patronage. Dakkani shared the same physical space as Persian. It had emerged through similar circuits of mobility as Persian since the time of the Delhi sultanate's conquests in peninsular India.¹⁰⁶ Thus, it was a derivative courtly vernacular that was very much part and a product of Persianate literary traditions. As such its di-glossic responses to well-established Persianate forms such as *tārīkh* should come as no surprise. On the question of reception and different audiences of Dakkani and Persian, it is worth reiterating here that hearing, speaking, and reading, writing a language are very different levels of 'knowing' it. In the court as well as in the frontier, perhaps these diverse audiences would have included courtly elites, soldiers, and officials, who operated in both languages while others who knew one or only a bit of the other language.

Scholars have answered the question of gauging the historical from literary artifacts in vernacular languages in several ways. Sharma's close reading of Brajbhasha literary materials,

¹⁰⁵ Matthews, "Pem Nem: A 16th Century Dakani Manuscript" p. 171, fn. 3. I agree with Matthews's dismissal of the futile debate on whether Dakkani texts from this early period belong to Urdu or Hindi.

¹⁰⁶ Digby, "Before Timur came", 299-300.

while mindful of prototypes and conventions, remains more committed to understanding the ethical, moral universe of these texts and the extraction of an absolute historical value from them. Busch, on the other hand, begins with the caveat that the poet, Keshavdas, did not himself use the term ‘historical poem’ in any of his works. She shows that the diverse genres that he produced, whether *praśasti* (panygyric) or courtly *carita* (life history), were chronologically connected and deployed literary structures that produced meaning and specific representations of the poet’s time and place. It is thus not a question of ‘extracting’ history from these materials but rather to glean how they were produced and written, and what this may tell us about larger social contexts. In the case of Dakkani, the claim to historicity and the task of writing history is something that seventeenth century Dakkani poets out rightly stated they were doing. Quiet unlike Busch’s Keshavdas who was no court chronicler, the central protagonist of this dissertation, a Dakkani poet - Mullah Nusrati of Bijapur - most certainly was. The proximity of Dakkani and Persian literary repertoires, I show in this dissertation, and the versified chronicle form shared across them, easily straddled the world of history and literature. In that sense, we may safely suggest that the relationship between Persian and Dakkani was quite unlike Persian and Braj. At the end of this opening chapter, I will discuss at length Nusrati’s self-fashioning as a poet-translator-historian and how Dakkani *masnawī* as a genre balanced the worlds of history and literature in particular ways.

The question of experimental forms of historical-writing and patronage in this dissertation takes another cue from a now notorious debate over historical-writing in the vernacular from southern India in the period 1500 – 1800 that occurred in journal, *History and Theory* in 2007. Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam were working with a very different set of materials in Telugu, Tamil and Kannada – vernaculars that have been more out rightly denied

historical worth for much longer than forms of historical-writing in the Persianate sphere.¹⁰⁷ Since then new innovations in the analysis of practices of imitation, historical referentiality, and literary techniques in genres such as the Persian chronicle and translations of romance and *dastān* (story) in vernaculars, have moved beyond anxious binaries about history vs. literature.¹⁰⁸ Following from these studies, this study locates the battle poem (*razmīya nazm*) in Dakkani as an emphatic “form of historical consciousness”¹⁰⁹ strongly informed by a literary sensibility but not merely, as a representation of reality. The simple reason to do so here is because 17th century practitioners, of a very different kind of historian’s craft, categorically declared that that is precisely what they were doing. At the end of this chapter, I will turn to my poet-translator-historian, Mullah Nusrati, who laid out his theory on the knowledge of history. As he journeyed alongside patrons and soldiers along the landscapes of the Deccan conquest, Nusrati composed works that seamlessly oscillated between history and literature.

We may turn to a poly-vocal context in the Mughal empire’s eastern fringes, most akin and strikingly similar to the Deccan. Thibaut d’Hubert’s poet-translator, Alaol (d. 1671) from 17th century Bengal, composed in Bengali and Persian. D’Hubert’s critical framework of multi-lingual patronage holds several lessons for my study of Nusrati and the Deccan in roughly the same period, with key variations with regards to the kinds of extant genres we have in the two

¹⁰⁷ Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, “A pragmatic response” *History and Theory* 46, no. 3 (2007): 409-427. Others have also chimed in, see Daud Ali, Chapter 4, “Indian Historical Writing c. 400-c.1400” in Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson eds., *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 2: 400-1400*, (Oxford University Press, 2012), 81-82.

¹⁰⁸ Sholeh Alyssa Quinn, Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles*. University of Utah Press, 2000. Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A comparative study of the late medieval and early modern periods*. Routledge, 2008. Thibaut d’Hubert, *In the shade of the Golden Palace: Ālāol (fl.1651-1671), a Bengali Poet between Worlds* (Forthcoming) and Pasha M. Khan, “Marvellous histories: Reading the Shāhnāmāh in India” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 49, no. 4 (2012): 527-556.

¹⁰⁹ Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam, “A Pragmatic Response,” *History and Theory* 46, no. 3 (2007): 419.

regions. D’Hubert draws on the romance genre in Bengali, tracing its lineage to a longer dispersal and interaction of Persian and other vernaculars such as Avadhi. Through a study of literary techniques such as discursive narrativity, orality, and pre-existing codes and conventions of romance, he evinces a more implicit relationship to historical referentiality in Alaol’s poetry. This is considerably different than the claim to historicity placed front and center in the genre of Dakkani battle poems. Like Bengal, the Deccan had a long history of Muslim migration. D’hubert, moving beyond just Sufi literary patronage, emphasizes that merchants, circulating in the Bay Bengal along with already settled Turco-Afghan Muslim migrants and Bengali converts, created an environment of multi-lingual patronage in the kingdom of Arakan and its capital city, Mrauk-U.¹¹⁰ Peninsular India too had similar patterns of migration and settlement, as well as multiple linguistic registers of regional (Telugu, Kannada), pan-regional (Dakkani), and transregional languages (Persian and Sanskrit). Aside from well-known didactic texts produced under the patronage of various Sufi orders up to and including the 16th century,¹¹¹ a whole range of materials produced for other kinds of listeners, readers, and users of Persian and Dakkani – merchants and military commanders - remain unexamined from the 17th century Deccan.

The battle poem in Dakkani cuts across the conventions of multiple genres. Scholars use the content or subject of these *masnawī* (romance, historical, or *dastān* or story) to distinguish between them but they all share the overarching (rhyming poem) form.¹¹² Versified chronicles also drew on the well-known and established form of Persianate history writing or *tārīkh* that had

¹¹⁰ Thibaut d’Hubert, “Pirates, poets, and merchants,” 50, 52.

¹¹¹ Eaton’s well-known *chakkī nāmahs*

¹¹² Anna Suvarova, *Masnawi: A study of Urdu romance* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000)

dominated Indo-Islamic court literature for centuries.¹¹³ But as Sunil Sharma has argued, versified chronicles have always received far less attention than their prose counterparts in Islamic South Asia. Historical *masnawī* composed in Dakkani have been almost entirely been ignored even for the purpose of ‘data-extraction’ of events in political histories of the Sultanates, let alone studied for their form or their relationships to other genres and languages. Underlying this gap is the old assumption that verse lies and prose tells the truth, such that even while using Persian chronicles historians tend to skip the poetry, translating only the ‘hard facts.’

Undoing the binary between romance and history for an earlier period, in the Delhi sultanate, Bednar has discussed the interlacing of multiple forms, *ghazal* (lyric poetry) and *masnawī* in the *Duval Rānī va Khizr Khān* of Amir Khusrau (d. 1325), a text that has been separately been studied as either history or romance. Bednar rightly critiques Hardy and others, earlier Delhi sultanate historians, who faulted Khusrau, based on his work’s aesthetic qualities, for being a poet rather than a historian.¹¹⁴ These qualities include Khusrau’s citation of another text, the prose *dibacha* (preface) written by his patron in *hindī*, which he translated and adopted into Persian. The interlacing of many different forms can also be seen in Nusrati’s *‘Alī Nāmah*, which includes panegyrics for particular patrons or participants within longer, historical poems that recorded certain battles.

To this discussion, we may add more diachronic explorations of the romance genre, especially iconic texts such as the *Shāhnāmah* or The Book of Kings, and how they were received and perceived in relation to history before the 20th century. Pasha Khan draws on a

¹¹³ Sunil Sharma, “Amir Khusraw and the Genre of Historical Narratives in Verse,” *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 22, 1& 2 (2002): 116.

¹¹⁴ Michael Bednar, “The Content and the Form in Amīr Khusraw's Duval Rānī va Khizr Khān” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (Third Series)* 24, no. 01 (2014), p. 27, 34.

long-understood distinction between *'aqlī* (rationalist) and *naqlī* (transmission-based) approaches to forms of writing history or *tārīkh* in the Islamic world. He offers a useful modification to Julie Meisami's thesis based on the interface between Iranian-Islamic historical encounter in the early Islamic world, in which history writing gradually replaced oral storytelling.¹¹⁵ Khan maintains the distinction between these two ways of producing knowledge but also suggests an interlacing that (modern) genre identifications fail to account for. In the case of Dakkani poems, the persistent repetition of conventional narratives, more in the realm of *naqlī* or transmission-based knowledge, served two purposes. Poet-historians like Nusrati continuously affirmed the authenticity of their account as they had born witness to historical events. Through the repetition of the tales of battle and dialogues between rivals in a highly dramatized form poets also asserted a kind of emphatic demonstration of literary and scholarly training in both rational and remembered forms of knowledge. With the above useful recent interventions in mind, in the next section, I turn to Mullah Nusrati's literary-historical repertoire and its centrality to this study.

Mullah Nusrati: Poet-translator-historian of the Karnatak Conquest

In the early twentieth century, Urdu scholars began to process and comment on the repertoire of the Deccan's most famous vernacular poet, Mullah Nusrati (d. 1672 or 1684?).¹¹⁶ Before that he had also appeared in the earliest *tazkirah* or hagiographies of poets as early as the mid-18th century.¹¹⁷ His complicated legacy, claimed since then, by the now distinct and highly

¹¹⁵ Pasha M. Khan, "Marvellous histories: Reading the Shāhnāmāh in India," *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 49, no. 4 (2012): pp. 540-542. He cites Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought in the classical period* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) and Julie Meisami, *Persian historiography to the end of the twelfth century* (Edinburgh University Press, 1999)

¹¹⁶ Maulvi 'Abdul Haq ed., *Gulshan-i Ishq* by Nusrati (Karachi: Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu, Pakistan, 1952). Ansari, *Nusratī ki shā'yarī*, (Hyderabad: Adabi Trust, 1984), 24. His death date is unclear.

¹¹⁷ 'Abd al-Jabbar Khan Malkapuri, *Mahbūb-e Zi'l Minan: Tazkira-e Shu'arā-e Dakan* (Hyderabad: Hasan Press, 1912). The earliest *tazkirah* in Persian, I have come across, mentions Nusrati as the founder of *rekhta* (mixed or bi-lingual) poetry. Khawja Khan Hamid Aurangabadi, *Gulshan-i Guftār* or *Tazkira-e*

politicized fields of Urdu, Marathi, and Hindi studies within the Deccan, along with more recent, glamorous appraisals of the illustrated manuscripts that accompanied his verse have together heightened the intrigue around this poet-translator-historian.¹¹⁸ Nusrati wrote three iconic narrative poems, the romance *Gulshan-i 'Ishq* (1657), and the battle poems - '*Alī Nāmāh* (c. 1665) and *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (c. 1672), as well as numerous other shorter forms of poetry, all of which have single editions in Urdu.¹¹⁹ In the 1970s, Akbaruddin Siddiqui and Rehmat Ali Khan found his lesser-known Persian verses in compendium of poetry in the Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad.¹²⁰ One manuscript in the library of David Matthews called *Qasida-i Charkhīyah*, the subject and provenance of which remain unexamined, is only partially published.¹²¹ In this section, I build on existing Urdu scholarship on Nusrati as well as turn to the poet's self-articulation within the battle poem genre. An analysis of Nusrati's theory of remembering, observing and writing history, his eclectic relationship to Persian, along with a portrait of his social milieu illustrates the two inter-related themes of this dissertation – experiments with forms of writing history about, and patronage relationships during, conquest.

Shu 'arā-e Hindī Ms. 3082, Salar Jung Museum, Tazkirah, ff. 27-28. Also published in Urdu translated from the original Persian, *Gulshan-i guftār shu 'arā-yi Urdū kā qadīm tarīn tazkirah* (Hyderabad: Maktabah-yi Ibrāhīmīyah, 1929).

¹¹⁸ Maulvi 'Abdul Haq, Zore, Sharif, Jalibi. For Hindi, Suresh Dutt Avasthi and Marathi Devi Singh Chauhan. From an art historical perspective, see Navina Najat Haidar, "Gulshan-i 'Ishq: Sufi Romance of the Deccan," in *The Visual World of Muslim India: The Art, Culture and Society of the Deccan in the Early Modern Era*, ed. Laura Emilia Parodi, vol. 2, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 295–318. Also 'Ali Akbar Husain, *Scent in the Islamic Garden: A Study of Deccani Urdu Literary Sources* (Oxford University Press, 2000)

¹¹⁹ I will tell the story of how they were published in the 20th century in the final section of this introduction.

¹²⁰ Akbaruddin Siddiqui, *Bhujte Chirag: Dakani Adab par Mazamin ka Majmu 'a* (Hyderabad: National Fine Press, 1975), 89. Rehmat Ali Khan, "The Progress of Persian (poetry) in Bijapur," section on Nusrati.

¹²¹ *Qasida-i Charkhīyā*, Library of David Matthews, Wembley, London. Matthews disagrees with Jalibi's reading and publication of this manuscript in his 1972, *Diwān-i Nusratī*.

The primary difference in the kinds of conclusions literary scholars make on Nusrati stem from their respective linguistic nationalisms but also their distance from, and use of, Dakkani manuscript sources. The chronological sequence of Urdu scholars have worked closest to the earliest manuscript materials, particularly on the genre of battle poems or on Nusrati, is as follows - Shamsullah Qadri, Maulvi Abdul Haq, M.Q. Zore, Nasiruddin Hashmi, Jamal Sharif, Zeenat Sajida, Akbaruddin Siddiqi, Syeda Jafar, Sakhawat Mirza, Moinuddin Aqeel, Jameel Jalibi, M.Z.A. Shakeb, Abdus Sattar Dalvi, Mohammad Ali Asar, Nurus Syed Akhter, Peter Gaeffke, and David Matthews.¹²² Despite a generation of work on him, within the broader world of Urdu studies, Vali Deccani's (d. 1707) legacy definitely overshadows Nusrati, who remains more firmly placed into the realm of 'pre-modern' Urdu, unlike 'classical' Urdu poets in the eighteenth-century.

Like many medieval and early modern Persianate literati, very few biographical insights can be gleaned from Nusrati's work. It is generally agreed that Nusrati came from a family of soldiers who had served in Bijapur's army for a few generations.¹²³ A strange debate concerning his confessional identity animated 20th century scholars along religious-linguistic divides for decades. The question was whether Nusrati was born a Sunni Muslim or a convert to Islam.¹²⁴ The latter claim, made mostly by Hindi and Marathi authors, was based on another unverified claim by French Orientalist, Garcin de Tassy (whose place in Urdu studies is quite complex¹²⁵),

¹²² See bibliography for lists their works. For earliest manuscript see, Nasiruddin Hashmi, *Yūrap main Dakkanī makhtūtāt* (Hyderabad: Shams Al-Matabi, 1932)

¹²³ Jamal Sharif, *Dakan Main Urdu Shairi Vali Se Pehle*, 499-502.

¹²⁴ Jameel Jalibi ed., *Divan-i Nusrati*, 4, (Lahore, 1972). Sharif, *Dakan main Urdu*, 503. Chauhan, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, 13-14.

¹²⁵ Joseph-Héliodore Garcin de Tassy and M. Garcin de Tassy, *Histoire de la littérature hindouie et hindoustanie*. Vol. 2 (Adolphe Labitte, 1870). The only 20th century Dakkani linguist, who also knew French well, who studied de Tassy is M. H. Zore, *Garcin de Tassy* (Hyderabad: Sab ras kitāb ghar, 1941). His legacy is slightly better understood in Urdu studies in Pakistan. Faruqi and Pritchett do not mention

in which he professed to have come across a manuscript of Nusrati's romance *Gulshan-i 'Ishq* (1657) from the city of Kanjivaram (in present-day Tamil Nadu) in which the poet was identified as a Brahman.¹²⁶ That Kanjivaram manuscript was never found but later British catalogers such as Blumhardt and others replicated this mistake. Maulvi Abdul Haq, Jalibi, and Sharif have convincingly disproven such claims returning to earlier *tazkirahs* as well as Persian chronicles where Nusrati is identified as a Muslim theologian and devotee of Chishti Sufi, Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz.¹²⁷ At the other end of the political spectrum, however, Urdu scholars working on Dakkanī in Pakistan tend to emphasize the religious motivations of such early poets, especially when it comes to the question of the battle poem genre that easily validates nationalist ideas of Islamic conquest.¹²⁸ Those working within the Deccan tend to emphasize a secular, regional nationalism wishing to give Dakkanī and Nusrati a respectful place in Urdu literary history. Still others, experts of 'classical' Urdu, such as Shamsul Rahman Faruqi, working from the editions produced by Dakkanī scholars, while rightly cautioning us from making quick biographical insights from Urdu verse, suggest that Nusrati may have known Sanskrit and Kannada, which again locks the poet into distinctly 'Indian' mindset that lay at the intersection of Persian and Sanskrit worldviews.¹²⁹ No doubt a poly-vocal context conditioned Nusrati but this claim, too, is far too ambitious.

de Tassy in their two part survey of Urdu literary history. They begin with Scottish Orientalist John Gilchrist and late 19th century Irish civil servant, George Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India*. But much of these writings were filtered through French Orientalists such as de Tassy, who never visited India and was one of the first to think about 'early' Urdu or Dakkanī. See Faruqi and Pritchett "A Long History of Urdu Literary Culture, Part I and Part II," 805-911 in Pollock ed. *Literary Cultures in History*.

¹²⁶ Awasthi, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Hindi Academy, 1987), p. x. 'Abdul Haq, *Nusrati*, 5-6.

¹²⁷ Sharif, *Dakan mein Urdu Shairi Vali se Pehle*, 503-505.

¹²⁸ Jalibi, *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū*, 240-241

¹²⁹ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, "A stranger in the city: The poetics of Sabk-i Hindi" *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004), 25.

Perhaps more useful than settling the question of his confessional or linguistic affiliations, the question of Nusrati's training and literary models may lead us to how and why he wrote what he wrote. German-American Indologist, Peter Gaeffke, discussing Nusrati's implicit, conceptual translation of the 16th century Avadhi romance, *Madhumālatī*, tested the repetition and origin of standard stories such as Alexander's search for the Water of Life in Nusrati's romance, *Gulshan-i 'Ishq*.¹³⁰ He very convincingly concludes Nusrati's deployment of well-known Persianate narratives attests to an emphatic display of training and erudition in "knowledge of the Qur'ān and *ahādīth* of the Prophet and a real and deep understanding of the neoplatonic/sufistic interpretations of the Qur'anic teachings."¹³¹ Instead of asserting a proximity to local 'Indian' oral narratives, the universal ambitions of text about conquest, such as the '*Alī Nāmah*, would have required the poet to reinterpret well-known legends of world conquerors.¹³² Undoubtedly, the vast majority of Nusrati's references come from the Old Testament and the Qur'ān. He constantly forefronts a theological erudition when it comes to the use of certain stories and moral lessons that he would have also discussed with his theologian, philosopher, and chronicler friends in court.

The battle poem, at the level of form, such as meter, rhyme transcends divisions between *qasida* (panegyric), *masnawī* (a form of narrative poetry), and *ghazal* (lyric poem). At the level of content, Faruqi has raised critical insights on the genealogy of so-called *sabk-i hindī* poetry, of which Nusrati may have been one of the earliest innovators. He cites one of Nusrati's famous verses from *Gulshan-i 'Ishq* (c. 1657) and '*Alī Nāmah* (c. 1665), on creating a new poetics

¹³⁰ Peter Gaeffke, "Alexander in Avadhī and Dakkinī Mathnawīs," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 109, 4, (1989): 530.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 531.

¹³² Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia" *Modern Asian Studies* 31.3 (1997): 755-756.

through the interweaving of Persian and Dakkani traditions. The theme, subject or *mazmūn* of a poem stimulated the use of a range of techniques to enlarge the spectrums of its meanings (*ma'ni*). He compellingly hints that something specific was unfolding in the poetic practice of Nusrati and several other seventeenth century Dakkani poets, different from their Persian and Arabic predecessors.¹³³ Indeed, in the '*Alī Nāmah* it was the theme of battle, to commemorate which the victory poem was written and that led Nusrati to declare:

*fasāhat se hen go shai 'r ke ban kā rūp
dil-i shai 'r kā jiyū hen mazmūn anūp*

*ke men fath nāmah likhā hūn āj
na aksar kiyā bāt mazmūn bāj*

*ghadiyā hūn salāsāt son yek yek bachan
mazāmīn kī mad men utārtiyār tan*

Although of eloquence is the poet's garden shaped
The heart of verse is a range of themes

For I have composed a victory poem today
I have not often composed [poetry] without a *mazmūn*

I have shaped each and every utterance flowingly
Pouring the body in the moulds of *mazmūns*.¹³⁴

Arguably, Nusrati measured the worth of his work through the compelling theme he selected - the recording of victory during conquest. In doing so, Nusrati also drew on pre-existing models within the Deccan. Jameel Jalibi and several Urdu scholars have noted that Hasan Shauqi's *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāh* served as a template for later historical *masnawī*, but especially for Nusrati who wrote responses to Shauqi's verse, even emulating the meter of his

¹³³ Shamsur Rehman Faruqi, "A stranger in the city: The poetics of Sabk-i Hindi" *The Annual of Urdu Studies* 19 (2004), 23-25. Also for the unanswered questions in Faruqi's expose, see Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire*, 317, footnote 30.

¹³⁴ Nusrati, '*Alī Nāmah*, 9.

Fath Nāma in later works.¹³⁵ The ‘*Alī Nāmah*’ falls in this longer tradition of a battle poem within the vernacular itself, but Nusrati’s literary models stretch further to forms of writing across the Islamic world informed by a literary-historical sensibility.

Nusrati placed his ‘*Alī Nāmah*’ within a much longer literary tradition of commemorative texts such as Firdausi’s *Shāhnāmah* or the Book of Kings. Nusrati does not directly quote or re-frame the narratives of this iconic work, but appropriates its royal, ethical and heroic message, as had also been the case in various ‘imitations’ of this epic in the Ottoman context.¹³⁶ Rather, he equated his longest victory poem the ‘*Alī Nāmah*’ as the *Shāhnāmah-yi Dakkan* (The Book of Kings of the Deccan), lending literary capital to the theme of recording conquest:

*‘ajab kiyā hen firdausī pāk zād
apas gham besar āp kare ruh shād*

No wonder if Firdausi, of pure lineage
Would forget his grief and delight from reading (this *Shāhnāmah* or Book of Kings)¹³⁷

...

*katā hūn sukhan mukhtasar be gumān
ke yū shāhnāma-i dakhan kā hai jān*

I say with brevity in speech, with the firm belief
That this, *Shāh Nāmah-yi Dakkan*, indeed, bears the (Deccan's) spirit.

Nusrati anoints himself as successor to Firdausi to give literary authority to his work. The status of the *Shāhnāmah* as a standard part of the curriculum of literary training was universal across the Islamicate empires, leading poets to measure their self-worth by asking ‘what would Firdausi think?’ Well, the old master may have turned in his grave if had heard these imitations,

¹³⁵ Jameel Jalibi, *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū: Qadīm dor - āghāz se 1750 tak*, Vol. 1 (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 1977), 296.

¹³⁶ Jan Schmidt “The Reception of Firdausi’s *Shahnama* among the Ottomans,” Melville and van den Berg eds., *Shahnama Studies II: The reception of Firdausi’s Shahnama* (Leiden, Brill, 2012):132.

¹³⁷ Nusrati, ‘*Alī Nāmah*, 427.

as Schmidt notes was the case in the 16th century Ottoman court. The designation of these poets as a professional class of *ṣehnameci* or writers of *Shāhnāmāh* led the court historian, Mustafa ‘Ali (d. 1600), to have nothing but scorn for their third-rate poetry!¹³⁸ Not surprisingly, like the Deccan, in the early Ottoman context, these were written in the form of Persian *masnawī*, and later written in Turkish.¹³⁹ Emulators of iconic Persian works in other linguistic registers across the Islamic world faced the challenge of justifying the exercise of translation and conceptual borrowing. I will show later that the tension between the respected court historian versus the inventive poet-translator-chronicler was also prevalent in the 17th Deccan courts.

Here, I would not want to give the impression that Nusrati’s only concerns in life were showing off his poetic skills and erudition in theology and literature. More prosaic matters, from an unusually harsh winter in Bijapur to his modest home’s leaking roof, also preoccupied him.¹⁴⁰ After describing the cold’s intensity, the dew that had become ice, leaves yellowed, buds that had wilted, the nightingales that had stopped singing, Nusrati realizes he has digressed from the task required of him - to praise the king. He goads the sultan to give him a robe of honor (*khil‘at*) to protect him from the winter. Eventually, he seems exhausted from the cold and the business of praising:

Naked bodies of the sun receive a robe from the king
So your body may not shiver again?

I would say all your qualities in this panegyric
But in this cold my speech refuses to burst open

Oh Nusrati! It is better if you first warm your heart,
So that you can compose a fresh opening verse tomorrow¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Ibid., 134.

¹³⁹ Schmidt, “The Reception of Firdausi’s *Shahnama*,” 32 – 133.

¹⁴⁰ Nusrati, ‘*Alī Nāmāh*, 106-109.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 109.

Perhaps one reason for the highly dramatized, hyperbolic representation of the patron as war hero and conqueror had to do with the competitive business of poetry in court. Even for the poet-laureate of Bijapur not all was glorious materially and financially. Thus, Nusrati bemoaned his small, uncomfortable home and could not stand his unruly neighbors. He urgently requested the sultan to grant his request for a better dwelling:

*pan kiyā karūn ay shāh men kayī bāb be sāmān hūn
avval to aisā ghar nahīn jahān thār hove rāhat bharī*

*ghar bhī nahna yak hen vale dāyam hen 'ilat liye ūse
ladka nad son hamsāye bad waisā ich bhūven kī bad terīu*

*mutlaq arāzil qom-i ū hai gird aise be hayā
samjhen who gālī khāu kon samjhen gamat hor maskharī*

*jīn kī zabān te lām kāf ātā hai shaitān sīkne
sānche pane son jab karen t'alīm jang zar garī*

*hangām par barsāt tuk padhne mai ladka nīr bhar
ghar hauz hu kar kīche ke rahe dhūp kāle lag terī*

*is sāl tu lark a sitam sāmān ghar kā le gayā
ūbariyā hai yek nahāyī lihāf y'anī gagan hor dhar terī*

*bande kī ākhir 'arz yū hai ay jahān ke sāye bān
yā kar padhe ghar ku khadhā ya kar karam se yāvarī*

*farmān son 'ālā hukm ke bakhshish mujh aisā ghar dilā
jo sāf tar mujh tabī ' kon jahān hove safāyī behtarī*

Alas, what shall I do, oh king? For I do not have a house with a door nor things
I do not have a comfortable home to my satisfaction

A house so small, no reason to say it will last forever
No son, no neighbor, no condition worse than this

Absolute rascals, those that surround hail from an utterly shameless group
They only understand abuses, but they think its some joke or fun

The devil comes to learn abuses from their foul tongue
Like a dishonest goldsmith, they only extract lies

When the rains fall, water fills up inside the house
Turning it into a fountain, full of puddles, which the scorching sun dries.

This year the floods took away all my stuff (and the roof)
And the skies have had to become my quilt

This slave requests one thing from you, shelterer of the world.
Build me a new house or help me

Please, oh great commander! Please get me a new house
One that gets rid of my greed and is also clean!¹⁴²

Nusrati is only strategically self-effacing in such lines. In much of the *‘Alī Nāmāh*, when it came to his art, he constantly reminded everyone of the unprecedented character of his innovation with language and recording history. He reached his career’s height during ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II’s reign (d. 1672). But Nusrati was already an upcoming star poet as early as the 1630s, when his verse commemorating the wedding of the previous Bijapur sultan, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (d. 1656) with Golkonda sultan, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah’s sister, Khadija Sultana,¹⁴³ was inscribed by a second-generation Iranian calligrapher in Bijapur, ‘Ali ibn Naqi al-Husaini Damghani.¹⁴⁴ Aside from attesting to the long arc of Nusrati’s poetic career in the Deccan, this particular manuscript raises questions on the complex interface between those who composed in

¹⁴² Quoted in Maulvi ‘Abdul Haq, *Nusrati*, 13-14.

¹⁴³ Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 450, 558 fn 3.

¹⁴⁴ MS. Or. 13533 British Library, London. Four folios out of a total of 24 of this manuscript have been published in Haider and Sarkar eds., *Sultans of Deccan India 1500-1700: Opulence and Fantasy* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2015), 142-143. The exhibit catalog wrongly identifies the verse form in this manuscript as a *qasida*, but based on the meter and rhyme, I believe this is Nusrati’s first *masnawī*.

Dakkani and those who visualized this language in Perso-Arabic script, presumably Persian-speaking Iranian calligraphers. The invention of symbols to represent the retroflex sounds of Dakkani such as ٺ (ṭ) ڌ (ḍ) and ڙ (ṛ) as well as the vocalization marks above the letters suggests that the calligrapher had at least partial knowledge of the language he was writing.¹⁴⁵ I will set aside these intriguing questions for now, and return to this dissertation's central protagonist and his claims to observing, writing, and remembering history.

Claiming historicity: Nusrati's challenge to historians

This project is pivoted around the genre of battle poems in Dakkani. The near complete absence of these sources in historical studies of the Deccan sultanates raises the question of the historicity of these texts and their authors. What kinds of truth claims do the historical actors - patrons and poets - make in these texts? Why did they chose to write history in this language? What was the relationship of Dakkani poets to their contemporary Persian-writing, speaking, and reading literati in Bijapur and Golkonda?

The challenge of translating major Persian works into Dakkani pre-dated the task of writing history in this pan-regional vernacular by many decades. Experiments with writing battle poems inherited a long legacy of translation. First, of Sufi texts from the fourteenth century as well as a great project of translation of Persian epics and romances into Dakkani that continued till very late in the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁶ As a result, many Dakkani poets expressed an inferiority complex of sorts against Persian, which their contemporary rivals often cast as

¹⁴⁵ I am still deciphering and translating Nusrati's verse in this manuscript but much more remains to be said on the development of early Urdu orthography and the overlapping worlds of Dakkani poets and Persian calligraphers in the Deccan at the level of manuscript production.

¹⁴⁶ Matthews, "Eighty Years of Dakani Scholarship", 86 – 97.

superior to Dakkani. Nusrati in the *‘Alī Nāmāh*, rather than self-deprecating his art,¹⁴⁷ challenged those in court who insisted on Persian’s superiority. Instead, he emphatically asserted his work’s novelty and his own experiments with writing history in verse. Nusrati was not the first to assert the validity of writing and translating from Persian into Dakkani. Several Dakkani poets commented on the novelty of composing in Dakkani and as well as on experimenting with form, especially across prose and poetry. As early as 1635, Mullah Wajhi, a Golkonda poet, in the preface to his *Sab Ras* praised the novelty of his attempt at translating Timurid poet, Muhammad Yahya Sibak or Fattahi Nishapuri’s (d. 1448) *Qissa-i Husn-o Dil*. He wrote, “*koī jahān men, hindustān men, hindī zabān son, is latāfat is chandān son, nazm hor nasr milā kar, galā kar yūn nahī bolīyā*/No one in Hindustan nor in the world has composed nor spoken in this *hindī* tongue, melting poetry and prose with such elegance and skill.”¹⁴⁸ Dialogue and debate between polyvocal literati was a consistent feature of literary gatherings in the Deccan’s Indo-Islamic courts.

Nusrati was undoubtedly acquainted with court poets who had done translations before him and new works that were being conceptually copied and imitated from Persian. Moving one step further from translation, he was the first, however, to discuss *‘ilm-i tārikh* or the knowledge of history¹⁴⁹ in Dakkani. In many self-referential verses embedded throughout his writings, he located himself in a constellation of Persianate historical writing across the Deccan, Safavid Iran and Mughal Hindustan. By the time Nusrati began writing *‘Alī Nāmāh*, literary circles of patrons,

¹⁴⁷ Nusrati is not humble nor self-effacing like Allison Busch's Keshavdas. See Allison Busch, *Poetry of Kings: The Classical Hindi Literature of Mughal India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 24.

¹⁴⁸ Wajhi, *Sab Ras*, 182.

¹⁴⁹ Blain Auer traces the history of the distinction between *tārikh*, the writing of history, versus, *‘ilm-i tārikh* or the knowledge of history and its emergence as a discipline within Islamic fields of knowledge, “Pre-modern intellectual debates on the knowledge of history and Ziyā al-Dīn Baranī’s *Tārikh-i Fīrūzshāhī*” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 52, no. 2 (2015): 209.

chroniclers and poets moving across the Deccan had already had debates on writing history and experimentation with the standard form, *tārīkh*, in which historical events could be recorded.

Let us turn to Nusrati's discussion of the knowledge of history and the question of representing 'truth' in a *haqīr zabān* or lowly tongue of Dakkani. Following convention he started with the praise of God, the Prophet, and the sultan. At the outset, he points to the name of his work:

*hamd-i avval hai khudā kā ke jine roz-i azal
diyā hai himmat mardān jo taufīq son bal
rakhīyā is fateh ke nāmah kā 'alī nāmah nāvūn
jis kā har razmīyah rustam ke gale kā haykal
sarānā sāre us sakat dār kon.*¹⁵⁰

Praise be upon God, who made the day of eternity
He who has given humanity courage from his grace
The name He gave to this victory poem is the '*Alī Nāmah*
Each war of which is like the magical talisman that adorned Rustam's neck
From the very beginning, praise be upon He who gives us strength

He often compared himself, the court poet, to the object of his observation - the conqueror. Addressing God, Nusrati asks:

*tere fan kī quvvat son mujh mast kar
hunar sab men merā zabardast kar
kadhā jān hu ran khānp de mujh qalam
merā nām nusratī son karvān 'alam
karāmat mere fan men rakh yūn nahan
ke sun te bachan hūe tamāsha ayān
merā shai 'r karde zamāne ko burd
yū har bait achu shīr mardān ko dard.*¹⁵¹

From the strength of your art may I be imbued
Make my skill be the most potent
Give my pen as much power as a sword in war
My name is Nusrati (victory), my standard stands tall,
So much charisma may be hidden in my pen

¹⁵⁰ '*Alī Nāmah*, 3.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

That when I display my words,
May every verse of mine make the world fear

Nusrati treated the world of writing poetry as a battleground, which was very much true in the fiercely competitive literary circuits of seventeenth-century Bijapur and Golkonda. Dakkani poets, like their Persian-writing/speaking contemporaries, used the text's preface to emphasize the unprecedented and unique nature of the task ahead of them, evoking tropes such as dialogue among learned elites in literary gatherings and the sultan's anointing of a certain poet or historian to the task.

Nusrati was convinced that history had never before been written this way, which was not an entirely false nor pompous claim. In terms of the form, versified chronicles such as Amir Khusrau *Nuh Sipih*r (c. 1318) and the *Tughlaq Nāmah* (c. 1321) and Isami's *Futūh-i Salātīn* (c. 1350) predated Nusrati by many centuries. Nonetheless, he went to great lengths to explain his work's linguistic novelty. One way was by citing historian-friends who urged him to do something new with history. Such gestures of gratitude towards interlocutors and friends were not unlike the acknowledgement sections of scholarly monographs in modern times. Through the simple task of saying thank you, Nusrati too, self-consciously revealed his intellectual community, social capital, and theoretical affinities. In a section on the reasons for writing this book (*sabab-i nazm kitāb*), he laid out his theory of the knowledge of history. Like many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Nusrati invoked the familiar image of the literary soiree. In an incomparable gathering of writers, patrons, poets and historians, the sultan picked Nusrati to write about the ongoing wars and conquest in the Karnatak, for only someone close to his heart could compose such an account. For Nusrati, three key techniques constituted history as a discipline and the person who produced and practiced it - the historian. Following a long

tradition of the writing of history in the Islamic world, these techniques included the patron's trust (*i'tibār, i'timād*), the historian's personal opinion (*rā'y*), and third, the capacity to observe or bear witness (*mushāhidah*).¹⁵²

Nusrati cited the sultan and three close friends who he praised for different reasons, especially with regards to their unique occupations and status at court. His foremost relationship in court was with his patron, sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah II (d. 1672), who himself was a prolific Dakkani poet.¹⁵³ This particular patron-poet relationship was one of a teacher-disciple, as the sultan and the poet-laureate often discussed poetics, language and history with each other. Praising the sultan's verse, Nusrati writes:

*tere shai'r te shā'irān kon hai nūr
mazāmīn m'āniyān ke gardūn kā nūr*

The poets are enlightened with the brilliance of your poetry
The themes of your poetry are light in a sky of meaning

*na kuch shai'r kasb kā nām hai
ke yū haq kī be jashash te ilhām hai*

Poetry is not an art which can be acquired
It is a God-given intuition

*ba hamd allāh kiyā mujh badhe bakht āj
na ustād koī mujh 'alī shāh ke bāj*

I am grateful to God that
I have no other master, except 'Ali, the King¹⁵⁴

The sultan is the '*Alī Nāmāh*'s hero and in many ways, the literary task of eulogizing the patron as a winner often takes precedence over the task of recording 'what really happened' throughout

¹⁵² Auer, "Pre-modern intellectual debates on the knowledge of history," 214-215.

¹⁵³ Zeenat Sajida, *Kulliyāt-i Shāhī* (Hyderabad, 1962).

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

the poem. ‘Ali wins every single battle even if he actually suffered huge losses in them. Of course, the text remains highly stylized and ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II always wins and turns out to be the hero. Given its conventions and aim of valorizing ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II, it is futile to mine this poem for well-known political events to fill in the gaps in political histories of the Deccan. Instead, we can gather from it a sense of social relations in the Deccan’s dynamic bi-lingual literary circuits.

In addition to the sultan, Nusrati had several other close interlocutors, whom he constantly had in mind while composing. The first of these friends was Qazi Karimullah, a legal scholar, who commanded Nusrati to:

*dise so tamāshe nazr ke huzūr
huā nusratī par tū likhnā zarūr*

You have witnessed with your own eyes
He said, Nusrati, you must write about it all¹⁵⁵

The power of first-hand observation, which Nusrati possessed by virtue of his active participation in Bijapuri politics, lent his written observations credibility and authority. The next person Nusrati held in the highest regard was Nurullah Qazi, a Persian poet-chronicler, who had just completed a chronicle, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Adil Shāhī*, on the early years of sultan ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II.¹⁵⁶ In a dialogue with him that Nusrati narrates, Nurullah Qazi first shared his mutual hatred of the Mughals, saying that as long as Bijapur existed, it should strike upon them:

*mudabbir badhā rāye zan durbīn
qavī rukan hai sultanat kā yaqīn*

*muqarrab badhā shah kī dargāh kā
badhā mu‘tbar mu‘tmad shāh kā*

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 33.

¹⁵⁶ Nurullah Qazi, *Tārīkh-i ‘Adil Shāhī* (The history of ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II) Abu Nasr Khalidi ed. critical edition of Persian text. (Hyderabad: Ijaz Press, 1964).

*zāhe shāh nūrullah farkhunda nām
munauwar hai jis fazl te jag tamām*

...

*ū sab likh ke tārīkh men khūb dhāt
kiyā nit hawāle nit zamāne ke hāt*

*kiyā jo ū tārīkh likhne shurū‘
huā faiz-i haq tis ke jānib rujū‘*

*safīna jo tārīkh kā le ke pās
dise yūn jo dekhe tū ahl-i qayās*

*mazāmīn ke le ke satrāh kī mauj
‘ibārat kī daryā te pakdā hai auj.¹⁵⁷*

a great writer with a far-sighted opinion
a powerful pillar, trusted in the sultanate

one who was close to the court
the most trusted ones of the king

his auspicious name was Nurullah
his excellence illuminated the whole world

he wrote a history of ‘Ali, in a fine style
and handed it to the world.

when he began to write this history
God cited him with grace.

taking his record or notebook (or ship) of history
it was apparent that he was fit to judge what he saw

such simplicity, like a pure stream of water
an expression like a river at its peak

Nusrati refers here to the actual, physical book authored by his friend and interlocutor.

Such lines confirm the inter-textual relationship between Persian *tārīkh* and Dakkanī *masnawī*,

¹⁵⁷ ‘*Alī Nāmāh*, 34.

which although decidedly different in form and ethos, emerged from the same socio-linguistic circuits. No matter which form one observes history in, the historian's three tasks were to have the patron's trust, formulate an opinion, and possess the ability to discern the world around him. Nusrati's third close friend was the poet, Shah Abu al-Ma'ali, whose high lineage Nusrati praises, hinting as well that the former was his teacher.¹⁵⁸ Dakkani and Persian poets and chroniclers conversed with each other on politics, history, and literature. The social realms of these two languages were co-constituted and not entirely distinct, even if the eventual literary output from them and the linguistic hierarchy between them makes it seem otherwise. Recognition from well-read friends lent Nusrati credibility for taking on the position of the official chronicler, a task that had never before been assigned exclusively to a vernacular poet.

Having praised his friends and their role in convincing him to write history, Nusrati moves on to justify his means of expressing historical truth in Dakkani. What is amply clear is that, in comparison to Persian, Dakkani had had little prestige among literary circuits across the Deccan sultanates. He explains:

*avval ke agar log barnā wa pīr
 kate the ke hai sha 'ir dakhnī haqīr
 haqīqat mai unke taraf haq athā
 ke tab sha 'ir be maye matlaq athā
 huā jab se ustād 'ālam 'alī
 sukhan ko sakat deke mai balī
 sazāwār-i tahsīn hai u sha 'ir āj
 na koi rakh sake bāt hāsīd ke bāj
 pasand sha 'ir karnā hai bas 'āqilān
 apas thār achu hāsīdān jāhilān
 likhīyan hū sau karke 'ālā khayāl
 suno nak badhī fath nāmah utāl*

Earlier people used to say that
 The couplets of Dakhni were lowly

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 36.

In reality the couplets had truth on their side
 which was absolute and total (like God)
 Since ‘Ali became the master of the world,
 He gave strength and power to speech.
 Today, this poetry has become deserving of praise.
 No one can speak of it with jealousy.
 Only the erudite appreciate this verse.
 The jealous and ignorant are together.
 I have written with the highest of thought
 For a moment, hear ye! This Poem of Victory!

Nusrati insisted, pointing to himself, that a truly gifted poet must have skills in both Persian and Dakkani. Not just that, he had nothing but condescension for those who could not appreciate the verse form. Dakkani poets, as is apparent from the prefaces of many works from this period,¹⁵⁹ seemed to have dealt with a crisis of validation from their peers writing in Persian, who dominated the court, some of whom undoubtedly looked down upon Dakkani. But by the mid-seventeenth century, Dakkani’s place and stature in the Deccan courts was firmly established, leading Nusrati to emphatically declare:

*agar koī ho m ‘anī garve ārasī
 padhe razmīya hindī wa farsī
 agar hai ū kāmīl samajh kā dhanī
 to is yek te hue do hunar saun ghanī
 ke donon kī khūbī mujh ankhīyān men ān
 khulāsā nikāliyā hun khush maye chān
 ratan dekh lete hen sāhib-i nazr
 ke andele ange kyā ratan kyā pathar*

If someone has a mirror of insight
 reads poems of war in Hindi and Farsi
 he shall be enriched with two sets of skills
 my eyes have the vision of both (languages)
 and I sieve goodness from both
 the masters who have a discerning eye,

¹⁵⁹ For a long list of Dakkani poets, who composed in Persian, see Mohammed Jamal Shareef, *Dakan mein urdu shairi Vali se pahle*, ed. Mohammad Ali Asar (Hyderabad, India: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Urdu, 2004), 458–69.

can distinguish a stone from a gem.¹⁶⁰

He notes people used to say ‘*kate the ke hai sha ‘ir dakanī haqīr*’ that vernacular poetry was base and worse still, incapable of recording reality and history.¹⁶¹ To disprove those who thought the knowledge of history could not be written this way, Nusrati wrote this epic poem, which he claimed posterity would remember as the Book of Kings of the Deccan. The author’s choice of form and language in this unique genre comes from his deep engagement with Persian *tārīkh*. While the battle poem shares some of the features of the chronicle, it also departs radically from this genre. We must therefore analyze the ‘*Alī Nāmah* and other early historical *masnawī*, adapting methods that have already been applied to study *tārīkh*.¹⁶² Nusrati imagines and recasts momentous historical events with drama, historical actors with dialogue, along with very elaborate descriptions of the tools and methods of war making, while marking present versus past time throughout the text. In most battle poems, authors deployed elaborate, heightened metaphors for descriptions of sieges and conquest, which were already prevalent in prose chronicles. Most importantly, such performative poetry in the vernacular deployed an ethnography of conquest that surpassed the Persian chronicle’s anthropological depths. The reversal of particular titles and terms of address to humiliate rivals as well as the rhetorical nature of this text confirms Dakkani *masnawī* took significant liberties in representations of patrons and their foes. Such transgressions of form and content cannot be found in contemporary Persian chronicles nor in diplomatic correspondence.

¹⁶⁰ ‘*Alī Nāmah*, 38.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 40.

¹⁶² Ali Anooshahr, “Mughal historians and the memory of the Islamic Conquest of India,” *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 46, no. 3 (September, 2006): 275-300. Sholeh Quinn, *Historical Writing during the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000)

Time operated in two distinct ways in Nusrati's theory of producing a narrative of history. First, it functions as memories of events, people, and places in the recent past that shaped Nusrati's present. These included iconic events such as the infamous episode of the duel between Maratha rebel, Shivaji, and Bijapuri commander, Afzal Khan in 1659, or from distant places, the war of succession between Mughal princes in the late 1650s. The poet recalls these momentous affairs as objects of observation but also as living memories with moral lessons impinging upon his judgment of present times. Nusrati, like all historical actors, saw his times as exceptional. There is a continuous comparison of the way things had been and how rapidly they were changing. Time was linear, contemporary, and cyclical. Clues within the narration mark shifts in the kind of time the poet is about to discuss. These include markers such as "*kate*" (it was said) indicating the memory of a historical event, while others "*kahūn khol ab kī*" (I speak of the present now) or "*katā hūn atā bāt ik kām kī*" (now I turn to the matter at hand or of substance" signaled contemporary time unfolding in the poet's present.¹⁶³ Despite the use of highly stylized, standardized set of metaphors to describe certain stories, events, and dialogue, such clues guided Nusrati's diverse circuit of listeners and friends through historical time.¹⁶⁴

This is not to say that Nusrati was pursuing an object of study called 'history' in the way we do now. He had a very different, but deep self-awareness of the past and what it meant to 'construct' it, following templates that had been laid out centuries before him. Here, my reading of Nusrati's battle poems affirms that any literary or visual evidence cannot just be studied for its forms, aesthetics, or styles alone.¹⁶⁵ No doubt all poems resemble other poems, as such there

¹⁶³ Nusrati, *Alī Nāmah*, 43.

¹⁶⁴ Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 10-12.

¹⁶⁵ Carlo Ginzburg, "From Aby Warburg to E. H. Gombrich: A problem of Method" in *Clues, Myths, and the Historical Method* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2013), 42-44, 51-53.

may only be tropes and nothing new in them. An entirely self-referential reading of these materials, where reality is ‘internal’ to the text alone, and one verse just a copy of another verse, may prevent us from seeing the deliberate and specific social, political, epistemological functions of these texts. If so, then, Nusrati’s historical verse maybe lost to us for good.

The twentieth-century afterlives of archives in the Deccan

The materials I engage with in this dissertation have had curious, circuitous life histories of their own in the twentieth century worth recounting here. Nearly half my time in the field has been spent listening to stories about what was in, what was preserved, what was stolen, what was fought over, and what was lost in archives, private libraries, and manuscripts collections across the Deccan. The highlight of my graduate school experience and ‘training’ happened in a setting beyond the university, under Mohammed Ziauddin Ahmed Shakeb, who has taught me much more than just languages and the paleography of pre-modern sources. Several men and women both before and of Shakeb’s generation processed the materials herein under deeply politicized and resource-scarce conditions of the post-Independence period, from the 1950s to 1970s. The divergences in the evolution English vs. Indian-language scholarship in South Asia after 1947 has a lot do to with the invisibility and visibility of scholarly work, that is, what we call and consider historiography. This scholarship needs to be engaged with at the level of its arguments rather just be mined for leads or quickly dismissed for its firm commitment to different kinds of regional or pan-Indian nationalisms. We would be nowhere in South Asian history without the work of this generation.

Unfortunately, many from this generation had a visceral aversion to writing, preferring a more ‘classical,’ oral transmission of knowledge from teacher to student, which partially explains why much of their ideas have yet to be engaged with. This may be unsettling to our

minds, enchanted as we are with the written word. Pollock's warning that in one generation, South Asia will not have people to teach students pre-modern languages could not be more true for study of the Deccan and for the current state of Indo-Persian and its irreverent stepchild, Dakkani.¹⁶⁶ From the Deccan to Europe, the latter literally has five remaining experts, all of them over the age of seventy, who are capable or even willing to instruct researchers on how to read and listen to this language. This problem is, by no means, unique to the Deccan and many such waning 'vernacular' intellectuals presumably exist in all parts of the subcontinent.

Laments aside, I turn now to the afterlives of selected sources, used as entrées in each chapter of this dissertation. The three battle poems, starting from Mirza Muqim's *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* (c. 1644), Nusrati's *Alī Nāmah* (c. 1665) and *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (c. 1672) have all had unique trajectories of processing and editing which may also explain the reasons for their relative invisibility after an initial burst of work on them. Finally, I will discuss the most underutilized of archival materials, provincial-level Mughal documents from the Deccan, which also had complicated constitution in the twentieth century.

Chapter One of this dissertation is oriented around a Persian patron, Mustafa Khan Lari (d. 1648) and a vernacular battle poem written for him, Mirza Muqim's *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*, composed around 1644. This is the second of four battle poems in Dakkani and it records Mustafa Khan's victory over the *nayaka* (lord) of Ikkeri, Shivapa Nayak. The *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* is a single manuscript, numbering around eight folios, bound together with other Dakkani manuscripts, all written by the same scribe who has not signed his name anywhere on these materials. The *masnawī*, with a total of 217 verses, begins in the middle two columns and

¹⁶⁶ Sheldon Pollock, "Towards a political philology: D.D. Kosambi and Sanskrit," *Economic and Political Weekly* (2008), 58.

continues on the margins of each folio. The date of composition has not been recorded in the manuscript itself but in the hand list of the Anjuman Taraqqi-i Urdu, the date is given as 1637, although the year of this battle was 1644.¹⁶⁷

The *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* was part of a large number of Dakkani manuscripts that ended up in Pakistan after Partition, part of the collection of *Bābā-i Urdū*, Maulvi ‘Abdul Haq.¹⁶⁸ The Anjuman Taraqqi-i Urdu in Karachi is one repository where the collections and libraries of migrant Muslim scholars from the Deccan relocated. Soon after moving to Karachi, in the 1950s, Maulvi Abdul Haq wrote to friends back in the Deccan, such as Umar Yafai, of the great challenges he faced in the Anjuman’s upkeep.¹⁶⁹ In recent years, the field of Dakkani studies in Pakistan has declined while these collections remain mostly inaccessible to the current handful of Dakkani linguists working in south India. Jameel Jalibi and a few others have been one of the few scholars in Pakistan to take an interest in, and process these early Dakkani sources. He has published indispensable and monumental surveys of Urdu literary history, affirming their utility to write cultural and social histories, while also editing several of these manuscripts.¹⁷⁰

In Chapter three of the first volume of *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū*, Jalibi has a brief discussion of Mirza Muqim's *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*.¹⁷¹ Given the specificity of the events and places covered in this *masnawī*, it was inevitable that several of Jalibi's early insights on this source required revision. In 1988, Nurus Syed Akhter of the University of Bombay acquired a copy of this

¹⁶⁷ Akhter cites Siddiqi Amrohvi's *Fihrist-i Makhtutāt Anjuman-i Taraqqī-i Urdū*, which records this information.

¹⁶⁸ On the current state of Maulvi ‘Abdul Haq's library, see <http://www.dawn.com/news/1190726/the-goddess-of-wisdom-and-maulvi-abdul-haq>

¹⁶⁹ Safdari, *Dakni Adab ke muhaqaqān*, 265-266.

¹⁷⁰ Jameel Jalibi, *Tarikh-i Adab-i Urdu*, Volumes I-IV, Educational Publishing House, Delhi. For proto-Urdu or Dakani, see *Tarikh-i Adab-i Urdu, Vol. 1: Qadīm dor - āghāz se 1750 tak*.

¹⁷¹ Jalibi discusses this manuscript on 238- 241 in Chapter Three, “Hindavī aur fārsī ravāyat kī kashmakash” in *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū Vol. 1*, 1979, 233 - 279.

manuscript and published an article in *Seh Mahī Urdū*, correcting several of Jalibi's conclusions on the manuscript's content. First, he correctly identified place names and its title, not as Jalibi had identified it as *Fath Nāma-i Bekherī* but Ikkeri and the date of the *masnawī's* composition, based on internal evidence in the manuscript, not as 1637 but 1644. He noted errors in Jalibi's reading the names of places and figures, including his mis-identifications of various historical actors.¹⁷²

The contested legacy of Nusrati between history and literature

Along with work in Pakistan, before and after Independence, historians and literary scholars working across universities in the Deccan produced a large body of work on social and cultural history of the Deccan sultanates. In the field of literary studies, Mohiuddin Qadri Zore in particular, pioneered a program under the Salar Jung Dakkani Publications committee to edit, process, and interpret major literary works of Dakkani.¹⁷³ The vibrant debates between Zore, a literary scholar, and Haroon Khan Sherwani, a historian, who wrote primarily in English, have been documented and are still recounted in Hyderabad today among the last generation of their students.¹⁷⁴ At stake in these debates, in particular, was the question of literature vs. history, which was never fully resolved among this previous generation of scholars. The overwhelming number of manuscript sources on the social and literary history of the Deccan sultanates that

¹⁷² Nurus Syed Akhter, "Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī az Mirza Muqim par tahqīqī nazr" No. 2, 1988, *Seh Mahī Urdū*, 109. Akhter rightly noted 'Raja Iyer Bhadra' was Vira Bhadra Nayak, the brother of Sivappa Nayak, 'Andaula Khan' was than Randaula Khan and so forth. Nurus Syed Akhter has been one of few Dakkani scholars who wrote some articles in English, including a biography of Maulvi's 'Abdul Haq's protégé, Shaikh Chand Hussain of Ahmadnagar, who also worked on early Dakkani manuscripts. Nurus Syed Akhter, "The Life and Contributions of Professor Shaikh Chand Hussain of Ahmadnagar" *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute*, Vol. 66/67 (2006-2007), 15-19.

¹⁷³ Sayed Mohamed, *The Value of Dakhni Language and Literature* (Mysore, 1968), 26-30.

¹⁷⁴ *Dāktar Sayyid Muhīuddīn Qādri Zor: hayāt, shakhsīyat aur kārnāme*, ed. Sulaiman Athar Javed, Muhammad Manzur Ahmed, Sayyid Rafiuddin Qadri, (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 2005)

were extant and in relatively good condition in the 1950s and 1960s was apparent to Zore, Sherwani, and their colleagues and researchers. The labor of processing history vs. literature was, however, neatly divided up along disciplinary lines. The historians took up the task of reading and interpreting Persian court chronicles and documents from both the Mughal empire and the Deccan sultanates. The literary scholars tackled all types of ‘non-historical’ genres, especially those in Dakkani. The latter were far more invested in producing editions of manuscripts than historians, who generally mined Persian chronicles to write political histories of the sultanates and the Mughal empire.

One incident, recounted by Sherwani and Zore's students, all of whom are now in their late 70s and 80s, captures the contested inheritance of history and literature among this pioneering generation of Deccani scholars. At the center of it lay the ambiguous status of Mullah Nusrati's monumental *‘Alī Nāmah*, which I analyzed throughout this chapter. Zore had originally assigned the task of editing and writing an introduction to this key source to Zeenat Sajida (d. 2008), proficient in Persian and Urdu, who, at the time, was professor in Women's College, Hyderabad. Despite some delays, over the course of fifteen long years, she completed a draft of an annotated edition of the *‘Alī Nāmah*. For several years, she had also been working on the collected works of sultan ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II, who had commissioned Nusrati to write the *‘Alī Nāmah*.¹⁷⁵ Right around the time she had almost finished an annotated edition of this difficult text, Zore grew somewhat impatient with Sajida. The Salar Jung Publications Committee handed over Sajida's draft of the edition and the task of finishing it to Osmania University historian, Abdul Majeed Siddiqi, the author of *Tarikh-i Golconda* or *History of Golconda*, published in

¹⁷⁵ Zeenat Sajida, *Kulliyat-i Shahi* (Hyderabad, 1962). Askari Safdar, *Dakni Adab ke muhaqaqīn wa muhsanīn (ibtida tā hāl)* (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 2011), 172-174.

1939 and 1964 respectively. The editorial committee abruptly decided that a historian was better suited to edit a battle poem such as the *'Alī Nāmāh* than a literary scholar. Despite his vast knowledge of Persian sources and preference for writing history in Urdu, Siddiqui had rarely worked with Dakkani manuscripts. Nevertheless, the single edition of the *'Alī Nāmāh* came to be published under Abdul Majeed Siddiqi's name in 1959. In his preface to the edited manuscript, Siddiqui thus makes the case that it was only natural that Zore asked a historian to step in and edit this text, which was "historical" and not "literary" in character.¹⁷⁶ The edition itself is worth studying for its notations and marginalia, which Siddiqui made over Sajida's copy, as well for the incomplete and rushed character of this single published edition. Manuscript copies of the *'Alī Nāmāh* which are in the British Library, Salar Jung Museum, Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute in Hyderabad and the four copies in the Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu in Karachi, compared against this edition would present several gaps and inconsistencies. In the dissertation form of my current project, I have limited my study to this edition from 1959. But much more remains to be resolved on the *'Alī Nāmāh* at the level of manuscript, which may further complicate the questions we can ask from this text.

Not long after this incident and crisis over the *'Alī Nāmāh* in the late 1950s, Zeenat Sajida published a history of sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah II (d. 1672) under the auspices of the Urdu Academy, Hyderabad in 1962. The differences between Majidi's introduction to the edited *'Alī Nāmāh* and Sajida's short literary history of the patron-king-poet are quite telling. Both secondary works chronicle Mullah Nusrati's life and his relationship to Bijapur sultan, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II. Siddiqui laid emphasis on the historical character of this *masnawī* but engaged very little with the content of the *'Alī Nāmāh*, largely relying on Maulvi Abdul Haq's extensive

¹⁷⁶ Siddiqui, "Muqaddimah" *'Alī Nāmāh*, 24.

commentaries on Mullah Nusrati published in the early 20th century. Sajida, on the other hand, while laying out Bijapur's overarching political narrative, was particularly invested in reaching her conclusions by citing key verses from Nusrati's many works, and those of his contemporary Dakkani poets as well as the writings of Persian chroniclers such as Nurullah Qazi.¹⁷⁷ She would later also edit the *diwān* (collected works) of sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah II, who wrote under the pen name 'Shahi', which remains very difficult to find in Hyderabad even today. All of the above twentieth century scholars - Zore, Sajida and Siddiqi - who produced for us the only manuscript-based edition of the '*Alī Nāmāh*, are now long gone. But this generation's complicated relationship to language, literature and above all, to history, complicates how we may situate these historical artifacts into a typology of 'sources.' The '*Alī Nāmāh* is a rich, long, and complicated text that deserves a separate study. Aside from the early editors who worked on this text in Urdu in the 1950s, to my knowledge, there are no dissertations exclusively on this work in English nor has this text received a complete comprehensive treatment in Urdu.¹⁷⁸

The invisibility of these early Urdu battle poems also has something to do with the stifling political climate of the last thirty years in the Deccan and in South Asia at large. In the modern regional states of Maharashtra and parts of Karnataka, Shivaji has been appropriated as a (Marathi and/or Hindu) nationalist hero.¹⁷⁹ Urdu scholars are extremely wary of putting into print anything that may be construed as soiling all the shibboleths about him. The only consolation is that fewer and fewer people now read both Urdu and Devanagari script, so within Urdu

¹⁷⁷ Zeenat Sajida, '*Alī 'Ādil Shāh Sānī* (Hyderabad, 1962).

¹⁷⁸ Most recently for an overview of the battle poem genre, Badr Sultana has completed a dissertation titled, *Dakanī kī razmīya masnawīyon kā tahqīqī aur tanqīdī mut'alīyah: Bahmani se Asaf Jāhī dor tak*, PhD diss., Department of Urdu, Maulana Azad National Urdu University, Hyderabad, 2015.

¹⁷⁹ The controversy over James Laine's work is well known. See his *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) and "Resisting My Attackers; Resisting My Defenders" in Matthew N. Schmalz and Peter Gottschalk, *Engaging South Asian Religions: Boundaries, Appropriations, and Resistances* (State University of New York Press, 2012), 153.

intellectual circuits in south India, they are relatively freer to publish and discuss the historical and literary context of early Urdu. But the question of publishing a new revised edition of the *‘Alī Nāmāh* or the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* remains daunting, if not impossible. Abdus Sattar Dalvi, a retired professor from the Department of Urdu, University of Bombay, who knows Persian, Marathi and Dakkani, and despite acquiring a copy of the single manuscript of *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* from Karachi, is wary of writing anything on this poem.¹⁸⁰ A close friend of his who moved to Pakistan, Sakhawat Mirza (b. 1898),¹⁸¹ sent him a new transcription of this manuscript in the 1970s. Despite a completely different reading of the manuscript from Jalibi’s edition, Dalvi has been hesitant to publish anything on this work in India, given that it recounts a battle between Afghan commander, Bahlol Khan and Shivaji in 1672. The *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, therefore, too has only one partially reliable edition published as part of Jameel Jalibi’s *Diwān-i Nusratī* in 1972. The last generation of Hindi and Marathi scholars, who also knew Urdu, based entirely on Abdul Haq’s commentary and Jalibi’s edition, published a few stray editions, along with deeply problematic commentaries on the poems.¹⁸² Sadly, these secondary editions are much more widely available in India than the original edition published from Pakistan.

The Story of the Mughal Archives in the Deccan

Chapter Four of this dissertation addresses the question of the Mughals in the Deccan, drawing on materials from the frontier, including documents from emperor Shah Jahan’s reign (c. 1627 – 1658). This imperial administrative archive, despite its size and scale, remains the

¹⁸⁰ Dalvi has written on a wide range of subjects, from Iqbal to Dakkani to a still unpublished cultural history of Bombay’s Muslims in Urdu.

¹⁸¹ Askari Safdar, *Dakni Adab ke muhaqaqīn wa muhsanīn (ibtēda tā hāl)* (Delhi: Educational Publishing House, 2011), 179-182.

¹⁸² Suresh Dutt Awasthi, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (Hyderabad: Andhra Pradesh Hindi Academy, 1987), Devisingh Venkatsingh Chauhan, *Dakhanī Hindītil Itihās va itar lekḥ* (Mumbai: Itihas Sansodhak Mandal, 1973) and *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (Pune: Maharashtra Rashtrabhasha Sabha, n.d.)

most understudied series of materials on the Mughals. In the 1950s and 1960s, Yusuf Husain Khan had published selected documents from this archive.¹⁸³ Mohammed Ziauddin Ahmed Shakeb produced the first descriptive catalogue of this archive in 1977. In the introduction to it, Shakeb recounts the story of how the Mughal Archives were found in 1916. Then Accountant-General of the ‘princely’ state of Hyderabad (c. 1724 – 1948), Maulvi Muhibuddin Sahib, came across a large mass of old documents that had been stowed away into the niches the Qila‘-i-Arak or Arak fort near Aurangabad in the northern Deccan.¹⁸⁴ It turned out that village people living inside the fort were using the documents to light fires. These documents were thus, promptly removed and incorporated into the *Daftar-i-Diwānī* (Office of Revenue Administration) of Hyderabad state, an office that later came to be known as the Central Records Office or the State Archives, Andhra Pradesh. Most recently in 2014, it was divided up into alternating floors (along with the furniture), between the newly formed state government of Telangana and the former state, Andhra Pradesh. Last I was there, it turned out that the Mughal Record Room belonged to the Telangana State Archives and Research Institute.

Around the time of Independence (1947), the last generation of the traditional *jagirdārī* (feudal land grant holding) staff, who worked for the ‘princely’ state of Hyderabad (c. 1724 – 1948), were all on the verge of retirement. As scribes, clerks and *munshis* (secretaries) who wrote, attested and read revenue documents, they had inherited hereditary positions over many generations. At first, they were wary of teaching anyone else how to read these documents,

¹⁸³ Yusuf Husain Khan, *Selected Documents of Shah Jahan’s reign* (Hyderabad, Dakkan: Daftar-i Diwani, 1950 & 1998), *Farmans and Sanads of the Deccan Sultans* (Hyderabad, Dakkan: Daftar-i Diwani, 1963, 1980) and *Selected waqai of the Deccan (1660-1671 AD)* (Hyderabad: Central Records Office, 1953)

¹⁸⁴ Mohd. Ziauddin Ahmed Shakeb, *Mughal Archives: A Descriptive Catalogue of the Documents Pertaining to the Reign of Shah Jahan, 1628-1658* (State Archives, Government of Andhra Pradesh, 1977), xii-xiii. For the evolution of this archive, see my Introduction to M.Z.A. Shakeb, *The Relations of Golkonda with Iran 1518 - 1687* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2016).

alarmed at the possibility of losing their feudal posts and titles. With the end of the Nizam's state, however, they reluctantly began to teach a new generation of archivist-historians how to read, sort, categorize and catalogue this archive. These developments occurred concurrently as private manuscript collections from Hyderabad state were also being put into national and state-level museums and archival repositories such as the Salar Jung Museum and Library that opened to the public in 1961. In the pre-Independence period in the indirectly ruled state of Hyderabad, Mughal archival documents were, due to their administrative content, incorporated into a pre-existing state institution, the Office of Revenue Administration, rather than in a museum or an archive. It was only in the post-Independence period that this office shifted its form and function, into an archive, for the use of researchers and historians. The princely state of Hyderabad had much longer continuities with its Mughal foundations that survived well into the mid-twentieth century. In states such as Hyderabad, where colonial rule was not fully implemented, survived the transition from an early modern empire to the present-day nation-state. Concomitantly then, an indigenous bureaucratic tradition lasted till late, leaving behind abundant administrative documents. This was quite unlike the trajectory of well-known repositories such as National Archives of India that were, already in the colonial period, delinked from their administrative functions and constituted as places that hold records, rather than places that process them for purposes of governance.

No single set of Mughal sources is less analyzed than the provincial records from the Deccan. Following from Yusuf Husain Khan's works, Shakeb wrote the first catalog for Shah Jahan's reign, Volume I, with the idea that it could be used as a teaching tool to instruct students on how to read and recognize different types of administrative documents in Indo-Persian and how to translate them into English. In this first volume from 1977, Shakeb listed the total of five

volumes that he planned to publish. These included Volume II - Posting and Attendance at forts and Mughal checkpoints, Volume III - Grants and Accounts of Officers, Volume IV - Verification and branding of horses and lastly, Volume V - Description rolls of Mughal *mansabdārs* (revenue grant holder). The total number of documents from Shah Jahan's reign is around 5000 (used partially in this dissertation), while the bulk of others - over 150,000 date from the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, which I have not addressed. Out of the 5000 from Shah Jahan reign, around 2438 are the descriptive muster rolls of Volume V of this catalogue series, which remains unpublished. At the time of his departure from Hyderabad in 1980, he had made hand lists with accession numbers for Volumes II-IV (the total number of unpublished, uncataloged documents from Shah Jahan's period number around 2562). I used these accession numbers to access them in the archives and have incorporated them in Chapter Four. We plan to return to these materials and publish a complete set of the documents from Shah Jahan's period in the near future.

Given the episodic and fragmentary nature of this archive, the problem of narrativizing these sources remains with historians. Athar Ali, in his *Apparatus of the Mughal Empire*, also used Shakeb's unpublished draft of Volume I when he visited Hyderabad in the early 1970s. But the accession numbers he gives in the *Apparatus* are totally opaque and do not correspond with the original ones.¹⁸⁵ No researcher can go into the state archives in Hyderabad and pull out a document based on the numbers given in Ali's directory of Mughal *mansabdārs*.

It seems to me that the best way to use them is in combination with other kinds of materials that correspond to different levels of Mughal governance, as well as observations found

¹⁸⁵ Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire: awards of ranks, offices and titles to the Mughal nobility (1574-1658)* (Oxford University Press, 1985)

in non-Mughal sources, as shown in Chapter Four. In order to do so, we may also draw on Vincent Flynn's 1974 unpublished dissertation which includes an extremely insightful introduction on the letters of Mughal prince, Aurangzeb, *Ādāb-i 'Ālamgīrī*, which he meticulously translated into English. These letters pair particularly well with the archival documents from Shah Jahan's period, which give a day-to-day picture of Aurangzeb's activities in the Deccan when he was still prince.¹⁸⁶ Personalities, places, and incidents that are mentioned in archival sources can be connected with the broader picture already present in published sources such as letter and court chronicles.

Very little biographical information on Vincent Flynn was accessible and his dissertation has remained largely un-cited in later secondary literature. We know the author worked under S.A.A. Rizvi at the Australia National University, Canberra but I was unable to trace any leads on him through the ANU Alumni office. Flynn divided Aurangzeb's letters chronologically and geographically. Letters 49 - 111 were written when Prince Aurangzeb was stationed in Burhanpur and Daulatabad and are directly relevant to the Deccan. On the chronology of the letters on the Deccan, Flynn noted:

On the whole, it seems better to postpone a final arrangement of the Deccan letters until full use can be made of Mr. Ziauddin Ahmed's work at the Central Record Office of the Andhra government. His catalogue promises to be as useful as the compilations made under Dr. Yusuf Husain Khan in elucidating questions of identity, topography, and chronology, and will be an essential aid to any study of the considerable changes and consolidation effected in the Mughal Deccan under Shah Jahan.¹⁸⁷

Shakeb and Flynn met when the latter visited Hyderabad in the early 1970s. More than forty years have passed. Aside from the descriptive catalog of Volume I, the rest of the documents

¹⁸⁶ Flynn, writing in the 1970s, was responding to communal readings of Aurangzeb, arguing against Sarkar as well as later editors (the published editions of Syed Najib Ashraf Nadwi and 'Abdul Ghafur Chaudhuri) of the emperor's correspondence. These letters provide very little evidence of his 'religious' predisposition when he was still a prince and Viceroy of the Deccan.

¹⁸⁷ Flynn, xxii- xxiii.

from Shah Jahan's period still remain unpublished. The full arc of Mughal presence in the Deccan frontier cannot be traced until we also have a complete re-evaluation of the most controversial of Mughal rulers, Aurangzeb, as well as the much larger unexamined historical records left in the Deccan from the second half of the 17th century.

Venturing into the administrative materials of the Mughals comes with risks. Entire generations of heavyweight historians have plodded through these materials, often going after each other over minute but critical technicalities, typologies and terminology that are internal to these documents. Writing on sixteenth and seventeenth century South Asia is split into a "war zone or minefield" that is north India and the "vast and thinly occupied *maidān* (field) of South Indian history" a region that has been the least incorporated into the field of Mughal studies.¹⁸⁸ The question of how to read these materials pre-figures what we can do with them. The groundwork laid by Aligarh 'school' of historians in Mughal studies has not necessarily told us how to read or tackle these materials. Perhaps only after testing the limits of the Mughal Empire *in praxis*, rather than in its self-affirming theories of sovereignty, can we de-mystify it. This may get us past the Mughal empire's ideal, normative portrait, so brilliantly presented in chronicles and courtly literature. Not unsurprisingly, the language, formulaic phrases, typologies, generic markers of these documents are much more standardized, repetitive and much less variable than the dense language of Indo-Persian chronicles, poetry and literature. But even after winning the battle of paleography, the problem of what we do with them, to construct different histories of the Mughal Empire, remains unresolved. The inquiry herein, especially in Chapter Four, offers one modest beginning to understanding the production and administrative functions of these materials in the Deccan's frontier context.

¹⁸⁸ <http://permanent-black.blogspot.com/2011/01/two-academic-moguls-madrasi-joins-hands.html>

Materials and Chapter Outline

The chapters of this dissertation fluctuate from the sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda to the Mughals, all of who operated as layers within the Deccan frontier producing a nested series of conquests. All of these sovereign units were self-similar in quality but different in size and scale, as suggested by this opening chapter's title.¹⁸⁹ Historians have often turned to this principle of fractal geometry to understand similarities across scale, and to analyze movement of social behavior from smaller to larger units of analysis.¹⁹⁰ Unlike the Portuguese encounter with kingdoms in Sri Lanka, the set of variables we are dealing with in the Deccan - the Mughals and the Sultanates - were already mutually comprehensible to each other. The inquiry here begins with two social phenomenon – patronage and practices of recording conquest - produced in the smaller unit, that is, the regional, non-imperial polity and then casts these reflections onto the larger entity, an agrarian empire. After 1636, Mughal suzerainty entailed the enforcement of symbolic terms of subordination upon the Deccan sultanates – paying tribute, reading the *khutba* or sermon in the name of the Mughal emperor, the regulation of titles and ranks for the nobility and so forth. Suzerainty, however, also produced conditions of relative autonomy in the Deccan sultanates. It allowed for an intense consolidation of resources (agrarian and maritime) that had been available to stakeholders in the Deccan for much longer than the Mughal empire. At this level, we then encounter the limits of Mughal sovereignty, imperial inability to enforce forms of

¹⁸⁹ Zoltán Biedermann, “The Matrioshka principle and how it was overcome: Portuguese and Habsburg imperial attitudes in Sri Lanka and the responses of the rulers of Kotte (1506-1598)” *Journal of Early Modern History* 13, no. 4 (2009): 265-310. Biedermann usefully deployed this metaphor to argue for a commensurability between the Portuguese empire and the Kotte kingdom in 16th century Ceylon. In his case, symbolic forms of kingship and mutual incorporation of resources produced parallel spheres of imperial suzerainty, which were only replaced by singular notions of sovereignty after the Iberian Union (1580 – 1640). In the case of the Mughals and the Deccan, the issue of commensurability is less relevant, given the shared material and ideological genealogies of both the empire and the sultanates.

¹⁹⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians map the past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 82-83.

direct rule such as fiscal control or revenue extraction. Here, the smaller unit – newly conquered frontier zones, the sultanates at the empire’s threshold, set limits upon what the empire could actually do, how it could operate within this space. The region determined the depths of well-established Mughal practices and institutions of governance in the frontier.

Although still separate in terms of sovereignty, the sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda resembled each other more than ever before during this conquest. This was not just due to shared kinsmen and marriages across two the courts¹⁹¹ but also a result of shared political ambitions, defined, most of all, in terms of an aversion to all things ‘Mughal.’ The political affiliation of “Deccani” or “Deccani,” throughout the period of conquest subsumed many languages, ethnic, confessional, geographic differences, which would come into sharper focus in moments of conquest and conflict. Lastly, the Deccan’s longer maritime orientation and the ‘mercantile’ features of these sultanates intensified the prolonged, contingent character of this conquest. This particular feature had allowed sub-imperial elites to have a diverse array of resources.¹⁹² Further, despite tremendous diplomatic pressure, it is this maritime orientation of the sultanates that also kept the Mughal empire in check in the frontier.

There are several reasons, some more transparent than others, as to why I selected certain historical figures and events to analyze in this dissertation. We must feign a method and theoretical finesse, but alas, there is no accounting for chance in history, especially when it comes to arriving at a question or an idea for a dissertation. But chance encounters - with old people, places, and books – produced this project. I began this inquiry infatuated with the sounds

¹⁹¹ Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 450.

¹⁹² Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher A. Bayly, “Portfolio capitalists and the political economy of early modern India” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 25, no. 4 (1988): 401-424.

of Dakkani. Perhaps due to the requirements of my discipline, to find something ‘historical’ in the literary, or because of the irreverent content (insults, abuses, and humor) of these texts, I was intrigued by the battle poems that recorded the Deccan conquest. Produced for different kinds of patron-conquerors, they intersected both temporally and spatially with a whole range of other materials in Persian and Dutch. Most of all, the historical actors themselves transcended the fundamental differences of the linguistic-intellectual worlds of each archive. Sub-imperial elites operating in non-imperial polities presented a particularly rich starting point to trace the conditions of conquest and the politics of patronage. The purpose of organizing the story of these conquests around the personhood of the conqueror-patron is not merely biographical nor is it meant to understand the cultural artifacts of patronage - chronicles, eulogies, poems, letters - as ‘tools of legitimation’ on the patron’s behalf. Rather, from the figure of the patron, I build out several concentric circles of friendships as well as moments of fragile negotiations, and at times, a near-complete collapse of these patronage circuits – all of which constituted the uncertain operations and narratives of conquest.

The historical record for the period from 1500 to 1700 is uneven, and even when abundant, as is the case with the Mughal documents in the Deccan, extremely difficult to pathologize. This is quite unlike the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, where there are multiple copies of well-known chronicles, an enormous amount of materials on the ‘late’ Mughals, plenty of regional archives in Indian languages, and much thicker sets of historiography as we move chronologically across different political units in the subcontinent. It is also easy then, from the late eighteenth century’s vantage point, to theorize on the Mughal empire. But for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, we stumble upon singular, unique manuscripts that leave very little room for raising questions about the reception, circulation, or

‘reading’ of these works. In the Mughal case, non-chronicles genres, treatises on astronomy, religion and so forth as well as forms of writing history (*tārīkh*) are now starting to be understood in terms how they were produced and written. In contrast, in the Deccan sultanates, with a comparatively thinner historiography, we are still unpacking the certitudes of Persian court chronicles that set the terms of all debates about this period and the region. An exploration of a different form of writing history in a new tongue is, therefore, meant to question the chronicle form’s exalted status and the debates it has entrenched. The battle poem genre in the pan-regional vernacular of Dakkani, undoubtedly, was part and parcel of the wider and longer Persianate imperium. It borrowed heavily from pre-existing models, and as this opening chapter shows, its foremost innovator, Mullah Nusrati, constantly paid his dues, in form and content, to his literary ancestors and peers. But these new artifacts also offer an ethnographic depth to the narrative of conquest that we do not find in Persian chronicles. They refract the neat correspondences and social typologies of language, ethnicity, and affinity that the latter tend to represent so convincingly.

Compared to the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the period of my dissertation from 1636 - 1687 is marked by an overall lack in terms of quantity (and some would argue even quality) of Indo-Persian prose chronicles. In contrast to the celebrated chronicles of Mughal north India and earlier well-known histories of the Deccan such as Firishta's *Gulshan-i Ibrāhīmī* (c.1612), the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Sultān Muhammad Qutb Shāh* (c. 1617),¹⁹³ *Burhān-i Ma‘āsir* (c. 1596) of Sayyid ‘Ali bin ‘Azizullah Tabataba, the only chronicles from the Deccan

¹⁹³ An earlier, pioneering generation of Golkonda historians have squeezed everything out of this well-known account (completed in 1617), extensive sections of it have been translated and innumerable copies of this chronicle are available in India and abroad. It is also the only Golkonda chronicle that has been analyzed briefly for form and language. Siddiqua, *Persian Language and Literature in Golkonda*, 123-128.

sultanates after 1636 that have been edited include Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Hadīqat al-Salātīn* (c. 1643) from Golkonda and Nurullah Qazi's *Tārīkh-i 'Alī 'Ādil Shāhiyā* (c. 1660) from Bijapur,¹⁹⁴ while others such as the *Muhammad Nāmāh* (c. 1656) remain in manuscript. While revisiting some of these materials, this dissertation primarily focuses on the literary-historical genre of the battle poem and positions it against other kinds of historical evidence. In each chapter, I briefly review the historiographical debates relevant to themes and materials presented in them.

Chapter Two considers the Deccan conquest's earliest phase in the western Karnatak as it unfolded under the Prime Minister of the Bijapur sultanate, Mustafa Khan Lari (d. 1648). Mustafa Khan's circle of friends, kinsmen, enemies, and interlocutors who pushed Bijapur's territorial limits frequently clashed with one another. It freezes frame on particular encounters - in highly dramatized images of - the patron and the enemy, the patron and his soldiers, and the patron and new allies. These portraits were recorded across two distinct but overlapping linguistic registers, Persian chronicles and a hitherto unexamined Dakkani *masnawī*, the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* (c. 1644). I then place these relationships into another dimension, the maritime world of the patron-conqueror. We see through an 'external' lens on Mustafa Khan, that both affective and material ties to the patron fell apart or began to contradict one another during an unresolved, processual conquest.

Chapter Three explores a parallel case of the long and itinerant career of Neknam Khan (d. 1672), another Iranian military commander, who consolidated the Golkonda sultanate's conquests in the eastern Karnatak.¹⁹⁵ In this chapter, starting in the seventeenth century's second

¹⁹⁴ From Golkonda, Mirza Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Hadīqat-u'sSalātīn* ed. by Syed 'Ali Asghar Biligrami (Hyderabad: Islamic Publications Society, 1961). From Bijapur, Nurullah Qazi, *Tārīkh-i 'Ādil Shāhī* (The history of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II) ed. by Abu Nasr Khalidi (Hyderabad: Ijaz Press, 1964).

¹⁹⁵ Here, I would like to add that I have avoided the famous case of Mir Jumla or Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani (d. 1663), who was the Prime Minister of Golkonda right before Neknam Khan, who defected

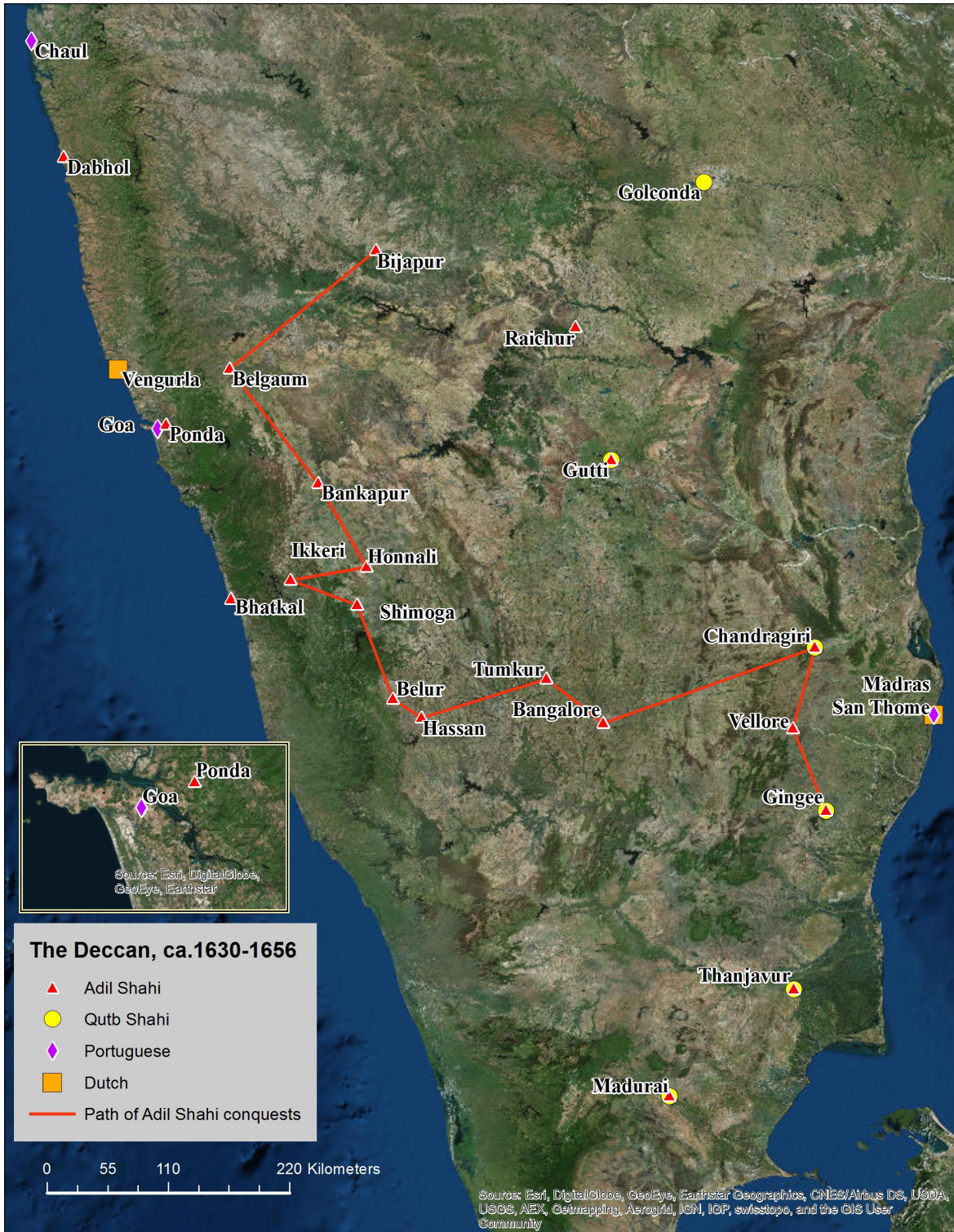
half, we see the two sultanates converging upon the partitioned Karnatak frontier at its southernmost point, the present-day city of Madras. A patron of many different kinds of literature, Neknam Khan also appears as an ambassador in literary materials, negotiating the terms of consolidation with the neighboring sultanate of Bijapur. The nested consolidation of conquest did not just mean the accumulation of resources but also their denial and scarcity. In the itinerant encampments of Neknam Khan in the frontier, military and civil offices and their functions combined. Earlier these offices had been more distinct and decentered in the sultanates, but now, were entrenched together in the patron-conqueror, who effectively put a stop to all socio-economic activities in the eastern Karnatak. Unfolding under Mughal auspices, the southeastern Coromandel Coast therefore, simultaneously began to resemble imperial ambitions and practices of conquest rule already prevalent in the upper Deccan, where the Mughals struggled to establish themselves.

In **Chapter Four**, the mighty Mughals finally enter the Deccan, but at best, as a penumbra. This chapter moves away from Persian chronicles produced in Delhi and draws instead on provincial documents of the Mughals Deccan to understand unwieldy and fragmented practices of imperial authority in a frontier zone. What were the limits of ‘ruling’ a frontier? The intermittent operations of Mughal institutions, such as the regulation of cavalry, hardly confirm the narrative of inevitability assigned to Mughal conquest in the Deccan. I pair administrative materials with the literary representations of the Mughal army we find in non-Mughal sources,

to the Mughals in 1655. An event often seen as symptomatic of ‘decline,’ despite a dense body of work on him in political histories and studies of commerce in the Indian Ocean, his literary circuit remains unexamined. Just from a preliminary survey of poetic *diwāns* dedicated to him, it seems to me, his circuit of literati was eclectic and enormous. His literary tastes and interests have not received any attention and deserve a separate study that would take us beyond the Deccan to Delhi, Bengal, and Cooch Behar, into the Mughal Empire’s eastern most fringes.

such as the *‘Alī Nāmāh*, in which Nusrati insulted and caricatured Mughal soldiers and imperial elites. Laying out the multiple meanings of “Mughal” from the frontier therefore, recasts political hierarchies between imperial and regional polities.

In **Chapter Five**, I close with a final interrogation of the multi-valent meanings of political affinity when we consider two social groups - Afghans and Marathas - both of whom self-identified, in the closing scenes of this nested conquest, as “Deccani.” Here, I return to the central question of this dissertation – what does the choice of recording a historical event in a particular language and a specific form of history writing tell us about the patron, the poet and the context of conquest? The Afghans, particularly, the family of Bahlol Khan Miyana, emerged in late 17th century Bijapur as complex poly-vocal patrons. A family, three generations old in the Deccan, moved beyond the use of Persian and the chronicle form. Instead, they memorialized themselves in the widely understood and respected Dakkani verse of Mullah Nusrati, who was by the 1670s very old, having lived through the complete arc of the Deccan conquests. His last exercise in constructing a narrative of conquest denigrated familiar rivals, the Marathas, who were part of the same sovereign unit of ‘Adil Shahi Bijapur, which a new set of “Deccanis” - the Afghans - would now defend.



Map 1 - Pathways of conquest in the western Karnatak c. 1656

Chapter Two

Vernacular Conquest? A Persian patron and his image in the western Karnatak c. 1636-1656.

It was during the exalted Ghazi King's everlasting regime that the profitable lands of the Karnatak and Malnad came to flourish under Islam. Praise be to God, may each dot that I write be the bearer of the fruit of this and that world! The climate these dominions, how it enlivens the spirit and pleases the heart. The abundance of every small hamlet and village here puts to shame all the villages of Syria and Egypt. Day and night the glory of the residents shines like the light upon the home of Faridun. Every day a farmer reaps an abundant and high quality harvest, worthy of presenting to the King. There is no dearth or scarcity of grains here and no need to gather it from elsewhere, nor beg the heavens for it. Each lush green field hoists its standard up to the skies. The shadows of the tall trees as if they have been grafted from the Lote tree of heaven (*darkhatān sidrah peyvand*), sending a message of their well being to the caretakers of the garden of paradise. When the trees swing, their ripened fruit falls into the pockets of travelers coming from far and wide, who come here via land and sea. Pomegranates so full of seeds, ripe and cracked like a carnelian, the juice of the mangoes from this land like a mix of musk and saffron.

*chū vasf ambe halāvāt be kām mā bakhshad
ze mīvehaye digar nām burdan az khāmī ast*

ta 'rīf mīvehāye gūnagūn ān vilāyat namūdan az bas shirīnī-i lab nagushūdan ast

My throat sweetens with the mere praise of mangoes
To speak of other fruits is crude.

(Although) My lips are still sticky from the sweetness of all the other kinds of fruits of this land.¹

It may seem prosaic to cite mangoes, the climate and the harvest as compelling reasons for the Karnatak conquest, which the Indo-Persian poet and chronicler Zuhur ibn

¹ Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, *Muhammad Nāmāh*, ff. 178-182. All references in this chapter are to the manuscript in the Bijapur Museum, Karnataka, Ms. No. 26, Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, *Muhammad Nāmāh*. It is preserved under the library books section of the Bijapur Museum and does not appear in the hand list of manuscripts. The office of the Assistant Superintending Archaeologist of the A.S.I. has digitized around thirty percent of the manuscripts in the Bijapur Museum in 2012 - 2013. Another older copy is in the Cambridge University Library, copied in 1770, Ms. Or. 1394.

Zuhuri praised so profusely in his *Muhammad Nāmah*, completed around 1654. But we may surmise that for Zuhur and his contemporaries the southern Deccan's riches and its cooler climate must have been a clear contrast to and a respite from the much drier and hotter environs of the capital city of Bijapur, located in the northern Karnatak, where the ‘Adil Shahs had struggled to create urban and rural infrastructure for water management and irrigation. Zuhur, a second-generation Iranian and the son of Zuhuri², the Deccan's most famous Indo-Persian poet, had lived his entire life in south India. During the 1630s and 1640s, he observed his patron Mustafa Khan and his army's conquests of the southern Deccan, as they gradually subdued smaller kingdoms of this region. Both Golkonda and Bijapur sought a piece of the Karnatak, with its ample rainfall, dense forests and proximity to the coast. It was in these two decades of the seventeenth century, under adventurers like Mustafa Khan that the Deccan Sultanates reached their greatest territorial extent.

It should come as no surprise then that Zuhur's *Muhammad Nāmah* and other contemporary Indo-Persian chronicles are less focused on the exploits of the sultan, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (r. 1627 - 1656), but more on the courtly elites who led the mid-seventeenth century conquests of these new territories. Another Iranian, Fuzuni Astarabadi, the author of *Futūhāt-i ‘Ādil Shāhī*, in the preface to his work recounted how after a disastrous voyage to India, he reached the port of Dabhol and made his way to Bijapur where he met Mustafa Khan, who presented him to the sultan, and after which his fortune flourished.³ Zuhur and Astarabadi were two of several writers and poets who accompanied Mustafa Khan on his campaigns to the Karnatak. These literati recorded the

² Devare, *Persian Literature*, 325-329. Sunil Sharma, “The Nizamshahi Persianate Garden in Zuhuri’s *Sāqīnāma*” in Daud Ali and Emma J. Flatt eds., *Garden and Landscape Practices in Pre-colonial India: Histories from the Deccan* (London: Routledge, 2012), 159-171.

³ *Futūhāt*, f. 4. Rieu, Vol. 1, 317.

aspirations, strategies and connections of their patron, Mustafa Khan, popularly known as Khan Baba,⁴ vis-à-vis his competitors within Bijapur but also his relations with local chiefdoms, the Portuguese and the Dutch who were keeping a close eye on the Karnatak frontier and on the Konkan and Kanara coasts.

This chapter focuses on Mustafa Khan's literary, familial, military and administrative patronage networks and his conquests of the Karnatak and Malnad region that followed soon after Bijapur signed the Deed of Submission with the Mughals in 1636. Political histories of the Deccan sultanates⁵ have drawn on Mughal and Deccani chronicles in Persian to recount Muhammad 'Adil Shah's reign (r. 1627 - 1656). These conquests are also mentioned in studies of the Nayaka kingdoms that were overrun by the Sultanates in this period.⁶ The activities of several key personalities in Bijapur, namely Mirza Muhammad Amin Lari or Mustafa Khan and Randaula Khan, also known by his title *Rustam-i Zamān*, and others find frequent mention in the Deccan's political histories.⁷

Most recent studies, however, again drawing on Persian chronicles, have rebottled the old debate over *āfāqīs* vs. Deccanis to assign a pre-givenness to the motivations of

⁴ Sarkar, Chapter II, "Ruin of the Hindus of the Madras Karnatak," 6-33. Joshi and Sherwani, *H.M.D.* I, 351. This Mustafa Khan of the 1630s to 1650s during Muhammad 'Adil Shah's reign is different from Mustafa Khan Ardestani (d. 1580) who played a major role in the Battle of Talikota, during the time of 'Ali 'Adil Shah I. Subrahmanyam, "Courtly Insults," 56, 60.

⁵ D.C. Varma, *History of Bijapur* (New Delhi: Kumar Brothers, 1974). M.A. Nayeem, *External Relations of the Bijapur Kingdom 1489 - 1686 A.D.* (Hyderabad: Bright Publishers, 1974)

⁶ K.D. Swaminathan, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*, (Madras, 1957). Kannada and Sanskrit sources from the Nayaka polities too account for these conquests. R. Narasimhachar, "The Keladi Rajas of Ikkeri and Bednur" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, January (1911): 188-193. A large body of historiography and unpublished dissertations in Kannada on the Nayakas of Ikkeri, Bednur and Shimoga (especially on their literary cultures) from the mid-twentieth century onwards from universities in south India remain inaccessible to me and are beyond this study's purview.

⁷ Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 99. Ali, *The African Dispersal in the Deccan: From Medieval to Modern Times*, 118 - 123. Although Devare seemed to think Randaula Khan was an *āfāqī*, Devare, *A Short history of Persian Literature*, 327.

courtiers like Mustafa Khan in Bijapur, according to their linguistic-regional-religious affinities (Persian vs. Dakkani, Iranian vs. Deccani, Afghan, Maratha, Hindu vs. Muslim and so forth). For instance, the position and rivalry of Mustafa Khan with Khawas Khan and Murari Pandit (the ‘Deccanis’), recounted in many studies⁸, has been understood from the viewpoint of his ‘diasporic’ Iranian identity⁹ and presumable lack of an affinity to the Deccan and thus, the advocacy of a pro-Mughal policy in Bijapur. The overemphasis on a single identity (what in these texts is, at times, the most arbitrarily expressed aspect of their lives) of these courtiers stems from our over-reliance on Persian court chronicles and a near complete elision of literary sources to understand the cultural processes and negotiations that occurred within this political conquest after 1636.¹⁰ A skewed assessment of sources has inevitably led historians to divide the military and ‘political’ world of these elites from their literary or ‘cultural’ milieu. There is no indication whatsoever in Persian and now, Dakkani sources that Mustafa Khan’s activities were motivated by any fixed affiliation or affinity. He favored peace with the Mughals so he could do as he pleased in the Karnatak and not necessarily because he was prone to such a disposition by the mere fact of being an Iranian or a ‘Foreigner.’ Although Mustafa Khan's scale of military operations and resources in Bijapur were, if not more, at least the

⁸ Joshi and Sherwani, *H.M.D.* Vol. I, 353. Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 35-36, 45-47. Shanti Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal*, 117. Although Ali seems to think that Mustafa Khan belong to the ‘Dakhni party’ and Khawas Khan and his allies to the Habshis. See Shanti Sadiq Ali, 115, compare with Kruijtzter, Chapter Two.

⁹ Kruijtzter, 92-95. Fischel citing Kruijtzter, 68.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the dichotomy between “literary” versus “historical” sources around the Battle of Talikota in 1565, see Subrahmanyam, “Courtly Insults,” *Courtly Encounters*, 40. This dated binary can be found even in the most recent work on the Deccan, see Fischel, “Society, Space, and the State in the Deccan Sultanates,” 29.

equivalent of Mir Jumla Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani's in Golkonda¹¹, materials on him remain far more scattered.¹²

Despite their presence in a wide range of text, political histories have failed to go beyond essential, rarified units of analysis to study migrant Indo-Muslim courtly elites such as Mustafa Khan. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, as I argued in the introduction, patronage (familial, literary, military, fiscal and mercantile) remains crucial for building a stratigraphy of cultural encounters, negotiation and incorporation that accompanied a patron's military conquests. I show in this chapter that the conditions, motivations and reasons for, and of, patronage changed over the course of the Karnatak conquest and were not pre-determined by any singular feature of the patron. Take for instance, the question of bi-lingual patronage of Dakkani and Persian poets and chroniclers in the Deccan, one of the central concerns of this dissertation. Men in the literary circuit of Mustafa Khan, always on the move with him in the Karnatak, were at once familiar and in competition with both Mughal and Safavid historiography and literary production. They read and processed pre-existing traditions, received wisdoms, conventions of observing conquest, and reinvented new ways of history writing in the form of Dakkani *masnawī*.

Second, I argue in this chapter's third part that patronage networks were fraught, contested, and never uniform. Turning to Mustafa Khan's mercantile portfolio, Persian chronicles, letters and European archival documents unveil the fractures, schisms and inherently contested character of multivalent patronage networks. To cast a final and still

¹¹ Subrahmanyam, Chapter Seven, *The Political Economy of Commerce: Southern India 1500-1650*. Jagdish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla* (Delhi: Rajesh Publications, 1979)

¹² See my introduction. These two Iranian courtiers led the Partition of the Karnatak, wielding nearly independent authority in these domains, the latter in the western parts and the former in the eastern half.

wider net upon the world of Mustafa Khan, this chapter concludes that the Karnatak conquest was not one of absolute political rivalries and alliances, but rather a processual contest in which the Indo-Islamic courts of southern India, smaller chiefdoms such as the Ikkeri *nāyakās* and the Mughal empire, all took on similar features in the seventeenth century through the incorporation and absorption of the same set of land, coastal and maritime resources.

This chapter follows three types of sources thematically, especially as and when they converge upon specific events and episodes from Mustafa Khan's career. Along with four manuscripts in Indo-Persian, I introduce in this chapter, *Fath-Nāma-i Ikkerī* of Mirza Muqim Shirazi, a unique *masnawī*, which recorded the third siege and conquest of the Ikkeri *nāyakas* by Mustafa Khan around 1644.¹³ The author Mirza Muqim, possibly an Iranian migrant and a member of Mustafa Khan's literary circle composed this poem in a mix of Dakkani and Persian while traveling with the Bijapur army to the frontier in Karnatak and Malnad. I supplement this source with the account of these conquests in the Persian chronicle, *Muhammad Nāmah* of Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, Fuzuni Astarabadi's *Futūhāt-i 'Ādil Shāhī* and selected letters from the *Insha'-i Tabrezī* and a little known Indo-Persian chronicle *Guldastah-i Gulshan-i Rāz dar ta'rīf-i Sultān Muhammad 'Ādil Shāh* by Abu l-Qasim al-Husayni. All these sources far from being king-centered histories are in fact detailed accounts of the career and exploits of the authors' patron, the Prime Minister Mustafa Khan and his larger network in Bijapur and its strategic relationships to the Mughals, the Portuguese and the Dutch. While building a profile of patrons and poets, I

¹³ Mirza Muqim, *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*, Ms. No. 1/225, Qadim 2/40 Jadid, Anjuman-i Taraqqi-i Urdu, Karachi, Pakistan. I am indebted to Dr. Nurus Syed Akhter of Bombay and Encino, CA who gave me the original manuscript and generously shared his published and unpublished work on this *masnawī* and several other Dakkani sources in his collection.

lay emphasis on the form, language, and the imitative connections between the literary works that these courtly elites wrote, read and patronized. The models and production of these sources corresponded with the experiences of circulation these courtiers had had across the Mughal empire, Safavid Iran and the Deccan Sultanates, rather than any pre-given sensibility or identity that determined their actions. This chapter moves across these sources to track a continuum of different kinds of patronage under Mustafa Khan from the mid 1630s to 1640s, especially zeroing in on differing narratives of his career and the siege of Ikkeri in 1644.

Arguably, like other contemporary adventurers,¹⁴ Iranian elites in the Deccan were far too preoccupied with local consolidation to always think of matters further afield. There is very little evidence of Mustafa Khan forging ties with Safavid Iran specifically for the purpose of opposing the Mughals or to form an inter-Asian alliance against the Portuguese. It was far more prudent to use resources *within* the Deccan to keep the Mughals at a safe distance while simultaneously manipulating European powers who were vying for control of the Konkan coast. Described as ‘*stadthouder*’ and ‘*regeerder des rijk van Decan*’¹⁵ in Dutch sources from the factory at Vengurla, Mustafa Khan rather than sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah¹⁶ made both Goa and Batavia nervous about the blockade along the Konkan coast, which after the fall of Hormuz and Syriam in the 1610s and 1620s, remained one of the last regional centres of Portuguese maritime power in India.

¹⁴ Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire in Asia 1500-1700*, 187.

¹⁵ VOC 1139, ff. 117-118. De Jongh, 198.

¹⁶ Om Prakash, “The Dutch Factory at Vengurla in the Seventeenth Century” in A.R. Kulkarni, M.A. Nayeem, and Teotonio R. De Souza eds., *Mediaeval Deccan History: Commemoration Volume in Honour of P.M. Joshi*, (Popular Prakashan, 1996), 187.

Gauging the military conquests of the Karnatak along with the oeuvre and social network of the authors who recorded them unravels several key debates in the historiography of the Deccan. At the same time that he strengthened his hold over the Konkan coast by forging precarious, often unreliable alliances with the Dutch and Portuguese, Mustafa Khan also patronized a new circle of literati, which included both Persian and Dakkani Urdu poets to record his conquests of the western Karnatak.

**Between Persian cosmopolis and the Vernacular: Choices of medium in writing
history**

Scholars have analyzed both the poetics of Indo-Persian and the shared narrative strategies of court chronicles from Mughal Hindustan and Safavid Iran. Critiquing modern Iran-centric condescension towards the so-called ‘Indian-style’ poetry from Mughal South Asia, Kinra has proposed that we read and hear *tāza gū’ī* or the fresh style on its own terms, more attuned to the expectations of early modern poets and audiences.¹⁷ Pointing to seventeenth century responses to poetic practices and competition between Iranian and Indian poets, he suggests that ethnic-professional rivalries within the seventeenth century were more concerned with defending classicism against the fresh style, and had less to do with geographical origins.¹⁸ Considering the most dominant form of courtly writing in Islamic South Asia, Ali Anooshahr has very usefully widened the set of questions we can ask from Persian court chronicles. These include transformations of the idea of human agency over the longer arc of Indo-Persian historiography from the Delhi sultanate into the Mughal period as well as exploring how the sociological context of elite circulation

¹⁷ Rajeev Kinra, “Make it fresh: time, tradition, and Indo-Persian literary modernity” in Anne Murphy ed. *Time, History, and the Religious Imaginary in South Asia* (London: Routledge, 2011), 19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 29-30.

shaped Iranian émigré chroniclers' intellectual concerns in both the Deccan and Mughal Hindustan.¹⁹ These analyses of poetics and chronicle histories confirm Persian's signifiante as a common cultural denominator across early modern Islamicate courts. However, vertical relationships within the Persian cosmopolis, extending from the courtly and administrative to the battlefield, and into other vernaculars, have yet to be analyzed conterminally.

In what follows, I combine Kinra and Anooshahr's insights to do a simultaneous reading of two forms of history writing in two linguistic registers - Persian and Dakkani - produced for and consumed by poly-vocal patrons and literati in Bijapur. In the case of south India, the Deccan sultanates were part of the greater Persianate imperium; as such the Persian chronicle form here was no different than its Mughal and Safavid contemporaries. But within south India's layered and poly vocal practices of history-writing, Rao, Shulman and Subrahmanyam have rightly cautioned against a mere transplanting of Persianate forms such as *tārīkh*.²⁰ Instead, they urge a more indirect relationship to Persian's diffusion in the *karanam* genre in Telugu as well the *bakhar* in Marathi. Within this complex linguistic equation, I insert Dakkani *masnawī* or narrative poem as a liminal artifact of history writing that both borrowed from Persianate conventions but departed from it radically in many ways. Sociologically, rather than placing 'Iranians' as an ethnically and linguistically homogenous category, I elucidate their role as users – listeners, readers, and speakers – of not just Persian but also of new kinds of history writing in the innovative vernacular of Dakkani. Above all, through this

¹⁹ Ali Anooshahr, "Author of one's fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo-Persian histories" *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 49, no. 2 (2012): 199 and "Shirazi scholars and the political culture of the sixteenth-century Indo-Persian world" *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 51, no. 3 (2014): 334-339.

²⁰ Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 250.

chapter's case study of Mustafa Khan Lari, I emphasize the fragility of personal networks and the volatile conditions of conquest patronage that called for recording, commemorating, and hearing about a patron's military accomplishments in ingenious tongues of the early modern Deccan.

Mustafa Khan's literary circuit was by no means limited to Persian-speaking Iranian migrants. Mirza Muqim's *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* written in 1644 is a rare Dakkani *masnawī* suggestive of Mustafa Khan's interest in the vernacular literary sphere, which frequently overlapped and intersected with Indo-Persian literature produced in the Deccan courts in the seventeenth century. Given that we have nearly no biographical information about this narrative poem's composer, while I will point to clues in some sources that suggest Mirza Muqim may have been an Iranian who learnt and wrote in Dakkani, my discussion here is least interested in settling the question of his identity. Whatever Mirza Muqim may have been, whether an Iranian or a local Deccani poet, the question of Mustafa Khan's patronage of him and his work in Dakkani to commemorate his siege of Ikkeri is amply clear.

Kinra has rightly cautioned us against reading the use of non-Persian words in early modern poetry as a mark of linguistic incompetence in the 'higher' language.²¹ Indeed, in the case of Mirza Muqim, an extensive overlay of Persian may not prove the opposite, his incompetence in the 'lower' tongue of Dakkani. Based on the way Dakkani poets used Persian, Urdu scholars have been more willing to suggest the Iranian origins of selected Dakkani poets. But the use of eclectic vocabulary may or may not prove beyond a reasonable doubt that Mirza Muqim Shirazi, the author of *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*, was an Iranian. To be sure, we cannot preclude the possibility that he may have been the odd, rare

²¹ Kinra, "Make it fresh," 18.

migrant seeking a patron and fortune in the Deccan, who at some point ventured into learning and composing in Dakkani, the local vernacular. Leaving the question of Muqim's origin unanswered, this *masnawī* nonetheless suggests, at least at the level of patronage, that it was perfectly plausible for an Iranian migrant such as Mustafa Khan to commission a text in Dakkani to commemorate his conquest. His ambitions as articulated in this *masnawī* are shared in the Persian chronicle *Muhammad Nāmāh* of Zuhur Ibn Zuhuri, which he commissioned during the same period. I read the seamless transitions from Persian to Dakkani in commemorative battle poems as a form of code switching. Such deliberate linguistic agility is less about asserting the poet's identity but more indicative of poetic craftsmanship and more broadly, such practices conveyed the different meanings of confrontation and negotiation during conquest.

At the level of content, the language of Dakkani *masnawī* produced in a regional court, in a period of war and conquest, appropriated the language of universalist ambition and expressions of charismatic genealogy, which were generally identified with empires. The enormous scale of the Karnatak conquest under men like Mustafa Khan, who also had a wider network in the Mughal court, I argue, led the Sultanates to resemble the Mughals militarily in terms of the territorial ambitions while concomitantly competing with and borrowing from their literary production throughout the seventeenth century. While continuing to patronize the Indo-Persian chronicle, a genre shared across the Persianate world, itinerant courtly elites like Mustafa Khan also chose to commemorate their conquests in the vernacular, which reaffirmed the scale of their investments, territorial resources and network *within* the Deccan.

A profile of Nawab Khan Baba's (d. 1648) long career

Indo-Persian sources do not mention the early career of Nawab Mustafa Khan, also known as Mirza Muhammad Amin Lari (d. 9 November 1648).²² There is no mention anywhere of when or whether he came from Iran. We cannot preclude the possibility that Mustafa Khan may have been a second-generation Iranian, maybe born in the Deccan but with close ties to Persia. The story of his career usually begins in the 1620s²³ when a power struggle unfolded over sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s ascension. Regardless of whether or not he was born in the Deccan, Muhammad Amin played a crucial role in the complicated transition to power between Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (d. 1627) and of his son Mahmud, later known as Muhammad ‘Adil Shah (d. 1656). The details of this ascension crisis come from a frequently cited Portuguese document from 1629²⁴ which sheds light on Bijapur’s tense relations with Ahmadnagar and on Mustafa Khan's reach, which stretched well beyond the capital city, as he controlled ports along the Konkan coast such as Danda Rajapur, which were not far from the Portuguese fort of Chaul. This document appears to be the most detailed Portuguese attempt to make sense of Bijapur’s court politics and factions:

Ibramo Idalxa died some three years ago, and as he was not on friendly terms at the time of his death with the principal Queen called Muluco Jahum [Malik Jahan], the daughter of the King Cutubuxa of Telangana, he ordered the putting out of the eyes of the heir called Darmes Pataxaa [Darvez Padshah], the oldest and legitimate son of the said King and of the Queen Muluco Jahú, and left the kingdom to a bastard son by name Soltão Mamede, the son of the Queen Tage Soltão [Taj Sultan] who had been a lady-in-waiting (*dama do paço*) in the palace, and this Soltão Mamede is [now] in his court in Vizapor, and he is 15 or 16 years of age,

²² Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 90.

²³ Jorge Flores, "A Persian Spin Doctor at the Court of Bijapur: The Career of Mustafa Khan as Seen from Goa (c. 1620-1648)" Unpublished Conference Paper, Conference "The Portuguese in Hormuz, 1507-1622", Paris, Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian, March 15-17, 2007, 7-8.

²⁴ Thanks are due to Sanjay Subrahmanyam for all Portuguese translations in this chapter. *Relação dos Reis Vizinhos* ("Account of the Neighbouring Kings", hereafter *Relação*), published by Panduronga Pissurlencar, "A Índia em 1629. Relação dos Reis Vizinhos do que ora paixão e contão", *Boletim do Instituto Vasco da Gama*, 7 (1930), 52-61.

and he governs through a Persian called Mamedeamym, and now he has given him the title of Mostafacão, and he serves as *Canamaluco* [*'Ain-ul-mulk*] which is the post of secretary of state of the King, and he is of the Persian nation, and at the time that Fernão d'Albuquerque was governor [1619-22], this Mostafacão was captain of Ponda and the Concão; and inside the palace, a certain Dolatacão has been placed, who always accompanies the King. He is of the oilmen caste, he was a musician at the time of the father of this King, and today he seems to be more the favourite (*valido*). He has the King's kitchen in his hands, and the kingdom of this Idalxaa is full of Persians, who are enemies of this *Estado*.

The description thus opens with what appears to be a power-sharing arrangement: Mustafa Khan, the Persian, seems to have charge of one set of affairs, while the humbly-born Daulat Khan holds the position of *valido*, akin to that of the Duke of Lerma or the Count-Duke of Olivares in a contemporary Habsburg context. The anonymous author of this document then goes on to provide more complex details, both of the court and of relations with the problematic neighbor to the north:

And Mostafacão serves as the secretary, and as financial intendant of the state, and because Calcão [Escalascão or Ikhlas Khan] does not wish to serve him [the King], and had held the position earlier, and because he is an Abyssinian, and as he sees that it is the Persians who govern and he does not want to enter their ranks as they are traitors, and only Mostafacão and Dolatacão together govern the entirety of the kingdom of the Idalxaa. And at present Xequé Moedina [Shaikh Muhyi-ud-Din], the ambassador from the court of Soltão Corromo [Sultan Khurram], the Mogor king, has come to ask for the annual tribute which amounts to 900,000 gold pagodas, at the rate of 15 tangas per pagoda, and excellent elephants, horses, jewels, and other things, and when these ambassadors of the Mogor king arrive, the Idalxaa [*'Adil Shah*] comes out a distance of three leagues from his court to receive and accompany them personally, and offer them a welcome, as well as four thousand pagodas per month for their expenses, since this ambassador brings along three hundred horse, and some forty odd elephants, besides the footmen, and this ambassador oppresses them a great deal, and each time he asks for whatever he wants, and he [the *'Adil Shah*] is now very tired of being a tributary, for the entire kingdom of the Idalxa can sustain some fifty thousand horse, but he does not actually have that many, and he is a neighbour of this court [Goa], and the entire seafront belongs to him, up to the fortress of Danda, which fortress of Danda is four leagues from our fort of Chaul. According to the peace treaty, this Idalxa is obliged to maintain an official ambassador and entourage in this court, as he in fact does. However, the person who holds the position of ambassador is a Persian, and does not carry out his functions correctly.

The oppressive character of the relationship with the Mughals, with their incessant demands for tribute in cash and kind, had already been a feature of the reign of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II. By the early 1630s, it seems, the pressure from the Mughals had grown even further, leaving the ‘Adil Shahs militarily weakened. The document implies however that the Bijapur rulers continued to have one significant source of strength, namely their control over several important Konkan ports. What rendered matters even more difficult was another form of cross-border interference, this one emanating from the rump state of Ahmadnagar, ruled over at this time by Burhan Nizam Shah (1610-31):

Between the King Idalxa and Nizamoxa [Nizam Shah], who is the Melique, differences remain on account of the fact that they raised up the bastard son [Muhammad], when there was the legitimate one who is the brother-in-law of this Melique, and the brother of his wife the Queen, and she has pleaded with her husband on behalf of her brother Darves, the legitimate son to whom the kingdom belonged, saying that her father Ibramo Idalxa had done many unreasonable acts against all the laws in putting out the eyes of her brother Darves Patxah, which he did though he was the true king, and that all that Ibraemo Idalxa had done was on the advice of Mamede Mostafacão, and of Doltacão, and so in any event these two should be expelled from the said kingdom, and that their place should be given to Ecalascão; and that a son of Darves Pataxa should be raised up as king, for he has one who is six years old, and another who is four. But it was never possible to implement this, and after this there was an exchange of ambassadors on the two sides, and things calmed down, and it was decided that these two kings should be friends, and that the Idalxa would give his help to the Nizamoxa against the Mogores, as they had always done, of 15,000 horses for the entire time that the war with the Mogores would endure; and to settle this, another ambassador of the king Nizamoxa came to swear this peace treaty, who was a Persian called Mirza Abulfata, [and] who said that with this his king was content, and that Mamedeamy and Dolatacão should be expelled from his [the ‘Adil Shah’s] kingdom, and that Ecalescão should be given his post of financial intendat of the state as before, and that the Nababo Agaraia [Aqa Raza] should be freed, and that he should be given his place as secretary of state, and when this contract was done, both kings could be friends as they had been before. And all this was for the best, and all the other captains, and regents were content, but as the affair was aimed against these two, Mamedeamym and Dolatocão, they did not let them advance, and as the King is new and incompetent, everything is in a mess, and [at present] there are 12,000 horse in the camp of the king Nizamoxa at the frontier of the lands of the Idalxa, along the riverfront at Bivara [Bhimvar = Bhima] thirty leagues from Vizapor.

There is still no firm peace, and they are at war, and that king Nizamoxa is still a neighbour of our fortresses of Chaul and Baçaim. The said King pays the treasury of His Majesty [Philip IV] each year for the fortress of Chaul 7,000 *patacões* as tribute, at the two hill-passes of Asarnala and Sancujá.²⁵

The presence of Persians in Deccan courts may have produced anxieties about alliances being made across regional and imperial states against the Portuguese, especially in the context of the fall of Hormuz in 1622.²⁶ At the same time the Mughals threatened to overrun both the Sultanates and demanded high tribute. This pressure, however, was not enough reason for the Deccan courts to unite against the Mughals, which the *Estado* hoped for. The first five years of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah were particularly tense, especially in terms of his relationship with other Deccan sultans. Instead, a few years after this document was written, the new sultan allied with the Mughals early on in his reign to crush the Nizam Shahs of Ahmadnagar.²⁷ It was more convenient in the 1630s to just overrun the Nizam Shahs, secure Bijapur’s northern frontier against the Mughals at the River Bhima and proceed elsewhere. From there, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah turned his attention to the southern frontier to conquer the Karnatak, in order to meet the demand for higher tribute and secure the Konkan coast, which also required a consistent policy of playing out European powers against each other. It is in this context that Mustafa Khan and his extended network of kinsmen, chroniclers, and allies began the Karnatak conquest in the late 1630s. Already present as a political player during the end of the reign of

²⁵ *Livro das Monções*, No. 13, fls. 447-49v, “Relation of the Neighbouring Kings, of what is happening now and is related,” Historical Archives, Panaji (Goa).

²⁶ Flores, “A Persian spin doctor,” 1-2. *ACE*, Vol. 1, 303-307.

²⁷ See Introduction. These early years of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah are the focus of another Persian *masnawī*, Hakim Atashi’s *‘Ādil Nāmāh*, a unique and unknown Indo-Persian manuscript written in 1043/1633, chronicles this strategic alliance along with copious insults for both the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and Fath Khan, the son of Malik Ambar of Ahmadnagar. Hakim Atashi, *‘Ādil Nāmāh*, Ms. P.4300, YSR Reddy State Archaeology Museum, Hyderabad, Telangana. Devare does not state the location of this manuscript, see Devare, 244.

Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (d. 1627) and the governorship of Fernão de Albuquerque (1619-1622), we may safely presume that Mustafa Khan rose up the ranks from being a port official on the Konkan coast to the highest positions at court in Bijapur. When the Karnatak conquest entered its greatest intensity in the 1640s and by the time of his death in 1648, he had already been in the Deccan for several decades.

At the other end of extant materials, a less known Indo-Persian chronicle probably written in 1043 H. or 1633,²⁸ Abu l-Qasim al-Husayni's *Guldasta-i Gulshan-i Rāz*, the earliest non-European source in which we find mention of Mustafa Khan and his circle, also reaffirms how much he hated the Portuguese and remained wary of other European powers seeking permission to trade along the Konkan coast. Internal evidence in the manuscript also suggests the author began this text in the early 1630s, as it opens with Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s birth, the years of his youth when Mirza Muhammad Amin (Mustafa Khan), Khawas Khan and Ikhlas Khan were incharge of all administrative affairs and the conflicts with the Nizam Shahs had begun. Unlike Zuhur’s *Muhammad Nāmah*, which also covers Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah’s reign, al-Husayni’s chronicle focuses exclusively on the period of his son, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah. It is apparent that Mustafa Khan held the strings in court after the young sultan had ascended the throne. Husayni comments on the overnight change in the attitude of rebellious local chiefs and Europeans after Mustafa Khan came to power. Only six months into the first regnal year of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah, Mirza Muhammad Amin was honored with the title of Mustafa Khan and soon after gifts from the Rayas of Malnad -- described as mean, lowly rulers (*rāyān-i malnāriyān wa hukām-i liyām*) and the mischievous Portuguese, the English, the great infidels of Malabar

²⁸ I thank Dr. ‘Abdul Ghani Imaratwale in Bijapur who alerted me to this source. We presume 1043/1633 to be the date of authorship as indicated on the flyleaf, which would suggest this chronicle pre-dates Zuhur's *Muhammad Nāmah*.

and the Dutch (*bad sagāl purtagāl angrez wa kubār kuffār malībār wa valandez*) who had formerly been rebellious and never bowed down (*sar furūd nemī āvardand*) were now agreeing to pay tribute (*rāzī be bāj wa ikhrāj gashtand*). With Mustafa Khan, the new Prime Minister in charge, precious gifts, which had previously failed to reach the court, now poured in from all directions. These included rubies, pearls and trays of gold, textiles from China and Rum, woven Frankish crowns (*tāj-i bāf firangī*), brocades, satin and gold-embroidered textiles from Gujarat (*zar-i tāri gujarātī*) and so forth.²⁹

During and after Muhammad ‘Adil Shah's enthronement therefore, Mustafa Khan's family and friends were well-established both in the capital city as well as along the coast, where they continuously clashed with the Portuguese and the Dutch. One of his sons, Asad Khan, was commander-in-chief of the Bijapur army.³⁰ Another commander, Randaula Khan, often misidentified as a son of Mustafa Khan in Dutch sources, led parts of the Karnatak conquest.³¹ Another important and volatile character (to whom we shall return in this chapter's third section) was Muhammad Reza, ambassador of Bijapur to Goa in the 1620s and *havāldār* of the Konkan³² and governor of Ponda during the conquest of the Karnatak in the 1640s.

Mustafa Khan and several other courtiers cemented their ties to and control over the royal family through marriage and by placing relatives in powerful positions along the

²⁹ *Guldasta*, f. 7a.

³⁰ *ACE*, Vol. 2, 340-341. VOC 1133, Letter from Merchant Pieter Paets to Director General Philip Lucas in Ceylon, f. 504v.

³¹ 1.10.30, f. 319, Vengurla Copie van Brieven Boek, 1642-1643. In Mughal sources, the region under Randaula, located across from Janjira, is identified as Danda Rajapur, Flynn, ‘*Ādāb-i Alamgīrī*, Letter 79, 291 - 292. Sarkar identifies him as an Abyssinian general. His family owned the area round Danda Rajapur and controlled the pepper producing areas in Kanara. Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 99. Ali, *The African Dispersal*, 118-119. He was first sent to subdue Vira Bhadra Nayak of Ikkeri in 1637/1045, see *Muhammad Nāmāh*, ff. 145-148 and later had a fallout with Mustafa Khan. Verma, “History in the Muhammad Nama,” 111.

³² Flores, “A Persian spin doctor,” 11-12.

Konkan coast and in the Karnatak. A certain Shah Saheb (‘Xa Saib’) is described in the Portuguese sources as Mustafa Khan’s brother-in-law and the father-in-law of Muhammad Reza, the governor of Ponda and the Konkan.³³ The most important of these kinship ties was the wedding of his daughter, Taj Begam to Sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah in 1632-1633/1042, mentioned in the *Muhammad Nāmah*.³⁴ There is a considerable amount of confusion on the many marriages of sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah. He also married the daughter of another important courtier, Muzaffaruddin Khan *Khān-i Khānān*.³⁵ An account of this second wedding was written by none other than Hasan Shauqi, the master of Dakkani *masnawī*, called the *Mezbānī Nāmah*, many decades after his first work, the *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāhi* on the ‘Battle of Talikota’, when he was well into his 90s and now serving in the Bijapur court!³⁶ Iranian courtiers such as Mustafa Khan and

³³ Ibid., *ACE*, Vol. 3, 346, 348, 369-370, 570.

³⁴ *M.N.*, ff. 135-138. Verma, “History in the Muhammad Nama,” 96.

³⁵ B.D. Verma, “History in the Muhammad Nama,” 107. He was later given the title *Khān-i Muhammad Muhammad Shāhī*. The title *Khān-i Khānān* was given to Muzaffaruddin Khan but has often been misattributed to Mustafa Khan in economic histories of the Indian Ocean. See this error in R.J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2002), 138 who copies the mistake of S. Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650 - 1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 225.

³⁶ Only one copy of the *Mezbānī Nāmah* manuscript exists, now in Pakistan. D.C. Verma claimed that this Dakkani poem was written on the occasion of the marriage of Mustafa Khan’s daughter, Taj Begam to the Sultan. Verma, *Social, Economic and Cultural History of Bijapur*, (Delhi: Idara-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1990), 144. The manuscript was edited and published in 1971 by Jameel Jalibi, see *Diwān-i Hasan Shauqī*, 24. Several early 20th century Urdu scholars including Maulvi ‘Abdul Haq, Nasiruddin Hashmi, M.Q. Zore misidentified this Dakkani *masnawī* with the wedding of Mustafa Khan’s daughter Taj Begam. The salient point to take away from this debate is that the great master of narrative poems in Dakkani, Hasan Shauqi, was alive during the 1630s, had lived through the reigns of both Nizam Shahi and ‘Adil Shahi rulers and was still held in high regard in court. At the end of his life, he was thus asked to commemorate a critical marriage alliance between a courtier’s daughter and the Bijapur sultan. Although I have not see the original manuscript of the *Mezbānī Nāmah*, I concur with Jalibi that Muzaffar and Mustafa are two very different names and are difficult to confuse orthographically in Perso-Arabic script. Content-wise as well, very early on in the poem, Shauqi mentions the *laqb* or title of Muzaffaruddin Khan (*sharyār kiswat shahānī kiya / duniyā dās ke tein diwānī kiya / kamr band sar band kā jhakjhakāt / qabā lāl chādar kīrā laklalkāt / jawāhar mane kān jawāhar huā / ke bil khān-i khānān jawāhar*

Muzaffaruddin Khan *Khān-i Khānan* would have been witness to Shauqi's works and recitations in court, especially as such Dakkani texts immortalized kinship ties and political alliances.

Earlier and most recent studies have paid attention to episodes from Mustafa Khan's long career such as his fallout with Khawas Khan, his role in negotiations with the Portuguese as well as his response to the Dutch embassy of Johan van Twist in 1637.³⁷ The part of his career that interests us in this chapter began to take shape around 1640 once Bijapur's northern frontier was secure against the Mughals and the Karnatak conquest began.

Chapters Eight through Ten of the *Muhammad Nāmāh* cover the period from 1644 to the early 1650s. Zuhur describes the long siege of Senji (or Jinji), which ended on 28 December 1648. This was the last major battle that he observed. Mustafa Khan, along with his newfound allies such as Sivappa Nayak, the ruler of Ikkeri, moved towards Bankapur, Hassan and Shimoga. They eventually reached Vellore and Chandragiri (northern Tamil Nadu) and Senji, where they encountered Golkonda's Mir Jumla Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani.³⁸ From this period onwards until the late 1650s, Indo-Persian chronicles can be supplemented with a large corpus of letters that went between Mustafa Khan, Mir Jumla and the Mughals, and the Deccan sultans. In one of these letters we learn of the negotiations between Bijapur and Golkonda over the Karnatak's partition:

As was agreed in the treaty, the division of these lands into 1/3 and 2/3 among these two *zamīndārs* is too much. A *farmān* should be issued, taking into consideration of both sides. Some who express loyalty are also prone to

huā.) See Jalibi ed. *Diwān-i Hasan Shauqī*, 129. I thank Dr. Bibi Raza Khatoon of MANUU, Hyderabad for clarifying this issue regarding the *Mezbānī Nāmāh*.

³⁷ P.M. Joshi, *Johan Van Twist's Mission to Bijapur, 1637*, (1956). Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 46-47.

³⁸ *Sources for Vijayanagar History*, 309. Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 123.

disobedience. Mustafa Khan is taking 16 to 17,000 *sawār* and 20,000 infantry near the vicinity of Jinji, which is at a distance of 3 to 4 *karoh* from Mir Jumla. And this humble servant is stationed at Siddhavatam³⁹ was not capable of defending himself and sought help from additional forces. And soon a batch of another 7 to 8,000 cavalry is expected to join him under the leadership of Ikhlas Khan. Since this humble servant has the full confidence of the emperor, he has written to Mir Jumla that he should maintain a good relationship and involve him in conspiracy till the issue of a *farmān*. I, therefore, request your majesty that a war begin and a *farmān* be issued so that '*Adālat Panāh* should not have the audacity to revolt.⁴⁰

Mustafa Khan thus accumulated enough resources to travel to the Karnatak frontier, with the hope of further strengthening his networks both along the coast and in inland areas. During this conquest, chroniclers and poets recorded the encounters, negotiations their patron had with friends, enemies and impermanent allies. From 1637 to the early 1650s these conquerors moved from Bijapur to Bankapur, Ikkeri, Panklore (Bangalore), Belur, Tumkur, Shimoga, Velur all the way till Gutti, Honnali, Madurai, Tanjavur and Senji. After Mustafa Khan's death on 9 November 1648, Muzaffaruddin Khan continued the conquest of Senji.⁴¹ Having laid out the basic chronology of Mustafa Khan's career, we may now turn to the first set of sources, court chronicles in Persian that provide a window into the complex processes of this conquest.

Imitation and Rivalry during Conquest: Patronage of Indo-Persian chroniclers

How were Indo-Persian histories in the Deccan from the 1630s to 1640s written? What sort of imitative connections did they share with earlier texts? How did they differ in accounts of the same event? Who did the authors cite and why? Do they provide clues on competition among patrons and in between chroniclers? What do they share with other

³⁹ Sarkar, *Life of Mir Jumla*, 'Siddhout' or Siddhavatam in Kadappa district, 47.

⁴⁰ *Insha'-i Tabrizi*, B.M. Add. 6600, ff. 6a-6b.

⁴¹ He founded a settlement called *Kānukānapettai* located between Senji and Narsingpet. Jean Deloche, *Senji (Gingee): A Fortified City in the Tamil Country* (Pondicherry: Institut Français de Pondichéry, 2005), 99.

universal and dynastic histories of the Islamic world, especially those from the Mughal empire and Safavid Iran? These questions will remain at the center of our discussion of Persian materials on Mustafā Khan and his contemporaries.

The author of the *Muhammad Nāmāh*, Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, was the son of Mullah Nuruddin Muhammad Zuhuri,⁴² perhaps the best-known poet of Indo-Persian from the Deccan, a contemporary of and much admired by Mughal poets, Faizi and ‘Urfi. Unlike his father, very little is known about the life and works of Zuhur, specific events of which are rarely described in the *Muhammad Nāmāh*. No other works aside from the *Muhammad Nāmāh* have been attributed to Zuhur. His father had arrived in the Deccan from the Safavid court in 988/1580 and circulated between Ahmadnagar and Bijapur.⁴³ Soon after arriving in India, he married the daughter of Malik-i-Qummi, another major Indo-Persian poet, who was then serving in the Nizam Shahi court.⁴⁴ Given that there is no evidence of Zuhuri returning to Iran until his death in 1025/1616 in Bijapur, we may assume that his son, Zuhur, was born in the Deccan. Throughout the chronicle on occasions that he discusses himself, Zuhur makes it point to play up his lineage:

az dū taraf vāriṣ-i ma‘ni manam
hujjat qata‘ bi da‘ve manam

gū malik-i imrūzī zuhūrī kujāst
fakhr be khud mī kunam ārī bejāst

yāfteh am nashāye ze jān-i yaqīn

⁴² Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 214 - 231, 198. Rehmat Ali Khan, section on Zuhuri, *The Progress of Persian Literature Under the ‘Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur 1489 - 1686 (Poetry)* Unpublished dissertation, University of Delhi, 1979.

⁴³ Although Zuhuri was invited to the Mughal court several times, he never visited Delhi. Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 220.

⁴⁴ Rehmat Ali Khan, Section on Zuhur, *The Progress of Persian Literature Under the ‘Adil Shahi Dynasty*.

*saāf dil-am sāfī sh ‘r-am bebīn*⁴⁵

From both sides [from my father and mother's side] I am the heir of meaning.
I am proof of this, with no need of claim.

Say, where is the king of today Zuhuri?
I am proud of myself, and this is right.

I stay alive from the cup of truth,
Look upon the purity of my heart from my verse.

There are many such lines throughout the *Muhammad Nāmāh*, where Zuhur refers to his father and his work. Being the son of Zuhuri and Malik Qummi's grandchild clearly set him apart in the competitive literary circles of seventeenth-century Bijapur. Aside from his lineage, Zuhur's defining relationship in court was the one with his patron, Mustafa Khan.⁴⁶ The *Muhammad Nāmāh* is essentially a chronicle not about the king but the powerful Prime Minister, Mustafa Khan, his friends and co-conquerors such as Randaula Khan and Muzaffaruddin Khan *Khān-i-Khānān* and their conquests of Karnatak and Malnad. Few other details of his life are known, but Zuhur undoubtedly circulated along with the Bijapur army to these new areas of conquest.

Unlike the 'golden age' chronicles of the Deccan from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, very few manuscript copies of the *Muhammad Nāmāh* exist. Prior to the early twentieth century, to study the seventeenth century Deccan historians tended to rely on *Basātin us-Sālatīn* of Muhammad Ibrahim Zubairi, which as I have noted in the introduction is a much later source and should be used with great caution.⁴⁷ Devare notes that Zubairi has quoted entire sections of the *Muhammad Nāmāh* without acknowledging

⁴⁵ *M.N.*, ff. 258 - 259.

⁴⁶ Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 327 - 328.

⁴⁷ See Chapter Five on the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, an account of a third-generation Miyana Afghan commander Bahlol Khan III, whose grandfather makes his earliest appearance here in *Fath Nāmā-i Ikkerī*. On Bahlol Khan and his descendants, see Sarkar, *House of Shivaji*, 59- 63.

or mentioning its location and manuscripts.⁴⁸ The discovery by Jadunath Sarkar of Zuhur's *Muhammad Nāmah* in the Kapurthala Royal Library in Punjab and the *Tārīkh-i 'Alī 'Ādil Shāhiyā* of Nurullah Qazi in 1929, shed new light on Bijapur's conquests and led to reassessments of Shahaji Bhonsle's career in the seventeenth century's first half.⁴⁹ Sarkar had the Kapurthala manuscript copied and presented it to the Bijapur Museum.

Since its discovery, events and incidents from the *Muhammad Nāmah* have been extracted and recounted in numerous political histories. In the early twentieth century, both Jadunath Sarkar and B.D. Verma laid out its chapter outline⁵⁰ while historians of the Marathas tapped into this source, especially to study the role of Shahaji and whether or not he was a relatively minor figure in the Karnatak conquest in the seventeenth century's first half.⁵¹ In the post-Independence period, studies of Bijapur's diplomatic relations with the Mughals immediately before and after 1636 drew on the early and middle chapters of this chronicle.⁵² While Zuhur's style and excessive use of poetry in this chronicle has often been the subject of criticism, sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah, has been faulted for sowing the seeds of 'decline' by departing from the 'harmonious' policies of his father, Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II.⁵³ One most recent study, has rehashed the episode about Khawas Khan's murder recorded in this source, while embarrassingly and repeatedly citing the *Muhammad Nāmah's* author as Zuhuri (the father) rather than Zuhur (the son)!⁵⁴ Although long ago

⁴⁸ Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 325.

⁴⁹ *Shivaji Nibhandhavalī, Vol II*, 50 - 52.

⁵⁰ B.D. Verma, "History in the *Muhammad Nama*" and J.D. Sarkar, *Modern Review*, 1929

⁵¹ C.S. Srinivasachari, "The Rise of Mahratta Power in the South" *Shivaji Nibhandhavalī, Vol II*,

52. Bal Krishna, *Shivaji The Great, Vol I*, 113.

⁵² See for examples the works of D.C. Varma and M.A. Nayeem.

⁵³ Verma, "History in the *Muhammad Nama*," 77.

⁵⁴ Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 103, Chapter Two. The author unfortunately resorts to a stereotypical characterization of Hindu-Muslim identity conflicts, which according to him was 'analogous' to the Foreigner vs. Deccani divide in the Deccan courts.

Devare urged that this chronicle deserved critical analysis, it remains unpublished, unedited and has not been subject to the kind of innovative readings that well-known Mughal and Safavid sources have recently received.⁵⁵

Both the Kapurthala Library manuscript described by B.D. Verma and the Bijapur Museum copy have the same structure. Chapter one to four cover Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s earliest years, his suppression of numerous revolts, the episode of Khawas Khan and Murari Pandit, the arrival of Mughal emperor Shah Jahan in the Deccan, consequent negotiations with the Mughals and the terms of the Deed of Submission. The sections after 1636 (which I focus on), chapters five to ten that constitute around sixty percent of the chronicle, plot the Karnatak and Malnad conquest, first under Randaula Khan and then under Mustafa Khan and Muzaffaruddin Khan *Khān-i Khānān* and others. The chronicle ends around 1654, a few years before the end of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah's reign.

Like historical-writing in other parts of the Islamic world, all Deccan histories apart from a few exceptions⁵⁶ were modeled after Mirkhwand’s late fifteenth century text *Rauzat al-Safā’*. Studies of form in Persian chronicles have emphasized that prior to understanding an author's oeuvre, we must recognize the imitative connections of these texts with preceding histories as well as with other genres. Numerous copies of this key text of the Herat school, which was also a favorite of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II, were copied by Zuhuri (the father of Zuhur) when he was still a calligrapher in Yazd and brought over and circulated widely in the Deccan.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Ali Anooshahr, “Author of one’s fate: Fatalism and agency in Indo-Persian histories” *Indian Economic & Social History Review* 49, no. 2 (2012): 197-224. Sholeh Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles* (University of Utah Press, 2000).

⁵⁶ Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 267.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

In the case of the *Muhammad Nāmah*, while the overall structure follows the foundational texts of Persian historiography, the author also points to models much closer in time and space, such as Abu l-Fazl's *Akbar Nāmah* (1005/1596) and Rafiuddin Hussain Shirazi's *Tazkirat al-Mulūk* (completed in 1025/1612).⁵⁸ He provides a long description, not in the preface (*muqaddimah*) to the chronicle but around two-thirds of the way into it, on how he was chosen by the sultan and his patron to compose this text.⁵⁹ This explanation follows soon after an account of Mughal general Asaf Khan's military defeat that the author contrasts with a longer description of the Karnatak's prosperity after the 'Adil Shahs had conquered it.

An earlier account of such a literary gathering where the *Akbar Nāmah* was discussed first occurs however, not in the *Muhammad Nāmah*, but in the aforementioned *Guldasta-i Gulshan* of Abu l-Qasim al-Husayni written in 1633. On the subject of writing history, the author thus begins:

On one occasion in a literary gathering, the discussion turned to the knowledge of history (*ilm-i tārikh*). The beauty of skill, eloquence of expression and phraseology of the *Akbar Nāmah* (*fann-i husn-i fasāhat wa balāghat-i akbar nāmah*) was discussed with great enthusiasm. The King called for it to be brought from the library, put it in his lap and then handed it to those gathered and asking them to understand it. The king then ordered that a book be authored like the *Bhārat Nāmah* called *Muhammad Nāmah* (*ke muqābil-i bhārat nāmah muhammad nāmah tasnīf kunīd*). Those that were present sought to understand the two works and noted that the *Bhārat Nāmah*⁶⁰ was a bulky work written in Hindi and contained old stories (of pre-Islamic times) and the *Akbar Nāmah* too contained such stories. Therefore the king ordered only the events and incidents of his own reign be included in a new work. The author thus agreed to follow the ruler's

⁵⁸ B.D. Verma, "History in the Muhammad Nama" *Shivaji Nibandavali*, 202-203.

⁵⁹ It occurs in Chapter VII immediately after the section where Zuhur has described relations with the Mughals, the arrival and defeat of Asaf Khan in Muhammadpur, the spreading of Islam in the Karnatak, the prosperity of subjects, the murder of Khawas Khan, capture of the fort of Sholapur, and the abundance of the imperial treasury.

⁶⁰ This may be a reference to *Razm Nāmah*, the Mughal translation of the *Mahabharata*. Audrey Truschke, "The Mughal Book of War: A Persian Translation of the Sanskrit Mahabharata," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 31, no. 2 (2011): 508-509.

command and with sincerity and talent took on this task, with the hope that his mistakes and oversights would be forgiven and that his work will please all.⁶¹

Arguably, Bijapur's chroniclers looked towards the Mughals and their historiography while simultaneously competing with their literary production. To cite pre-existing models was of course common to all Indo-Persian chroniclers but when we compare the passage from *Guldasta-i Gulshan-i Rāz* with Zuhur's *Muhammad Nāmah*, we may safely draw a few conclusions on the ways in which historiography evolved and shifted in the different conquest contexts of early 1630s versus the early 1640s. First and foremost we know that Abu l-Fazl's work was by the mid-seventeenth century a standard reading in the Deccan's literary circles, an obvious consequence of the circulation of writers, poets and patrons who moved between these courts. Zuhur re-interpreted incidents and events in Abu l-Qasim al-Husayni's work, but writing in period of intense military competition with the Mughals in the 1640s, his condescension towards them heightened. He cited Rafiuddin Shirazi's *Tazkirat ul-Mūlūk*, describing a literary gathering similar to the one in *Guldasta*, he wrote:

On one occasion, at an exceptional and large gathering a point was raised about Shaykh Abu l-Fazl's *Akbar Nāmah*, his eloquence and beauty of expression and that there was no book comparable to the *Akbar Nāmah*. To test this discussion, the king set this work as the criteria (*mahak-i naqd-i qābilīyat ast*). All the great literati, who adorned this gathering and were masters in the domains of poetry and prose and each unique for his time, (*farmān ravāyān-i qalamraw-i nazm wa nasr ke yegāna-yi rozgār būdand*) prostrated before the king and felt elevated. Like waves in an ocean of meaning, they spread their pearls of fine speech. The king, pointing to Zuhur, noted there is no one who can write a book like the *Akbar Nāmah*. All those who were gathered bent their heads and agreed they could not accomplish this feat. Zuhur rose up and said, "*Akbar Nāmah* is really a specimen of literary production, adorned with figures of speech, eloquence and rhetoric, written in a learned style, but my *Muhammad Nāmah*, from cover to cover, shall have the glorification of God and praise of the Prophet, not to be found in the

⁶¹ *Guldasta*, ff. 8a - 8b.

Akbar Nāmah.” Upon hearing this, the King had the *Akbar Nāmah* fetched from the library and he compared it to the *Bhārat Nāmah*, the book of Hindus.⁶²

Zuhur was thus honored and appointed to write the *Muhammad Nāmah*. Although this passage has been cited numerous times,⁶³ what has been overlooked is how Zuhur drew on the work of Abu l-Qasim al-Husayni, which he probably had access to and read before he began writing his chronicle. While in the earlier history the literary merits of the Mughals were recognized, Zuhur borrowed the gist of the passage, the emulation of Mughal chronicles, but at the same time he one-ups them by insinuating they are just not good enough Muslims because of the quality of their historiography! In a time when Zuhur’s own patron and his kinsmen were attempting to consolidate their territorial resources and networks, while keeping the Mughals at bay, contemporary literati also sought to outdo Mughal historiography. Alongside rivaling the Mughals with their armies, historians and poets from the Deccan thus sought to share, match and compete with Mughal literary production. This competition was a direct and obvious consequence of the circulation of these poets or their patrons to the Mughal court, which at times meant that history and history-writing came to resemble each other in empire and region in a period of an intense, nested series of conquests.

The vicissitudes of conquest: Tensions between Sultan and Prime Minister

We may now turn to specific moments in Persian chronicles, which hint at Mustafa Khan’s often tense and volatile relationship with sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah during the Karnatak conquest. One such instance was the second arrest of Mustafa Khan that

⁶² *M.N.*, ff. 262-263. Verma, 110.

⁶³ Devare, *A Short History of Persian Literature*, 326.

unfolded around 1643.⁶⁴ By this time, the sultan, well past his teenage years, had come into his own and sought to establish his authority over court factions within the capital, which left him no time to attend to the affairs of the conquest. Many of his closest advisors had, by the 1640s, moved to the frontier. In doing so however, these courtiers often accumulated their own resources and clientele in domains far removed from the capital. We find two accounts of Mustafa Khan's activities in the frontier during this period. The first of these written by his close friend Zuhur summarily casts Mustafa Khan's arrest as an erroneous judgement on part of the King and a trying time during which his patron's endurance was tested. Zuhur writes:

God willed that power and eternal good would open its doors upon this blessed one. First, that he be put through a torrent of trials and his sincerity be tested in fire. The wise and knowing knew the reality of this event and that Khan Baba was arrested and sent to Belgaum fort, and then summoned and alerted again. In 1055/1645 the seven star conjunction was not in favor of Khan Baba. After the passing of this time, the king graced him with favors and the auspicious conjunction was over him. The Almighty willed that *Khān-i-Khānān* (title of Muzaffaruddin Khan), a pillar of the state, be sent to arrest Khan Baba and he arrested him in Belgaum fort, which had a circumference so huge it served as the center of the skies and its moat was so deep, with more than seven layers into the earth. After about a month of the occurrence of this event, the King became aware of reality and sent 'Abdul Razzaq, one of the *mahaldars* (district collectors), to bring back Khan Baba from Belgaum. After nine days when they reached the outskirts of the city, the King came to give Khan Baba a great welcome outside the city and brought him back, honoring him with royal favor.⁶⁵

A slightly different sense of this arrest can be found in Fuzuni Astarabadi's account, but both texts make it amply clear that the conquest began to unravel just as it had started. The king confirmed that people posted on the frontier were not able to carry on the works and procedures of the state (*kār-i mulkī wa ādab-i kār guzārī*).⁶⁶ As early as

⁶⁴ *M.N.*, f. 191. This was Mustafa Khan's second arrest. The first time was during the fallout or civil war with Khawas Khan around 1635. Verma, "History in the Muhammad Nama," 79.

⁶⁵ *M.N.*, f. 191.

⁶⁶ *Futūhāt*, ff. 342a - 343b.

1052/1642, Mustafa Khan's intentions to control the Karnatak independently were already apparent. He explained to Muhammad ‘Adil Shah that he need not travel down to the areas of conquest even though things were somewhat out of order in the Karnatak. Astarabadi reports that Mustafa Khan was sent to warn rebellious elements after earlier attempts had failed. Previously Randaula Khan had been busy conquering forts in the Karnatak but despite that discord (*nā sāzī*) had broken out in those parts and he haughtily turned up at court in the capital (Bijapur). Upon hearing this Muhammad ‘Adil Shah rightfully decided to send an experienced merchant (*iqṭazā kard ke yekī az kārdānān sāhib-i tijārat rā be ān sarhad ferestādand tā amrā-i ‘azām rā khātir juyī namūdeh*) to placate the disaffected minister.⁶⁷ Soon after, he sent another representative, a certain Sayyid Qazi to subdue rebellious kingdoms and capture their forts.

Despite these efforts, the Karnatak expeditions were not progressing as expected and local officials there continued to be recalcitrant. Clearly, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah was not just facing revolt from local kingdoms but his own ministers’ ambitions in the frontier were difficult to tame, as turned out to be in the aforementioned case of Randaula Khan. Eventually, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah summoned Mustafa Khan and told him about the state of affairs in the Karnatak and his wish to bring those domains under their rule. He also expressed his intention to go there to warn rebel officials himself. To this, while paying his respects to the sultan, Mustafa Khan allegedly responded, “everything you suggest I shall accept and execute but it would be a great risk for you to leave the capital and join the troops there (*be har che ishāreh farmānīd sūrat mi pazīrad amā īn che ehtemāl dārad ke khusro āfāq dar maqām lashkar keshī dar āmadeh markaz-i daulat rā khālī*)

⁶⁷ *Futūhāt*, f. 396.

guzārānd).⁶⁸ Mustafa Khan then informed the king that the domains further south were crowded with elephants, battalions and residents and also polluted and difficult to breathe in, as so many troops had encamped on the banks of the River Krishna. It was advisable that the sultan should not leave the capital and join the Karnatak expedition.

Mustafa Khan supplemented his strategy in the Karnatak with a concomitant policy of keeping the Mughals satisfied but always at a safe distance. Soon after this incident, tensions between Muhammad ‘Adil Shah and Mustafa Khan came to the fore. The instance of Mustafa Khan's second arrest mentioned in the *Futūhāt* confirms the connection between what was happening in the newly conquered territories and how each courtier used Mughal intervention for their own political gains *within* the Deccan. The sultan learnt of further rebellions in the Karnatak and despite his consultation with *Āsaf Zamān* (Mustafa Khan) the rebellious chieftains were not subdued:

Upon hearing of these displeasing incidents, the king had a change of mind because of the mistrustful and jealous talk in court about *Āsaf Zamān* had an effect on him and he heard that *Āsaf Zamān* was not attending to the affairs of the state properly. He sent Ikhlas Khan to *Āsaf Zamān* and who delivered the king's message which noted, "The everlasting government does not deem it advisable that the work of the state be for some days left attended". He demanded that the Prime Minister and his entire clan stay in one of the forts for a few days. (*ze sāhib-i sarīr rā dar bātin taghaiyri wa ze āsaf zamān rā taqsīrī guftahāye munāfiqāneh husād rā behar waqtī tāsīrāt mi bāshad chū husād bad i'teqād gufteh būdand ke wūjūd-i āsaf zamān muhimāt mulkī tamshīyat pazīr nīst...salāh-i daulat abpevand dar ān nīst ke chand rūz az kār mulkī dast keshīdeh dārand...taqāzā kard ke āsafī ba rusāye qabīleh rūzī chand yekī az husūn bāshand*)

Astarabadi reports it was during this time that trouble broke out in Ikkeri, especially on account of Sivappa Nayak. Zuhur, on the other hand, recorded this arrest of Mustafa Khan in 1055/ 1645 before the account of the seige of Ikkeri and Sagar. It would seem however that most of these changes in the sequence of events have more to do with

⁶⁸ *Futūhāt*, f. 397.

how the Bijapur manuscript was copied and rearranged in the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the accounts of Mustafa Khan's second arrest are very different in narrative and tone in these two Persian chronicles as are the accounts of Ikkeri's seige. Fuzuni Astarabadi's account above pays some heed to Muhammad 'Adil Shah's opinion that Mustafa Khan was not in control of affairs in the Karnatak. He also ends this section with mention of the emissaries who were sent on behalf of Bijapur to Delhi, and suggests that it was Shah Jahan who eventually intervened in the release of Mustafa Khan and his clan from house arrest.

In all of the above-mentioned passages, we may note that the language of political strife varies across different levels. The term *nā sāzī* here implies a certain level of disagreement (or what we may call *anban* in Urdu); but we should note that it is distinct from the term *fitna*, which carries with it an element of mischief, and was reserved for those who sought to oppose the existing political order and forge an alternative authority. Once again, since no affinities were fixed, we have conquests unfolding within conquests. All of these processes of political fragmentation were reversible and continuously reconstituted, and not determined by inherent affinities.

Narrating the siege(s) of Ikkeri

Like loyalties in the Deccan, no conquest was ever final nor conclusive in the middle decades of the seventeenth century. Seven years prior to Mustafa Khan and Muzaffaruddin Khan's siege of Ikkeri in 1644, many attempts had already been made to subdue the Nayakas of Bednur and Keladi, most notably by Randaula Khan in 1637-

⁶⁹ Sarkar notes that dates in the *Muhammad Nāmāh* are according to the *Shahur San* years, which were nine years short of Hijri years. Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla*, 383.

1638.⁷⁰ We may begin first therefore, with the earliest accounts of the encounter of Bijapuri courtiers with the rulers of Ikkeri produced in Indo-Persian. The prime ambition of these vassals or feudatories of the former Vijayanagar empire seemed to be to outdo their own competitors with Bijapur's help and to sustain themselves while aiding the conquest of a larger polity. Zuhur recalls the aid of Keng Nayak of Basavapatam who had earlier helped *Rustam-i Zamān* Randaula Khan find his way to Ikkeri in 1637, because he wished to defeat his arch rival, Vira Bhadra Nayak (d.1645):

The *ghāzī* king sent off Randaula Khan to Ikkeri fort, All kings of the world of an exalted status have decreed that they bring this kingdom under the seal in the name of one God and Islam, the affairs of Karnatak and Malnad, since the time of the ancient kings of the Deccan till the reign of present King, had not been settled properly and as desired. The *ghāzī* king, with such royal bravery, ordered the conquest of the mentioned domains.

The remainder of the rebellious cities, one of which was famously known as Ramraj [سایر متمردان بلاد که یکی از آنها رام راج مشهور بود], had been rendered non-existent with the universal sword, and all domains of infidels and villainy had been forced into submission, such that rebels now became slaves. Only the honest and insightful would have the capacity to understand this story of the conquest of the King, given here with such heart-pleasing expression. The King thus resolved to promote and strengthen Islam and bring these domains under his sway. The King called upon Randaula Khan, the son of Farhad Khan, one of members of the exalted court and gave him the title of *Rustam-i Zamān*, a robe of honor, and made him *sipāh sālār*. He set off to punish those domains to the fort where Vira Bhadra had taken all the treasure, his large army and retinue and was being defiant and procrastinating in paying tribute. When *Rustam-i Zamān* reached the border of Malnad with his victorious troops, a revolution came to the kingdom of infidels and the unfaithful. The pillars of stability of those ill-fated religions and their temples and idols and homes were broken. Keng Nayak, the King of Basavapatan, too heard the sound of the troops arriving, became anxious and hurried, with foresight went in service of them.

He wished to be a slave to the exalted court, and wanted get his own work done. He always had fights and disputes with Vira Bhadra. For this purpose, he sent a chamberlain to *Rustam-i Zamān* and promised his obedience and his life. He said, 'Since you intend to conquer Karnatak and Malnad, if you wish to go that way you

⁷⁰ Shanti Sadiq Ali, *The African Dispersal*, 118-122. Swaminathan, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*, 68, 73-75, 94-95. R. Narasimhachar, "The Keladi Rajas of Ikkeri and Bednur" *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* (January, 1911): 193.

must first capture the fort of Ikkeri, along the way there are dangerous forest and frightening forests and no one has gone there and to go there is impossible. I will take you to Ikkeri fort as you wish, such that Vira Bhadra will not even get to know about the coming of your army. But on the condition that you recommend me to the court with all due ceremony and fix the amount of one lakh *hūn* for me.’ *Rustam-i Zamān* agreed to this condition and made a promise.⁷¹

After the battle at Ikkeri, Keng Nayak accompanied Randaula Khan, chasing Vira Bhadra Nayak to the fort at Kalyandurg, who finally surrendered, agreeing to give half his kingdom to Bijapur and paid eighteen lakh *hūns* to the sultan. The memory of 1565 and the ‘Battle of Talikota’ continued to inform the way the Indo-Persian chroniclers apprehended the Nayakas, the successor states of the erstwhile Vijayanagar empire in the seventeenth century. While the language of conquest here and in all other descriptions of negotiation, sieges and battles and submission in the *Muhammad Nāmāh* emulates the standard conventions of Indo-Persian historiography, the Nayakas are not cast as a uniform, monolithic unit. Keng Nayak would offer support to Randaula Khan, who himself would revolt against the Bijapur sultan, and Vira Bhadra Nayak would seek Bijapur’s help in crushing the chiefs of Tarikere and Basavapatan. In the mid-1640s, a succession struggle would break out among the rulers of Ikkeri, in which Vira Bhadra’s cousin Sivappa Nayak came to power and once again took over Ikkeri fort.⁷²

We may now turn to the third and final seige of Ikkeri in 1644, led by Muzaffaruddin Khan and Mustafa Khan and how Zuhur recorded it:

As was the will of God, that he should manifest his power through this *ghāzī* king so that all the rulers of the world should realize and know the meaning of power and kingship. Therefore, according to what is deemed eternally advisable, in the

⁷¹ *M.N.*, ff. 145-147.

⁷² Swaminathan, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*, 74, 87-88. For the Dutch viewpoint of succession struggles in the Nayaka kingdoms, see the forthcoming dissertation of Lennart Bes, “Imperial Legacies in Early-Modern South India: Dynastic Politics in the Vijayanagara Successor States” University of Leiden, 2016.

year 1053, an incident occurred that took all by surprise, a miraculous event that deserved to be written. The *ghāzī* King, had with great courage and with a sword like that of ‘Ali, conquered the domains of the Karnatak and Malnad and strengthened the religion of Islam in those parts, destroying the foundations of darkness and infidelity in these places, beheading those who had done dark deeds. The blessed King heard the news Karnatak and Malnad, where innumerable mosques and *khānqahs* were established, had become lands of peace (*dār ul-aman*) and come under the faith of Prophet. Some of the strongest forts in this area however remained unconquered. To seize them, the King had to issue an order. None of these forts were as tall, strong and as impregnable as the fort of Ikkeri, its towers were high and reached the skies.⁷³

Later however, it is reported that the fort was lost due to the negligence of an indolent man who had been appointed to protect it. It was then that Sivappa Nayak seized the opportunity to re-conquer Ikkeri and began stocking up supplies in the fort.⁷⁴ Sivappa Nayak had by this time also killed Vira Bhadra Nayak and consolidated himself as the ruler of Ikkeri.⁷⁵ Learning of Sivappa Nayak’s actions, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah, distressed and apprehensive about Ikkeri’s loss, appointed Khan Baba and Muzaffaruddin Khan *Khān-i Khānān* to the post of Commander-in-Chief (*sipāh sālār*) ordering them to recapture Ikkeri.⁷⁶ Observing this battle very closely, he writes:

The sound of drum-beating of the armies reached the sky, the sounds of the trumpets reached the ears of angels, the earth trembled from the movement, the sound of the King's magnificent arrival in the unstable lands of the Karnatak spread fear in the hearts of the residents, such that the wearers of the [sacred] thread (*zunnār*) fled through complicated, narrow ways. The devil-natured (*afriṭ nihād*) Sivappa Nayak who had with such arrogance bombed the fort and turned rebellious from (*ātish-i gard ‘anād*) no longer fearful, securing himself and leaving no stone unturned he strengthened the fort, raising discord and disturbance (*fitna wa āshob*) and with his group of infidels he built pits with fiery talismans or mines (*tilism-i ātishīn*) at the foot of caves in the mountains (...). On the day of battle, the victorious armies reached the outskirts of Ikkeri, while one set of troops began to attack and plunder. The army of the enemy, having gone astray, blocked the path

⁷³ *M.N.*, f. 193.

⁷⁴ *M.N.*, f. 195.

⁷⁵ Swaminathan, Chapter VII, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*.

⁷⁶ *M.N.*, f. 196.

of those fighting for Islam (*junūd mukhālif ke az berāhī sar-i rāh mujāhidān ‘araseh dīn wa islām baste būd*).⁷⁷

By the 1630s and 1640s, the kinds of firearms and military techniques used on all sides were roughly equal. In numerous battles throughout the *Muhammad Nāmāh* and in descriptions of weapons in Dakkani *masnawī* from the seventeenth century, supplies of cannon for securing forts during battle are attributed to all players and were usually not the decisive factor in determining the outcome of such sieges.⁷⁸ At times, the majority of battles described seem somewhat anti-climactic since it was usually negotiation, diplomacy, the flight of soldiers or a set of turncoats who tipped the balance in favor of one side or the other, and not the absolute quality of weapons nor the number of dead on each side. Literary perceptions of firearms, often described metaphorically in Indo-Persian sources, are sometimes identified with the different kinds of ammunition, the quality or effect of the weapon and on occasion by the social group most skilled at using a certain type of gun.

Shortly after seizing Ikkeri, the Bijapur army then moved to Sagar where a large reservoir had to be crossed.⁷⁹ A long description of crossing the reservoir and the siege follows, after which the rebels surrendered and handed over the keys to Muzaffaruddin Khan and Mustafa Khan who were then honored and appointed in-charge of the fort and its surrounding domains. The sultan who had not joined the expedition returned to Bankapur from Muhammadpur for Nauruz celebrations.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ *M.N.*, f. 198-199.

⁷⁸ Richard Eaton, “‘Kiss My Foot,’ Said the King: Firearms, Diplomacy, and the Battle for Raichur, 1520” *Modern Asian Studies* 43, no. 01 (2009): 289-313. Subrahmanyam, “The Kagemusha Effect: The Portuguese Firearms and the State in Early Modern South India,” *Moyen orient et océan indien, XVIe-XIXe siècles* 4 (1987): 97-123.

⁷⁹ *M.N.*, f. 199.

⁸⁰ *M.N.*, f. 206.

We have thus far journeyed from Bijapur to Ikkeri observing the protracted, slow and contingent nature of the Karnatak conquest. The contest, as narrativized in Indo-Persian court chronicles, while most obviously political, is also simultaneously ethnographic. Zuhur and his contemporaries were making sense of the Mughals, the successor states of the Vijayanagar empire as well as the internal competitors of their patron, Mustafa Khan within Bijapur. Enemies such as the Mughals were cast and apprehended through specific cultural markers such their literary production, which although admired was nevertheless displaced by a critique of their presumable lack of commitment to spreading Islam. Other enemies such as the *nayakas*, while perhaps on the surface more unfamiliar than the Mughals, but narrativized with the same language and conventions of recording conquest, were actually quite different in scale and content. And even if rendered as absolute political others, not unsurprisingly, unlike the Mughals, these rivals were far easier for the Deccan sultanates to incorporate into the processes of conquest. It is to one such moment of incorporation but in a different linguistic register, following Mustafa Khan's encounter with Ikkeri, that we may now turn.

Conflict and Negotiation during conquest in Dakkani *masnawī*

The episode with Sivappa Nayak and the re-conquest of Ikkeri recounted above in the *Muhammad Nāmah* receives a very different treatment in *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* of Mirza Muqim Shirazi, composed in 1644. This rare *masnawī* pre-dates Mulla Nusrati's more celebrated works, the '*Alī Nāmah* and *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, from the seventeenth century's latter half and at the center of Chapters Three, Four and Five of this dissertation. Like them, it too, is a direct descendant of Hasan Shauqi's late sixteenth century foundational text the *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāh* on the so-called 'Battle of Talikota' of 1565. It is second

in the sequence of battle poems written in Dakkani (but with a much more extensive overlay of Persian than other Dakkani sources). As laid out in the introduction, in his article on this manuscript, Akhter agreed with Jalibi's observations on Muqim's extensive use of Persian, leading both to suggest the Iranian origins of the author. The problem of Mirza Muqim's identity was compounded by the fact that there were at least two or three other poets with similar names in Bijapur court in the first half of the seventeenth century.⁸¹

In addition to Jalibi and Akhter's observations on the extensive overlay and use of Persian in this *masnawī*, we have one additional clue that may yield more biographical insights on Mirza Muqim. The Salar Jung Museum in Hyderabad holds a single Persian manuscript, *Diwān-i Mirza Muqīm Shirāzī*,⁸² the only study of which can be found in Rehmat Ali Khan's unpublished dissertation on Persian poets in Bijapur.⁸³ We learn that Muqim hailed from Shiraz while his father was from Astarabad from the verse:

*nūr-i chashm astarābād ast agar abā-yi man
khāk-i shīrāz ast ammā mawlid u binā-yi man*

If Astarabad was the light of my father's eye
Shiraz is the land of my birth and rearing

⁸¹ One figure around whom there is significant confusion and debate is Muqimi, the author of *Chandra Badan-o Mahyar*, see Rajkishor Pandey and Akbaruddin Siddiqi eds., *Chandra Badan-o Mahyar* of Muqimi, (Hyderabad: Abul Kalam Azad Oriental Research Institute, 1968)

⁸² *Diwān-i Mirza Muqīm Shirāzī*, Adab Nazm, Ms. 480-481, Salar Jung Museum & Library.

⁸³ Rehmat Ali Khan, *The Progress of Persian Literature Under the 'Adil Shahi Dynasty of Bijapur 1489 - 1686 (Poetry)* Unpublished dissertation, University of Delhi, 1979. I showed the manuscript of *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* to Dr. Rehmat Ali Khan who has studied the Persian *diwān* much more closely than I have. While he agreed the Persian verses of the *masnawī* are strikingly similar to the style of the Persian *diwān* in the Salar Jung Museum, he remained hesitant to admit that a Persian-speaking Iranian migrant poet could have mastered Dakkani and composed in it. But the issue of the common patron, Mustafa Khan or Khan Baba, of both the author of the *masnawī* and the *diwān* is indisputable, even if the issue of the poet's linguistic and regional identity remains unresolved.

Muqim's father died in Astarabad after returning from pilgrimage, after which he migrated to Bijapur as a calligraphist and panegyrist.⁸⁴ He often longed to go to Kashmir and found the Deccan's environment inhospitable:

*az hawā-yi dakan shudam dilgīr
karda-am 'azm-i gulshan-i kashmīr*

*sayr-i shīrāz chūn tawānam kard
khāk-i hind shudam dāman-gīr*

Oh, the weather of the Deccan afflicts me
I have decided to set out for the gardens of Kashmir

For I could have travelled to Shiraz,
The land of Hind ties me to my patron.

The salient point to take away from the *Diwān* of Mirza Muqim is that much of it centers on praise of the poet's patron, Mustafa Khan, his son-in-law Abu l-Hasan as well as the King. Khan astutely observes as well that Muqim was a contemporary of the above-mentioned Persian chroniclers and poets such as Zuhur, Fuzuni Astarabadi and Hakim Atashi, as he composed several verses that responded to or commented on his contemporaries and friends.⁸⁵ Further, Muqim seemed to be well-versed in Indian traditions and frequently used Dakkani and Hindi words in his verse.

Reading the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* along the grain

For now, we may leave the question of Mirza Muqim's identity unsettled and instead begin a reading of his *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* 'along the grain'. Such a reading presumes a few rules, the first of which is to avoid anachronistic judgments regarding the 'truth-value'. The second is to place its conventions and tropes in a wider context of

⁸⁴ Ibid., Section on Mirza Muqim Shirazi.

⁸⁵ Ibid, Bibliography. Innumerable such *diwāns* of pre-1800 Indo-Persian and Dakkani poets lie scattered in libraries across South Asia.

literary practices, engaging with a pan-regional courtly vernacular's longer trajectories and changes over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Placing Mirza Muqim's poem as second in line after Hasan Shauqi's *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāh*, I will outline the author's use of this earlier template and show how he deployed conventions and a language of war and conquest shared across similar texts in this period. Further, I would argue that the functions of this *masnawī* and the battle it represented were not merely 'religious,'⁸⁶ since the allies and rivals dramatized in it frequently shifted political allegiances, independent of religious, ethnic and linguistic identity.

The victory over Ikkeri was just one of many small scenes in the constantly fluctuating drama of alliance and rivalry in seventeenth century Deccan. The defeat of Sivappa Nayak dramatized in this *masnawī* and his re-adjusted loyalty towards Bijapur would prove to be a prudent decision in the 1650s, as Bijapur and Ikkeri would continue to ally with each other on many occasions to overrun other rivals in the Karnatak. Nor were the men who accompanied Mustafa Khan on this expedition, whether Afghans, Marathas or Iranians, bound to each other by any inherent affinities. Some of them would shift camp while other would stay with Bijapur and consolidate their strongholds in the seventeenth century's second half.

Nor were such texts merely propaganda on the patron's behalf or some tool to legitimize the king⁸⁷ but a conscious choice on the part of the patron, Mustafa Khan, to stake a claim in the Dakkani literary milieu, which was just as important in recording his conquests as were Persian sources. This is not to argue that Mustafa Khan hired Mirza Muqim to write a Dakkani panegyric to prove some proto-national allegiance to the

⁸⁶ Jalibi, *Tārīkh-i Adab- i Urdū*, Vol. 1, 239.

⁸⁷ Pollock, *Language of Gods*, 511-524.

Deccan. This *masnawī* re-affirms Mustafa Khan's near autonomous authority that perhaps even superseded the King's, a picture already quite evident in Persian and European materials. It would only be natural then for him to outdo his competitors ('Deccanis' or whoever else they might be) by placing himself at the center of both the Indo-Persian chronicle and Dakkani *masnawī*.

The *masnawī* is divided into seven sections or chapters each with a heading in Persian. The series of court scenes include dramatizations of various conversations between the sultan and Mustafa Khan, the Bijapur army's journeys from one location to another, the exchange of letters and emissaries between Mustafa Khan and Sivappa Nayak, the latter's submission at the end of the siege and the presentation of honors to Mustafa Khan. The first of these chapters is the *hamd*, praise of God. The chapter sequence runs as follows:

- 1) *rāyī andīshīdan sultān Muhammad 'Ādil Shāh
bā arkān-i daulat-i khud dar bāb-i qil'a Ikkerī*

Muhammad 'Adil Shah takes the opinion
of his court's nobles to lay siege upon the gates of Ikkeri fort.

- 2) *raftan sultān Muhammad 'Ādil Shāh,
be maqām Bankāpur jahat fath-i Ikkerī.*

Sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah goes to Bankapur
Towards the victory of Ikkeri.

- 3) *ravānah kardan sultān Muhammad ('Ādil Shah) Nawāb Mustafa Khan rā,
bar qil'a ikkerī wa nāmeḥ navishtan īshān be Sivap Nāyak.*

Muhammad 'Adil Shah sends off Nawab Mustafa Khan,
to Ikkeri fort and he writes a letter to Sivappa Nayak.

- 4) *Fath kardan nawāb Mustafa Khān qil'a Ikkerī rā*

Nawab Mustafa Khan conquers Ikkeri fort

- 5) *nāmeḥ navishtan Sivap Nāyak be navāb,
Mustafa Khān dar jawāb īshān.*

Sivappa Nayak writes to Nawab Mustafa Khan and his reply.

- 6) *Qaul dādan Mustafa Khan Sivap Nāyak rā,
wa āmadan-i u barāye mulāqāt-i nawāb.*

Mustafa Khan promises Sivappa Nayak,
And the latter comes to meet with the Nawab.

Even more than the *Muhammad Nāmah's* later chapters discussed above, which also focus on other courtiers such as Muzaffaruddin Khan and Randaula Khan, throughout this *masnawī* the sultan only serves as a foil to its hero, Prime Minister Mustafa Khan. The sultan appears only briefly in the text's beginning and end, and in both scenes his purpose is to praise, promote and express gratitude towards Mustafa Khan. He invites Mustafa Khan to sit beside him:

*bulayā unan kon jo dildār the
kiyā dūr unan kon jo aghyār the*

He called upon those were near to his heart,
Distancing those who were strangers.

*kahiyā Mustafa Khān bābā ke ten
ke tum āo mujh pās baitho yahīn*

He said to Mustafa Khan Baba,
Come! Sit near me.

He then lauds the bravery and intelligence of Khan's five closest relatives and friends.⁸⁸ These include his son-in-law, Abu l-Hasan (who had served as envoy to the Mughal court in 1636)⁸⁹, his son Asad Khan,⁹⁰ Shah Nawaz Khan and Muzaffaruddin

⁸⁸ See Appendix.

⁸⁹ Nayeem, *External Relations of Bijapur*, 163.

⁹⁰ *ACE*, Vol. II, 340-341.

Khan *Khān-i-Khānān*.⁹¹ In the opening scene we find Muhammad ‘Adil Shah pensive and worried about the rulers of Ikkeri:

*ke la gayā hai charkā mujh us rāt te
gayī jad ikkherī wo phir hāth te*

I have been stricken since that very night
when Ikkeri had once again fallen out of our hands

*tad hān te bū mujh kon badh asīl huā
badh asīl yū dil par tū ugal huā*

Ever since then, this great burden like a heavy rock
has aroused a great anxiety in my heart

The king swears upon God, the Prophet, the Sufi saints Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz⁹² and Miran Muhammad, Islam and his faith and his ancestors not to spare Ikkeri nor its populace:

*na chhorūn ikkerī na us pand kon,
khandal mār todhrūn kufr kand kon.*⁹³

I won't spare Ikkeri nor its populace,
Trampling upon infidels and their cave-like forts.

*dharūn ek harbā sau tarwār kā,
jo turkhe sīnā phūt kuffār ka.*

With one strike of my sword,
I tear open the chests of infidels.

⁹¹ Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 28, 193. Shah Jahan expressed his displeasure at Muhammad ‘Adil Shah conferring such a title on one his nobles.

⁹² Chapters in the *Muhammad Nāmāh* record the journeys of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah to the shrine of Khwaja Banda Nawaz Gesu Daraz in Gulbarga in 1055/1645. Zuhur, *Muhammad Nāmāh*, ff. 227-228.

⁹³ Compare with Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 86. This verse is modeled after Hasan Shauqi and emulates his meter: “*na turkān ko chhorūn na turkī kamān/Agar gyo Rustam hāzīr zamān*” *Courtly Encounters*, 73.

Muqim does not follow the standard sequence in this *masnawī* where praise of God, the Prophet and the king appear in separate sections. All of them are essentially summed up in the opening lines of the sultan, who articulates a standard set of ambitions - - to eradicate infidels and their domains. These conventions or tropes common to all Indo-Muslim texts whether *tārīkh* or *masnawī* have at times been used to emphasize the ‘religious’ intent and purpose of these conflicts.⁹⁴ But the repetition of such tropes symbolically marked a political authority that included many diverse constituents. It was perfectly plausible for this Indo-Islamic authority to include Marathas like Shahaji, Mambaji and others and want to destroy the Nayaka kingdoms of Karnatak and Malnad. But there was *never* a moment when, in the social taxonomy of the Indo-Persian chronicler or Dakkani poet, these two groups became or meant one and the same thing. As I argued earlier for the *Muhammad Nāmāh* the memory of Rama Raya and the Battle of 1565 is what set apart the Nayakas of Karnatak and Malnad from other upstarts and political rivals in the eyes of the a mid-seventeenth-century Persian or Dakkani litterateur. Just as Firishta and Tabataba were available to Zuhur, Mirza Muqim would have read and accessed Hasan Shauqi's *Fath Nāma-i Nizām Shāh* and read Indo-Persian chronicles before composing his *masnawī*. It is only natural then for both Zuhur and Muqim to emulate their predecessors’ language of war, conquest but make distinctions between figures and groups that fell within their political authority and those that defied it.

While Muhammad ‘Adil Shah's ambitions seem like standard fare, those of Khan Baba were far more grand. Upon hearing the sultan’s anxieties, he tells him to sit back and relax while he sets off to take care of Ikkeri:

⁹⁴D.C.Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 118-119. Verma, "History in the *Muhammad Nāmāh*," 77. Jalibi, *Tārīkh-i Adab-i Urdū*, Vol 1, 238.

*kahiyā khān bābā ne shāh khās kon,
sukhī rah tun rāje bhar tās kon.*

Khan Baba said to the special King,
May you be well, I pray for you in every moment.

*na kar kuch ikkerī ki tūn fikr bhī,
safā rakh tun khātir kon is zikr thī*

You need not worry about Ikkeri,
Rest assured and have confidence in me.

*tuje chhor jāyūn ikkerī kahān,
ikkerī kahān bil ikkerī kahān.*

I will not leave you, what of Ikkeri?
What of Ikkeri? We shall take it by force.

*che mānge Ikkerī takht bīch hai,
jite raye rāje qadm nīch hai.*

What feat is it to want Ikkeri?
With all their petty Rayas and Rajas

*agar hukm bakshe tūn sardār kon,
leve kot til mai milābār son.*

If you order, the commanders can,
In a moment even take the forts of Malabar.

*wa gar dil chalāve be jang-o-jadal,
ketī raye liyāve pakad paye til.*

If you are set upon going to war,
In a moment we shall capture and force these Rajas to submit.

The geographic extent of Mustafa Khan's territorial ambitions stretched all the way to Malabar. He believed that it would take no time to subdue Ikkeri, so he praises the king while reminding him of the auspices of saints across Hindustan and the Deccan:

*madad tujh hai pirān dakhān hind ke,
ze lāhor dehli aur sind ke.*

You have help from the saints of the Deccan & Hind
from Lahore, Delhi and Sindh.

*ikkerī kon til main to qābiz karūn,
kare jin atā 'at to jayiz dharūn.*

I'll capture Ikkeri in a second,
If you think it necessary, I shall subjugate these Rayas.

*wa gar nayīn to shamshūr par roz son
milā diyūn kufr kon masn gor son*

And if not, then with full strength of my sword
I'll turn the realm of infidels into a graveyard.

*na kīn rāye chhorūn na rāyal katen,
to angar gadāyān sāyal ke tayīn.*

I won't spare Rayal and his successors⁹⁵
and turn them into to poor beggars.

Hearing this the sultan is relieved and consults all types of court astrologers to set a
date to depart for the conquest:

*suniyā shah jab yū bachan kān dhar,
mubāarak 'aql men rakhiyā mān kar.*

When the King listened to these words all ears,
He had great respect for (Mustafa Khan) in his exalted mind.

*liyā pūch mahtar sau jūsiyān kane,
che jūsi wa jangam majūsiyān kane.*

He asked the opinion of elders and astronomers⁹⁶
And astrologers⁹⁷, Lingayat ascetics and Zoroastrian priests⁹⁸

After this first scene in court at Bijapur, the King proceeds to Bankapur along with
the Bijapur army. This journey would have begun on 22nd Shawwal 1053 / Wednesday, 3

⁹⁵ Rayal here should refer to Venkata III (r. 1632-1642) rather than Rama Deva Raya (r. 1617-1632) of the Aravidu dynasty of Vijayanagar

⁹⁶ *jūsiyān = nūjūmiyān*

⁹⁷ *josī = jotshī*

⁹⁸ *majūsiyān = ātish parast*

January 1644 and the army would have camped at Bankapur for a few days until the day of battle on 10th Zi-Qa‘da 1053/11 January 1644. Bankapur was in this period of intense conquest a frontier city for the sultanates in the way that Burhanpur was to the Mughals. The scene of the royal army marching into Bankapur is followed by a long list of the nobles who accompanied Mustafa Khan and the King. This list includes the broad categories of nobles and soldiers - Habshis, Deccanis, Mughals, Chaghatays, Uzbeks, Qizilbash, Marathas and Turks. It reads:

*Ankas Khān Shahjī⁹⁹ va Farhād Khān,
‘Alī Khān Gāntī va Amdād Khān*

Ankas Khan, Shahji and Farhad Khan
‘Ali Khan Ghatai and Amdad Khan

*Ahmad Khān Fath va Bahlol Khān
‘Azīz Khān va Bājī va Sartol Khān.*

Ahmad Khan Fath and Bahlol Khan¹⁰⁰
Aziz Khan and Baji (Abaji Ghatge)¹⁰¹ and Sartol Khan.

*Mambājī, Ambājī va Randaula Khān,
athe Pīshjang Khān hor Boleh Khān.*

Mambaji, Ambaji and Randaula Khan
There was Pishjang Khan and Boleh Khan

*the khand agle ran mane āgale
athe ghāntge fauj main chāngle¹⁰²*

⁹⁹ Stewart Gordon notes very little is known about the activities of Shahji between 1642 and 1645. The list of personalities in the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* confirms that Shahji joined the Bijapur army’s campaigns in this period and did not stay back at his *jāgir* at Bangalore. Gordon, *The Cambridge History of India: The Marathas 1600-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 56.

¹⁰⁰ See Chapter Four on Bahlol Khan’s grandson’s patronage for Dakkanī.

¹⁰¹ B.D. Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 111.

¹⁰² *chāngle* or good in Marathi. Mirza Muqim’s use of selected Marathi words is at times unusual, almost as if he was a recent learner experimenting with new words. Marathi verbs such as *āhe* (is or to be, *hai* in Urdu) are common and fairly frequent in Dakkanī sources. Akhter (a speaker of both Marathi & Urdu and a scholar of Persian) suggests Muqim may have had a basic familiarity with Marathi. He frequently inserted nouns and adjectives in Marathi into the verses of this *masnawī*.

In the battlefield there were Agales
Many Ghatges, all good at war

pahalwān Suchhā va ū Qāzī Sa ‘id
javānmard dānā kuhan ro safīd

The strongman Suchha and Qazi Sayyid
Who was a *javānmard*, wise and fair

chalīyā siddī rehān solāpur kā,
sīlah bānd marjān bednūr kā.

Along went Siddi Rehan of Solapur¹⁰³
Fastening his weapons, he set off for Bednur.

ketī aur gāntī marāthī vazīr,
jinan nanūn likhne nayāve vazīr

They there were Kate, Ghorpade, Marathi ministers
All those names of ministers came to be written...¹⁰⁴

Such close ethnographic observations of armies, common to all Dakkani battle poems of the seventeenth century, are not just ornate descriptions of the pomp of royal armies. Mirza Muqim's ability to distinguish different members of the nobility according to their ethnic, regional, occupational and linguistic markers is curious, even remarkable, if one proceeds on the assumption that he was an Iranian migrant, but not unsurprising at all if we think of him as a Deccani, to whom the distinctions between Marathi-speaking Bijapuri nobles may have been far more recognizable. For his patron Mustafa Khan, a precise record of those who accompanied him in the siege of Ikkeri was important, as was a validation of their skills and valor on the battlefield.

Leaving the sultan in Bankapur then, Mustafa Khan departed for Ikkeri with his ablest ministers. Muqim uses contrasts of fights between animals, a lion (*sher*) for Bijapur

¹⁰³ *Nāib* of Randaula Khan, who Muhammad ‘Adil Shah gave the title of Akhlas Khan.

¹⁰⁴ Analkar, More, Sharke. Akhter, 37-39.

and a bear (*khars* or *rīch*) for the rulers of Ikkeri. As he neared Ikkeri, Khan Baba summons a *dabīr* (letter-writer) to draft a letter to Sivappa Nayak. He asks the letter-writer to compose a polite and eloquent letter on his behalf, but also one that may imbue fear in the heart of his rival (*be haibat wa hayyat ke sāche ūsse*). Like Persian chroniclers, we may surmise that Mirza Muqim had access to these dispatches or perhaps witnessed them being narrated to the letter-writers. He versifies the correspondence between Khan Baba and Sivappa Nayak throughout the poem, following epistolary conventions but heightens the imagery of pride and valor contrasted with the enemy's insolence, to edify his patron in a panegyric. The *dabīr* composes the letter, first evoking God's many names:

*alifyek hai nānūn jis ism kon,
na pāyā bashar ant tis jism kon.*

there are 1001 names of Him
Till today, man is unaware of his secrets.

*diyā ān haman kon khabar dar kitāb,
kufr dīn karna padhā kar sawāb.*

He has given us the message in the Book,
To take the right action against infidel faiths

*sachen kām momin ke ma 'sūd hain
karein nīst un kon mardūd hain*

Believers prosper from doing the work of truth
Those who do not do them are unbelievers (and will be destroyed)

After this follow a long series of creative insults and serious threats, which constitute a key component of all Dakkani battle poems from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sivappa Nayak is an enemy not just because he is an infidel but also because he is an uncouth and uncultured man. The insults are quite self-explanatory and require no interpretation:

*samajh kuch bhī aisī le na pāk tūn
huā yun kī bīsad wa bebāk tūn*

You make think anything, filthy fellow
You have become insolent and disobedient

*badhi khūb khūbī tu hāsil kiyā,
ke ap sain jahnum main wāsil kiya.*

You think you have done a good deed or two
But these shall only ensure your entrance in hell

*wa gar dil main rākhe harāne vichār,
tu nā haq apas kon kiyā khawār zār.*

If you harbor thoughts of defeating me in your heart,
Prepare your infidel self for bitter humiliation.

*ke je karb lojin pe giriyā hūn main,
agar hai agan tu to daryā hūn main.*

From pain, tears come to my eyes
If you are the fire, then I am the river.

*be sam satūrān saun kul jūt kar,
milāūn giran main jism kūt kar.*

I restrain poisonous animals
I will mince your body into pieces.

*be shamshīr khūnī chu barq ravān, *
sarān kāt bikherūn sau lākhān sawān.*

With a bloodied sword, like lightning striking
I chop off and scatter lakhs of heads

*karūn chūr mohrā chashm sār kā,
ke jon chūr karte hain sar mār kā.*

I will crush the pupil of your eye
In the same way that one crushes the head of a snake.

*qasm mujh namak hai mere shah kā,
na rākhūn bilā (milā) zārtī kāh kā.*

I swear upon the salt of my King,

With no trace of regard for anything else.

Khan Baba's threats and belittling continue in the letter, towards the end of which he declares:

*ange dekh tadbīr āp jiyū ke,
ke bhujte nahīn hain agan ghyū te.*

Look ahead to the plan of your death,
For a blazing (*dehaktī*) fire cannot be put out with *ghī*.

*hove mast bekar pive mūt kon,
na pūrā padhe shīr avadhūt kon.*

Intoxicated from drinking your own urine
But even that is not enough milk for an *avadhūt*¹⁰⁵ like you

The comparison of Sivappa Nayak to mendicants who lived on the banks of rivers and consumed human excreta, urine and the flesh of the dead is not entirely outlandish. In common Hindustani parlance, *avadhūt* and *aghor* are often used together to identify *aghor panthis*, a religious mendicant order that worships Shiva and is synonymous with filth and impurity. Mirza Muqim's familiarity with Shaivite sects and ascetics of the Deccan is most apparent in such insults. The finest and most intimate insults in Dakkani *masnawī* from the seventeenth century have something or the other to do with feces and urine. Court culture in early modern South Asia clearly was thus not just about refinement, beauty and etiquette.

In this first letter, Khan Baba reprimands Sivappa Nayak for re-taking Ikkeri fort. He chastises him, urging him to pay *kharāj* (land-tax) and obey the king, otherwise prepare for his funeral (*wa gar nayīn to apnā janazā sanwār*) and face the curse of the heavens (*tu 'ājiz hai aksar falak qahr saun*). The messenger sets off with this letter, with orders to capture Sivappa Nayak alive.

¹⁰⁵ Platts - renouncers or mendicants who live on banks of rivers, eat human excreta and waste.

In the fourth section of the *masnawī*, Mirza Muqim summarily describes the siege of Ikkeri, which only lasted for five days. Compared to earlier and later Dakkani *masnawī*, the description of battle here is less drawn out. With one attack of Bijapur's infantry and cavalry, the fort shatters. The poet compares Khan Baba's bravery to that of 'Ali, a rare instance of Shi'i symbolism in this poem:

*be yek hamle nawāb chu sher-i mast, **
hisār wa dar-o-burj qil'a shikast.

with one attack the Nawab, like a furious tiger
broke the ramparts, gate and towers of the fort

hue khawār āp dhāk nāchīz ho,
mange qaul nā chār 'ajīz ho.

Humiliated and rendered powerless
Weak and left with no option, he (Sivappa Nayak) asked for a promise

jo qābiz kiyā kot khān nāmdār,
uthiyā sūt nusrat bhar dar dayār.

When the famous Khan captured the fort,
The sound of his victory spread in all directions.

mohib 'alī sher-i nawāb hai,
ze haibat son uske na kis khwāb hai.

The Nawab is a lover of 'Ali, the lion
From fear of him dreams shatter

liyā kot zūdī che hikmat bebīn,
ze jang-o-salah wa ze sin'at bebīn

Taking the fort quickly, what strategy!
Look at his skill in making war and peace

chū qahr khudā baīn ke malnād par
kiyā zer-i nawāb sarkār nar.

God's curse had fallen upon Malnad
He put its governance under the Nawab.

With the Bijapur army victorious, Mirza Muqim next versifies the letter that Sivappa Nayak wrote to Khan Baba, asking to be forgiven and pleading for peace. It is in these letters that Mirza Muqim's expresses very specific cultural markers of each actor but within the linguistic register of Dakkani and Persian. The scene begins with the rebellious *nāyakas* losing their senses, Sivappa Nayak having a monologue and expressing regret. To articulate his apologies to Khan Baba, he summons a bi-lingual letter-writer, someone who knows Persian very well (*bulā bhīj apnā du bhāshī dabīr / ke buje jītā khūb fārsī zamīr*). Bi-lingual letter-writers, secretaries and emissaries were of course were common to all courts in the seventeenth-century Deccan, Sivappa Nayak's ambassadors to the Portuguese and the 'Adil Shahis were often Navayati Muslims (residents of the port-city of Bhatkal), who were fluent in multiple languages. Such lines are rare, suggestive of Mirza Muqim's ability to traverse multiple linguistic registers, a trait that could not be found among his Iranian contemporaries, especially Persian court chroniclers. He observed and felt it was worth pointing out that some political rivals operated in a language different from his own. The speeches and letters of historical actors that Muqim versifies in this *masnawī* confirm the many linguistic registers and moments of translations that were a part of everyday court politics and practices in the Deccan.

Sivappa Nayak then urges this writer to draft a wise and honest letter, one that will help broker a peace between him and Khan Baba. Once again, like the earlier versified letter of Khan Baba, which included a *hamd* (praise of God), the poet now versifies the same sequence and conventions in Sivappa Nayak's letter:

*likhiyā yū avval tab sukhan āshkār,
ke qādir hai sab parvar digār.*

First he wrote in the very beginning
God is almighty

*mahādeo jagdeo sau hai badhā,
ke jis the gagan yū mu 'alaq khadhā.*

Mahadev (Shiva) is greater than Jagdev (Vishnu)
Because of him the skies hang.

*hare rām govind bhagvān hai,
ke jis 'arash kursī sā aivān hai*

The name of God is Hare Ram and Govind
The sky is his throne

These lines make apparent Mirza Muqim's knowledge of Sivappa Nayak's religious cosmology. The symbols, tales and imagery evoked in Dakkani poetry (much wider than the borrowings of the Persian chronicle) range from the Old Testament, heroes of the *Shāhnāmah* to the Battle of Karbala to the Ramayana, so Mirza Muqim's ability to identify the hierarchy of deities in Sivappa Nayak's world should come as no surprise. Many, if not all Dakkani poets, could distinguish between Shaivites and Vaishnavites in the Deccan. It may also be worth stressing here that the shared form (evocations and praise of the divine in the beginning) of both these versified letters of Khan Baba and Sivappa Nayak suggests a negotiable equivalence of sorts between the two competitors. As long Sivappa Nayak remains subordinate to the mighty Khan Baba, he can believe in whatever he wants. The next lines may help explain this relationship better:

*diyā zor kis ko harī rām ne,
khadak ko maqābil de kar sāmne.*

To he whom God gave strength,
He can face the enemy with a sword

*avval yād mujh hai so bhagwant,
ba 'd az ās us khān mahāmant kā.*

First, I remember God
After which I depend on that Khan, the Prime Minister (*mahāmantrī*)

*ke mulk-i dakhan kā yaqīn thā nab tūn,
be jang-i mubārak kā ran khānp tūn.*

That you are trusted Nawab of the kingdom of the Deccan,
You who shook the battlefield with victories

*sivā nām nāyak main darbār kā,
na darbār digar hon sardār kā.*

I am Shiva, the *nāyak* of this court
But there is no other court than that of Khan Baba

*jo chāhe tu khidmat main hāzir achūn,
kare jān hawāle tu nāzir achūn.*

Whatever you may need, I will always be at your service
If you forgive me, I will always be before you

*wale yek 'arz hai jo mujh piyār gar,
banchāle yahān tūn na mujh khawār kar.*

I have but one request
Save this place, and don't be humiliate me.

*gunehgār har chand huā tujh nāzr,
bakhsh mujh wa lekin na de kuch zarar*

I have become a sinner in your eyes,
Forgive me but do not cause me harm.

*bakhshā hai sāhib gunehgār kon,
khatā tein ba 'd az nāchār son.*

God forgives the sinner,
My mistake has rendered me helpless.

In other words, Sivappa Nayak can even hold on to his autonomy as long he remains under Mustafa Khan's authority. He can believe in whichever god he wants, as long as Khan Baba (second only to god) is the next person he fears and obeys. The poet

evokes with precision the deities of all players not necessarily to cast one as better than the other but as ethnographic markers. Political authority had a hierarchy but it was not always synonymous with religious difference, the latter although observed had less direct bearing on these rivalries which could quickly re-align and shift in any given moment of conquest.

In the rest of this dramatic letter, Sivappa Nayak assures Khan Baba that he will no longer make trouble. He urges the Prime Minister to believe him and promises him never to tread this path of treachery. He asks him to let bygones be bygones (*jo māzī huā hor māzī ho gayā*). He promises to prostrate before the King if he is forgiven:

*yaqīn shāh zarā hai watan bhej kar
rahungā tu sar shah qadm nīch dhar.*

Believe me, Oh King! For I am just a speck of this homeland
I will place my head at the King's feet

*wa gar amr bakhshe to main rāzī huā,
qadm bosī karne kon bā sāz huā.*

If you forgive me I'll come to agree,
and be ready to kiss your feet.

Six lines in this chapter on the bottom right corner of folio 11 are illegible in parts.¹⁰⁶ Along with this letter Sivappa Nayak sends gifts and eight lakh *hūns* (*dhar asāt tuhfaḥ le hashtsad hazār*) with the messenger. The messenger reaches Khan Baba and delivers Sivappa Nayak's letter and recounts it verbally. In such moments of reconciliation all the lofty, ideals (to destroy infidels etc.) conventionally repeated at the beginning of such commemorative texts tend to take a back seat. Absorbing rivals into and under one's political authority was the preferred form of resolution. Khan Baba thus promises Sivappa

¹⁰⁶ *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*, f. 11.

Nayak, “*yahī qaul merā wa mujh shah kā / ke farzand sahī hai tu dargāh kā*. This is the promise of my King and I / That you are a true son of the court.” He honors the messenger with betel nut, who departs to deliver the good news to the *nāyak*. In the meantime, Khan Baba sends a *wāqi‘a nawīs* (intelligencer) to the King who, pleased to hear of Sivappa Nayak's defeat, in turn issues a *farmān*. Sivappa Nayak delighted at this news, selects the finest gifts and eight lakh *hūns*. He summons the finest engravers and goldsmiths to produce the most precious necklaces, bracelets, knee breeches and sword sheaths (*adak mol turrah kanthmāl chand / padak hast gadkān wa shamshīr band*). Along with these he carries boxes of uncut gems, he also takes along Arab horses and his ablest elephants. His gifts and entourage include an infantry of 25,000 and princelings and nobles of various ranks from areas within the Malnad (*sune wār nayak rajwād the / kare had na bar jo te malnād ke*). The abundance of such tribute seems plausible, given that Sivappa Nayak wielded authority over many smaller princelings in the Malnad region by the 1640s, and with his aid Bijapur would capture areas further south.¹⁰⁷

In the second to last scene, we witness Khan Baba's ceremonial reception of Sivappa Nayak at Ikkeri fort. Two things are worthy of comment in this encounter. First, Khan Baba's speech here is entirely in Persian and shifts qualitatively from the threats and insults in Dakkani of his earlier letter. Second, whereas in the beginning, in the moment of confrontation, Sivappa's behavior is aggressive, proud and insolent, its opposite - humility and mercy are idealized in him in the moment of political resolution.

*makkalal zar ān main sar tā qadm,
chaliyā mulke sā rājdhān sab hasham.*

From head to toe in gold-embroidered outfits
With great pomp and show they set off for the capital.

¹⁰⁷ *M.N.* Chapters VII-XI.

*chū āmad be dargah wa karnesh namūd
rakhīyā sar qadm par ū khān rā satūd*

As they were coming towards the court, the trumpet played,
He (Sivappa Nayak) put his head to the feet of that Khan in praise.

*ūthā sar kon navāb sāhib shiko,
pe chātī lagā ho, kahiā ū gurūh.*

The honorable Nawab lifted him
Embracing him, addressing him he said

*safāyī tu bāshad darīn bazmgah,
ke kardam ze shafaqat...bar tu nigah.*

"You must stay pure in this court,
I have taken pity upon you and cleared you of your sins"

*rah khūb khūbī tu burd āshī,
ke bā mā girafī ta āshī.*

You took the right path, the path of peace,
and you made peace with us.

*shavad behtar aknūn hameh kār tu,
be har jā ke bāsham nigehdār tu.*

Now all your works will become better,
Everywhere I am, I will protect you.

At the end of this scene, describing his patron's generosity Mirza Muqim gives perhaps a second, faint hint to his choice (and skill) in composing in both Dakkani and Persian. He asks - *sifat tis sadr kā kahūn kis zabān?* / 'ajāib dise dar nazr begumān (In which language shall I express this master's traits? / He appears wondrous and incomparable to the eye). Admittedly however, variations of such lines can be found in the work of many Dakkani poets, where they emphatically point to their ability to compose in both tongues (most often to one-up their Persian-speaking competitors who were rarely masters of both). Yet, one may surmise Mirza Muqim and Mustafa Khan's literary sphere

was hardly an unmixed, exclusive universe of Persian. A powerful Iranian courtier's ear was attuned to hearing Dakkani poetry, which clearly did not operate in some lower realm outside the court but competed for the same circuits of patronage and connoisseurship as Persian.

In the closing scene, Khan Baba receives the keys to the fort as he delivers the gifts to the sultan (*zar-o-bāj wa tuhfeh wa tāb sāt le / apan kot apnā apan hāt le*). Comparing his patron to the rarest of stars (Suhail), Mirza Muqim concludes the poem with the sultan's reception of Mustafa Khan. Khan Baba bends to kiss the feet of the sultan, who instead lifts him up, embraces him and honors him with a robe, a promotion and appoints him commander of the army. The *masnawī* ends, with the name of Mirza Muqim:

*murattab shud fath nāma-i ikkerī,
az guftār-i mirzā muqīm.*

Fath Nāma-i Ikkeri was complete,
in the words of Mirza Muqim.

In such a stylized final portrait of the Prime Minister and the sultan, Mirza Muqim placed both figures on equal terms in court. Unlike Persian chronicles, there was no ambiguity in the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* about the poet's partiality towards his patron.

The new kind history-writing Mirza Muqim experimented with articulates the two-fold purpose of this chapter - to present a profile of patronage in a moment of prolonged and negotiated conquest. Moving away from the absolute political rivalries represented in Persian chronicles on the upper levels of the stratigraphy of conquest, we moved here to a layer further down. In this strata of Dakkani *masnawī*, the encounter of conquest unsettles all received wisdom and neat typologies of both the 'identity' of the patron and the choice of language, form and content on the part of the poet. Mirza Muqim, perhaps an Iranian

or a Deccani, was fully cognizant of the bi-lingual registers of himself and his patron, an Iranian migrant in the process of consolidating his careers and resources within the Deccan. Moreover, conquest as dramatized in this narrative poem is not just a plain matter of political domination. But one in which the ethnographic profile of rivals was at once generic and specific. That Shivappa Nayak was a non-Muslim who stood in the righteous path of Islam remains the battle poem's obvious convention. But to apprehend and incorporate him into the processes of conquest also required a much deeper, erudite appraisal of and familiarity with the adversary's religious and cultural cosmology. In this layer, intimate insults were often signaled through the enemy's ethnographic markers, and the two were always coterminous. The contest over Ikkeri existed in a wider coastal and oceanic spatial continuum along the Konkan coast, which held all of the crucial tools and materials necessary for the Karnatak conquest, and where we find Mustafa Khan's next set of entangled and often fragile spheres of patronage.

Between bully and friend: Encounters with the Portuguese and the Dutch

Let us now turn to another set of negotiations that unfolded around and as a result of the Karnatak conquest, both before and after the seige of Ikkeri in 1644. Under Mustafa Khan and his kinsmen, the Karnatak conquest continued at full speed in the 1640s, at the same time that the power equations between European powers were being reconfigured across Asia. While Syriam and Hormuz fell in the 1610s and 1620s and Melaka in 1641,¹⁰⁸ Portuguese power along the Konkan coast survived but was frequently challenged and weakened by the Dutch, especially through their newly established factory at Vengurla, located just north of Goa. After Bijapur granted the Dutch permission to settle there in 1637, Vengurla was set up under the direct control of Batavia. The early

¹⁰⁸ Subrahmanyam, *Portuguese Empire in Asia*, 184.

negotiations between the Bijapur court and the Dutch, as recorded in the embassy of Johan van Twist, are well known as is the context for Luso-Dutch rivalry in the western Indian Ocean.¹⁰⁹

While Mustafa Khan's disdain for the Portuguese went back at least two decades, after the establishment of the factory at Vengurla and during the conquest of the Karnatak in the 1640s, he never proved to be an unequivocal friend of the Dutch either. It was far more advantageous for him, sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah and local port officials to maintain a balance of power among European powers, never allowing them exclusive control of the Konkan's hinterland nor of its coasts. The picture that emerges from the Dutch and Portuguese materials suggests that bullying rather than outright collaboration with either side remained the default position of courtly elites such as Mustafa Khan, especially in a time when they faced competition from men within their own ranks or were at odds with his own sultan. Like Pulicat in the period 1610-1640, powerful local magnates, who controlled the area around Vengurla, and their rivals and allies determined the trajectory of the rivalry between the Dutch and Portuguese.¹¹⁰ Further, the interests of local officials controlling areas closer to the coast and the court at Bijapur, as this section will show, were never uniform and not always aligned with each other either. Even when forging connections across the ocean or with Europeans within their domains, migrant elites' primary concern remained local consolidation and the intensification of networks *within* the Deccan.

¹⁰⁹ Joshi, *Embassy of Johan van Twist* (1956), C.R. Boxer, "War and trade in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, 1600–1650," *The Mariner's Mirror* 71, no. 4 (1985): 417-435. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "The 'Pulicat Enterprise': Luso-Dutch conflict in south-eastern India, 1610–1640," *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 9, no. 2 (1986): 17-36.

¹¹⁰ Subrahmanyam, "The Pulicat Enterprise," 20-21.

Based on published sources, Om Prakash has suggested that the factory at Vengurla had a strategic rather than ‘purely commercial’ purpose.¹¹¹ Unlike Bengal and factories on the eastern Coromandel, precious metals did not flow into this factory. Instead goods from other parts of the Indian Ocean such as Indonesian spices (nutmeg, cloves and mace) and Malayan tin from Melaka were traded into Vengurla. The English and Dutch had jointly tried as early as 1621 to unsuccessfully blockade Goa and the Dutch resumed this blockade in 1635, with no assistance from Bijapur.¹¹² Although the Bijapur sultan repeatedly issued *farmāns* that exempted the Dutch from tolls and *rahdārī* duties in his territories, local officials did not obey him and continued to harass the Dutch for these payments.¹¹³

While it is true that much of the goods passing through Vengurla were for the maintenance of crews and the factory,¹¹⁴ the prime beneficiaries of war supplies such as saltpeter from the southeastern Coromandel,¹¹⁵ horses from Masqat¹¹⁶ and elephants from Sri Lanka were local courtiers such as Mustafa Khan and his kinsmen who needed these materials for the campaigns in the Karnatak. While continuing to receive these supplies from Vengurla, both Muhammad ‘Adil Shah and Mustafa Khan made tall but unfulfilled

¹¹¹ Om Prakash, “The Dutch factory at Vengurla,” 186.

¹¹² Ibid., 187. De Jongh, 196-198, Letter of Dominicus Bouwen to the King of Bijapur, 2 October 1640.

¹¹³ Ibid. VOC 1133, 517, Pieter Paets in Vengurla to Governor General Antonio van Diemen, 20 October 1639.

¹¹⁴ VOC 1133, 481-483, Letter of Pieter Paets in Rajabag to Governor General Antonio Van Dieman, 15 August 1640.

¹¹⁵ Subrahmanyam, *Political Economy of Commerce*, 55. Aside from the region north of Madurai, which supplied saltpeter to most of the Deccan, another area of saltpeter production for the Konkan in the 1640s lay much closer, in Danda Rajapur. During the first half of the seventeenth century it was controlled by Mustafa Khan, Randaula Khan and several others. Coastal trade along and around Rajapur also moved saltpeter supplies to different polities along and within the Konkan hinterland. VOC 1133, 505v, 517r. The main issue of contention was whether the Dutch or the Portuguese would be exempt from taxes on saltpeter.

¹¹⁶ VOC 1133, f. 483.

promises to the Dutch that they would aid them in weakening the Portuguese. Pieter Paets, merchant at Vengurla often reported rumors circulating that the Bijapur king intended to raise war against the Great Mughal and with this intention he had called upon the maximum forces from the Karnatak (*De geruchten lopen hier en wert voor wacht geseijt dat sijn Majesteit van Visiapour den oorlogs tegens de Groten Mogol meent aen te nemen, tot welke intentie sijn meeste macht uit de landen van Carnatica heeft op ontboden*).¹¹⁷ If this were to happen, he insisted that it would be difficult to take a firm position on the issue as all the promises Bijapur had made to the Dutch were bound to change. The Dutch frequently sent Pieter Andries, a *chirurgijn* or doctor, who attended to Mustafa Khan and brought back information.¹¹⁸ He reported that His Majesty had promised the Dutch that Goa could be taken over with the assistance of thirty to forty thousand men under the command of Asad Khan, the son of Mustafa Khan, but that this never transpired.¹¹⁹ The Dutch were under the impression that Bijapur could, given that it controlled all of the Konkan hinterland, if it wished, effectively cut off Goa from the land side (*schriftelick beloofden om Goa van de landt zijde alle affbreuck te doen soude verbonden hebben*).¹²⁰ Reporting on his audience with the Bijapur sultan in the presence of Mustafa Khan, Pieter Paets wrote that very little pepper had been procured, because the former had gathered all his forces and other vassals and sent them to the Karnatak conquest. This had made travel and transit routes so unsafe that no merchants could use the roads. But now that the entire Karnatak would be under the Bijapuris, the Dutch hoped to be in a better position.

¹¹⁷ VOC 1133, f. 483r.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ VOC 1133, 20 October 1639, Letter of Pieter Paets in Vengurla to Governor General Antonio Van Dieman, fls. 517v - 518. VOC 1133, 505-506, Letter of Pieter Paets in Vengurla to Director General Philip Lucas in Ceylon, fls. 505-507.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

The movement of different ambassadors in and out of Bijapur made it evident to Dutch merchants at Vengurla that they were one of many suitors to the court. Mustafa Khan owned ships that moved between Vengurla and Bhatkal and the Persian Gulf. There are frequent references to the traffic of ambassadors from Safavid Iran to Bijapur, one of whom Bijapur requested be brought over on VOC vessels instead of their own ships.¹²¹ In 1639, a Safavid ambassador arrived on the Dutch ship *Harderwijk* via Dabhol. While in Bijapur, his principal request was that the Bijapur sultan pursue the war against the Mughals. Otherwise, he claimed, the Safavid sultan threatened to destroy all the frigates that were coming from this kingdom (to the Persian Gulf). He brazenly added that the tribute that the ‘Adil Shahs were paying annually to the Mughals could instead be paid to the King of Persia!¹²² The Dutch reported that the Bijapur sultan, for his part, waited and did not answer the Safavid ambassador’s request and proposition. In other instances, Pieter Paets reported on other European ambassadors who appeared in Bijapur, where the Dutch themselves waited for hours on end for an audience with the sultan. Paets also noted the Portuguese ambassador’s visit to Bijapur in September 1639. Although the sultan and Mustafa Khan honored this Portuguese ambassador with gifts of a horse, gold embroidered cloth and a silk veil for the ambassador’s wife, the youngest son of Mustafa Khan did not want to talk to the said ambassador saying that he did not wish to be either friends or enemies with the Dutch nor the Portuguese (*maer den jongsten soon van den Hartoch en heeft geseijde Portugeesen Ambassadeur niet te spraack willen staen seggende*

¹²¹ De Jongh, 202, Copy and Translation of Letter of Bijapur king to Dominicus Bouwen, commander of Dutch fleet in Goa, 1641. VOC 1133, f. 506.

¹²² VOC 1133, fls. 519-520.

met de Hollanders ende Portugeesen te gelijk geen vijanden segge vrienden).¹²³ All the *farmāns* and rights that had been granted to the Portuguese during the sultan's father's (Ibrahim Adil Shah II) time were renewed. Thus, not only was there no uniform consensus within the highest ranking nobles of local courts on which Europeans to side with, there was no guarantee that a favorable reception accorded to one embassy necessarily meant the same would happen the next year.

Early on in 1640, Muhammad Reza, the governor or *havāldār* of Ponda, reprimanded the Dutch for failing to follow diplomatic protocol. He chided them in a letter for not sending news of the fleet's arrival at Vengurla and questioned them as to why no one was sent to pay dues to Mustafa Khan. He also kept an eye on Dutch negotiations with the Portuguese.¹²⁴ The Dutch complained often of the lack of commitment to drive out the Portuguese, who they believed were at their weakest naval strength and did not understand why despite the promise of doing so by the Bijapuris five years ago, the Portuguese had still managed to burn down the fortress of Mormugão and make fugitives out of its guards.¹²⁵ All the while the commander of the Dutch fleet off Goa's coast, Dominicus Bouwens wrote several letters to the Bijapur king and Mustafa Khan insisting that not enough was being done to contain the Portuguese in the early 1640s.¹²⁶ Clearly, with all their energies focused on the Karnatak campaign and on keeping an eye on each other's ambitions, the Bijapuri elites could not be bothered with forging an unambiguous alliance with either the Dutch or the Portuguese. A more astute option was to keep European

¹²³ VOC 1133, f. 519v, Letter from Pieter Paets to Governor General Antonio van Dieman, 20 October 1639.

¹²⁴ VOC 1152, Letter of the Governor of Ponda, 165.

¹²⁵ De Jongh 196, Copy and Translation of Letter of Dominicus Bouwens, commander of Dutch fleet in Goa to Bijapur king, 2 October 1640.

¹²⁶ Ibid. De Jongh 198, Translation of the letter in the name of Dominicus Bouwen, by Chief Merchant Claes Cornelissen to Mustafa Khan 'the ruler of the kingdom of the Deccan', 1640.

powers in balance, never allowing them full and unhindered access to coastal or inland areas, but instead using their factories, supply lines and maritime resources to stock materials for the war in the Karnatak.

Bouwen reported to Muhammad ‘Adil Shah on the activities of Muhammad Reza, whose letters the Dutch intercepted in Melaka.¹²⁷ The Dutch probably believed they could expel the Portuguese entirely from Goa if they had the full backing of Bijapur, much like the alliance they would soon forge with the Sultanates of Aceh and Johor against the Portuguese in Melaka in 1641. Never a reassuring ally, Muhammad Reza, thus made a contract with the Portuguese Viceroy on 4 June 1641, a Dutch translation of which is included in the incoming correspondence of the factory at Vengurla.¹²⁸ On behalf the King and his ‘*stadthouder*’ Mustafa Khan, on the one hand, and the Portuguese viceroy on the other, both parties promised to set aside previous differences and begin anew. In summary, the Portuguese agreed to provide the full support of their fleet to Bijapur, while the latter was expected to remove all Dutch residents from all the areas in and around Vengurla. Further, with or without a *qaul*, Muslim merchants were allowed to trade in hitherto forbidden items such as elephants, horses, slaves, incense, ginger etc. (*Ende zullen de Mooren vermoogen t'zij met ofte sonder Couwel te negotieren in oliphanten paerden slaeven Caffers gember Balcken en alles wat voor deesen nooit toegestaen was te handelen haer negotie vrij in onverhindert mogen drijven*). The contract also stipulated that the Viceroy would be allowed to remove the Dutch from Vengurla and all the other places on the coast, while the contents of their establishment and goods would be kept as loot. Both parties promised to aid each other militarily and each would keep an

¹²⁷ De Jongh 196.

¹²⁸ VOC 1139, fls. 117-118.

ambassador in Goa and Bijapur.¹²⁹ The contract dates from 4 June 1641, months after the Iberian Union had ended but when news of it had not yet reached Portuguese possessions in Asia.¹³⁰ Whether or not the Bijapur sultan agreed to any of these articles remains unknown, but the Bijapur governor stationed at Ponda, Muhammad Reza, was undoubtedly a partisan of the Portuguese even though his patron Mustafa Khan had been known to despise them. This was, by no means, the first time that the *havāldār* had taken it upon himself to represent the sultan and negotiate independently with the Portuguese, with the ostensible goal of driving out the Dutch while strengthening his resources against rivals in Bijapur.

We may turn now to a moment of convergence in the sources and where we witness the conflicts between local rulers, administrators and officials, within the ambit of which Dutch and Portuguese conflict unfolded. The second arrest of Mustafa Khan of 1642-1643, two accounts of which I presented in the first section on Persian chronicles, appears somewhat different when seen through the prism of negotiations between Muhammad Reza, the Bijapur sultan and the *Estado da Índia*. Although the governor of Ponda and his ambitions in the Konkan remain missing in court chronicles, they are hardly inconspicuous in European sources. In one letter dating from 28 February 1642, Muhammad Reza requested the Portuguese to assist him against the Bijapur army which was making its way to Danda Rajapur. While some members of the Portuguese State Council (*Conselho do Estado*) agreed that any outright assistance to the *havāldār* would unsettle and provoke the sultan, others did not wish for Muhammad Reza to side with the

¹²⁹ Ibid., f. 118.

¹³⁰ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Holding the World in Balance: The Connected Histories of the Iberian Overseas Empires, 1500–1640", *The American Historical Review* 112, 5 (2007): 1359-1385

Dutch either. Although the Council eventually dodged the request, they concurred that the more people rebelling against the ‘Adil Shahi king, the better it would be for them.¹³¹

The plot took an unexpected turn right at the time of Mustafa Khan’s arrest, analyzed already through Zuhur and Astarabadi’s accounts in this chapter’s first part. On 1 October 1643, the Bijapur ambassador reported that the ‘Adil Shah had taken Mustafa Khan prisoner along with his two sons and Muhammad Reza's father-in-law, a certain Shah Saheb (‘Xa Saibo’). The *havāldār* feared it would be his turn next as he was Mustafa Khan’s creature (*era feitura sua*). The ambassador requested the Viceroy that Muhammad Reza be given a safe conduct allowing him to come to Goa and from there proceed to Persia or wherever else he wished to go. The safe conduct (*seguro*) of Muhammad Reza stated:

I give safe passage in the name of the King, our Lord, to Mirza Mamede Raza *avaldar* of the Concão so that if he wishes to come to the city, he can do so freely with his wife, children, family and service people, with all his goods and those of these said persons, so that he can go on from here to wherever seems best to him, without any constraint, rather he will receive all good treatment and honor with his family. To this effect, I ordered this safe conduct to be passed in Goa on 29 September 1643. Count of Aveiras.¹³²

The Council also calculated correctly that since Mustafa Khan and Shah Saheb were known to be close to the Mughals, they might soon be released, and we do know that Shah Jahan eventually intervened and compelled the Bijapur king to set Mustafa Khan free.¹³³ Any help extended towards the kinsmen and allies of Mustafa Khan would work in favor of the Portuguese, to whom they would then be grateful and indirectly this would help keep the Portuguese be on the good side of the Mughals. While Mustafa Khan was jailed

¹³¹ ACE, Vol. II, 340-341.

¹³² ACE, Vol. II, 457-459.

¹³³ Nayeem, *External Relations of Bijapur*, 167.

in Belgaum, Muhammad Reza wrote once again to Goa, asking permission to go to Mecca with his family:

The said Lord Count Viceroy further pointed out in the same Council that they were aware of the presence in this city of Goa of Mirza Mamede Raza, who had been Avaldar of the Concão, on account of the fears that he had of being made prisoner by the King Idalxá; and that in order for him to come to this city he had been given a safe-conduct (*seguro*), for him and for his family, as had already been communicated to the Council; and now he was asking for permission to be able to go in a vessel to Meca, or some other destination, along with his family, and since the matter is of such importance, he [the viceroy] wished to communicate it to the Council in order that it might be resolved what the most appropriate course should be. He also noted that this Avaldar had taken 48,480 *xerafins* from Joseph Pinto Pereira, in the dealings with him regarding the expulsion of the Dutch from Vingurla, for which it seemed just to demand satisfaction, besides what it would cost for a fleet to take him to Surrate, if he is allowed to go, a decision that has many disadvantages, the principal one being that the Dialxá will ask for much money in the event of his absence, as nothing is ever enough for the Moors, and even more so in the state in which we are.¹³⁴

Clearly, by this time and according to the aforementioned contract with the Viceroy that was intercepted by the Dutch in 1641, Muhammad Reza should have assisted in the removal of the Dutch from Vengurla. This task had been left unfinished despite the hefty payment that Muhammad Reza had taken for it. Not long after the safe conduct was given to Muhammad Reza, the Bijapur Sultan, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah, wrote a furious letter to the Council on 16 November, 1643. In it he asked the Viceroy to hand over Muhammad Reza, who had escaped to Goa with a safe conduct. The Sultan’s letter was described as bad-tempered (*descomposta*) and the meeting minutes noted it was completely out of keeping with the norms of correspondence.¹³⁵ The letter implicates the *havāldār* and his patron, Mustafa Khan, and runs as follows (in its Portuguese version):

To the one who resides in great state, [whose] government is full of good fortune, [who is] obeyed by his subjects, luminous in fame and spirit, steadfast in peace,

¹³⁴ ACE, Vol. II, doc. 180, 469.

¹³⁵ ACE, Vol. II, doc. 184, 474-478.

informed of all news, feared, and with power over many, the Chosen of the Law of the Messiah, the whale and lion of the sea, João da Sylva Tello, viceroy of the state of Goa, may he ever be secure and contented, to whom this is written, with love and with pearl-like letters, so that the following may be known:

Despite the fact that Mostafacão did not merit my royal grants and graces, I covered him with them; and when he had them all, he did not know how to benefit from them, and forgetting them he became ungrateful and went about doing bad and dishonest things. And when I was informed of his evil actions and bad works, I became greatly annoyed, and for that reason I had the said ingrate and his sons seized and put in prison, with all the other people who were his dependents and supporters, which included one Mamede Raza, who had the Concão in his charge, which [region] gives much profit to my crown and treasury, and sustains and feeds many people. He being despicable, and rooted in evil and unworthy intentions, and wholly lacking in wisdom, had placed the said Concão and its lands in a poor condition.

Unlike the two Persian chroniclers's accounts discussed earlier which were produced under Mustafa Khan's direct patronage and thus hardly, favorable to the sultan, the correspondence with the *Estado* reveals the true sentiments of sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah towards his Prime Minister in 1643, who had by this time accumulated an enormous range of resources through the Karnatak campaigns. While the exact reasoning for the arrest has not been given here either, the memory of Mustafa Khan's first arrest in 1635 is implicit in this letter as is his tendency to defy the sultan's authority. We know that over the course of the sixteenth century, Bijapur only episodically intervened in the Konkan.¹³⁶ But by the mid-seventeenth century, Bijapur's ambitions were much more clearly mercantile, directly linked to maritime and coastal trade along the Konkan coast, which as the sultan emphatically observed, was a huge source of revenue for his kingdom and the prosperity of his subjects. The letter does not share the ambivalence of Astarabadi nor the unequivocal partisanship of Zuhur towards Mustafa Khan, a courtier who had already overstepped the King's authority by placing his kith and kin in critical positions on the

¹³⁶ Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History: Mughals and Franks*, 90-95.

Konkan coast. Muhammad Reza could therefore either threaten to choke resources moving eastwards towards Bijapur from the coast, or just escape with his family and assets further west towards Goa. The news of his flight had already reached the Sultan:

And now, as soon as he has learnt that I had ordered Mostafacão to be seized, he [Raza] fled to Goa and the protection of Your Excellency, and along with him he took all his goods, money, effects, and other things that belong to my crown and treasury, to which he and his family are indebted. So that Your Excellency should be aware that everyone lives in the hope of my favourable regard and grace, and I thus cast my eyes on the friendship of that pious setting of precious stones, the King of Portugal; and Your Excellency who too possesses grandeur, and that fine understanding and prudence through which everything can be attained, and who is loyal in the service of his King of Portugal, I suggest that you cast your eyes around at a distance, and inform yourself well of all this, and having sought the advice of all the Portuguese in Goa, look to your [own] welfare, and order the handing over of Mamede Raza with all his goods, effects and family to that noble Sahide who is fortunate and much beloved among the Sahides, Sahide Ibraemo, the Avaldar of the Concão, through the mediation of Mir Mamede Sahide, who is honoured, noble and loyal in my service and that of my state, who is my ambassador resident in Goa, [and] who was appointed and has been covered with my grace, as soon as he arrives in the presence of Your Excellency. There should be no delay in this, and Your Excellency should look to your own well-being, for this is not a matter that brooks dissimulation, and I swear on God Almighty that if there is any delay in this, and if Your Excellency does not pay attention to this, you may be certain that no trace of Goa will be left on the ground. So that Your Excellency should do in every way as I say, and should order the handing over of Mamede Raza to my servants and those of my royal state, along with the money, effects and treasury of Mostafacão, and with everything from my royal treasury and my crown that he has taken. If Your Excellency does not settle this, and act with the rapidity that is appropriate, there will then be problems and dissensions and tumult, all caused on account of Your Excellency, and the Portuguese in Goa, and not on my account, because I have and possess much friendship with the King of Portugal, and on that account I sent Memede Saide there as my ambassador, with whom you can deal in all matters that concern that state, and through whom everything can be negotiated and settled, for it is understood that the increase in the welfare of both states is made up of this. Written on the 21st of the month of Xabana [Sha‘ban] in the Moorish year of 1053, which is 4 November of the present year of 1643.¹³⁷

The presence of an ambassador in Goa was no guarantee that enough intelligence and information on Muhammad Reza's activities would reach the sultan. So he threatened

¹³⁷ *ACE*, Vol. II, doc. 184, 476-78.

to go all the way to the King of Portugal, to whom Bijapur, had much earlier in 1575, sent an ambassador, Zahir Beg, during the reign of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah's grandfather, ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah I.¹³⁸ Alas, this was, by no means, the first time that the angry sultan had intimidated the Viceroy of Goa. The Portuguese letter above uncannily echoes a *farmān* in Persian issued two years prior to the fall out with Mustafā Khan and Muhammad Reza in 1643, wherein the King again threatened to destroy Goa. Addressed to Muhammad Reza, when relations between the two were relatively cordial, the reasons for the sultan's fury in this order were closely connected to the access and flow of goods, horses and war materials along and over the Konkan coast. The letter opens:¹³⁹

Hu al-Jalīl
God's glory

Al-mulk ullah
In the kingdom of God

Stamp/seal (*sikka*)

A royal *farmān* issued to the noble charactered, ever vigilant, peerless well-wisher Mirza Muhammad Reza, the *havāldār*, in charge of the district of Goa, in the *Shuhur San* year 1041. During these days it was brought to imperial notice a ship from the port of Chaul was prepared for the [title] choicest of nobles, the progeny of the high ranking, illuminated, servant of Fars, brave in the battlefield, bold, with thousands of favors, of boundless benevolence and the gracious, the exalted *Rustam Zamān*, *sipāh sālār* or commander of the Sultanate, Randaula Khan, and they wanted that this ship (of his) be sent out to other ports. Captain Rewadanda¹⁴⁰ objected to this and going against the agreements and covenants, he instead wanted to cause damage. *Asad ul-Bahr*, the Viceroy of the island of Goa, claims to be very sincere and friendly, therefore, that well-wisher should send this case to the Viceroy and it should be explained to him and made to understand that God forbid, even if the slightest obstruction is made against the ship of the

¹³⁸ Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History*, 90.

¹³⁹ The editor of *Assentos de Conselho*, Panduranga Pissurlencar refers to this Persian *farmān* from Muhammad ‘Adil Shah to Mirza Muhammad Reza at Ponda, dated 1st August 1641, reproduced in G.H. Khare, ed., *Aitihāsik Phārsī Sāhitya*, Vol. 4, Poona, 1949, doc. 27. There are some errors in Khare's transcription, which I have changed in my translation here from Persian to English.

¹⁴⁰ This is a reference to Upper Chaul or Rewadanda that was the Portuguese section of Chaul. Subrahmanyam, *Explorations in Connected History*, 126.

above-mentioned Khan, he (the Viceroy) better believe that at the same time Goa would be destroyed, as the entire army is ready. However you, a well-wisher, agreeable to our *nawāb* [Mustafa Khan], and should also show consideration to *Rustam Zamān*. In short, that well-wisher should emphasize and quickly write a letter in the name of above-mentioned Captain, that there should not be slightest hindrance in the departure of the ships of the said Khan, and that not an iota be left in helping him out.

The six horses which were brought for the government of the said Khan were asked to be taxed, and the above-mentioned Captain is aggravating the demand for *zakāt*. Before we ordered this 25 horses were to be treated as exemptions for the government and a notice issued that the Captain should not show a harsh attitude. But instead he made an excuse that if these are brought to Dabhol they would be permitted to pass. What does he mean by this? (*īn lā falāyīn che ma 'ani dārad*), in the port of Dabhol or the port of Rajapur or Goa, *zakāt* is exempt for the exalted government everywhere. In such a situation, the above-mentioned Captain was making the wrong excuses and wanted to create *fasād* or disturbance. You must believe that this disturbance will cause his destruction.

Therefore it should be said in this matter, and you well wisher should warn the above-mentioned Captain that he shall make no more unreasonable demands. The above-mentioned Captain, as per rule of the past, harshly demanded 28,000 *Lārī* (Persian coins). Before the said port was under someone else but now is under my government, then, how can it be taxed? A letter should be sent to the Viceroy, emphasizing to the above-mentioned Captain, to make no other demands after this warning. Before this 1% *Lārī* coin was taken as *zakāt* from merchants and now they demand 10%, because of this reason the ports are suffering. What has always been the practice should be continued and it be emphasized that no excessive demands be made, written on 3rd of the month of *Jumādī al-Aval* 1051, 10 August 1641.

The first point to note here is that the Bijapur king saw *all* of the Konkan coast from Chaul to Dabhol to Danda Rajapur to Goa, more than seven hundred kilometers of a distance, and in spite of European presence on it, as his territorial domains because he controlled access to its hinterland. In 1641, the sultan was still relying on Muhammad Reza to make sure that goods of Bijapuri courtiers were unhindered in their passage along the coast so they could fuel conquest. Ironically however, in a matter of a couple of years, the sultan would come to have troubled relations not just with Mustafa Khan and Muhammad Reza, but also with Randaula Khan, *sipāh sālār* or the commander of the army, whose ships he wanted to ensure in this particular *farmān*.

The anxieties of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah unveil how high the stakes were for a mercantile polity such as Bijapur, where at all levels of court faction, each individual sought to combine land and port-based resources during a period of conquest and consolidation of their interests. The Portuguese Captain of Chaul seems to have been sending Bijapuri vessels back and forth, further south to Dabhol, if they wished to be allowed inland without paying any commercial tax. In both Golkonda and Bijapur, the formal commercial tax, categorized as various types of *zakāt*, was a regular source of state revenue and was imposed on all import and export goods at the harbor, and was generally assessed and fixed at a flat rate based on the type and the quantity of goods.¹⁴¹ Arbitrarily increasing the rate of taxation at ports, especially for war materials such as horses necessary for conquest, went against the convention of a fixed, pre-determined commercial tax. Paired together, the two letters of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah reaffirm the fragility of both Goa and Bijapur, mercantile polities that were internally fraught with disagreement among their officials, courtiers and ministers and wholly dependent upon resources of the hinterland as well as the ocean.

By the mid-1640s, things seemed to have come full circle with negotiations settled between the King, Mustafa Khan and Muhammad Reza, and the Dutch and the Portuguese. Between November 1643 to January 1644, through the Dutch broker who went between Rajapur, the factory at Vengurla and the capital city, Bijapur, Mustafa Khan received numerous gifts including Chinese porcelain and cloth with brocade.¹⁴² In

¹⁴¹ M.Z.A. Shakeb, Chapter Four "Commercial Contacts" in *The Relations of Golkonda with Iran 1518 - 1687* (Delhi: Primus Books, 2016). Shakeb notes at times the rate of *zakāt* was also fixed according to the number of laborers employed in producing it, as in the case of diamond mining in Golkonda.

¹⁴² VOC 1144, *Dagregister* Wingurla, ff. 696, 697.

February 1644, the Dutch once again drawing a comparison with their experience in other parts of Asia seemed to think that Mustafa Khan would ask them to join in an alliance against the Portuguese. They received the news that “Mustafa Khan is on the move with a large army and intends to create an alliance between us and the sultan in order to attack Goa with the said army by land and then to make an attack by water, and conquer their forts, and they can imagine nothing else than that this year Goa will be lost just like Ceylon.”¹⁴³ By November of 1644 however, we learn that all sides had become less hostile towards each other from a letter written to Muhammad Reza, the Governor of Ponda, who clearly did not flee to Mecca with his family after the abovementioned confrontation with the King.¹⁴⁴ The fact that Muhammad Reza was under Portuguese protection and not always in agreement with Mustafa Khan or the Bijapur king was quite clear to the Dutch, who thus tried to keep him pleased and placated. In a letter to Muhammad Reza, who seemed to cast doubt on Dutch naval assistance, which had been used all along the Konkan coast to blockade and threaten Goa, we learn the following:

When we were writing a letter to the great lord Mustafa Khan, the letter you sent to me came to us, which was a great pleasure to me on account of the great sympathy that I have always seen Your Honor have towards our side, for which we are obliged to return the same affection to Your Honor. Our letter to the lord [Mustafa Khan] was immediately dispatched to the up-country yesterday along with a proper present to His Highness [Mustafa Khan], which we hope will be accepted by him as a mark of the special respect cherished towards him. That the dispatch did not happen earlier was because I had been busy sending ships to many places. This is also the reason why I was not able to write to Your Honor earlier, and not because our friendship has diminished; as you seem to doubt whether we have really intended, with the forces that we have all along this coast, to realise something special against the Portuguese. But the Portuguese, seemingly being also afraid of it [i.e. the Dutch attack], have finally seen reason and consented to avoid the causes on account of which we have been so far at war with them. So that, with all reasons of enmity coming to stop, both sides have left hostility behind. However this agreement will not make our obliging friendship to His Highness or Your

¹⁴³ VOC 1144, *Dagregister Wingurla*, f. 698.

¹⁴⁴ *ACE*, Vol. II, doc. 180, 469.

Honor decline in any way, and notwithstanding this, we remain always ready to be at the service of His Majesty [the ‘Adil Shah] as he might be pleased to use us. For which end we have stipulated that the Portuguese should not be able to make war against any kings and prince[s] who are our friends in these countries, or that [in such an event] we would be allowed to come to their aid with our forces. As a consequence, our friendship will never be decreased but rather increased, for we will have a better opportunity to serve His Majesty with our forces, when he would be pleased to command us, while not using them against the Portuguese. In order to prove this, we will herewith send Your Honor a roll of brocade, and requesting Your Honor to be kind enough to thankfully accept it, though actually being of little value, nevertheless as a certain mark of our inclination to maintain all good friendship and alliance with you. May God protect Your Honor for many ages.¹⁴⁵

As the Karnatak conquest moved further southeast, the correspondence with Mustafa Khan and his network of friends and allies begins to thin out from the Dutch factory at Vengurla. We learn of Mustafa Khan’s love for Chinese porcelain and Chinese anise, which he liked to put in his coffee (*cawa*), and frequently asked Dutch merchants at Vengurla to bring it for him.¹⁴⁶ After his release from Belgaum fort and the siege of Ikkeri in 1644, the merchant Martin Portmans was sent to deliver gifts and a message to Mustafa Khan. He was instructed to check on the Portuguese and the English agents of Courteen’s Association who already had their agents in Danda Rajapur and had sent gifts to the court at Bijapur.¹⁴⁷ Although by this time hostilities had temporarily ceased on all sides, Portmans was still instructed to inquire why, despite the full support of Dutch fleet during times of war, Bijapur had made peace with the Portuguese.¹⁴⁸ By 1647, the Bijapur army, under Mustafa Khan was reported to have reached the domains of the neighboring

¹⁴⁵ VOC 1152, Letter to the Governor of Ponda, Wingurla 19 November 1644.

¹⁴⁶ VOC 1133, f. 485, Pieter Paets in Vengurla to Antonio van Dieman, 20 May 1640. “*Sijn hoogheid Mustaf Chan verlangt seer naer het Porceleijn daer van het Monster met Edele Heer Coen is gesonden, soo dat dagelix soo wanneer bij hem comen vraegct off het selve desen jare oock sal comen den Hartogh soude meede wel regeeren 2 a 3 man Chinesche Anijs alsoo hij de selve in sijn cawa coockt ende daer seer naer verlanght*”.

¹⁴⁷ De Jongh 326, *Copie Instructie voor den Koopman Maertijn Poortmans, gaande van Wingurla als afgezant naar het hof van Visiapoer tott het overbrengen van geschenken aan den hertog Mustapchan*, 29 November 1644.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

sultanate of Golkonda.¹⁴⁹ At the same time, through much of this period, both the Dutch and the Portuguese also had to come to terms with Sivappa Nayak who controlled the pepper-producing hinterland off the Kanara coast.¹⁵⁰ He would remain an ally of Bijapur, nominally accepting their authority, but gradually acquiring the forts they had earlier gained. Concomitantly, in order to defeat his rival in Mysore, Sivappa Nayak recognized the suzerainty of Sri Ranga III in Vellore, the last ruler of the Aravidu dynasty of Vijayanagar, who, in turn, wrote several pleas to the Mughal Viceroy, Aurangzeb, on how the sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda were harassing him and he needed the Mughal empire's protection.¹⁵¹

We may close the story for now at 1648, when Mustafa Khan's death was reported to the factory at Vengurla, and the news of his successor was received with caution by Dutch factors.¹⁵² After Mustafa Khan, the next ten to twelve years of the conquest of the Karnatak continued under his successors and son, Asad Khan, but also through newly acquired alliances and in collaboration with the forces of local powers such as Ikkeri's Sivappa Nayak. Unlike the narrative of a smooth, unhindered conquest we find in Persian chronicles and the heroic drama of conquest, presented in Dakkani *masnawī*, European archival sources provide a window into the fractures and fissures within Mustafa Khan's network and his relations with the sultan. Such cross reading of multi-sited materials offers a fuller appraisal of the interdependency between maritime, littoral, and hinterland resources, all of which were critical to the Karnatak conquest.

¹⁴⁹ VOC 1170, f. 678v, f. 681r

¹⁵⁰ VOC 1170, f. 678r. VOC 1231, f. 515. Swaminathan, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*, 96-97.

¹⁵¹ Swaminathan, *Nayakas of Ikkeri*, 90, 92. Flynn, *Ādāb-i 'Ālamgīrī*, Letter 84, Part II, Viceroy of the Deccan at Burhanpur to Sri Ranga Rayal, 305-307. See discussion of this correspondence in Chapter Four.

¹⁵² VOC 1174, f. 575.

Conclusion: The fragility of patrons

The picture of a nested conquest, presented in this chapter, is a matrioshka doll of sorts, where each element although progressively smaller in scale and size exhibits similar features and resembles its predecessor and successor. The migration of elites was a natural corollary of the formation of conquest states in medieval Asia, with a possible early template already being established by the Sultans of Delhi on the one hand, and by the Mongols further north on the other.¹⁵³ In the seventeenth century, during a period of a different, more prolonged and slower conquest, the circulation of courtly elites produced an effect of mirroring between regional and imperial states, in this case the Mughal empire and the Deccan Sultanates, both of which came to draw on the same spectrum of military, fiscal, commercial, literary and cultural skills and capital.

As stated at the outset in the introduction, methodologically the study of the circulation of courtly elites and their networks requires us to engage with questions of state-formation as well as to understand these actors as part and parcel of broader courtly and literary cultures. Mustafa Khan and his contemporaries were part of a larger trend in seventeenth-century Asia of ‘mercantilist’ features of courts, and individuals that constituted them, who drew on ‘landed’ as well as ‘trade-based’ resources. The chapter has attempted to challenge spatial-linguistic frameworks that have long dominated the historiography of early modern South Asia. Sources in ‘indigenous’ languages such as Dakkani and Persian have mostly been used for the study of land-based polities, either as ways to understand agrarian systems or the religious and cultural elements of local societies, while sources in European languages, in Dutch and Portuguese, are usually

¹⁵³ Subrahmanyam, *The Portuguese Empire in Asia*, 22-23.

limited to write the history of European expansion *in* Asia, as is the case in economic histories of the Indian Ocean.

The micro-level view of the historical actors presented here, who moved within the Deccan from Bijapur, Bankapur and Ikkeri to Rajapur and Vengurla suggests a consolidation of skills and capital within a conquest region, which was also the result of longer-distance connections and movement. Further, the place of origin of these actors did not necessarily pre-determine how and why a member of the migrant courtly elite acted after settling in a new region. We have been less concerned here with gauging an essentialist characteristic, such as say the ‘Iranianness’ of Iranians like Mustafa Khan, either as the prime motive for or the end result of his actions. In sections one and two of this chapter, we saw how the constantly fluctuating conditions of patronage -- whether literary, familial or fiscal -- determined the terms of Mustafa Khan’s alliances and rivalries, rather than any given nor well-defined linguistic, religious or ethnic affinity or identity. Bringing together a spectrum of sources, in which these historical actors appear, therefore helps us bridge the artificial divide between the historiographies on ‘state-formation’ vs. ‘court culture’ in the context of the Deccan in particular, as well as South Asia more generally.¹⁵⁴

Moreover, we may look at kindred cases in the Islamic world to understand how military conquest produced a complex set of cultural encounters, conflict, and

¹⁵⁴ Within South Asia, for one approach to court culture, see Daud Ali, *Courtly culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India* and for the period 1300-1700, and see an early review of state-formation historiography in Alam and Subrahmanyam, eds., *The Mughal State*. For a study from elsewhere that bridges the distance between these two methods, see Sooyong Kim, *Minding the Shop: Zati and the Making of Ottoman Poetry in the first half of the Sixteenth century* (Proquest Digital Dissertations, University of Chicago, 2005). With a more synchronized approach to time and space, Kim engages with Norbert Elias' classical work without dismissing the question of state-formation in early Ottoman literary and court culture and urban life.

incorporation. After Ottoman imperial incorporation of Arab lands in the 16th century, Arabic-speaking and Turkish-speaking Rumi scholars debated each other in literary salons. The Ottoman conquest of the Mamluks was by no means a contest between political and military unequals. Nonetheless an asymmetry existed between the newly arrived Turkish-speaking Rumi officials who sought to emulate and outdo Arabic-speaking interlocutors already well-established in recently incorporated territories.¹⁵⁵ Further east, we may draw close parallels between migrant elites in the Deccan frontier and Bengali Muslim patrons in the court of Mrauk-U in Arakan. Here too patronage circuits of a regional vernacular and Persian intersected and bi-lingualism among poets was the norm rather than the exception.¹⁵⁶ The movement of literati, intertextuality across genres in different languages, and the dispersal of texts evince the persistent feature of circulation inherent across early modern literary cultures.¹⁵⁷ In this chapter, we saw relationships between poets, chroniclers, and patrons and debates in these circuits about iconic works of history, such as Abu l-Fazl's *Akbar Nāmah* that implicitly conditioned new practices of writing history in the Deccan courts.

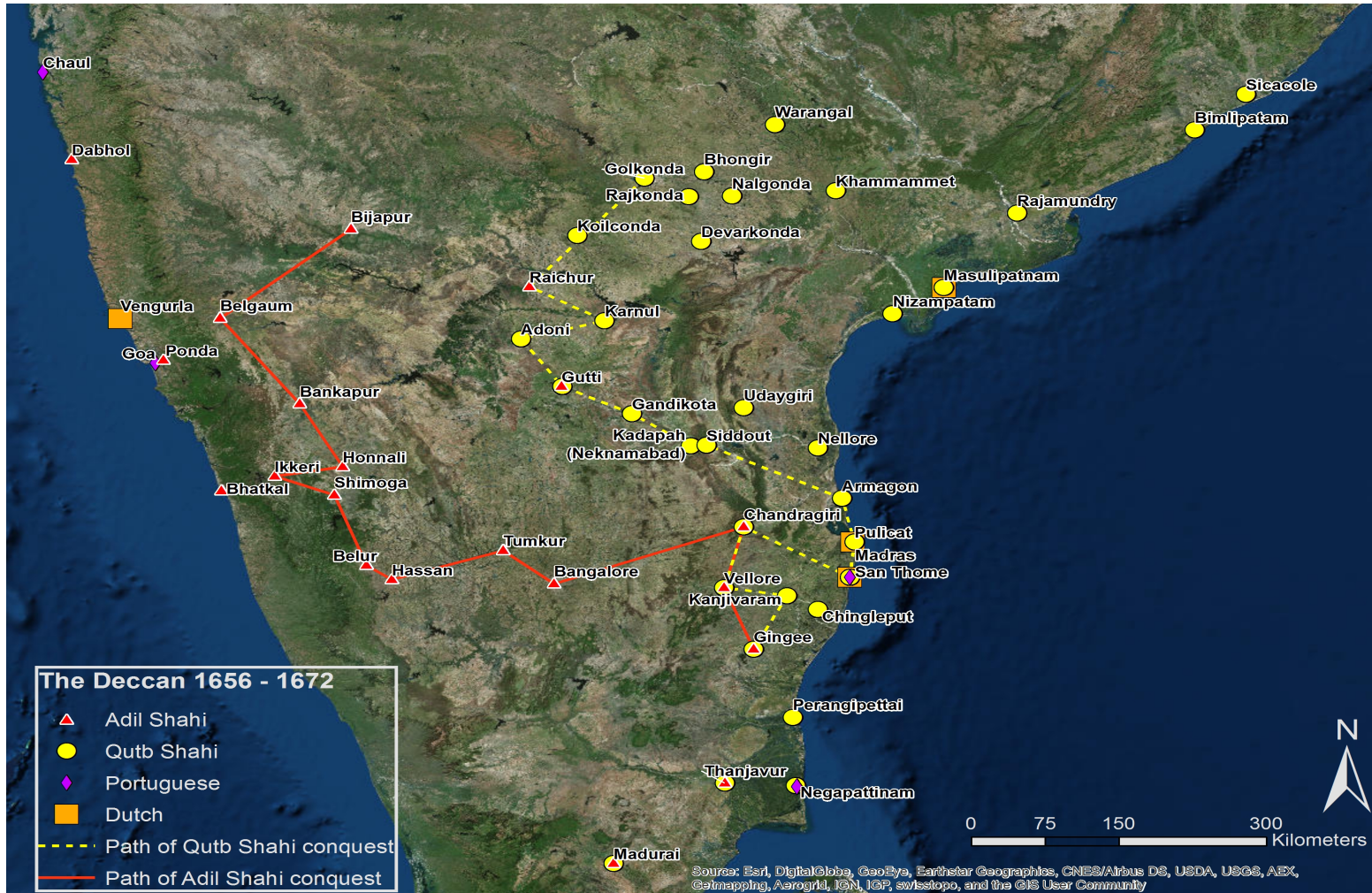
Resilience and fragility emerge as two defining features of patronage during conquest. Persianate materials present a patron exceedingly larger than life. At first, in Persian prose chronicles, Mustafa Khan's friendships endure through the course of the conquest. Experimental forms of writing history in the vernacular along with Persian chronicles cemented ties between Mustafa Khan's friends, former rivals, and new allies. All of the normative ideals or clichés of the patron – strength, generosity, and resilience –

¹⁵⁵ Helen Pfeifer, "Encounter after the conquest: scholarly gatherings in 16th-century Ottoman Damascus" *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 47, no. 02 (2015): 220-221.

¹⁵⁶ d'Hubert, "Pirates, Poets, Merchants," 47-74.

¹⁵⁷ Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 90. Thomas de Bruijn and Allison Busch, "Introduction" to *Culture and Circulation*, 3.

can be easily gleaned from the heroic accounts that chroniclers and poets wrote for Mustafa Khan. These vivid but two-dimensional portraits were, however, not without imperfections. Mustafa Khan's most critical relationship in court - the one with sultan Muhamad 'Adil Shah - stood on precarious grounds. From one perspective, this was one of the most troubling contingent outcomes of an unpredictable conquest, where new circuits of authority and semi-sovereignty held together tenuously along conquest pathways. From still another angle, multiple nodes of authority in the land-based circuits of conquest allowed regional states to have greater leverage over the oceans. Extended kinsmen of the patron thus conditioned the outcome of the Luso-Dutch conflict in the western Indian Ocean. All of the states and institutions, which these diverse actors allegedly represented and operated within, were therefore fraught with internal disagreement.



Map 3 - Eastern and western pathways of the Karnatak conquests 1656 – 1672

Chapter Three

The many lives of Neknam Khan: Consolidating a region, policing the coast in the eastern Karnatak c. 1656 – 1676

The Fort of St. George and Town of Madraspatanam had been held by a *cowle*, originally granted by Neiknam Khan, who, as we have already stated, is styled Nabob of Golconda, but who in all probability was Commander in Chief of the army of the Carnatic. No traces of this Neiknam Khan can be discovered in the history of Golconda; and indeed the name is an ordinary title, and another Neiknam Khan is mentioned by Bernier as an *Omrah* residing in the Court of Shah Jehan. His successor, whose name is variously spelt in the records as Moussa Khan and Mirza Ibrahim Khan, and who is also styled Nabob, is to be identified with the Ibrahim Khan, who, according to Elphinstone, is to commander-in-chief of the forces of Abu'l Hassan, the last king of Golconda. As Neiknam Khan is stated in the records to be the predecessor of Ibrahim Khan, we have assumed that, as like him he is called "Nabob," so like him he was Commander-in-Chief. No English history of the period appears to be in existence sufficiently full to clear up the matter.

- James Talboys Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Time*, 1861¹

By the mid-nineteenth century, several histories had been written on the English East India Company earliest dealings with local kingdoms of the northern Tamil country, in and around the present-day city of Madras. From colonial bureaucrat-historians such as James Talboys Wheeler to more recent historians of European expansion in Asia, Neknam Khan's *qaul* issued in the southeastern Coromandel coast, occupies the position of a point of origin of sorts, to which the English East India Company's eighteenth century successes are traced back.² But the figure at the center of the period between 1656 to 1672, Neknam Khan, commander of the Golkonda sultanate's armies, who conquered the southeastern Karnatak or the northern Tamil country, and mediated conflicts over maritime and coastal trading rights between the English, the Portuguese,

¹ James Talboys Wheeler, *Madras in Olden Time*, I: 1639–1702. (Madras: J. Higginbotham, 1861), 82.

² Sinnapah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1640-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 84-85.

the Dutch, the French, remains a bit of an enigma. The operations and narratives of conquest in the eastern half of the Karnatak, as they unfolded under Neknam Khan, lie at the center of this chapter.

In this chapter, I draw three conclusions on Neknam Khan as a patron from ‘internal’ Persianate materials and ‘external’ European archival documents. Like Chapter Two, I first glean a basic biography of the patron-conqueror and his relationships with chroniclers and poets. Second, through a dramatic account of his role as an emissary of Golkonda to Bijapur, I explore regional sultanates’ shared universalist ambitions, common territorial interests and self-fashioning in response to Mughal presence in the Deccan. From such stylized representations of the patron-conqueror, I then turn to the actual operations of Neknam Khan’s patronage circuit along the southern Coromandel coast in European sources. In the seventeenth century’s second half, the Karnatak conquest on the southeastern coast continued unabated, but with some important variations from the first half of the seventeenth century. First, the two regional sultanates concomitantly converged upon the final frontier of conquest (see Map 3.1). The feature of a layered conquest – self-similarity – manifested itself in the consolidation of military and civil offices in the figure of a semi-sovereign patron-conqueror. The rapid movement of patrons and personnel between capital cities and closely regulated conquest areas consolidated the frontier. In these moments, sovereignties of non-imperial polities, expressed in universalist terms, were resonant of Mughal articulations of power in the upper Deccan. Tense encounters with European traders over scarce resources and inaccessibility to inland production areas were accompanied with the intensification of eastwards long-distance trading connections across the Bay of Bengal that fed into the

Karnatak conquest. The ‘mercantile’ features of regional states heightened during conquest, as a greater pool and diversity of resources were required to sustain and fuel territorial expansion.

Contours of a conqueror: Reza Quli Beg in Golkonda

Also known as Reza Quli Beg, Neknam Khan, an Iranian immigrant, had come to India from Safavid Iran some years after Safavid ruler Shah ‘Abbas I executed his father in 1595. After spending some time in Mughal India, Reza Quli Beg moved to the Deccan and eventually became commander-in-chief of the Qutb Shahi army. Neknam Khan’s social and literary milieu, his dealings with neighboring Deccani sultans, local rulers of Karnatak as well as his eastward trading connections to Tannaserim (in present-day southern Myanmar) and possible diplomatic ties to King Narai of Ayutthaya have remained entirely unexplored.

Neknam Khan and other local officials were best known to colonial historians for bullying the English, the Dutch and the Portuguese, forbidding them access to ports, toll roads and inland trade routes throughout the 1660s and 1670s. It was not until the twentieth century that archaeologist Ghulam Yazdani and epigraphist Ziauddin Desai began to explore material and epigraphic evidence around figures like Neknam Khan. Villages named after him were found in the southeastern Karnatak and his tomb and its inscription, the only one of a non-royal in the Qutb Shahi necropolis, were discovered and deciphered near Hyderabad.³ Neknam Khan's conquests in the Hyderabad-Karnatak

³ In Haroon Khan Sherwani’s *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, we find Neknam Khan bullying the English in Madras over customs and pressuring them to let Golkonda officials oversee the transport of supplies to Fort St. George. The same incident is recounted in economic histories of the Coromandel, see Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1640-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 84-85. Ziauddin Desai,

have largely been overlooked presumably because he embarked on them immediately after the infamous defection of Mir Jumla Mir Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani in 1655, a paradigmatic event that marks the beginning of sultanate decline and Mughal ascendance in south India.

Itinerant sub-imperial elites brought their skills and talent to regional and imperial states. The Mughals rhetorically sustained the Karnatak's partition between the Deccan sultanates, who in turn, expanded territorially while re-deploying the resources accumulated during conquest to resist imperial pressure. Neknam Khan, who had previously served under Mughal nobles, came to Golkonda in the 1640s. He moved back and forth between Hyderabad, Cuddapah (or Neknamabad) all the way to Madras from the late 1650s until his death in 1672, continuing the slow process of the Karnatak conquest. Given the precarious conditions in these spaces, Neknam Khan's prime objective was to police regional, coastal, and maritime activities in newly acquired territories, often in ways that resembled the Mughals in the upper Deccan (covered in Chapter Four) but without institutional imperial mechanisms of governance. Sovereignty and authority were contested in the frontier, which produced similarities in the operations of all polities, rather than an outright and absolute political opposition. The problem of territorial sovereignty was closely linked to the issue of controlling major arterial routes and channels that connected fortified cities inland with coastal areas. The Mughals, the Deccan sultanates, and local kingdoms along with European merchants had very different viewpoints on how to police chaotic, often anarchic conquest domains.

"Note on the inscription on the tomb of Nawwab Neknam Khan at Golkonda," *Itihas: Journal of the Andhra Pradesh State Archives*, XIV (July, 1988): 90 - 93.

Like Chapter Two, in the first two parts of this chapter, I follow new genres in Persian and Dakkani, in this case, hagiographies and literary texts that Neknam Khan patronized to build a profile of his social milieu and literary interests. After assessing biographical details and Neknam Khan's literary circle from non-chronicle Persian sources, I present an account of his embassy to Bijapur c. 1665 in the *'Alī Nāmah*. In this account of inter-sultanate diplomatic and military relations, we get a vivid description of the alliance between Bijapur and Golkonda against the Mughals. Nusrati's representation of Neknam's Khan embassy included applause for a brief alliance between the Deccan sultanates and copious insults for the Mughals. These binaries often shifted as the conditions of alliance and rivalry changed during as the Karnatak conquest took its course. The dual layers of courtiers - patron and poet - elucidate two separate arguments of this dissertation. The intense circulation of migrant courtly elites such as Neknam Khan within the Deccan produced a contingent and interlocked relationship between empires and regional states, rather than an unambiguous one of opposition during the conquest. Nusrati's representation of this regional alliance demonstrates that the two were still separate sovereign units. But regional sultanates' aspirations now intersected in more ways than one with the ambitions of imperial states.

The third part of this chapter focuses on the period after Mir Jumla's defection, in spite of which the Golkonda sultanate continued to expand into the northern Tamil country, from the late 1650s to early 1670s. I zero in on the eleven-year period from Golkonda sultanate's expulsion of the Portuguese to the arrival of the French in 1672 in the area around Madras. Previous studies of the Coromandel coast tended to emphasize the eventual outcome (rather than the process) of negotiations with local elites. In doing

so they only explained the intensification of European expansion and settlement in Asian port cities in the eighteenth century. These studies often contrast the ‘narrow, protectionist’ vision of figures like Neknam Khan with the vibrant, dynamic ‘market-oriented’ innovations of European traders, while reluctantly acknowledging the stiff competition Asian traders posed to the latter.⁴ The often-cited famous *qaul* of 1672 that Neknam Khan issued to the English thus was a starting point to explain later eighteenth century European conquests along the Coromandel coast. More recent, serious revisions of this scholarship on European expansion in Asia have argued against a neat temporal division between a “commercial” versus “imperial” divide in the formation of the English East India Company. Stern has shown how a series of contradictions and contingencies forged a ‘company-state’ that constantly negotiated with rivals and competitors in the Atlantic and in the Indian Ocean long before 1757.⁵ Systems of adjudication and governance were thus forged in conjunction with local magnates and systems of authority.⁶ Although the surviving evidence is limited, I take a closer look at the processes of negotiation and conquest around Madras that preceded 1672. Similar to Mustafa Khan’s case presented in Chapter Two, I argue that as the landscape of conquest became more layered in the seventeenth century’s second half - the primary objective of migrant-adventurers remained maintaining a balance between European powers while consolidating agrarian and maritime resources for the Karnatak conquest.

Several themes emerge from three kinds of sources. Foremost among these is the circulation of men and materials *within* the Deccan. Neknam Khan spent eleven years

⁴ Raychaudhari, *Jan Company in Coromandel*, 60.

⁵ Stern, *The Company-State: Corporate Sovereignty & the Early Modern Foundations of the British Empire in India*, 6-7.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

going back and forth from the conquest region in Madras to the port-city of Masulipatnam to the capital city, Hyderabad. Dutch and English merchants, who had known Neknam Khan for over two decades and were negotiating on behalf of their trading companies, encountered him often on the pathways of conquest. Second, territorial sovereignty once again took on a nested, protracted character, a pattern that was evident since the Karnatak conquest began in 1636. At times, due to a layered sovereignty, historical actors were unclear as to which political authority oversaw the spaces of conquest. To all parties, the fiscal purview of villages, port-cities, and resource-cachement areas was ill defined and contested. Before turning to the full scale of Neknam Khans operations in the eastern Karnatak, we may first begin with tracing the earliest biographical details on him in Persianate materials.

Early life of Neknam Khan

The first source in which we find biographical details about Neknam Khan's early life and circulation in India is the *Hadā'iq al-salātīn fī kalām al-khavāqīn* of 'Ali Bin Taifur Bistami, completed in 1681. Although Sherwani dismissed this source and noted it was of 'definitely inferior' quality than earlier Qutb Shahi chronicles, he observed that it remains the only Persian text written during the reign of the last sultan of Golkonda, Abu l-Hasan Tana Shah (d. 1699).⁷ No doubt, there are no prose chronicle sources from Golkonda in the second half of the seventeenth century.⁸ But, a number of non-chronicle

⁷ Sherwani, 687-688. Shareefunnisa Ansari edited this manuscript but her version is riddled with gaps and discrepancies. All my translations here are from the manuscript in Salar Jung Museum, Tarikh Ms. 213, which was copied sometime in the 13th/19th century and also poses problems. The manuscript till folio 220 is written in neat and readable *nastāliq* after which it is in *shikastah āmīz*.

⁸ Sherwani notes 'the *Hadā'iq* is not a book of history.' *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 687-688.

genres in Persian survive from last ten to fifteen years of the Golkonda sultanate. Rather than an absolute decline in Persian literature that corresponds to Golkonda's political decline, there is clear evidence of continuity, especially for instance, in Bistami's prolific writings and translations of Arabic works in the late seventeenth century. However, unlike a Persian chronicle, Bistami's *Hadā'iq* falls somewhere between a *tazkirah* (hagiography) of important court poets and administrators and a world history.⁹ Bistami included, among other things, excerpts of letters between famous Mughal poets and patrons like 'Urfi (d. 1591) and 'Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan (d. 1627), the preface to Faizi's (d. 1595) *diwān* (poet's anthology) and brief biographies of Golkonda elites and some official documents as well. Bistami's work embodies the circulation of verse, books, and ideas between these courtly elites across the sultanates and the Mughal empire, as well as expresses his patron, Neknam Khan's tastes and preferences. The text's edited version is not the entire manuscript, but a selection of the 'important sections relevant to historians of the Deccan.'¹⁰ It does not include more than half the manuscript, the preface of which actually begins with pre-Islamic kings, the Pishdadian dynasty and characters and excerpts from the *Shāhnāmah*, starting with Giyumarth,

⁹ Siddiqā, *Persian Language and Literature in Golkonda*, 135-139. On this unique *tazkirah*, see Hasan Sadqi Samarjani, "Mo'rrefi va bar rasi kitāb-i Hadā'iq al-salātīn fī kalām al-khavāqīn tazkirah-i fārsi monhasr beh fard-i bazmandeh az asr-i Qutb Shahiyan." in Chander Shekhar ed. *Indo-Persian Studies: Translation and Texts* (University of Delhi: Department of Persian, 2007), pp. 189-207. Also see Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 603-605, 687-688. While this is the only surviving hagiography, I think an earlier *tazkirah* was authored by Ibn Khatun in Golkonda, which has not survived, which is mentioned in Nizamuddina Ahmad, *Hadīqat*, 210 - 211. Siddiqā notes that Bistami was a student of Ibn Khatun and thus, we may infer that he had access to this work while writing *Hadā'iq*.

¹⁰ Shareefunissa Ansari, 'Muqaddima,' in her edition of *Hadā'iq al-Salātīn* (Delhi: Nomani Press, Delhi, 1983), 29.

Hushang, Humayun, Afrasiab and so forth.¹¹ Based on the preface of another manuscript, a *Shāhnāmah* lexicon, authored by Bistami for Neknam Khan, I will suggest later that these two men shared a special interest in the epic form. A specific literary-historical sensibility therefore, permeated both the hagiographical-world history, that is, the *Hadā'iq*, and lexicon of the *Shāhnāmah*. But before turning to Neknam Khan's literary circle, let us first turn to the earliest details of his life.

In the third part and towards the end of *Hadā'iq*, a section on Neknam Khan begins:

It is not hidden from the hearts of the insightful that his humble servant has learnt from reliable sources, that Reza Quli Beg was the son of Malik Bahman, the son of Giyumarth, the son of Kaudust, the *valī* of Larijan and the fort of Dushmankur, which since olden times had been the appendages of Nur and Kajur. The descendants of Kiyumars, the son of Bihistun who was the son of Gustaham, had since the times of Timur, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction, held the entire provinces of Rustamdar and the *kotwālī* of the fort of Nur. In sum, the aforementioned Malik Bahman had an abundance of wisdom and maturity. Over a long time, due to his wise works he became wealthy and led a happy life. But this man was also prone to trickery, sedition and trouble (*mard-i mahayl fitnah andūz āshob talab*). His ways of trickery and lies (*shiveh hīleh va tarvīr*) surpassed all those who had come before him. Malik Bahman began a revolt in Tabristan and became desirous of rebellion (*rāghb fasād talab 'anād mī būd*). In the year 1004 Hijri (1595), Shah 'Abbas ordered for him (Malik Bahman) to be executed and had his two sons, who were at the prime of their youth, castrated (*maqta' nasl gardānīdand*). Due to the inauspiciousness that fallen upon Malik Bahman the wealth of that lineage vanished and his family was finished. Some time after this incident, Reza Quli Beg and his brother escaped from Iran to India secretly. Incidentally at that time, his brother was killed along the way by bandits.

In his universalist hagiography-cum-history, Bistami traced Neknam Khan's descent to Giyumarth and the pre-Islamic kings with whom he already discussed in the preface.

Neknam Khan is one of the only personalities whose ancestry is traced so far back in this

¹¹ Annemarie Schimmel has tracked many such tropes in Persian poetry, including themes from Pre-Islamic times such the Pishdadian dynasty and characters from the *Shāhnāmah* in *A Two-Colored Brocade: The imagery of Persian Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 109.

source. The biographies of other figures from Golkonda such as Allama Ibn Khatun, Mir Mu'min Astarabadi or Mughal personalities like Faizi, 'Urfi or 'Abdul Rahim Khan-i Khanan in the *Hadā'iq* either lack such detail or focus exclusively on their literary and intellectual pursuits. The incident of the castration of Malik Bahman's sons, and Neknam Khan's arrival in India as a eunuch, would later come to be well known in Golkonda.

Arrival in Mughal Hindustan

The itineraries of Iranian migrants frequently included a stop in Mughal Hindustan before arriving in the Deccan courts. Journeys of such a pattern were especially common after 1636, as the Deccan sultanates were symbolically subordinate to the Mughal empire. Thus, after escaping from Iran, Neknam's Khan earliest service in India was in the Mughal court in the circle of Zamana Beg Mahabat Khan.¹²

The aforementioned then was in the service of Nawab Mahabat Khan and remained in it for a while, until he came to the Hind-Deccan when he conquered the fort of Daulatabad, famously known as Aurangabad. All the domains of the Nizam Shahs came under the possession and lordship of Shah Jahan. When Mahabat Khan passed away in 1045 hijri from this impermanent world, Reza Quli Beg left his service in Hindustan. With the intention of staying, he turned his attention to Hyderabad, the foundation of paradise. He passed some time in the service of Mullah Owais, who had the *mansab* of *dabīr* and 5000 cavalry and some time in the service of Mir Muhammad Said Mir Jumla, who was at the time *sipahsalār* (commander-in-chief) of all of the dominions of the Karnatak. Eventually, he showed his real intentions, in the year 1066 the aforementioned along with seditious nobles, with a disposition of rebellion, he became corrupt and

¹² Corinne Lefèvre, "Recovering a Missing Voice from Mughal India: The Imperial Discourse of Jahāngīr (r. 1605- 1627) in His Memoirs" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (2007): 485. Munis D. Faruqi, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (2005): 520. Most famous for his failed coup against Jahangir and rivalry with Empress Nur Jahan in 1626, Mahabat Khan spent the last years of his career in the Deccan, where he died in 1044/1634. Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Hadīqat*, 155. In this Golkonda chronicle, a chronogram composed by a certain Shaykh Ahmad Jabal Alami gives the date of Mahabat Khan's death:

khān-i 'alā makān mahābat khān
dāsh't 'umīd ta dakkān girad

ānke budesh zamāneh dar farmān
raft 'umīd az mahābat khān (1044)

selfish. Such worthless people were strewn like dust in the royal court. Mir Jumla feared and was envious of the king, and he lacked the fortitude to come to the court. He went off to kiss the throne of Shah Jahan.

The Mughal conquest of Ahmadnagar is mentioned in Golkonda's sources, when Mahabat Khan laid siege to the fort of Daulatabad.¹³ While Neknam Khan does not make an appearance in the main Persian chronicle of this period, *Hadīqat al-Salātīn*,¹⁴ from the earlier part of 'Abdullah Qutb Shah's early reign, we do find in it his first patron, Mahabat Khan and his later career in the Deccan, from the early years of Shah Jahan's reign. This Mughal patron's interest in medicine, poetry and excerpts of his verse also appear in Bistami's *Hadā'iq*, where the author devotes a section to Mahabat Khan.¹⁵ We may infer that Neknam Khan received both his early military training and fostered his interest in literature and poetry during these years of service and training during Mughal conquest in the northern Deccan, spending much time with Mahabat Khan and his circle in the gateway city of Burhanpur. The frequent transfer of skilled courtiers from empire to region produced the pattern of self-similarity during different segments and stages of imperial and regional conquest. Due to personnel circulation, strategies of coercion and policing the frontier would also come to resemble each other across region and empire.

Pursuing conquest after Mir Jumla

Neknam Khan's conquests reinforced a resilient pattern of territorial expansion, rather than a rupture from first half of the seventeenth century. The defection of Mir

¹³ Nizamuddin Ahmad, *Hadīqat*, 152-155.

¹⁴ One of the few published Persian chronicles from the 17th century Deccan, Mirza Nizamuddin Ahmad, Syed Ali Asghar Bilgrami ed. *Hadīqat al-Salātīn*. (Hyderabad: Islamic Publications Society, 1961).

¹⁵ Aziz Ahmad has dismissed Mahabat Khan's interest in poetry as one "probably more for prestige rather than for any genuine appreciation of poetry" in "Safawid Poets and India," *Iran*, Vol. 14 (1976): 126.

Jumla to the Mughals in 1655 has often been flagged as symptomatic of sultanates' decline.¹⁶ No doubt many literati in Mir Jumla's circle defected and moved to Mughal Hindustan. While Ardestani's biography and numerous political maneuvers are well known,¹⁷ many other officials like Neknam Khan chose to stay in the Deccan. After the death of Mahabat Khan in 1634, Neknam Khan joined the service of Mir Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani Mir Jumla, and we may assume this is when he entered the Golkonda court and arrived in Hyderabad.

The continued conquest and strengthening of domains in the eastern Karnatak, formerly possessions of Mir Jumla, under Neknam Khan makes a few things clear. The Karnatak's partition between Bijapur and Golkonda no doubt happened under Mughal pressure, as Sherwani suggests.¹⁸ But the defection of Mir Jumla and relative inattention of the Mughals towards the Deccan due to the war of succession also seems to have allowed the sultanates to expand without interference from the 1650s till the early 1670s. This expansion depended less on Mughal auspices nor on their internal crisis but more on the circulation and the accumulation of resources by skilled administrators like Neknam Khan who already had considerable experience of the Mughal court and now offered their skills and talents to regional sultanates.

The account of Neknam Khan's conquest of the eastern Karnatak and how he set things right thus continues:

Reza Quli, who was in his (Mir Jumla's) service, retired and did not go with him. The administration of the kingdom of Karnatak was in disarray and had forcibly

¹⁶ Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 455 – 459.

¹⁷ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla* (Calcutta: Thacker Spink & Co., 1951). Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *The Political Economy of Commerce in Southern India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 322-342.

¹⁸ Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty*, 455 – 459.

been taken out of the control of the one with the glory of Jamshed, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah. Mir Jumla had been appointed to the Karnatak, becoming a resident and establishing himself there. The great nobles of the state were motivated to advise the king that Reza Quli Beg knew the reality of matters and ways of that place, and was well informed about good and bad people there and since the time of Mir Jumla, had been associated with them. He would be the right man for the conquest of that kingdom and take the right course of action. As a result of his effort, he was made in charge and those lands came under our control. The king summoned the aforementioned and had him honored with royal favors and promoted him to a high rank and raised him above all other ministers.¹⁹

After leaving the Mughal court, Neknam Khan worked under Mir Jumla for nearly twenty years before he decided to retire. By the time the Golkonda sultan, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, recalled him again he had participated in conquering two parts of the Deccan, first Khandesh and Ahmadnagar under Mahabat Khan, and later the southeastern Karnatak with Mir Jumla. These multiple stages of circulation and experiences during conquest that Neknam Khan took to new courts produced the feature of self-similarity between regional and imperial polities. Bistami in his *Hadā’iq* records Neknam Khan’s appointment as commander-in-chief:

He was entrusted as *sipahsālār* (commander-in-chief) of that entire territory (Karnatak) and the power to appoint and discharge offices, previously the duty of other able men, was passed to him. He was given the title of *khān* with honor and respect. With treasury, soldiers and retinue, he set off in that auspicious direction,

mi risd ākhir be jāyī har ke sāhib-i joharast
He who has the capacity, reaches his deserving place.

In short, this Khan of great status, through sincere ways and indubitable attention, returned and stayed there. With the aim and intention to reclaim those domains on behalf of the exalted government, with trust and reliance on God, both with the might of the sword and negotiation in the right manner, he conquered and occupied all those dominions.

¹⁹ *Hadā’iq*, f. 202.

*bar avard mulkī be zīr-i qalam
kizān nām u shud be ‘ālam o ‘alam.*

bringing the land under his pen
his name became famous in the entire world.²⁰

After attending to important affairs and putting those dominions in order, he brought all the *zamindars* and generals to his side. He had them endowed with favors according to their status. He gave some of them permission to return to their land (*watan*) and some of them stayed in service of the court, in the presence of the luminous King, possessor of the glory of Jamshed. Because he was a devoted servant, full of honesty and his great capabilities were apparent to the king, who gave him a robe of honor and the *wizārat-i diwānī* and the title Neknam Khan. He was appointed to the military affairs, civil and financial administration of those dominions and he attended to them according to the old traditions and with great effort. This gentlemen, for close to fifteen years, with respect and permanence, took decisions to manage these dominions, restoring the glory of the court, taking care of the welfare of both soldiers and subjects.

*chunān hikmat moarrefi kar bast
ke az amr o nahyiesh durūnī nikhast*

With such knowledge and insight he was busy
That command was indistinguishable from negation.²¹

Both civil and military administration could fall under one office, as was common practice in this period. I have, however, not come across the term *wizārat-i diwānī*, which seems to be an office or ministry rather than just an honoric title as suggested by Desai, in Golkonda sources, from earlier periods including *Tārīkh-i Muhammad Qutb Shāhī* and *Hadīqat*.²² As a result of Mughal presence and pressure in the Deccan, commanders of sultanate armies, now presided over all financial matters, leading to consolidation of different civil, military, and administrative duties. With both the treasury and the military under him, Neknam Khan seems to have had nearly independent and complete control of

²⁰ *Hadā'iq*, f. 203.

²¹ *Hadā'iq*, f. 204.

²² Khusro Husaini Collection, State Archives Andhra Pradesh.

the eastern Karnatak for close to twenty years. Secondly, it is also from this point on that the offices of Mir Jumla and *peshwā* by themselves seem to have had less clout and the office of treasury or *wizārat-i diwānī* was put under the military office of the commander-in-chief. These two posts had immense importance in Golkonda. The office of the *peshwā*, which was originally a religious one in Iran, also had political and administrative responsibility in the Deccan.²³ The office of Mir Jumla was unique to Golkonda and had similar responsibilities as the office of *peshwā* but excluded the religious leadership. When the Mughal empire was interlocked with and constrained by the pre-existing administrative practices of the sultanates, these offices combined the duties of a regional center with the tasks of frontier administration.

Neknam Khan's literary circle

The business of praise, at the center of Persianate materials, bound the patron to other Iranian migrant literati in Golkonda. These texts, produced during conquest, articulated universal aspirations and literary-historical genealogies in ways different from Persian court chronicles. Neknam Khan was the patron of the abovementioned *Hadā'iq*'s and its author, 'Ali Bin Taifur Bistami, came to Golkonda from Iran along with his brothers Ibrahim and Zayn al-Abidin in the middle of the seventeenth century.²⁴

Bistami migrated to Golkonda late during the reign of 'Abdullah Qutb Shah. Little seems to be known about the conditions under which he moved to Golkonda in

²³ M.Z.A. Shakeb, *The Relations of Golkonda with Iran 1518 – 1687* (Delhi: Primus Publications, 2016). The author notes the word *peshwā* literally meant a leader. It had been largely used in Iran in the sense of a religious leader. In Golkonda too, this was partially a religious institution, which is confirmed by the additional title *muqtada* and *murtazā-i-mumālik-i-islām* given to *peshwās* like Mir Muhammad Mu'min and Shaykh Muhammad Ibn Khatun, *Hadīqat*, 3, 11, 33.

²⁴ Siddiqā, *Persian Language and Literature in Golkonda*, 135.

1654 and served under the last two sultans.²⁵ Bistami's interest seems to have shifted from an earlier interest in Shi'i scholarship to Sufi mysticism, in addition to authoring several other prose texts.²⁶ He arrived relatively late in the Deccan but became prolific well into the last years of Qutb Shahi court. Bistami's brother, Ibrahim, composed a chronogram on the year of Neknam Khan's conquest of the Karnatak, the year 1068 Hijri or 1656 – 1658.

On the date that he, with the help of God, paid attention to the objective of aiding those dominions (the Karnatak), the brother of this fortunate writer, Ibrahim whose penname was Khadim and who was also in the service of Neknam Khan, composed the following words. Receiving favorable attention and benefiting from Neknam Khan's bounteous reign, he remained tied to the chain of his service.²⁷

hame jā fath pish ro bādā
May victory always be in front of him.

After recounting Neknam Khan's re-conquest of the Karnatak, following conventions of biography where the virtues and finest attributes of a personality would be described, Bistami writes about the manners and good qualities of Neknam Khan:

In brief, this gentlemen (*janāb-i khānī*) was adorned with all kinds of jewel-like accomplishments and a master of many trades, free of self-conceitedness, arrogance and miserliness (*nakhut wa kubr wa khissat*) but with abundant generosity and an excess of politeness he sowed the seeds of grace in the hearts of nobles of the court. With his speech he wished to train scholars, intellectuals and poets with whom he always kept company. He took great caution in being neat and regarded cleanliness as a virtue.²⁸

Bistami also wrote a *masnawī* in praise of Neknam Khan:

rezā khān-i jam qadr khurshīd rayī
ze sar tā be pā mehز lutf-i khudāī
dilesh makhzān-i sar-i dānayī ast
rukhesh matl'ā nūr-i bināyī ast

²⁵ Samarjani, "Mo'rrefi va bar rasi *Hadā'iq al-salātīn*," 196.

²⁶ Siddiqā, *Persian Language and Literature in Golkonda*, 88.

²⁷ *Hadā'iq*, f. 203.

²⁸ *Hadā'iq*, f. 204.

*be dānish falātūn-i jism parvarī
 bebinesh arastū wa sikandarī
 kafesh dar sakhā dast-i mūsa būd
 damesh dar shefā rūh-i 'īsa būd
 nasīmī ze khulqesh burd garm bahār
 be shākh shikaste dahad barg o bār
 khirad ra bedāna dil joharī
 karm ra be daryā dilī goharī
 qaza az reza esh na pechīdeh sar
 fiz āyandeh qadr-i u shud qadr
 chunān tab 'a u rāstī pīshe kard
 ke az kaj ravī charkh andīshe kard
 kafesh ra che nisbat be abr-i bahār
 ke ān dur feshān ast wa īn qatreh bār
 chūn 'azmesh be taskhīr be bandad kamr
 zafar bar rekābesh be dūzad nazr
 chun fikresh be tadbīr gard dumī
 be yek dam maskheyr kunad 'ālamī
 'alam gir shavad taigh u dar masāf
 kunad qāf ra rukhneh dar tan chu kāf
 jahān roshan az sham 'a-i tadbīr u ast
 zamān-i gulshan az āb-i shamshīr-i u ast
 falātūn shikvehī ke dīn parvarast
 saf-i lashkaresh sad-i iskanderast
 jahān ra ke taighesh himāyat būd
 namūdan dast wilāyat būd
 chu dar roz-i maidān shavad kīneh khwāh
 kunad halqeh dar gush māhī o māh
 be sar panje be shīr shīrī kunad
 be qudrat be gardūn dalīrī kunad
 be khurshīd e taighesh būvad tā amān
 ke gīrad be yak dam zamīn-o-zamān
 be 'adl o shuja 'at wa hīlm-o-bajūd
 siphar e kamālesh girafte wajūd
 chun dar nīkuyī ū tamām āmadeh
 khitābesh az ān nīknām āmadeh²⁹*

Reza Khan, with the stature of Jamshed and thought as bright as the sun.
 From head to toe, he had the grace of God.
 His heart, a storehouse of wisdom,
 His face, the source of insight.
 His knowledge like Plato,
 His vision like Aristotle and Alexander.

²⁹ Ibid., f. 205-206.

His hand, generous like Moses,
 His breath like the cure of Jesus.
 A whiff of his good nature
 Revives broken branches with leaves and fruit.
 His intellect, like a heart full of jewels,
 His generosity, like a sea full of jewels.
 Even destiny did not disobey his will
 His status increased in the eyes of destiny.
 For his nature was on the path of truth,
 That even the heavens ceased to turn.
 His generous hand incomparable to the cloud of spring,
 Which unceasingly showered pearls
 With firm resolution he set to conquer,
 Victory set its eyes on his stirrup.
 When his mind thinks of a plan,
 In one breath, he conquers the whole world.
 His sword is like a flag in the battlefield,
 Which could split the mountain of Qāf. (His sword can change *qāf* to *gāf*)
 His flame illuminates the world,
 From the water of his sword, the world blooms.
 Great like Plato, nurturer of the world.
 His army like the wall of Alexander,
 His sword was the world's protector.
 His hand, the agent of God.
 If he became vengeful in the field of battle,
 He could turn all, from sea to sun, into his slaves.
 With his hand interlocked against the claws of a lion
 With the ability to be brave against the heavens
 To the sun his sword
 In one moment, he beheld both heaven and earth
 With justice, bravery, magnanimity and generosity
 His excellence and high achievement came into being
 His goodness was manifest in all his deeds
 His title came to be 'Neknam'

With a margin of exaggeration and the conventions of Indo-Persian verse in mind,
 we may observe that Bistami drew on a very long and established set of tropes to cast the
 heroic deeds of his patron, Neknam Khan. The imagery of the miraculous hand of Moses,
 the wall of Alexander that separated Gog and Magog from the civilized world were

common in *qasida* or panegyrics written for patrons,³⁰ where enemies need to be demonized and conquests valorized. After narrating the re-conquest of the Karnatak under Neknam Khan, Bistami inserted these lines in which he praised his actions and lauded his patron's revival of dominions that were formerly in disarray and disorder. In the seventeenth century's second half, Golkonda lacks Persian court chronicles with an exclusive focus on regional sultans and dynastic polities. Instead, Bistami and his contemporaries experimented with new ways of memorializing conquest under sub-imperial elites in the *Hadā'iq*, a world history-cum-hagiography.

In another manuscript in the preface to a lexicon of the *Shāhnāmah*, called *Ganj nāmah dar hal-i-lughāt-i-shāhnāmah*,³¹ which Neknam Khan asked Bistami to write, we find similar themes and a special interest the two shared in the epic. Evoking tropes of the literary *majlis*, praising Reza Quli Beg, the author describes the patron as the center of a literary circle, which was the destination for many travelers.³² He writes that Neknam Khan found the recitation of the *Shāhnāmah* especially pleasurable. Although the stories in it were legends, they held secrets, wisdom and lessons on the oneness of God. At literary gatherings after he had attended to official affairs, Neknam Khan would sit with his companions and interpret and discuss the epic. Such personal anecdotes, where the patron, at the insistence of his friends, would explain the *Shāhnāmah*'s archaic

³⁰ Schimmel, *A Two-Colored Brocade*, 77.

³¹ Salar Jung Museum & Library, Ms. Adab Nazm No. 187. The manuscript is extremely damaged and brittle. The colophon notes, '*hisb khvāesh-i reza qulī beg al-mukhātib be neknām khān tālif shud.*' (written for and at the request of Reza Quli Beg)

³² Ms. A.N. No. 187, f. 4.

vocabulary, were common to prefaces of lexicons across the Persianate world.³³ The patron would point to lessons that could be drawn from the good and bad characters in the epic. It then occurred to Bistami that he should write down his patron's interpretations of this epic, like an encyclopedia, along with explanations of its vocabulary, phrases, and expressions.³⁴ Besides from the information he gleaned from Neknam Khan, he researched and gathered information from other sources to put together this lexicon. The stylized literary gathering portrayed in the preface to this lexicon is meant to lend a historical reference point to the text. Both the fantastical and the historical in the *Shāhnāmah* held valuable lessons for learned elites, for whom this text was part of a wider curriculum. Iranian migrants' literary circles continued to engage with classical works in Persian and produced commentaries and dictionaries on them for royal libraries of the Deccan courts. At a time when regional sovereignty was seriously compromised due to Mughal pressure, Persianate literati reaffirmed the place of Deccani regional powers (and the courtiers who continued to sustain their marginal independence) in a wider and longer continuum of literary and learned interests. Along with the abovementioned biographical materials produced directly for Neknam Khan, his activities were also observed in contemporary vernacular battle poems. In the next section, to fully understand what it meant for regions to imitate empire during conquest, I analyze an instance of regional diplomacy in a Dakkani *masnawī*, which recorded Neknam Khan's local alliances and circulation within the Deccan. In the following linguistic register, we find a more defiant assertion of

³³ John R. Perry, "New Persian: Expansion, standardization, and inclusivity" in Brian Spooner and William N. Hanaway eds., *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order* (Philadelphia: Penn Museum International Research Conference Publications, 2006), 85.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 5-6.

regional sovereignty that simultaneously embraced and outdid Mughal expressions of authority and power.

Regional diplomacy in the *'Alī Nāmāh*

Neknam's Khan's biographical portrait was recorded in a period when the two sultanates of Bijapur and Golkonda came to aid each other militarily, in preparation for a battle against the Mughals. In Mullah Nusrati's *'Alī Nāmāh* from the 1660s, Neknam Khan appears as an emissary who facilitated the consolidation of conquest between regional sultanates. In this section, through an analysis of the dramatic portrayal of this embassy, I explore the question of regional diplomacy and appropriations of imperial expressions of sovereignty. Nusrati again deploys conquest ethnography to cast the Mughals as absolute political others, in a moment when two regional rivals united against them. At the same time, his appropriation of a universalist language of conquest elucidates the persistent feature of self-similarity across regional and imperial states.

As stated in the introduction, the *'Alī Nāmāh* was not composed all at once, but over many years as the poet traveled with the Bijapur sultan and his army to major battle sites across the Deccan. It provides dramatic descriptions of major sieges and battles as well as the receptions of ambassadors from Mughal Hindustan, Golkonda, and Safavid Iran. More than any other contemporary historical work, the *'Alī Nāmāh* rhetorically united the Bijapur and Golkonda sultanates on the basis of their mutual disdain for the Mughals in a period of conflict and expansion. At the level content, like Persian sources discussed in the previous section, it too, only provides a stylized biography of Neknam Khan. But through portraits of such patron-conquerors, who had circulated across regional and imperial states, it also offers a relational portrait of the cultural negotiations

that took place between the sultanates, the Mughal empire and their armies during the slow conquest of the southeastern Karnatak. The embassy of Neknam Khan is one instance of a portrayal of regional alignment and re-positioning vis-à-vis the Mughals.

On Neknam Khan's mission to Bijapur, there are a total of five *masnawīs*, over four hundred verses long. In them, Nusrati recounts the conditions of the Bijapur-Golkonda alliance against the Mughals. Their sequence is as follows: the entrance of Neknam Khan in Bijapur, his reception at the court of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II, a description of the plan to deter the Mughals and the last, the Deccan sultanates unite to fight a battle against Mughal-Rajput general, Jai Singh.

We may now turn to the immediate context in which Neknam Khan was sent to Bijapur in 1665. Golkonda sultan, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah sent military assistance to help Bijapur sultan, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II, repel the Mughal army that was about to invade the Deccan. This new section thus begins:

*dāstān yū ke shāh qutb mil shāh ten apen,
bhije kumak kon sipahdār apas kar bulbul*

the story of how the king of Qutb Shahs united with our king,
and sent military corps (to Bijapur) as a token of mutual support.

This sub-*masnawī* begins, like many others within the *'Alī Nāmāh*, with the conventions of *hamd* and *na't*, praise of God and the Prophet. These praises often correspond to or echo the larger sections on the praise of God, the Prophet and the Caliphs that opened the poem. Specific verses of praise in each sub-*masnawī*, however, evoke chapters from the Qur'ān that serve as analogies or lessons for the historical battle that will subsequently be described. For instance the support the Qutb Shahs offered Bijapur against the Mughals is

equated with an incident about Abrahah, the Abyssinian who wished to conquer Mecca, and who was chased away with the help of allies:

*madad ān jise āp be shak karen
bashar kiya hai jo us ki komal kare
kiya mār gird āp tha jis vakil
abābil ke hit ton ashāb fil*

those who God helps without a doubt,
what of man? who cannot weaken His help.
the enemies of those whose supporter is God turn to straw
in the way the flight of birds (pelted stones) at the companions of the elephants³⁵

Here, Abrahah plays the role of the evil Mughals, and the story's outcome from the Qur'an preordains sultanate victory. These lines are followed by praise of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II and his contemporary in Golkonda, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah, and the city of Hyderabad.

This section on the alliance between the Bijapur and Golkonda, under the leadership of Neknam Khan, was not the first time that Nusrati insulted the Mughals. But the way he positions all three polities here is different from earlier parts of the poem for several reasons. As stated in the opening chapter, Nusrati, travelled to all battle sites and closely observed Bijapur's opponents. In other parts of the poem, which I discuss in Chapter Four, Nusrati provides very elaborate descriptions of the different groups that made up the Mughal army, from Hindustan and cities elsewhere – Uzbeks, Balkhis, Kabulis, Qizilbash, Rajputs etc. – and all the vices that each group was prone to – some were addicted to drink, others to sex, and some were pathological cheats and thugs. The term 'Mughal' shifts throughout the text. When rivalries with others such as Shivaji or a

³⁵ *The Qur'an* 105:1. Abrahah's army and its elephants are attacked by swallows that pelted stones on them and forced them to flee. In Yusuf Ali Khan's translation, it reads, "Seest thou not how thy Lord dealt with the Companions of the Elephant? Did He not make their treacherous plan go astray? And He sent against them Flights of Birds, Striking them with stones of baked clay. Then did He make them like an empty field of stalks and straw, (of which the corn) has been eaten up."

local rebel became more urgent, Nusrati cast the Mughals as less threatening, as kings who were equal and kindred to the sultanates. In the text's beginning, they are not cast unequivocally as cowards. But in the section where Nusrat recounts a Deccani alliance against them, the Mughals are seen as perpetually disloyal, fickle, and effeminate:

*ke jab shāh 'ādil 'alī narpatī,
apang fauj dehlī kī pat kar jatī.*

*har ek jang mai kar adak ran khandal,
khadedh apnī zāton bhar āya jangal*

*mughal kis son hargez kiyā nayīn wafā,
ke nayīn tis zabān sār kā dil safā.*

when Ali 'Adil Shah, the king,
beat up and defeated the lame armies of Delhi.

in every battle, he trampled them,
armies of men were chased into the jungle.

Have the Mughals ever been loyal to anyone?
their heart, unlike their speech, is unclean.³⁶

The alliance between the Qutb Shahs and 'Adil Shahs, although portrayed as eternal and unswerving, was nonetheless a volatile one, as both Bijapur and Golkonda expanded to their largest territorial extent, vying for control of the Karnatak. Prior to this decade Bijapur and Golkonda were embroiled in negotiations to partition the Karnatak. In the 1640s, Neknam's Khan third employer, Mir Jumla Muhammad Sayyid Ardestani, had confronted Bijapur's Mustafa Khan over the possession of important forts such as Gandikota and Gutti in the southeastern Karnatak. In 1676-1677 Bijapur would again briefly ally against Golkonda with the Mughals.³⁷ Therefore, we may wish to treat

³⁶ 'Alī Nāma, 362.

³⁷ Verma, *History of Bijapur* (New Delhi: Kumar Brothers, 1974), 114-115.

Nusrati's portrayal of Bijapur-Golkonda relations with expressions like *bandanawāzī* or solidarity, as the confluence of two seas, and an expression of brotherhood with some caution. Besides, when it comes to one-upmanship, whether it was Bijapur's Deccani counterpart, Golkonda, or the Mughal empire, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II, the sultan of Bijapur, always emerged as the undisputed winner:

*gharz yū hai hāsil sabab is bāt kā,
ankātiyā mughal shāh kī jab hit huā.*

*wahīn qutb shāh rāzdārān sangāt,
kahe rāj kāran men khol bāt.*

*na hove raye ho shāh 'ādil ke bāj,
ke rakhnā mughal son hen salah āj.*

*kabal waqt par yū ich kām āyenge,
mughalān son zāt apnī dikhlāyenge.*

*na 'āqil hai hai hargez himāqat kon chod,
jo gurgī kon sehrabandī sar ko chod.*

in short, the reason for this talk,
was that they had supported the Mughals.

The Qutb Shahs with their allies and confidants,
shared strategies openly in the battlefield.

without the consul of the 'Ali 'Adil Shah II,
they could not make peace with the Mughals.

in difficult times we shall be of use to each other,
Mughals will then show their true colors.

for they were stupid and lacked intelligence,
Instead of on the head, they wore the groom's veil as their pajamas.

Nusrati implicitly critiques Bijapur's regional neighbors, the Qutb Shahs of Golkonda, who were at fault for their previous misguided support for the Mughals. He

then insults the Mughals as effeminate and politically inept. The orders issued to Neknam Khan by Qutb Shahi sultan, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, are dramatized with the following dialogue:

‘Abdullah Qutb Shah said, ‘O Neknam Khan!’
Take whatever you need from this kingdom.

Go in the service of ‘Ali Shah ‘Adil
Money, magazines full of arms and ammunition, take along.

First, take all you have before the king,
Then obey his command.

And with grace obey his will,
The same loyalty you’ve shown me, show to the King.

giving a command to royal ministers,
He sent him off as the commander-in-chief.

The troops departed beating drums,
Good fighters accompanied him

He selected a few village officials and local lords, (*maniwārān wa nāyakān*)
Each one of them could kill a thousand men.

with canon and arms that reached the sky,
with great quantity of canon balls.

innumerable battalions of Franks.
weapons made of metal and hands of iron,

all the armies arrived,
along with furious elephants.

wherever he went with this heavy entourage,
the earth’s balance shook and trembled.

without stopping they walked for days and days,
until they arrived at the end of their journey.

Neknam Khan arrived at Bijapur’s borders with twenty five thousand cavalry and six thousand infantry. The next five *masnawī* in this section recount Neknam Khan’s audience with ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II and plans for the war with the Mughal-Rajput general, Jai Singh. The durbar scene when Neknam Khan held audience with the Bijapur sultan includes some curious appropriations of the language of Mughal-Timurid sovereignty, which Nusrati inverts and instead uses to represent the regional sultanates. The repetition of select titles and terms occurs at very specific places in the text, such as the scene where Neknam Khan and other Golkonda ministers appear before the Bijapur sultan:

*neknām khān apas thār sanjīda thā
ke at pir dānā jahān didā thā
khiyā dil mai dekhiyā hun mai kayī maluk
na aisā hai kayīn shāh sāhib-i maluk
ke do bhānt ha lain hādā jahān
kahīn taigh dhar kain sau kar khush zabān
dise yu ich sāhib qirān hoyegā.³⁸*

Neknam Khan appeared intense and serious,
he, the maturest and wisest of men who had seen the world
said to himself ‘I have seen many nations,
but never have I seen a ruler of a country, like him (‘Ali ‘Adil Shah).’
With two qualities, one of his sword and the other his sweet tongue,
he takes over half the world.
It appears as if he must be the *sāhib qirān* (the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction)

We may take note here of the use of the term *sāhib qirān* and in several other places in the *‘Alī Nāmāh*. This term had charismatic significance and imperial implications and its literary significance dated much further back.³⁹ One could dismiss it as a generic convention, flattery on part of the poet to the king, but in each period it mattered where, when, to who and what context it was used. In a moment of regional

³⁸ Ibid., 374.

³⁹ Naindeep Chann, “Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Sahib Qiran” *Iran and the Caucasus*, 13 (2009): 93-110.

competition versus an imperial rival, Dakkani poets appropriated and deployed such universalist terminology to recast specific encounters and conflicts with the Mughals.

No doubt we cannot ask the question whether Neknam Khan actually thought or said these words. Throughout the poem, Nusrati frequently makes historical actors have long, neurotic monologues (and the ones of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb are especially amusing). In the above example, the audience of ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II is the erudite, well-travelled Iranian migrant, Neknam Khan, an itinerant courtier who was all too familiar with imperial states and their universalist ambitions, having lived and served in Safavid Iran and Mughal Hindustan. Secondly, the more immediate audience is of course Golkonda itself, a neighboring regional sultanate that was facing similar challenges from a larger empire. But like Bijapur, Golkonda too harbored ambitions for territorial expansion in the Hyderabad-Karnatak. Even at the rhetorical level, the equation of the ‘Adil Shahs with universal sovereignty is rather curious, given that such claims of legitimacy were generally reserved for empires, and in this period specifically for evoking Timurid legitimacy. Tentatively, we may suggest that during a nested conquest when relations between the Mughals and the Deccan states were particularly fraught, court poets and writers appealed to larger concepts of sovereignty. Sub-imperial courtiers such as Neknam Khan, whose portfolio of transferable skills and experiences made territorial expansion under imperial pressure possible, were uniquely positioned to negotiate consolidation within the region of conquest. Dakkani poets perceived and apprehended the Mughal empire, a much larger and formidable political opponent, in opposition to an inter-sultanate Deccan alliance. Such frequently occurring titles in

Dakkani battle poems confirm Mughal pressure and presence produced universalist aspirations, and self-similarity in regional and imperial states.

The strange afterlife of Neknam Khan

Memorializing Golkonda's Iranian patrons continued into the eighteenth century in generic works that repeated and recast well-known narratives of the Qutb Shahi and 'Adil Shahi courts. We may close with a recasting of Neknam Khan's self-righteous and noble career that I found in a rather strange Persian manuscript called *Zamimah-i Tārīkh-i Muhammad Qutb Shāhī*,⁴⁰ which recounts the Golkonda sultanate's last few decades. There is no signature or the name of a scribe on the manuscript, except its title and a note in one corner that says 'az qalm shakhs-i digeh.' (from the pen of another [writer]). It runs over 156 pages (78 folios) and is attached to a complete copy of *Tārīkh-i Muhammad Qutb Shāhī*, the well-known and frequently used anonymous Persian chronicle from Golkonda, which was completed in between 1616 to 1626, during the reign of Muhammad Qutb Shah (d. 1625).⁴¹ The *Zamimah*'s first half is essentially a selection of events from 'Abdullah Qutb Shah's reign, most of which are summaries or extracts from earlier Deccan chronicles such as *Hadīqat al-Salātīn* and Mughal sources like *Pādshāh Nāmah* and *Muntakhab al-Lubāb* of Khafī Khan. The manuscript's second half, however, contains a detailed and perhaps the only extant Persian prose narrative of Golkonda's last ruler, Abu l-Hasan Tana Shah, not borrowed from pre-existing sources. Based on its mention of the great flood in the very last sentence of the manuscript, I dated this manuscript to the early eighteenth century.

⁴⁰ *Zamimah-i Tārīkh -i Muhammad Qutb Shāhī*, OMLRI, Tarikh Ms. 680.

⁴¹ For a detailed discussion of this known chronicle, its date of composition, various copies of manuscripts and authors, see Siddiqā, *Persian Language and Literature in Golkonda*, 123-129.

In the middle of the manuscript, the authors begins a long section on Neknam Khan titled, ‘mention of Neknam Khan and how he brought beauties from Serendip or Ceylon (*dar zikr Nekkām Khān wa āvardan-i u padminihā az sarandip*).’⁴² The author tells us that it was no secret to readers that Nizamuddin Ahmad had written a history of the reign of ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah (i.e. *Hadīqat-al-Salātīn*). But, he adds that a rough draft of the book (*tasvīdān-i kitāb*) was not at hand, several pages it were left out and the remainder of these portions came to him. In these leftover portions of the previous chronicle, he found an incident from the life of Neknam Khan. One day, the king was intoxicated, making merry with his beautiful, moon-cheeked consorts. One night, pacing in search of beauties, so he summoned Neknam Khan, who was one of his trusted nobles, appointing him to go look for such unprecedented beauties. Neknam Khan agreed, but he knew the dangers of such a mission. Being wise and noble, he chopped of his reproductive organs, fried them in oil and put them in a glass (*‘azaye tavalud wa tanāsul khud ra burideh dar roghan bariyān kardeh wa dar shishe nahādeh*).⁴³ Then, he took leave from the king and set off for Serendip and he started searching for such distinguished ladies. After a long struggle he found two well-endowed beauties, just as the king had desired, who would have been the envy of fairies. On the journey back, one of the beauties died but he brought along the other two, who he named Taramati and Pemamati. When they reached court, all were in awe of their beauty and they were given jewels and clothes. The king was pleased and gave a robe of honor to Neknam Khan and promoted him in rank. Other courtiers however were envious of Neknam Khan and thus accused him of being dishonest, alleging that he had enjoyed the ladies on the journey

⁴² *Zamimah*, f.184.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, f. 185.

back and accused him of polluting their chastity. The rival courtiers made the king believe such things, and he was enraged. In front of the entire court, Neknam Khan brought out the glass he had prepared before his journey to Serendip. He placed it before the king, opened its seal, showing one and all his chopped organs and cleared his name.

The story's absurdity aside, the anonymous eighteenth-century author seems to have copied and recast Neknam Khan's early life and his status as eunuch when he arrived in Golkonda, which was recounted in Bistami's *Hadā'iq*. He adapted the earlier version of Neknam Khan's escape from Safavid Iran and grafted a fantasy onto it. While this is clearly not a historical incident, the lives and anecdotes of courtly elites continued to have fascinated Indo-Islamic courtly circles in the early eighteenth century. The image of a courtier undertaking a perilous journey to bring consorts for the sultan and then having to prove his loyalty and honesty was a common story, and versions of such tales exist in several chronicles. The anonymous author of the *Zamimah* layered it with knowledge of the circumstances of Neknam Khan's escape from Safavid Iran, perhaps as way for audiences to recognize and identify biographical details of the previous century's courtiers.

Portraits of Patron and Poet

In the late seventeenth century, the Karnatak conquest's intensification led to the further entrenchment of sub-imperial elites from Golkonda and Bijapur into the trading world of the Indian Ocean. The social worlds of Asian patrons were a topic of interest for distant European collectors. These collectors tapped into networks of the Dutch East India Company to gather visual materials, books, and ethnographic accounts of polities in

the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴ In this context of early modern knowledge circulation, patron and writer, Neknam Khan and ‘Ali Bin Taifur Bistami, appear in *The Witsen Album*, a collection of miniature paintings made in Golkonda for the mayor of Amsterdam, Nicholaas Witsen (d. 1717).⁴⁵ These generic portraits of different courtly elites were probably not produced in a royal atelier, as evidenced from their quality. Several other copies of this prototype portrait exists in the Victoria and Albert Museum, in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliotheque Nationale, few others in the Musée Guimet, and in the Codex Manucci in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. Nonetheless these are the only portraits of the Deccan’s sub-imperial elites and of the literati they patronized. They contain captions in Dutch, Portuguese, and Persian identifying many famous and lesser known Mughals, Sidis, Iranians, Afghans and Marathas.⁴⁶ Both, Neknam Khan and Bistami, in all versions of these generic portraits, appear to be very old. While Neknam Khan came to north India probably in his late teens, Bistami, probably came to Deccan, already middle-aged, in the mid-seventeenth century. By the time *The Witsen Album* and other portraits were prepared, they were both in the twilight of their careers. The caption in Dutch under Bistami reads ‘*dit is het portret van Mulla Tayfur die de leraar (ustad) van Sultan ‘Abdullah is geweest*’ or ‘this is the portrait of Mulla Tayfur, who was the teacher of Sultan Abdullah.’⁴⁷ In archival documents too we find ‘Ali Bin Tayfur identified as ‘Mullah Tayfur’ where he seems to have served as witness and judge in

⁴⁴ Marion Peters, *De wijze koopman: het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber van Amsterdam* (Amsterdam: Bakker, 2010), 27-71.

⁴⁵ Pauline Lunsingh Scheerleer, “Het Witsenalbum: Zeventiende-eeuwse Indische portretten op bestelling.” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 44 (1996): 167–254.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 194-198.

⁴⁷ See Image 3.1 of Neknam Khan.

judicial matters.⁴⁸ The portrait of Bistami is particularly rare and most likely accurate as the caption provides at least one or two specific details about each personality's occupation and position at court, which confirm the identifications of the portraits. *The Witsen Album* records Neknam Khan's position as that of *sar lashkar* or head of army, in Persian the caption reads *'īn surat-i Nekkām Khān wazīr-i Sultān 'Abd-Allah buda sar lashkarī-ye Karnātak kardā ast ba 'd az Mir Jumla*⁴⁹ and in Dutch *'Culanel Vecanamcam - Niknamechan Visir van Sultan Abdulla naderhand Veldoverste over het Leger in Kjernatek.*' He is identified as a commander of the Karnatak armies after Mir Jumla. Other than fulfilling the interest of distant European collectors, such portrait albums were also attempts to visualize and understand different levels of administrators and officials who controlled the access of European traders to the Coromandel coast. In the next section, I analyze the specificities of such interactions and the scale of Neknam Khan's operations in the eastern Karnatak and across the Bay of Bengal.

⁴⁸ Khusro Husaini Collection, State Archives Andhra Pradesh, Doc. No. 52.

⁴⁹ See Image 3.2. of 'Ali bin Taifur Bistami.



Image 3.1. Neknam Khan, number 25, *The Witsen Album*, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.



Image 3.2. 'Ali bin Taifur Bistami, number 31, *The Witsen Album*, The Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

From Golkonda to St. Thomé: Policing the southeastern Coromandel Coast

The portrait of regional consolidation that we saw in this chapter's first half was not without its detractors and dissenters. As stated at outset of this project, if we appraise the patron's world exclusively through Persianate materials, at times we come away only with 'a great man's biography.' This is not to say that literary tastes and the rhetorical declarations of loyalty, friendship, and valor are not worthy of inquiry. But we may want to treat stylized narrations of affect and affinity in patronage relations with some degree of skepticism. One reason for the patron's projection of absolute power was probably because regulating, policing, and governing a layered frontier in moments of consolidation was inordinately difficult, if not impossible. The projection of regional sovereignty with an imperial framework also had material consequences in the frontier. In this section, I analyze Neknam Khan's heavy-handed regulation of the agrarian and maritime areas around St. Thomé to draw two conclusions. First, the new commander's policing of supply lines in the eastern Karnatak did not sit well with Golkonda sultanate's provincial and coastal officials, who had hitherto operated in relative autonomy in this region, far removed from the capital city. Second, following Chapter Two's pattern, Neknam Khan's network across the Bay of Bengal controlled the outcome of relations among European actors, whose activities were severely limited as the conquest intensified in the 1660s.

After securing the alliance against the Mughals with neighboring Bijapur sultanate, Neknam Khan spent the last ten years of his life circulating frequently between the Golkonda sultanate's northern and southern limits. This path of conquest stretched between the capital city of Golkonda-Hyderabad and St. Thomé (near present-day city of

Madras), nearly seven hundred miles of a distance. Golkonda had made attempts to take St. Thomé, which lay few miles south of Madras, as early as 1659. Neknam's Khan heavy-handed treatment, of subjects, European residents, merchants, and local rulers, in the 1660s, was in many ways, not very different from Mir Jumla's in the previous decade. The English and the Dutch had already encountered several of these obstacles during Mir Jumla's time. These tactics usually included choking of food supplies to European garrisons, increasing tolls, customs and rent, and taking prisoner those who violated rules.⁵⁰

Unless physically present, all Golkonda generals, from Mir Jumla onwards, needed to be physically present to police all possible contenders in the frontier region, especially along the littoral, from Masulipatnam to Pulicat to Madras. By the early 1660s, Bijapuri general, Shahaji, had destroyed Porto Novo or Perangipettai. The English suspected that the Dutch who had absorbed many Portuguese settlements, had plans to take over St. Thomé. So, in 1662, Reza Quli Beg first laid siege to the town, starved it into submission and all its residents flocked to Madras.⁵¹ In the decade preceding 1672, that the English would establish of Courts of Justice and other mechanisms of governance in Madras was far from certain nor inevitable. Dominic Navarette, a Spanish priest, who visited the city in 1668, observing the general lack of authority in the area noted, "The English are not so strong in Madraspatan, yet they hold it and are like to do so. What signifie walls and bulwarks where there is no government."⁵² The possibility of alliance with, and fear of, local officials set the terms of internal rivalries and friction within the

⁵⁰ V.O.M., 168-169.

⁵¹ V.O.M., 198, Fort St. George to Surat, 8 March and 7 April, 1662.

⁵² V.O.M., 307.

early 'company-state,' shaping relations between different Europeans along the southeastern Coromandel coast.

In the late 17th-century, the physical and material conditions of conquest reined in trading circuits along the Coromandel coast. Although things were calmer in the northern Coromandel, in early 1660, precarious weather conditions in the southeastern Karnatak frontier worried Dutch observers. Armies, constantly on the move within the Deccan, had quickly exhausted crop supplies in cloth-producing areas much further south of Masulipatnam, which were quickly drying out. It was feared that the drought would harm those who traded in cloth and cause a famine. In contrast, far removed from the war frontier, on the east-west axis from the capital city Golkonda to the port-city of Masulipatnam, the rains had been heavy and unsparing. Several VOC ships, English yachts, and two large ships of Neknam Khan, one of which was being repaired in Aceh and the other in Mocha, were also destroyed.⁵³ In the meantime in Masulipatnam, Sayyid Muzaffar, the *havāldār* or governor, openly defied the sultan's orders, disallowing the Dutch and the English from monopolizing and supplying silver. Bullion just sat in Masulipatnam and could not reach mints in the capital city were it could be processed. Even though Sayyid Muzaffar had agreed to implement the royal *farmān* nothing was put into practice. The *havāldār* stopped the English who were on route to Golkonda with a huge supply of silver. By this time, news also reached the Deccan that the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was now at peace with his siblings and had just begun to learn to rule. The Dutch surmised he may threaten to send an army to the Deccan or demand forty

⁵³ VOC 1233, Lauren Pits to Governor General Joan Maetsuijker and the Batavia Council, 10 January 1660, ff. 5a-6b.

lakh pagodas or the restitution of the Karnatak territories which now fell under Golconda.⁵⁴

Bijapur and Golkonda had converged on the campaign for Senji or Gingee fort on numerous occasions since 1658. Here, Neknam Khan encountered the successor of Mustafa Khan, Muzafaruddin Khan, known as Mullah Muhammad in Dutch sources. Further west, by this time, Sivapa Nayak, the *nayaka* of Ikkeri, took over Seringapatam and declared himself king of Mysore. In May of 1660, the Dutch could not keep track of Neknam Khan's whereabouts, who moved with his entire camp within a matter of days towards Kanjivaram then turned course to Peddapuram, possibly with intention of returning to Golkonda because there were rumors that the king, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah was dead.'⁵⁵ But it turned out that Mughal general, Shaista Khan, had just turned up with 5000 horse riders at the capital city to collect unpaid tribute and to demand handing back of the Karnatak lands, which had come under Golkonda's control.⁵⁶ While the Mughals sought opportunities to extract tribute from the Deccan sultanates, the latter pushed southwards, at times disregarding imperial demands for a stake in these newly conquered areas. When Mughal emissaries and military commanders appeared in the Deccan courts, they sought tribute as a way of reminding regional states who was in-charge. The Mughal empire's newly acquired territories in the upper Deccan were not yielding much revenue, so the empire depended upon the tribute from regional sultanates to support its armies in the frontier. This Mughal presence, very different from 'the Mughal state' in the northern India, had an insecure and precarious revenue base, which Prince Aurangzeb struggled to

⁵⁴ Ibid., f. 8.

⁵⁵ VOC 1233, f. 31a, Lauren Pits to Governor General Joan Maetsuijker and the Batavia Council, 6 May 1660.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

establish in the mid-1650s.⁵⁷ The contested physical spaces of conquest thus produced regionally contingent manifestations of Mughal and Sultanate sovereignty in the frontier.

In the meantime, in the southeastern Coromandel, Lauren Pits waited to see if Neknam Khan would make it back to Golkonda in time or whether the Mughals might threaten to attack the capital city gain. He observed that while Neknam Khan was travelling up north, he would need to leave someone else in charge in the Karnatak frontier. At the same time, the Bijapuri general Muzaffaruddin Khan, who was still near Senji was beginning to negotiate with the *nayakas* of Tanjavur and Madurai, where he was encamped with a contingent of Bijapuri horse-riders.⁵⁸ There was always the possibility that the neighboring sultanate of Bijapur would outdo Golkonda in capturing forts in conquest areas.

By 26 September 1660, Neknam Khan was in Masulipatnam once again on his way to Hyderabad. He left a certain Alam Khan with 2200 horse riders in-charge of the Karnatak. Golkonda's resources were divided between protecting the capital city from a northern invasion from the Mughals and the intermittent Karnatak campaigns in its southeastern frontier. Armies under individual commanders therefore circulated intensively within the Deccan. At this time, Sivapa Nayak too fell ill in Seringapatam, which he left after fighting with Sri Ranga Raya III, the last of Vijayanagara's rulers. By this time, Bijapuri general Muzaffaruddin Khan returned to Bijapur leaving the evil (*den snooden*) Shahaji with a force of four to five thousand horse riders in the frontier. The Dutch noted that he could do something crazy and manage to extract gold wherever he is (*het waare niet vrempt den selven door desen Sahagie weder op nieu tot uijt schietinge*

⁵⁷ See Chapter Four, "Region taming empire: Mughal observations of the Deccan frontier"

⁵⁸ VOC 1233, f. 31b.

van part hij connen gout geperst).⁵⁹ Conquest therefore allowed many different constituents to accumulate resources while still being nominally part of distinct sovereign political units.

Through the 1660s, the Dutch grew frustrated with Neknam Khan's maneuvers, especially over the city of St. Thomé. Chief Merchant Jacques Caulier made several appearances before the sultan and Neknam Khan to deliver on the promise to hand over this city since the Portuguese had been kicked out.⁶⁰ After lots of talk in vain and empty promises to give the city to the Dutch in exchange for expensive gifts, Neknam Khan finally spelt out his terms. The Dutch must never refuse any ships to the Golkonda sultan. Most of all, the Dutch should consider all of Golkonda's enemies their enemy, including the Mughals! Such stipulations were attached to the *farmān*, which Caulier insisted should not be accepted at all on the proposed dangerous terms. The Dutch, under pressure from regional sultanates, could not afford to take on the Mughals. Nothing came of Caulier's numerous trips to Masulipatnam to convince the Golkonda sultan to give them the city of St. Thomé.

Disputes over disallowing the flow of ships to and along St. Thomé frequently mention Neknam Khan's ability to control all European powers while protecting his own ships and resources around the city. In 8 April 1662, Lauren Pits wrote to Batavia about the commander's demand that the Dutch protect his ships. They refused to do so given the unreasonable nature of this demand; as long as the English and Portuguese were being given concessions and controlling St. Thomé, the Dutch could not offer support to protect

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 43b.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

the fort.⁶¹ Since Mir Jumla's defection, different villages fell in and out of the administrative purview of the Dutch, Portuguese, and the English. Earlier, access to supplies and areas of production areas inland had depended upon the authority of the 'Karnatak kings,' that is, various offshoots of the Vijayanagara empire. With the sultanate's intensive southern expansion, to access these regions, Europeans had to now seek the permission of Golkonda officials.⁶² The Dutch controlled one such village called Siricouri, which was under local rulers before Mir Jumla took over it. It was a place where the Dutch built wooden boats, but at the moment Neknam Khan had put a stop on production of these boats in the said village.⁶³ But if the village would fall under English or other European enemies rather than the Golkonda authorities, the Dutch were even less likely to get access to supplies.

By this time, in the early 1660s, Edward Winter, a notorious English private trader, had gone and come back from England, where he had successively pleaded his case to the English East India Company directors.⁶⁴ He came back knighted and appointed Agent in Fort St. George.⁶⁵ Three days after arriving in Madras, Winter traveled to Masulipatnam. This port-city's Governor, possibly this was still the obstinate and arrogant Sayyid Muzaffar, refused to co-operate with the English Agent. The sultan's orders were proving to be entirely ineffective in protecting Europeans. Apparently, the Governor of Masulipatnam had prevented the passage of provisions, stocked guns and cannon around the English settlement, killed an Englishman, and physically fought the

⁶¹ VOC 1242, f. 781, Extract from Lauren Pits' report to Batavia, 8 April 1662.

⁶² VOC 1243, f. 968.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Bassett, "English Relations with Siam in the Seventeenth Century," *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 34.2 (194) (1961), 92-93.

⁶⁵ V.O.M., 201, 208.

English agent.⁶⁶ Winter wrote to the English Agent at Masulipatnam that the Gentue (Hindu) king, who was still quite powerful in the Tanjavur country, could potentially overcome Bijapuri general Bahlol Khan, and quite possibly, he would not meet much resistance from anyone in the Karnatak. Except of course, from Reza Quli Beg or Neknam Khan, who was encamped at Tiruvallur, and posed the greatest threat to the entire region. 500-600 horse riders were stationed in St. Thomé since Golkonda had taken it in the early 1660s.⁶⁷ Winter awaited a response from Nawab Neknam Khan, from whom he had not yet received any satisfactory answer despite the sultan's earlier *farmān* to right all the wrongs that the *havāldār*, or governor of Masulipatnam, had done to the English Agents.⁶⁸ From the port-city to the capital-city to forts located in the path of conquest, a crisis of governance and authority unfolded. A royal decree issued in the capital city of Golkonda did nothing to protect Europeans in the eastern port-city of Masulipatnam. Further south, no routes, from Pulicat to Madras and in inland and coastal arterial areas, were free from intervention of conquest authorities.

It is in this context of many overlapping and conflicting layers of authority that Winter expressed a palpable fear of local Golkonda officials, who, with or without Mughal sanction, could suppress or support European traders along their coasts. On 7th January of 1664, Winter reported that the “New Nabob (Neknam Khan) hath long threatened, and lately come with an Army within five miles of us, and at this tyme lyes near us, and what their intents towards us are we cannot tell.”⁶⁹ A year later not much

⁶⁶ V.O.M., 209 – 210.

⁶⁷ V.O.M., 212, 306.

⁶⁸ V.O.M., 213. Fort St. George to Honorable Company, 10 December 1663, Fort St. George to Masulipatnam, 3 May 1664.

⁶⁹ V.O.M., 216, 213, Sir Edward Winter to Sir Andrew Riccard.

changed, even when the Golkonda sultan had summoned Neknam Khan to come back to the capital, Winter reported:

...for neither the greate strength, whatever wee can make, can any way offend the Moores should they be our enemy, whilst they, onely with a few of their Servants, and by a word of Command, can stopp or prevent either releife or provisions from comeing neere us. And though the Sea lye open and free to us, yet is but of little helpe in regard you will not allow us vessayles to releive our necessities upon many occasion. Indeed it is somewhat a Terrour to the Jentues, but the Moores are warrlike people, and make it a common saying that two Peons will starve us to a composition.⁷⁰

In 1665, an eternal coup d'etat and power struggle unfolded between Winter and others at Fort. St. George.⁷¹ Rivals of Winter, who were pursuing the case against him, reported that he was prone to violent outbursts and had imprisoned, maimed, burnt alive rival merchants, and seized their homes and possessions.⁷² Both sides accused the other of allying with the Kingdom of Golkonda, who could lay siege to Fort St. George and throw everyone out at any given moment.⁷³ Further, Winter sided with local merchants Timmana and Verona, who were together skimming off part of payments on goods imported from England at a rate above invoice prices.⁷⁴ After George Foxcroft's restoration as the first Governor of Madras, Winter briefly stayed with the Dutch in Pulicat. He continued to be a source of anxiety to the Government, and even pursued a long dispute with the Company in London after he left India in 1672.⁷⁵ All of these characters sought Neknam Khan's permission either to outdo their own competitors

⁷⁰ V.O.M., 246, Fort St. George to the Honorable Company, 9 January, 1666.

⁷¹ V.O.M., 219 – 229, 233 - 245, 259.

⁷² V.O.M., 248-249, George Foxcroft to the Honorable Company, 8 September, 1666.

⁷³ V.O.M., 230. George Foxcroft to the Honorable Company, 26 September 1665, accused Winter of trying to start a mutiny or have the city besieged by the King of Golkonda.

⁷⁴ V.O.M., 232-233. Also discussed at length in Brenning, "The Textile Trade of Seventeenth-century Northern Coromandel," 75-86.

⁷⁵ V.O.M., 262.

within the English East India Company or to strengthen their foothold in existing port-cities and inland production areas. English agent Winter's machinations confirm the continued dependence of European actors on local brokers in the eastern Karnatak. The activities of individual local merchants with different levels of European traders fell beyond the purview of conquest administration. Golkonda's armies were split between the conquest region and the northern Coromandel and could not regulate them easily. Neknam Khan's role at the center of these volatile negotiations emerges more clearly in the diary of Pieter de Lange, a Dutch doctor-merchant, who visited the commander's frontier encampment in 1663.

A Dutch doctor in Golkonda c. 1650s

Among the many Europeans who circulated between the Deccan courts, the Dutchman, Pieter De Lange, a chief surgeon who moved up to be chief merchant, spent a considerably lengthy time around Golkonda's sultan and its network of Iranian courtiers.⁷⁶ He stayed in Golkonda from 1651 to 1657, serving in the court of sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah (d. 1672). The VOC had sent him to serve in Golkonda at the sultan's request where he received a monthly salary of eight hundred rupees. Pieter de Lange's report of a visit to the diamond mines of Kollur published in Pieter van Dam's *Beschrijvinge van de Oostindische Compagnie 1639-1701* is well known,⁷⁷ but the documentary trail on him remains unexplored, as no account of his seven-year stay in Golkonda appears to have survived.

⁷⁶ Havart, 160-161.

⁷⁷ Ishrat Alam, "Diamond Mining and Trade in South India in the seventeenth century," *The Medieval History Journal*, 3, 2, (2000), 293-300.

Although the paper trail on de Lange is thin, letters between him, Governor Lauren Pits and Chief Merchant Cornelis van Qualbergen suggest a few things. During his tenure as private doctor to sultan ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, de Lange was reporting on Golkonda's internal court politics to VOC officials in Pulicat and Batavia.⁷⁸ After leaving Golkonda, Pieter de Lange returned to working for the VOC. In the 1650s, de Lange observed the power struggle amongst court factions in Golkonda, especially those who controlled the traffic of goods in Masulipatnam and the beleaguered sultan whose orders no one seemed to follow. In the early 1650s, de Lange wrote of particularly disliking the young and very arrogant Sayyid Muzaffar (*als wat jongeren sijnde, en daar en boven aan 's Compagnie twee soo arrogante vijanden*), the obstinate *havāldār* of Masulipatnam. Sayyid Muzaffar would, in the 1670s, turn out to be instrumental in the power struggle during the reign of the last Golkonda sultan, Abu l-Hasan Qutb Shah.⁷⁹ De Lange urged Governor Pits to write to him directly instead of asking the *havāldār*, who refused to give the Dutch a break on tolls despite the sultan's *farmān* in favor of the VOC.

Given his proximity to sultan ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, de Lange's tone in descriptions of the latter is often familiar, rather than formal and respectful. He often grew frustrated with the sultan's powerlessness. In one letter, de Lange described the Golkonda sultan as weak and as having become feminized under the influence of this mother (*sijn moeder vervrouw te sijn*) and stooped so low as to be willing to negotiate

⁷⁸ Scheurleer, 230. In reference to sultan ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah's portrait from 1650, auctioned by Sotheby's in April 1988, Scheurleer notes that Pieter De Lange may have acquired the portrait from Tavernier, who perhaps found a buyer for it. Shakeb, *Relations of Golkonda with Iran*, (Delhi: Primus Publications, 2016), Chapter Three, footnote 104, Tavernier, 232.

⁷⁹ Kruijtzter, 229-230.

with those who were openly rebellious.⁸⁰ After watching momentous events such as Mir Jumla's defection in 1655 along with the consistent pressure that Mughals put upon Golkonda, de Lange thought the sultan to be a pushover. In his correspondence with Pits in the 1650s, de Lange often commented on the sultan's responses as spineless and fickle. Due to this close encounter with the Golkonda court, he was deeply familiar with the internal power struggles and Iranian patron-conquerors who controlled the southern frontier, including Neknam Khan.

Report of Pieter de Lange to Neknam Khan's encampment c. 1663

Only few years after his service in Golkonda ended, in August of 1663, de Lange visited Neknam Khan's encampment in the frontier and wrote a daily report of the exchanges and meetings with the commander. Pieter de Lange and Neknam Khan, by this time, presumably knew each other well, as they were in Golkonda's capital together in the 1650s. Both men now met at the conquest frontier, with a different set of priorities. Neknam Khan was well aware that Pieter de Lange, having served as doctor to the sultan, was quite knowledgeable about Golkonda's court politics. De Lange, for his part, remained diplomatic throughout the exchange, trying not to overcompensate nor explaining too much about his reasons for leaving Golkonda nor did he divulge his whereabouts after his service.⁸¹

De Lange's journey began on the 13th of August, during which he travelled to the northern Tamil country along the eastern Coromandel coast. He stayed near Neknam

⁸⁰ VOC 1203, f. 537b.

⁸¹ VOC 1203, f. 517, Copy of letter to Governor Lauren Pits by Junior Merchant, Pieter de Lange from Golkonda, 11 December 1653. f. 537, Copy of letter by Pieter de Lange from Golkonda to Chief Merchant Cornelis van Qualbergen and Ijsbrant van Swanswijck in Masulipatnam, 24 August, 1654.

Khan's encampment until the 22nd of August 1663. On the first night he halted at Pulicat Lake, moving to Armagon in the morning. Along the way he negotiated on behalf of the VOC with the inhabitants of the area, who were all cloth painters. Here, the brother-in-law of a certain Shaykh Mustafa, the *havāldār* of Armagon hosted de Lange. Along the way, he came across villages where the residents specialized in one occupation, as was the case with Cottapatnam, located at the intersection of two rivers and very close to the sea, whose residents were only farmers. Along the way, some people arrived to complain about a monopoly, which the English had gained through their great supplier (*groot leverancier*), a certain Angeloer/Angala Ragnata.

On August 15th, de Lange finally sent a message to Neknam Khan informing him about his arrival. The commander refused to give him audience on the first day, due to some celebrations that were under way. While waiting for an audience in his tent, de Lange tried his luck with the Commander's interpreters instead, two men named, 'Afsanga' and Sundar. He secretly pried them for information on Neknam Khan's plans and negotiations to hand over St. Thomé to the Portuguese.⁸² The interpreters told de Lange that both, the Portuguese and the English, had attempted to acquire the same information and even tried to pre-emptively stock weapons in the fort. Neknam Khan, furious upon learning of this, had told all of them that if anyone tried to trade even a bit in the area and failed to comply with his instructions, he would throw everyone out. The interpreters added that no one knew exactly what Neknam Khan had in mind. Apparently, a Portuguese interpreter, who worked for Neknam Khan, had gone on his behalf to the English, three or four months ago. The commander threatened to appoint a Muslim

⁸² VOC 1243, f. 962.

governor to Madras, but the English refused to allow any local government to preside over the city. Neknam Khan, in turn, warned to stop anyone from fortifying the city assuring all parties that there were no plans to wage yearly wars around it. Further, he forbade all residents in his lands from trading, or risk paying with their lives or goods.

On the 18th of August, Neknam Khan finally gave de Lange an audience. Just as de Lange was about to reach the encampment, south of the city of St. Thomé, the great supplier of the English, Angala Ragnata turned up, possibly to spy on the VOC's negotiations with the Golkonda commander. Despite this interruption, De Lange finally entered Neknam Khan's open and beautiful tent. He sat at its center on a chair covered with white cloth. Neknam Khan then accepted three gold chains as presents, made all sorts of small talk, which de Lange observed, was in the manner of some old man rather than a military commander. De Lange succinctly answered a question about the circumstances of his departure from Golkonda. He then presented a letter from the Governor General, Cornelis Speelman, laying out the VOC's various requests. These requests included the following - to lease land between Cottapatnam and Armagon, VOC's agreement to pay a fee to use the sea around Sadurangapattinam, request for a *qaul* or a compact to build a *logie* or dwelling for VOC traders to live in St. Thomé so they could trade with inland areas, and to pressure the *havāldār* of Kanjivaram to pay up what was due to the VOC. After a few more questions from Neknam Khan, de Lange returned to his tent for the night, where he dictated these requests formally to a Persian letter-writer for delivery to the commander.

At this time, reports of Edward Winter's removal and frequent drama reached Neknam Khan, who therefore asked Dutch Chief Merchant Pieter de Lange whether the

infamous Englishman had returned to Madras and whether the Dutch had any negotiations with him.⁸³ Neknam Khan had been insisting that the English allow a Muslim governor or *havāldār* in Madras. This issue would remain the main bone of contention between Golkonda and the English for the entire decade of the 1660s. Winter's correspondence, with Dutch governor Cornelis Speelman, makes clear a few things. All throughout 1664, Winter lost his grip over Madras as his rival countrymen Foxcroft and Jearsey cornered him, seeking his removal. To cover his bases, just in case things turned against him, he urged the Dutch and English not to use their warships against each as they were friends, resorting to the usual rounds of flattery and declarations of friendship.⁸⁴ By interrogating de Lange, Neknam Khan, well aware of the infighting among the English, wanted to keep an eye on Winter and the Dutch to make sure they did not forge any kind of alliance.

The next day, Neknam Khan invited de Lange to come to see the fortification and repairs of a fort at Serpilli(?), where the commander's whole army was working. Accompanying de Lange and Neknam Khan was someone identified as Your Honor's son (*Uw Edele zoon*), which presumably the Dutch observer wrongly refers to as Neknam Khan's son. For this journey, Neknam Khan made a strange request and asked de Lange and his men to carry this alleged son's palanquin out beyond the city. The Dutchmen agreed to do as the commander said. At the fort, workers were using iron, stone and chalk to make repairs around the fort. The entire trip took two hours and the whole time, the said son never came out of the palanquin, which the Dutchmen carried around the

⁸³ VOC 1243, Report of Pieter de Lange to Neknam Khan, fol. 972.

⁸⁴ VOC 1245, Two Letters of English Agent Edward Winter to Cornelis Speelman from Fort Saint George, 14 and 16 December 1664, f. 462. VOC 1245, Copy of a letter from the Governor & the Coromandel Council to the English Agent Edward Winter, 18 December 1664, f. 463.

countryside. At the end of this excursion, De Lange returned exhausted to his tent for the night, writing another letter to Neknam Khan. The latter granted some requests while ignoring others.⁸⁵

On the 20th of August the monsoons brought heavy rain, the ground turned to clay and Neknam Khan quickly ordered the army to shift its encampment. While they prepared, de Lange had no opportunity to converse with the commander. He wrote another letter reporting to the Dutch Governor that a Swede, Andries Pieters, was now working for the Muslims, frequently interacted with the Golkonda king and was very slick. One day, this Swede turned up at Neknam Khan's encampment with another Englishman with some hidden agenda in their minds. De Lange warned everyone to be wary of this Andries Pieters, as he never divulged what he was up to and prepared well.⁸⁶ Presumably, de Lange's wariness of the new Swedish counselor to the Golkonda sultan had an element of envy in it. Not too long ago, as a private doctor to the Sultan, it was he who had been privy to the sultan's plans, inaccessible to other Europeans.

On the morning of the 22nd of August, Neknam Khan issued a *qaul* incorporating several of de Lange's requests but dodged the request for a *farmān*. He did not sit nor indulge in lengthy conversation with de Lange, only asking again if the Dutch had had any contact with the troublemaker, English agent Eduard Winter. De Lange replied he honestly knew nothing about this, except that the English did not want a Muslim governor in St. Thomé. After this conversation came to an end, Neknam Khan and his contingent departed, and a group of drunks stumbled into the encampment! These included the interpreters Afsanga and Sundar, who had helped de Lange earlier. De

⁸⁵ VOC 1243, ff. 969-970.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 971.

Lange lists all the items that he gave to each of these people and notes that the rude Muslims (referring to Neknam Khan and his circle) only gave the Dutch two small gifts, which would reach the Governor General soon enough.⁸⁷

In August 1664, letters from Neknam Khan to Cornelis Speelman, indicate the former expanded his army in the frontier by recruiting disaffected Europeans. VOC officials had come to learn that Dutchmen, whom Neknam Khan identified as people from your nation who have turned coat (*uw Edele volk d'overlopens van uw edele natie*), had joined Golkonda's frontier army. Of course, the commander denied this allegation, saying that he investigated it himself and found this not to be the case.⁸⁸ In another letter, translated from Persian into Dutch, he complained about the *havāldār* of Condumeda(?) who pretended to be a *fakīr* or ascetic (*fackrier*) but was of bad character. The *havāldār* had had the nerve to stop Governor Cornelis Speelman on the road while he was traveling and tried to talk to him directly, instead of seeking the frontier commander's permission first. Neknam Khan added that such an official had no power to do so and therefore, he promptly removed him from the post of *havāldār*.⁸⁹

In June 1664, it was reported that Neknam Khan, in a fit of rage, killed the wife of a weaver and committed several other crimes, but due to his power remained immune from imprisonment. The complaints of Dutch officials fell on deaf ears. The *havāldār* of Pulicat heard their complaints but was not in a position to confront Neknam Khan. The *havāldār* and his men continued to take 1/6 of the value of the goods passing through the

⁸⁷ Ibid., ff. 974-975

⁸⁸ VOC 1245, f. 460, Translation of Neknam Khan's letter to Cornelis Speelman written from Golkonda and received in Pulicat.

⁸⁹ VOC 1245, Translation of Neknam Khan's letter to Cornelis Speelman without date, written from Golkonda.

port, on which they kept an eye day and night, making sure nothing was smuggled out from the ships. Private traders gave the reason of their poverty and insisted that smuggling these goods was their only option and source of income. The Dutch tried to prevent ships from disembarking, as most smuggling happened with the *havāldār* and private traders' collusion.⁹⁰ Despite the wish to complain to the sultan about these problems in Pulicat and Masulipatnam, Maetsuijker eventually decided against sending anyone to Golkonda. Back in the capital city, sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah demanded two pairs of pince-nez spectacles (*neus brillen*) for himself and his mother. He also asked for a pair of binoculars for bird watching. It was decided that the resident at Masulipatnam would deliver these gifts, but instructed not to bring up the list of problems in the port-cities as VOC officials were afraid the sultan would out rightly reject or dismiss their requests.⁹¹

All of the above correspondence between Neknam Khan, the Dutch and the English reveals two interlinked arguments. Conquest consolidation consisted of two parts. First, despite Mughal pressure, the southeastern Karnatak's conquest, haphazard though it was, created a demand for resources just at it constrained major routes to inland areas of production, restricting the movement of goods along littoral routes. Second, Neknam Khan policed these trading nodes in a manner not very different from a previous generation of Golkonda officials. He controlled land and sea-based resources to which actors within 'company-states' sought access. A continuum of interactive levels of governance and authority operated, from the sultan in the capital city to port-officials to circuits of patron-conquerors in the frontier to the cantankerous English, Dutch, and

⁹⁰ VOC 1246, f. 1484.

⁹¹ Ibid.

Portuguese. These interactions affirm the unpredictable rather than pre-given features of conquest, which saw parallel, incremental degrees of control in the frontier rather than absolute authority of one dynasty or official.

From Karnatak to Tennaserim: Fueling conquest across the Bay of Bengal

The concentric and overlapping circuits of authority within the eastern Karnatak were further complicated through a wider, long distance dimension to Golkonda's conquests. Along with a range of local resources, Neknam Khan tapped into a still broader network of Iranian traders in the eastern Indian Ocean across the Bay of Bengal. In a report from Cornelis Speelman in Pulicat to Joan Maetsuijker, head of the Coromandel Council, from 20 June 1664, mentioned Neknam Khan's order for a shipment of elephants from Tennaserim, in present-day southern Myanmar. A protracted episode, concerning this shipment of elephants unfolded, which involved a family of Iranian merchant brothers named Aladdin and Muhammad Sadiq, who had left a representative of the King of Siam (Thailand) in Golkonda for three years. Neknam Khan's seems to have been purchasing goods from these Iranian merchants in Siam, independent of the Dutch and the English.

Sanjay Subrahmanyam has hinted at connections between the Deccan and the court of King Narai of Siam in the seventeenth century, especially in the context of Iranian elite circulation in the eastern Indian Ocean.⁹² D'Hubert also links this mercantile network to the circulation of Persian texts and literati, hinting at simultaneous processes in literary production and projects of translation between Persian and Dakkani in Golkonda and between Persian and Bengali in the court of Mrauk-U, further north in

⁹² Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 349-350.

Arakan.⁹³ The well-known travel account of the *Safīna-ye Sulaymānī* or the Ship of Sulayman, dating from 1685-1686, too has been discussed in numerous studies confirming connections between Safavid Iran, the Deccan, and the kingdom of Ayutthaya in the late seventeenth century.⁹⁴ Earlier clues in Dutch correspondence confirm the role of Iranians, especially those hailing from places near the Caspian Sea such as Mazandaran and Gilan, in consolidating trade networks between Golkonda and Siam. By the seventeenth century's second half, commercial relations between Siam and Golkonda did not necessarily need to rely on the Dutch for freight trade. By the 1660s, this circuit from the Bay of Bengal's upper portion, between Coromandel and Pegu, was not yielding much revenue for the VOC.⁹⁵ Instead, households and family networks of Iranian merchants who had a firm footing in the administrations of both Golkonda and Siam, often undercut European monopolies on shipping across this maritime route. The recent memory of the strength this Iranian network across the Bay of Bengal just a few decades before framed the Safavid ambassador's observations of the Thai court in the 1680s. This may explain why the Safavid ambassador lamented the decline of Iranians in Siam and the rise of the Greek, Constant Phaulkon, as the new counselor to King Narai.⁹⁶

Neknam Khan's conquests in the Karnatak in the 1660s forged both direct and indirect linkages to this inter-Asian nexus of circulation and exchange within the Bay of Bengal. Iranians were in Siamese King Narai's court nearly two decades before the famous embassy of Muhammad Rabi' ibn Muhammad Ibrahim, soon after the king's ascension in 1658. Brief Dutch observations of the movement of Iranians, between

⁹³ d'Hubert, "Pirates, Poets, and Merchants" 65 - 66.

⁹⁴ Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 159 -174.

⁹⁵ Raychaudhuri, *Jan Company in Coromandel*, 85.

⁹⁶ Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, 166.

Golkonda and Siam, also reveal the terms of the relationship that these itinerant merchants had with the rulers of these two kingdoms. One trader of elephants, Mamet Reza (Muhammad Reza) is described as “*een vrij coopman en geensints verhouden*” or a free merchant and bound to no one. And yet, after they arrived in Golkonda, the king of Siam appointed this Muhammad Reza and other Iranian as ministers and servants, to represent his kingdom in the Deccan courts.⁹⁷

Through these merchant-diplomats, Neknam Khan placed orders for elephants from Tennaserim or Mergui in the early 1660s, which were executed on his behalf by a larger network of Iranian merchants who moved between Golkonda and Siam.⁹⁸ One of these nine elephants died on the journey, leading to great confusion over allowing the remaining elephants to disembark and who would account for them near Madras. In the previous year, the King of Siam had let go off of the aforementioned Muhammad Reza (*door de Majesteit was ontslagen en op vrije voeten gestelt*). Muhammad Reza departed from Golkonda, with his wife and children, but their ship wrecked along the journey. The merchant-diplomat lost all his belongings and his family perished. Although rescued by another ship, he still could not clear his debts from the previous ship. In these circumstances, the Siamese King then offered Muhammad Reza to come back into his service, as ambassador to the Dutch, but the latter refused. Another Iranian, a certain Anam Khan (Inam Khan?), who had been living in Golkonda for three years as an emissary on behalf King Narai then tried to claim the shipment of elephants, which by now had dis-boarded on the Coromandel coast. Inam Khan said he would pay 1000

⁹⁷ VOC 1246, f. 1507

⁹⁸ VOC 1246, Letter from Cornelis Speelman to Joan Maetsuijker and Council of India, 20 June 1664, f. 1507

pagodas for each elephant and put up a warrant or guarantee for the elephants. Further, he claimed that rightful owners of these elephants were the two Iranian brothers, Aladdin and Muhammad Sadiq, but the latter could not appear in court to press for their claim as one of the brothers was on a voyage to Manila. Aladdin is described as “*een vrijkoopman en overbonden aen den Conicq was*” or a free merchant but who was bound to the king. At the heart of this confusion seems to be a distinction between those Iranians who fell under and represented the Thai king versus those who did not or were long-time residents of the Deccan courts. Iranians from Siam could have easily blended into the Golkonda court, given that they already made up a majority of its courtly ranks. But the option of serving as a representative of the Siam court offered the possibility of controlling indigenous freight trade in the Bay of Bengal from Golkonda, which was, by this time, lucrative and fueling the Karnatak conquest.

In the meantime, the elephants were transferred from Masulipatnam to Madras. From the viewpoint of Dutch officials, both kinds of loosely court-affiliated Iranian merchants with ships at their disposal, posed a threat to freight trade between Golkonda, Siam, and Aceh. Further, the households of these Iranian merchants were deeply embedded in both the Golkonda and Siam courts. In Madras, once again the perpetually antagonistic, Edward Winter, protested, refusing to allow the eight elephants to go to Golkonda. Pieter de Lange reported that the elephants were now being rerouted to St. Thomé and that a Dutch ship might be used to carry them along the coast. It seems King Narai sent letters, which were to be meant for the VOC, but were actually for the English agent, Edward Winter, possibly to make an arrangement with the English instead of the

Dutch.⁹⁹ All of these actors were operating under the auspices of Neknam Khan, who was procuring these supplies to sustain his conquest around the city of Madras.

Although brief and fleeting, traces on Neknam Khan's extended ties with Siam suggest that familial trading networks, such as those of Iranian merchants, were difficult for Europeans to insert themselves into. The political affiliations of these merchants were not quite apparent to European observers even though they attempted to distinguish between those who served the Siam court versus those who were already settled in Golkonda. It seems Dutch officials on the Coromandel coast understood that Iranians in Siam were bound to the court of King Narai in a very different way than Iranians who constituted the Golkonda court and its provincial administration. In both courts, they were active participants in court politics. The degree of their autonomy and flexibility was circumscribed by their status as representatives of different sovereigns across the Indian Ocean. Local Dutch merchants perhaps apprehended the resources and networks at the disposal of these Iranians, which may have looked very different from the Company structure that they were familiar with and working within. Two very different institutional contexts – households and companies – operated as a continuum of interactive entities that proscribed and enabled each individual actor's operations within overlapping spheres of authority. Within this layer of conquest encounters, the precise terms and relationships of local officials to centers of political authority was not always comprehensible to European actors. We may perhaps conclude then that the way of being an Iranian 'portfolio capitalist' in 17th century Siam was slightly different than being an Iranian migrant-conqueror in the Deccan. But both of these, operated together in different

⁹⁹ Ibid., ff. 1208-1213.

political landscapes, fueling expansion on both ends of this long-distance route. The accumulation of material resources for conquest depended upon resilient inter-regional affective and familial ties that connected Golkonda with the Bay of Bengal.

Negotiating the landmark *qaul* of 1672

It is within this context of decade-long negotiations that Neknam Khan issued the famous *qaul* of 1672, with which we began this chapter. Keeping different European residents and officials in balance was perhaps only a small part of Neknam Khan's worries. Policing vagabonds, drunks, keeping inhabitants in cities, and controlling rival officials posed greater challenges for the commander. As late as 1670, Neknam Khan continued to refuse to hold audience or give time to anyone, and often insulted and treated them badly after short, abrupt meetings. Neknam Khan frequently joked to Dutch officials that he could just destroy Castle Geldria or Pulicat anytime he wanted.¹⁰⁰

Under George Foxcroft's administration, a new series of negotiations unfolded between Neknam Khan, the English, and local rulers. Since 1658, Neknam Khan had refused to accept a fixed payment of 380 *pagodas* per year, which according to previous *qauls*, had been fixed at half of the customs paid to the Golkonda sultanate. Neknam Khan wanted a Muslim governor to check all receipts and increase the amount as required. While Foxcroft attempted to extend pre-existing agreements and kept sending 380 pagodas, Neknam Khan simply refused to accept the payment. In 1670, a certain "Chinapella Mirza" or Janab Ali Mirza imposed a blockade around Madras, disallowing the flow of goods from and into the city.¹⁰¹ Despite refusing this arrangement, the English

¹⁰⁰ VOC 1284, Copy of letter from Anthonij Pavileon to Heeren XVII, 1 November 1670, f. 1909

¹⁰¹ V.O.M., 265, Love cites Irvine who had suggested this name may be a corruption of Janab Ali Mirza. See Love's footnote 2, V.O.M., 265.

preferred “the Nabob’s good opinion” instead of his “discontent and anger.”¹⁰² Foxcroft cited privileges the English had acquired when the Kingdom of the Karnatak was under the Hindu king, within which they paid rent for the town, but controlled its governance. Golkonda officials however would not consent to this arrangement and wanted Madras to resemble Pulicat, where governance was not up to the Dutch or the English, and the local governor checked receipts before customs were paid to Golkonda.¹⁰³ The Golkonda commander therefore flatly refused all of these requests.¹⁰⁴ In the often-cited *caul* of 1672 that Neknam Khan issued, the town rent was fixed at 1200 Pagodas and arrears of dues were to be paid at the rate of 1000 Pagodas per year. It further confirmed the non-interference of a local governor nor could the English be hassled for other custom duties.¹⁰⁵

The story of Neknam Khan’s negotiations with the English, recounted briefly or referred to in passing in numerous studies,¹⁰⁶ has one further untold layer. Apparently, a woman named “Butche Paupana” a relative of Chenappa Naik, negotiated the final deal on behalf of the English. Love quotes a report by the political agent present in Golkonda who wrote to Governor Foxcroft from 1672:

“the daughter of Damerla Timapanague being heere, I have assisted her, and made an end of some of her business with the Nabob; and whereas our towne was made at first by her Unckle Agapa Nague [who] was the man that made and begun Chinapatam, after which the English have populated and augmented [it] so much that his name remaines now known in all parts.’ The political agent explained that, on an earlier occasion, he and Verona had in vain appealed to the Nawab to let the English retain their town on the old terms; ‘after which wee went to speake

¹⁰² Ibid., 266-267.

¹⁰³ V.O.M., George Foxcroft to Nawab Neknam Khan, 10 November 1670, 267.

¹⁰⁴ V.O.M., 276.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 344 - 345. Copy of the Cowle given by His Excellency the Nabob Yecknam Cawne to the Honorable Sir William Langhorne, 23 February, 1672.

¹⁰⁶ Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*, 84-85. Stern, *The Company-state*, 28.

with Ackapa Nague and Timma Nague, acquainting them of the answer the Nabob gave us; and then they both went to the Nabob and told him that Chinapatam was made in their father's name, and that strangers do live in it, and if his Excellency should not rent the said towne to the English, twill never be populated or augmented."¹⁰⁷

The man that "Butche Paupana" sent to visit Neknam Khan presented his mistress' plea to the minister. She pointed out that the deal with the English over Chennapatam was negotiated in her Uncle's time and that the current conditions of tenure were opposed to what was set out in the original. On 8th March 1672, she wrote to William Langhorne informing him that the Nawab, allegedly impressed with her arguments, had finally granted a *qaul*.¹⁰⁸ The episode drew to a close as Neknam Khan fell quite ill by this time and died shortly after issuing this landmark decree.

Conclusion: The resilience of patrons

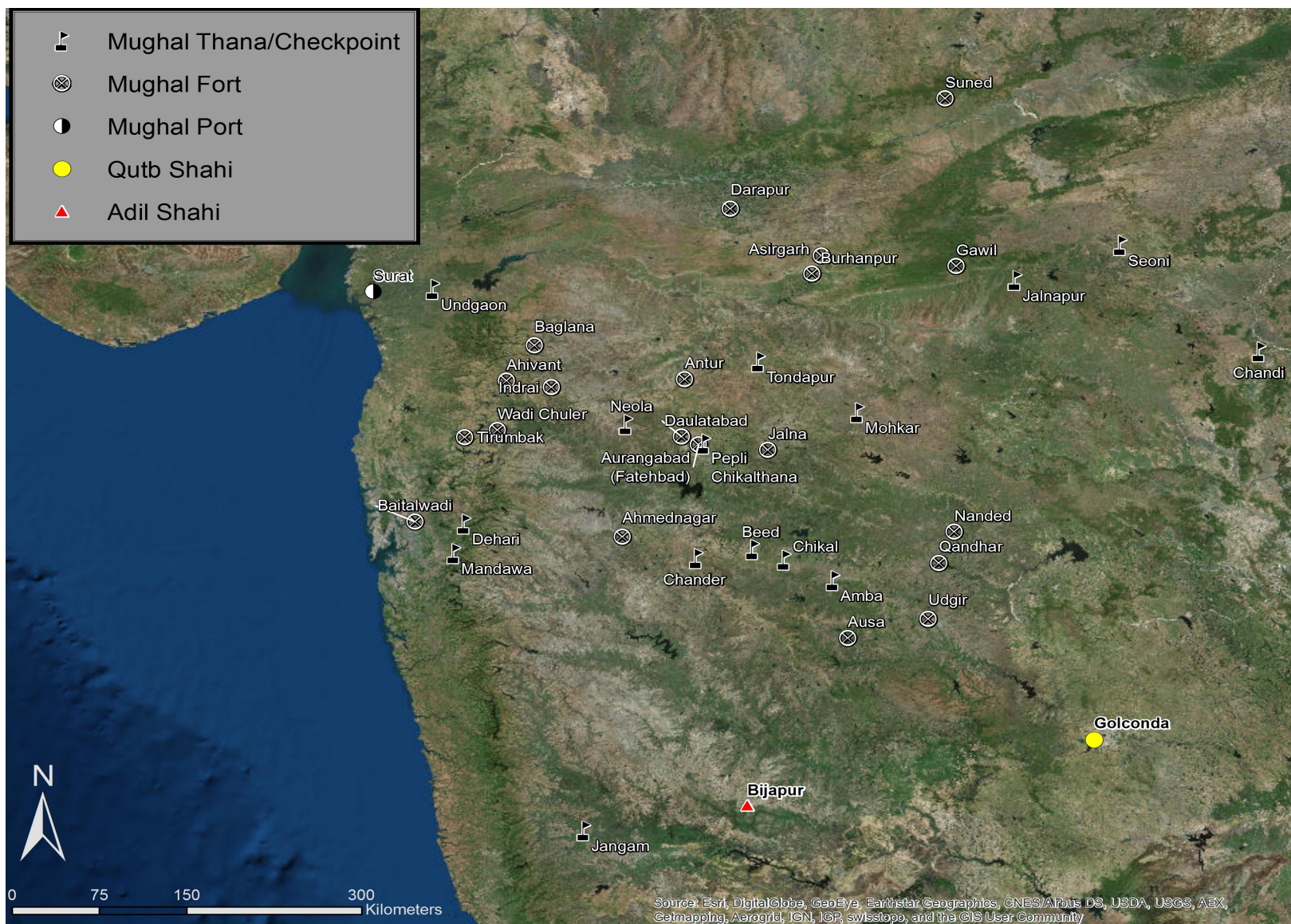
Like Chapter Two, circuits of activities, people, and goods revolving around a patron were analyzed to make a series of arguments. This chapter's first half moved across literary sources in which we find representations of Neknam Khan. Two decades after Mir Jumla's defection in 1655 until the mid-1670s, the Karnatak conquest continued more or less uninterrupted, but in an often haphazard and chaotic way. The narrative of conquest presented in Persian and Dakkani sources, no doubt, follows from much older templates and conventions of expressing the patron's valorous and heroic characteristics. And yet, these representations were not merely means for legitimizing him but also suggestive of the consolidation of civil, military and ceremonial offices in the Deccan

¹⁰⁷ V.O.M., pp. 346- 347.

¹⁰⁸ VOM, Butche Papanana to William Langhorn, 8 March 1672, p. 347.

sultanates during conquest. Nusrati's portrait of Neknam Khan as a diplomat, who negotiated with the neighboring Bijapur sultanate, to oppose the Mughals, rhetorically united two Deccan sovereigns. The poet recast regional territorial ambitions in universalist terms while continuing the practice of conquest ethnography. In the second part of this chapter, in European sources, we find a closer glimpse of the 'real' Neknam Khan and of the contingent, tenuous character of his hold over conquest areas. An angry, formidable, and intimidating patron who kept everyone – merchants, subjects, local officials – under constant fear and threat. Despite Neknam Khan's overbearing presence, the eastern Karnatak, with its nested and hierarchical sovereignties, experienced another crisis of authority along its coasts. Port-cities, forts, and arterial towns and cities fell in and out of different authorities. Both Chapters Two and Three elucidated the halting, internally contested and differentiated layers of a nested conquest. Regional methods of ruling and governing a frontier had certain features that could not be found in imperial, agrarian empires. Foremost among these were variable techniques that patron-conquerors used to incorporate maritime resources of the Indian Ocean. Coastal officials, although entrenched in court politics of regional polities operated with relative autonomy, allowing them to forge alliances with each other and European traders. But the maritime orientation of early modern regional states enabled multivalent nodes of resource accumulation, which in turn, acted as a deterrent to further Mughal expansion. This is precisely why Mir Jumla's defection to the Mughals in 1655 actually made little or no difference to Golkonda and Bijapur's continued territorial expansion in the seventeenth century's latter part.

To return to the matrioshka doll metaphor at the center of this inquiry - the effect of mirroring or self-similarity during conquest interlocked smaller dolls (sultanates) with the larger doll (empire), but it did not entirely collapse the differences and gap between the two. As late as the 1670s, the specter of the Mughals loomed large but even then it was, by no means, an absolute certainty. And yet, when it finally entered the Deccan after decades of rehearsals, the Mughal empire too, stood on uncertain ground. Problems of fiscal authority and scarcity of resources in the southeastern Deccan that we saw in this chapter mirrored the Deccan conquest's most dominant layer- the Mughals - the subject of Chapter Four. However, what was markedly different about Mughal rule in the frontier was the inapplicability of the most trusted of imperial institutions - the regulation of the army and personnel incorporation - which could not always adapt to the frontier's volatile and perpetually shifting landscapes.



Map 3 - Mughals in the Upper Deccan 1636 - 1676

بر دل ما تیره روزان از صف مژگان گذشت
آنچه از فوج دکن بر ملک هندستان گذشت

To us, black of fortune
the array
of her eyelashes
did what the army
of the Deccan did

to the people
of the north.

- Anand Ram Mukhlis¹

Chapter Four

The Mughals march south: Imperial operations, ambitions, and limits in the Deccan frontier

The two previous chapters were organized around migrant-adventurers from the Sultanates who pursued conquest in the eastern and western Karnatak. Yet I have thus far not adequately addressed the question of this territorial expansion unfolding within a larger Mughal presence in the Deccan. No study of the seventeenth century Deccan is complete without the Mughals. We may cast the Mughal empire as an unstoppable juggernaut that had already emerged supreme in the Deccan as early as the late sixteenth century²; as an unavoidable and overconfident bully relentlessly harassing southern India's regional polities to extract tribute but never fully settling into the frontier³; or locate the empire's eighteenth century decline in this region, into which it had invested enormous (wasted) resources in the

¹ Shamsur Rahman Faruqi, *The Shadow of a Bird in Flight* (New Delhi: Rupa & Co, 1994), 85.

² Jadunath Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb, Vol. I-IV* (Orient Longman, 1972)

³ Alam and Subrahmanyam, "The Deccan Frontier," 362. Shakeb, *Relations of Golkonda with Iran*, Chapter Two. Both, Alam and Richards, drawing on the Inayat Jang Collection in the National Archives in Delhi, have addressed questions of imperial alliance making and rule *after* Mughal conquest in 1687. Muzaffar Alam, "The Zamindars and Mughal Power in the Deccan, 1685-1712" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 11, 1 (1974): 74 – 91. John F. Richards, "The Imperial Crisis in the Deccan" *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 35, no. 2, February (1976): 237-256.

previous century.⁴ As stated in this dissertation's outset, there is little use in bemoaning Mughal 'rise' and sultanate 'decline' in the seventeenth century Deccan, bracketing neat chronologies marked by these political dynasties, drawing on sources from one or either region. For this study's purposes, rather than starting from an absolute binary between imperial and regional forms of rule, I have chosen the period *prior* to the final Mughal conquest of the Deccan in 1687. Doing so suggests a simultaneity and self-similarity in conquest patterns of polities of different size and scale. In previous chapters, patron-conquerors and their networks produced new forms of conquest consolidation in the Karnatak. In regional sultanates, instead of formal institutions of governance, hierarchies and operations within patronage networks entrenched conquest pathways within the Deccan, connecting them to long-distance trading networks of the Indian Ocean. At the same time that Mustafa Khan and Neknam Khan were pushing the southern frontiers of Bijapur and Golkonda, the Mughals began implementing formal mechanisms of imperial rule in the newly acquired territories of the upper Deccan (See Map 3). In this concomitant conquest, we may even observe a strange reversal in imperial and regional dynamics of rule - the regional polities' informal mechanisms allowed for more consolidation and centralization than the Mughal empire's centralized institutions, such as cavalry regulation, which more or less ceased to function in the frontier. It was in the Deccan that the most resilient of Mughal institutions – the imperial army's regulation and the efficient re-distribution of imperial revenues – only occasionally succeeded. Casting a regional viewpoint upon imperial rule during conquest simultaneously affirms both centralizing and decentralizing tendencies of the Mughal empire along with those of regional polities. Offering a compromise between structural and processual approaches to Mughal studies, in the case of western India, Farhat Hasan too has cast a regional lens upon the Mughal empire but *after* the

⁴ Athar 'Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb* (Delhi, 1997), 4, 102-103.

latter conquered the Gujarat sultanate in 1572.⁵ Several of Hasan's insights, with some modifications, bear upon my analysis of the Mughal Deccan. By pushing the Mughal empire's traditional, agrarian limits to include an analysis of its maritime frontiers through Persian documents from Surat and Cambay, Hasan meticulously follows the processes through which local society constituted imperial rule.⁶ Compared to the relatively swift expeditions of the Mughals in Gujarat,⁷ the Deccan conquests stretched over a longer period and due to sustained and exhausting military sieges, imperial structures remained deeply constrained in southern India. Like southern Gujarat, Mughal suzerainty facilitated the rise of local power brokers in the Karnatak frontier, which we saw in the previous two chapters. Instead of an negotiated absorption after conquest, as was the case in Gujarat, during a nested conquest in the Deccan, regional polities continued to operate within Mughal suzerainty while emphatically defining themselves as Deccan sovereigns, in essential opposition to all things 'Mughal.'

To understand the many different meanings of what constituted 'Mughal' in the period after 1636, this chapter once again moves away from well-known Mughal chronicles produced in Delhi and casts a lens upon the empire from sources produced in the Deccan frontier. Here, I analyze the Mughal empire's everyday operations and mundane, unrealized tasks meant to regulate the frontier. Second, I turn to empire's representations in non-Mughal, Deccani and European materials to understand how frontier actors apprehended imperial presence. By way of administrative documents as well as complex symbolic portraits of it found in literary sources, this chapter oscillates between narrative history and processual analysis of the empire's provincial workings and limits. I highlight several factors that made the Deccan

⁵ Farhat Hasan, *State and Locality in Mughal India: Power Relations in Western India, c. 1572 – 1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 5-11.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 43-51.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 25-27.

qualitatively different from the Mughal empire of northern India, which has often been held as a model or prototype for the rest of the subcontinent. The southern frontier's variable physical topography, the trials of administrating it, different kinds of military personnel and disagreements between imperial actors, and its maritime orientation made it more akin to regional states within the Mughal imperium such as Gujarat, and beyond those limits, to peninsular states such as Aceh and Johor in Southeast Asia.⁸ Before turning to the materials, I engage with previous works on Mughal warfare, the military and the nobility, which have been the subject of a dense body of research, focused mostly on northern India.

The question of where the Mughals fell in the Deccan's complex and polycentric political landscape returns us once again to the moral articulations of sovereignty and conquest ethnography. In this chapter, I analyze how Mullah Nusrati articulated the problem of political disloyalty and affinity in the 1660s by setting up contrasts between allies and enemies of the Deccan sultanates and most of all, by insulting the Mughals. Once again, the category of who is included in the political affiliation of "Deccani" shifts throughout the course of his long poem, the *'Alī Nāmāh*, composed at the height of war making and conquest in the 1660s in the Deccan. The ethnographic depth of this literary source surpasses 17th Persian prose chronicles and offers a more multivalent sense of political affinity and disloyalty and what these meant for the Mughals in a period and space of conquest.

The depths of an imperial penumbra

In the first section, I build the Mughal army's profile in the Deccan from four kinds of materials that correspond to different levels or cross sections in the empire that often intersected with each other. The first of these is the correspondence between Prince Aurangzeb,

⁸ Ito Takeshi, "The World of the Adat Aceh: A historical study of the sultanate of Aceh" PhD. diss., Australia National University, 1984.

during his first and second viceroyalty in the Deccan, and Emperor Shah Jahan, as well as the letters exchanged between the Deccan sultans and the Mughals.⁹ This correspondence was at the highest level of the Mughal provincial governance in newly acquired provinces. As such, it expresses the ambitions and struggles of a Mughal prince who spent a majority of his formative career in the frontier and drew upon its resources to consolidate his authority back in Delhi.¹⁰ The second set of materials that I draw on are unpublished provincial-level Mughal documents from the Deccan, including *'arz-o-chehreh* or soldiers' description rolls, a body of administrative materials that provide a window into the Mughal army's ethnic, racial, linguistic, and demographic composition. Unlike prose chronicles, these fragmentary administrative records do not lend themselves to easy narrativizing and have therefore not received adequate attention nor do they provide an absolute and finished portrait of the empire in the frontier. I recounted the story of the accidental discovery of these documents in the early twentieth century in the opening chapter. The description rolls are a window into the empire's lowest rung, and offer a 'bottom-up' view of an imperial state, struggling to settle and make sense of its frontier. In these sources, we see the challenges, contributions, and internal mobility of the lowest levels of Mughal personnel alongside their interactions with the highest authorities in Mughal administration, members of the imperial household.

In the second section, I supplement fragments from the provincial administrative archive with the vignettes of the Mughal army that poet-chroniclers from the Deccan Sultanates painted in dramatic accounts of battles in Dakkani *masnawī*. Lastly, I supplement Persianate materials with the observations of the Dutch, who kept a pulse on the ever-present

⁹Vincent John Adams Flynn, "An English translation of the *Adab-i 'Alamgiri*" PhD. diss., Australia National University, 1974.

¹⁰ Munis Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), Chapters Three and Four.

threat and possibility of the Mughals marching through the Deccan. Based on these diverse materials, a picture of the Mughal empire in the frontier emerges that was never complete nor systematic nor always cogent in the traditional sense of a state with an absolute and unequivocal intent with a matching causal impact. Rather, we find that the same layers of negotiation, expansion, and contingency that characterized the Deccan sultanates during a period of conquest (shown in Chapters Two and Three) appear as processes that also constituted different levels of the Mughal empire.

Along with a portrait of the Mughals from a provincial vantage point, the question of patronage (fiscal, military and mercantile) once again comes to the forefront when we observe Mughal challenges, strategies of personnel incorporation, and negotiation in the Deccan. I argue that the frontier and regional sultanates at the empire's threshold were integral to the Mughal empire's constitution. Aurangzeb's presence in the Deccan brought Mughal structures, such as the institution of a princely household, to the region, as suggested by Munis Faruqi.¹¹ But certainly these Mughal institutions, just as in the Indo-Gangetic heartland of empire, did not exist in a vacuum in the southern frontier but were bound up with and contingent upon pre-conditions of governance in the Deccan. Thus, we may probe further: how and why imperial structures absorbed or conflicted with pre-existing regional processes? Within the template of a nested conquest, which features of mercantile polities such as Bijapur and Golkonda did the Mughal empire take on? Which features were impossible for an empire to absorb? How did low-level officials in the Deccan determine imperial policy and practice? Did the Mughal army's ethnic profile change as a result of incorporating new troops and ethnic groups from the Deccan?

Armies, firearms, and frontiers in Mughal historiography

¹¹ Faruqi, *The Princes of The Mughal Empire*, 221.

Studies of Mughal state-formation are far too numerous to re-visit here. The arguments of some key works, however, are indispensable to any discussion on the Mughal Deccan. I argue here that in a fundamental way the eighteenth century decline debate looms large upon seventeenth century historiography, especially when it comes to the question of Mughals in the Deccan. By contrast, the Mughal empire's western and eastern conquests, in Gujarat and Bengal, do not always take the blame in political histories of imperial decline. Mughal decline invariably begins and ends in the empire's southern most fringes. The empire's deterioration is either located firmly in Mughal emperor Aurangzeb's 'psyche'¹² or, with slightly less psycho-structuralist reasoning, early colonial conquest is explained with the dismantling of pre-colonial military labor market. Even in the most imaginative discussions of the Mughal army that have moved away from the binary of a centralized versus decentralized state, the underlying concern has been to explain the Mughal empire's eighteenth century collapse.¹³

In a discussion of Dirk Kolff's classic work, *Naikar, Rajput and Sepoy*, John F. Richards urged a revival of the empire's military history.¹⁴ He located Jos Gommans' *Mughal Warfare* as the only worthy successor to Kolff which addressed questions of military recruitment in the imperial army and engaged with Kolff's thesis of a pre-colonial military labor market.¹⁵ Gommans' work, based on published Mughal sources and European accounts and borrowing from models elsewhere in the early modern world,¹⁶ has been a landmark in setting out the Mughal army's overarching structure and evolution in the subcontinent. Mughal

¹² Jadunath Sarkar's multi-volume biography of Aurangzeb is the classic example.

¹³ Jos Gommans, *Mughal Warfare: Indian Frontiers and Highroads to Empire 1500–1700* (Routledge, 2003), 202.

¹⁴ John F. Richards, "Warriors and the State in Early Modern India" *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 47, No. 3, *Between the Flux and Facts of Indian History: Papers in Honor of Dirk Kolff* (2004): 390-400.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 392.

¹⁶ Gommans citing Owen Lattimore, *Mughal Warfare*, 16.

state-formation occurred in a transition zone between nomadic and settled ecological zones that produced different administrative practices and types of military activity. Several of Gommans' observations, on the Mughal army as it evolved in different corners of the empire, are worth restating here. First, unlike the Indo-Gangetic plains of northern India, the Mughals found it difficult to move a large army in the Deccan's uneven terrain and over long-distance routes that cut across the plateau.¹⁷ Such a transition also required a shift in the form of military conflict from battle to siege, and the latter was unsuitable for the swift movement of cavalry. The 'zamindarisation and regional centralization' witnessed in the eighteenth century was therefore a natural corollary of the centripetal forces at work in the empire's inner frontiers in the seventeenth century.¹⁸ The spatial unit of the Deccan therefore explains the Mughal empire's longer diachronic shifts, including 'decline'.

From conquest's physical and geographic features to its human profile, in several medieval and early modern contexts, scholars observe a correlation between the movement of large populations during conquest and ethnogenesis. Christine Noelle-Karimi's discussion of the long pattern of a tension between those who hailed from urban, sedentary groups (*tājīk*) versus those of tribal-nomadic background (*turk*) in Central Asia is pertinent to the Deccan.¹⁹ After at least three centuries of Central Asian migration to southern India, by the early seventeenth century, there was less correlation between the positions these sub-groups occupied in Central Asia and what they did in the Deccan. In Chapter Three and Three, I showed that as regional kingdoms expanded into the conquest frontier, Central Asian military commanders of nomadic background posted to conquest areas also held administrative

¹⁷ Ibid., 33.

¹⁸ Ibid., 199-202.

¹⁹ Christine Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in its Midst: Herat and the Mapping of Khurasan (15th – 19th centuries)*, (Wien: Veröffentlichungen zur Iranistik, 2014), 69-70.

positions in regional capital cities. The reverse was also true – those of sedentary, urban stock could hold military posts in conquest areas. Similar to the breakdown and changes in old and new clan affinities wrought by Mongol rule that Karimi suggests, we can observe ethnic realignments in the Deccan due to the Mughal army’s migration into the peninsula. This is exactly what may explain categories as curious as ‘Afghan Maratha’ ‘Afghan-i-Kurd’ ‘Rajput Solanki’ in the Mughal description rolls, from Shah Jahan’s period, which I analyze in this chapter. The categories are multivalent and signify ethnic, regional, linguistic, and sub-regional affiliations that were forged and evolved as result of long-distance movements into and within the frontier. My argument here, from an earlier set of materials, anticipates and agrees with what Digby observed about the presence of Central Asians in the Deccan through the saintly biography, *Malfuzāt-i Naqshbadiyya*, produced in the Mughal provincial capital of Aurangabad in the early eighteenth century. He too noted the blurring of nomadic and sedentary ethnic divisions in the Deccan and the rather loose application of the label ‘Mughal’ to both Iranis and Turanis.²⁰ The *Malfuzāt* represents the culmination of a longer Mughal military presence from the early seventeenth century where ethnographic markers were well defined but evolved homologously in a conquest context. In this context then, a certain second-generation Turani, Turktaz Khan Bahadur could ‘adopt Maratha customs’ while serving in the imperial army.²¹ At the same time, Digby discerns certain ‘*chihra-aqasi*’ or muster masters were exclusively appointed to record Turani soldiers’ rolls.²² The utility of ethnographic enumeration, therefore, can be observed across administrative, courtly, and religious contexts as circuits of military commanders, soldiers, learned elites, and charismatic Sufis overlapped.

²⁰ Simon Digby, *Sufis and Soldiers in Awrangzeb’s Deccan: Malfuzāt-i Naqshbandiyya* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 7-8.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 135, 177, 270.

²² *Ibid.*, 253, 258.

The relationship of these classifications to the imperial army's organization may be answered in several ways. In his survey of the Mughal army, Gommans following Kolff, maintained that labels for groups such as Irani, Turani, Afghan and Rajput were not ascriptive categories that implied inherent loyalties but political coalitions that often cut across these lines.²³ In other words, service under a certain *mansabdār* did not always imply a similar or corresponding caste or ethnic affiliation. Again this is an older and wider pattern Karimi also observes in Khurasan - commanders did not share common background with their troops.²⁴ But Athar Ali in his work on the Mughal nobility rightly noted that these ethnic classifications were not at all meaningless. Some groups were more valued than others, as were horses, and the imperial government regulated what proportion of men belonging to his own group a *mansabdār* could recruit.²⁵ Following from Ali, Firdos Anwar further studied the Mughal nobility's constitution during Shah Jahan's reign, dividing it into different periods and marking two major shifts in 1636 and 1642. Like Rafi Ahmed Ali, Anwar too concluded on the utility of ethnic groups and the household as the Mughal nobility's central organizing unit. Yet the prime concern in all of these studies remained the *umarā'*, or nobles above the rank of 1000, who constituted 'the Mughal ruling class.'²⁶ The description rolls, at the center of this chapter, represent much lower-level soldiers in the Mughal army, who did not constitute the ruling elite. But the ability to control and utilize this military manpower, which held the empire together in the frontier, with far fewer imperial tools and resources, raises the question - what was utility

²³ Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 69-70. Dirk Kolff, *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23.

²⁴ Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in its Midst*, 69.

²⁵ Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of empire: awards of ranks, offices and titles to the Mughal nobility (1574-1658)* (Oxford University Press, 1985), xvii, xx. *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 15.

²⁶ Ali, *Ibid.*

of recording military personnel, how was ‘rule’ implemented and what did ‘ruling’ mean in conquest spaces?

Mughal cavalry and soldiers have remained auxiliary to most studies of the Mughal *mansab*, especially in a frontier zone, even though the idealized forms of soldiery they performed and the weapons they used are well examined.²⁷ During the Deccan conquest, there were two prototypes of the Mughal soldier. The first were those who journeyed to the Deccan from different parts of the empire or from areas beyond it, such as Central Asia. The second were local cavalry from within the Mughal empire’s penumbral domains in the upper Deccan or from areas further south. Neither of these were full-time, stationary cavalry in the Mughal army. Just as sub-imperial elites from the Deccan sultanates defected to the Mughals, plenty of low-level Mughal officials and soldiers would have, after their arrival in the Deccan, jumped in the other direction, and gone over to the sultanates.²⁸ We cannot preclude this possibility because of the minute scale and intense frequency of these movements at the imperial army’s lowest levels. Branding and muster rolls were created as institutions in the frontier to make sure Mughal soldiers did not run away. The uneven application of such ‘formal’ mechanisms of rule was most apparent in the frontier. Further, soldiers in the frontier were probably only seasonally occupied with work in the Mughal army. At other times, cavalry soldiers could have kept their horses, but turned to other ways of earning a living as agriculturalists and pastoralists.

Long before Kolff, Gommans, Ali and Anwar, Rafi Ahmed Alavi was the first to take a random sample from around 2500 Mughal *‘arz-o-chehrah* documents from Shah Jahan’s reign. These documents were just beginning to be processed in the State Archives Andhra Pradesh in

²⁷ Iqtidar Alam Khan, “Gunpowder and Empire: Indian Case” *Social Scientist* 33, 3/4 (2005): 57-59.

²⁸ This was the case for many Afghan contingents in the Mughal army. See Chapter Five of this dissertation.

the 1970s, and Alavi published this sample as a short chapter in his *Studies in the History of Medieval Deccan*.²⁹ He drew several important conclusions regarding the Mughal army's constitution and administration in the Deccan frontier. First, entire households or generations of families were often employed under the same noble, which Alavi likened to a *khānazād* system within the army organization. Secondly, he observed that despite normative prescriptions for regulation and verification in Mughal chronicles and administrative manuals, especially for Mughal *mansabdārān-i khāssa* who were paid directly from the imperial treasury, it was hardly the case that rules for branding of horses or verification of soldiers were actually followed or that the Mughal army was systematically regulated.³⁰ Before all of the aforementioned historians, Alavi also noted there was no correlation between a noble's ethnic background and the kinds of soldiers he recruited, who came from all parts of the empire and beyond it. But he also observed that only in the case of south Indian troopers – whether Maratha, Habshi or Dakkani – did soldiers from the same region work under a noble also of “South Indian domicile.”³¹ *Mansabdārs* from Hindustan and elsewhere probably collected their soldiers from different parts of the Mughal empire as the army slowly moved towards the southern frontier. When the Mughal army turned towards the Deccan, local elites shifted over to Mughal service along with their military contingents. The purpose of soldiers' description rolls was by no means arbitrary and the process of recruitment and regulation encountered difficulties unique to a frontier, where such Mughal administrative practices could not be fully implemented. These challenges, in turn, while changing the Mughal army's demographic

²⁹ Rafi Ahmed Alavi, Chapter Three, “New Light on Mughal Cavalry” in *Studies in the History of Medieval Deccan* (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1977)

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 21-22.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 23.

constitution also meant that administrative practices evolved within the constraints of, what was possible and impossible in the frontier.

Here, I should clarify that each level of the administrative archive analyzed in this chapter offers separate glimpses into two concerns of Mughal governance. The bottom-most of these are the description or muster rolls and lists of staff accoutrements. These present rough contours of Mughal soldiers' physical presence and regulation, as well as changes in their salaries and additions to grants. These 'lower' level documents show the re-distribution of revenue as expense rather than its collection and accumulation. Revenue collection is only visible when we move 'higher' up in the hierarchy of Mughal governance. The question, or rather the perpetual problem of, revenue collection can be seen in the second register, that is, in the letters exchanged between princes and imperial authorities in north India who constantly observed the Deccan frontier's dismal revenue returns.

Due to a chronological focus either on the period after 1687 or on single events in the 17th century that typified decline or successes of 'the Mughal state', we have not yet accounted for changes in Mughal institutions of incorporation when the empire was occupying a space with pre-existing sovereign units. The period from 1636 to 1687 was when the Deccan sultanates too were consolidating and expanding territorially alongside and against an imperial presence in the peninsula. The issue of Mughal incorporation of different groups leads us to Gommans' last argument on institutional changes that led to the empire's decline. He refers to the debate between Athar Ali and Richards on the Deccan's role in precipitating Mughal decline in the eighteenth century,³² whether due to incorporation of new Deccani elites and the increase in demand for *jāgīrs* or revenue assignments versus those who cited Mughal failure to

³² John F. Richards, *The New Cambridge History of India: The Mughal Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993): 147-148.

forge political ties with local chieftains such as the Marathas. Gommans rests his argument on these two differing viewpoints noting that the Mughals chose not to destroy their enemies but incorporated them into imperial structures (as typified in the defection of Mir Jumla and other high-ranking nobles from the Deccan Sultanates).³³ What is striking about all of the above hypotheses is a chronological dissonance in the evidence. While Ali and Richards focused on the post-1687 period, the moment *after* Mughal conquest, Gommans extrapolates from singular, synchronic events such as Mir Jumla's defection in 1656. Which processes in the Deccan shaped, tamed, and altered Mughal ambitions after 1636 and up until the final military conquest in 1687? What sorts of agrarian, logistical, and economic challenges did the empire face in a frontier zone with pre-existing sultanates at its borders? Moreover, the Deccan sultanates have themselves remained auxiliary to this debate no matter which part of the seventeenth century we are discussing. Bijapur and Golkonda exist in the seventeenth century, but only as an eventual outcome of Mughal dominance and absorption. The question thus remains – how the empire perceived the frontier and the reverse, how the frontier apprehended empire? It is to these questions we may now turn, from the lowest rung of Mughal personnel at its southernmost fringes to the highest level, in Prince Aurangzeb's letters to his father Shah Jahan. From these different levels, we can see negotiations between local officials and personnel stationed in the Deccan frontier from the late 1630s to 1650s after which I turn to the frontier's perception of Mughal presence in literary sources.

Regulating the frontier: Enumerating the Mughal soldier

In this section, I explain how description rolls were written and how historians have generally used them as a 'source' in Mughal historiography. Due to the uneasy relationship of this 'archive' to historical narrative, there is a perceptible dissonance between the Mughal

³³ Gommans, *Mughal Warfare*, 77-79.

document's form and function and our attempts to pathologize it as 'data.' Unlike literary sources in the chronicle form or *akhbār* or news report that are now studied for their narrative strategies, could we possibly read description rolls from the Mughal Deccan for their truth claims? What parts, if any, of a chaotic imperial presence in the Deccan do they lend coherence to? To begin to apprehend these fragments, we could apply an analogy from the study of ceramics in archaeology. Description rolls are resonant of potshards - documentary artifacts, we find in a sizable amount, in the stratigraphy of Mughal conquest. But '*arz-o-chehreh*' are the equivalent of broken potshards from the body or middle (of a pot) where we cannot see any portion of the rim and handle of the once whole, complete vessel, which may give us clues on its uses. The muster rolls offer only a partial portrait of the whole, if that. In this sense, there is a palpable distance between what the document recorded and what we may probatively 'distill' from it, such as different kinds of numerical ranks and categories of 'caste and community.'

I recounted the evolution of the Mughal archives' in the Deccan in the 20th century in the first chapter. As stated at the outset, I limit myself here to the unpublished documents from Shah Jahan's reign and to the viceroyalty, rather than emperorship, of Prince Aurangzeb. The set of '*arz-o-chehreh*' we have from Shah Jahan's reign number at total of 2438, which both Athar Ali and Rafi Ahmed Alavi consulted in the 1970s when Shakeb had begun to preserve and process them. Given that the site where the materials were found was itself disturbed, any single type of document corresponding to a specific administrative prerogative of Mughal governance, in this case, the description of soldiers and the branding of their horses, will always remain a sample and never representative of the whole. In other words, if the *sawār* rank of a certain *mansabdār* is 500, we do not have *chehreh* for all five hundred soldiers, but

sometimes a few hundred, sometimes a handful and in some occasions, only one or two have survived. We may, however, look for patterns within this sample.

Such samples, although not comprehensive, clearly indicate that social classification and enumeration were widely understood and practiced in pre-colonial South Asia, an argument Norbert Peabody and Sumit Guha have made for regions and kingdoms in the eighteenth century.³⁴ Athar Ali and Alavi rightly noted that the Mughals were no believers in equality and muster rolls served an administrative and political purpose. Kolff's evidence, mostly from the eighteenth century, tends to always contrast the 'fluid' nature of pre-colonial military service and soldiers' ethnicity with what came after (that is, British colonialism) which was necessarily more rigid and well-defined. However, zeroing in on a single set of administrative practices suggests enumeration was simultaneously ascriptive and achieved, and by no means arbitrary nor fuzzy in the seventeenth century.³⁵ For instance in the muster rolls from 1641-1654, we observe that certain types of military work were assigned to contingents constituted by a single ethnicity. As shown in Table 4.2, *bandūqchīs* or musketeers and *barqandāzān* or mounted matchlockmen or musketeers³⁶ stationed in the Deccan were, overwhelmingly, Rajputs. The imperial army recruited certain ethnic groups who were identified with and assigned to specialized military skills.

Along with the content of Mughal muster rolls, let us now turn to the form and function of the office of the *chehra nawīs* in the Deccan frontier that generated this type of document.

³⁴ Norbert Peabody, "Cents, Sense, Census: Human Inventories in Late Precolonial and Early Colonial India," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2001): 819-850. Chapter Five of Sumit Guha, *Beyond Caste: Identity and Power in South Asia, Past and Present* (Leiden: Brill Publications, 2013), 143-174 and Sumit Guha, "The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India, c. 1600-1990," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 45, 2 (2003): 148-167.

³⁵ Guha, "The Politics of Identity and Enumeration in India, c. 1600-1990", 152

³⁶ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Gunpowder and Empire: Indian Case," 60.

We may begin by looking at the document's structure and layout (See Image 4.1). Each *chehrah* included a description of the soldier's face, his name and parentage, "caste and community," rank and also the name of the chief under whom the individual worked. Some rolls included the names of the grandfather, the great grand father, place of residence, the place of birth etc. The second part generally recorded on the document's reverse gives the soldier's horse count, description of the horse or horses together with their branding marks. The soldier's physical description included traits such as:

- (1) The type of forehead (broad, narrow)
- (2) Eyebrows (separated, close, thick, thin)
- (3) Nose (long, short, snub, flat)
- (4) Eye color (black, brown, sheep, etc.)
- (5) Mustaches and beard (black, white, brown, mixed)
- (6) Ear (pierced or not pierced)
- (7) Chin (pointed, broad)
- (8) Other marks like small pox, scar, mole etc., on the face
- (9) The height was expressed in terms of age as height for example = 24 years

While the horse's description on the reverse noted:

- (1) the type of horse like *surang, nila, kabut, yābu, ablaq*
- (2) Horse's color
- (3) The branding mark illustrated with a figure
- (4) The date of branding
- (5) Defect or condition, if any
- (6) Total number of horses belonging to an individual.

In the unpublished muster rolls from Shah Jahan's reign, there are a total of 201 *khassa mansabdārs* (imperial officers paid directly from treasury) listed along with their *zāt* (numerical) and *sawār* (cavalry) rank. These include 128 *mansabdārs* with their soldiers' identifications and 13 more lists that include various troop contingents with specialized occupations and roles in the Mughal army. The additional lists include *barq andāzān* (mounted matchlockmen or musketeers), *piādeh* (infantry), *sawār* (cavalry), *bandūqchīs* (musketeers),

shagird pesha bajantarī (menial servants who were village musicians), *daig andāzān* (archers) and miscellaneous laborers.

Mughal archivists and historians used the term “caste and community” to divide sociological categories mentioned in description rolls. However, these categories correspond to a range of social markers such as ethnicity, region, sub-regional, city, language, clan, and descent from a common male ancestor – all of which often overlapped. While Athar Ali and Alavi’s works on the Mughal nobility’s constitution are indispensable, moving from the specificity, particularity of sociological categories indicated in the *chehreh* to broader typologies remains difficult. Many, from the 181 unique types (that I counted) of sociological classifications, cannot easily be subsumed into the categories of “Indian Muslim,” “Irani,” “Turani” and “Rajput” or “Deccani”. Athar Ali, Alavi, and Anwar all use these basic categories, although often certain groups are difficult to subsume in any such classification. The problem is further complicated when we consider categories with more than one signifier such as “Rajput Deccani,” “Rajput Solanki,” “Jalayir of Andjan,” “Rajput-i-Khokar” “Rajput-i-Kurd” and “Rajput Bhonsla Deccani.” Shifts and variations in social classification emerged from the circulation of large imperial armies. In the case of Afghans, for instance, the *tāi’fa* (tribe), *gurūh* (group), and *firqā* (factions) mentioned in these description rolls echo the categories listed in the first Indo-Afghan history, *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, discussed by Green and composed in Burhanpur in the upper Deccan in 1613.³⁷ In a narrative source such as the latter, *tāi’fa* are often mentioned along with the *watan* or homeland, the specific geographic area they originated in³⁸ For the Afghans, such a correlation between clan and space does not appear in the muster rolls. Similiar, in the case of the term ‘Rajput Deccani,’ both Alavi and

³⁷ Green, *Making Space*, 108-109. *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 441, 642-643.

³⁸ *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, 642-643.

Athar Ali have noted that this indicated a Maratha. Part of this inference stems implicitly from Shivaji's claim to Rajput status thirty years later.³⁹ It seems to me 'Maratha' and 'Rajput Deccani' were not always synonymous but often mutually exclusive signifiers. In other words, 'Rajput Deccani' may not always be a Maratha but could have been newly employed soldiers from the recently conquered areas in the upper Deccan. On the whole, many categories in the muster rolls cannot be slotted into larger classifications nor distilled into neat geographic areas.

Reading the Mughal document as artifact

Despite a previous generation of historians use of Mughal documents,⁴⁰ very little has been laid bare on what these documents looked like, how these documents were written or produced, how they circulated or were stored. To disaggregate the categories that have hitherto been used to build typologies of the Mughal imperial army, two key features of provincial documents are worth observing. The first is the document's materiality and the second, the specific language used to record, observe, and categorize social groups as well military occupations.

All debates on the 'Mughal state' gauge its centralized and de-centralized character, very little has been said on the materiality of historical evidence we have left from the empire's bureaucratic institutions. Almost nothing has been written on specific types and classes of papers in circulation in the Mughal empire. Here, I limit my observations to administrative paper rather than manuscript or decorative paper that Deccan art historians have recently begun to analyze.⁴¹ The economy of paper and the question of who had access to it raises a series of

³⁹Sumit Guha is confused about what this means, jumps across too many time periods, draws on Alavi. Guha, *Beyond Caste*, 155.

⁴⁰ Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of Empire*. Firdos Anwar, *Nobility under the Mughals (1628 – 1658)* (New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 2001)

⁴¹ Jake Benson, "The Art of Abri: Marbled Album Leaves, Drawings, and Paintings of the Deccan, 157 – 159 in Haider and Sardar eds. *Sultans of Deccan India*

questions about the ‘Mughal state.’ In the Ottoman context, far more detailed studies have been carried out on the qualitative aspects of paper production and writing, both at the level of manuscript production and documents.⁴² Despite being mined for information, historians of South Asia have not adequately explored and theorized textual genres of documentation in the pre-modern period, especially when compared to Ottoman cultures of documentation.⁴³ Even if in absolute numerical terms, we find many more Mughal documents than manuscripts, the paper’s expensive and durable quality suggests its consumers were limited and quite exclusive. Unlike manuscripts on which changes and corrections made during later periods are easily detectable, administrative paper is immutable.

Official documents sampled in this chapter were written on unsized paper, so as to prevent all forms of tampering. Since the appearance of the sheet is very white and consistent, we must conclude that this paper was not cheap at all. Inferior papers generally have poorer finer quality and are more flocked and less white. The superior quality of the paper used for provincial Mughal administration confirms that access to this paper was limited to specific offices and officeholders. Writing on unsized paper makes any attempt at tampering readily obvious. On sized paper, calligraphers can very easily correct mistakes and neatly remove all traces of ink, and after the paper dries, re-write on it. In contrast, it is virtually impossible to make changes or corrections on an unsized paper without smearing it. The unsized paper used in Mughal documents from the Deccan is burnished and its fibers absorb ink that goes deeper than the paper’s surface, which then prevents forgery and alteration.⁴⁴

⁴²Colin Heywood ed. *Writing Ottoman history: documents and interpretations*. Vol. 725 (Variorum, 2002)

⁴³ M. Uğur Derman. *Letters in Gold: Ottoman Calligraphy from the Sakıp Sabancı Collection* (Istanbul: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1998), 11-12.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 12.

From these observations, it seems that genre of these documents has much to do with their materiality. These documents are quite different than illuminated manuscripts, court chronicles or even imperial *farmāns*, written on more finer quality paper, far more embellished and which were meant for public viewing in the court or as iconic objects parts of the imperial library. Provincial-level documents circulated within the limits of offices in the frontier and recorded empire's mundane workings. Chronicles and *farmāns* present the idealized vision of 'the Mughal state' - its purported aspirations rather than actual implementation. Everyday documents reveal what was achieved, feasible, and what was impossible in Mughal governance. The durability and resilience of documentary materials is suggestive of the empire's limits and reach rather than its intent and expanse. We may now look at another layer to this bottom up viewpoint of the Mughal governance by turning its language and content.

Inscribing identities: Documenting the Mughal soldier

Description rolls had certain generic phrases through which routine observations on imperial operations were organized and recorded. The category of the document and the place where it was recorded are indicated on the top center of the sheet. We find two kinds of dates, one on the seal, which indicates the regnal year and multiple other dates that record the implementation or actions taken. From Image 4.1 Description Roll Acc. No. 35-669, several observations maybe made. First, in this case, three generations of service were recorded for Malik Ahmad, his father and grandfather. Second, most *chehreh* indicate only the soldier's ethnic category without an abstract noun such as *qom*, which is mentioned in this particular description roll. Third, the category of Rajput Solanki, in this particular case, is one that cuts across confessional and religious lines. Thus, it can be put under both, Rajput or Indian Muslim. In this particular case, the use of the term *qom* implicitly indicates that Malik Ahmad

was a Muslim and a Rajput Solanki. Fourth, the place of residence, Burhanpur, rather than the region of origin indicate the soldier's proximity to the frontier capital of the Mughals. Soldiers did not carry the description roll with them. This was an immobile document that was produced and stored at the imperial army's provincial headquarters. The document's reverse records the kind of horse and its features and the branding mark. In this case, Malik Ambar, a Rajput Solanki, possessed one *turkī* horse. From my preliminary analysis of these 2438 documents, there also seems to be some correspondence between the horse's breed and the soldier's ethnicity. Overwhelmingly, the best breeds of horses - *turkī* - belonged to Central Asians - Iranis, Turanis, and local soldiers owned Afghans while lower breeds such as *yābu*, *tāzī* and *janglah*.⁴⁵

Muster rolls represent the lowest level of subjects who worked for the empire. The ethnic categories recorded were comprehensible, legible, and imbued with meaning to both the soldier and the Mughal official who produced the document. In other words, it was not as if Mughal officials were 'inventing' these categories nor necessarily fixing them into a hierarchical order. Such ethnological practices of Mughal governance suggest very clearly who was what and what an individual looked like. The *chehra nawīs* learnt to use the generic language of descriptive rolls, the form and template for had already been laid out in administrative and *munshi* training manuals.⁴⁶ These manuals, which Mughal scribes and officials studied, list the range of adjectives and words which can be used to describe the soldier's complexion, eyes, noses, foreheads etc. as well as the horse's physical attributes. These ethnic classifications become operational in that they systematically record empire's human and animal resources and its capacity to differentiate and mark social differences in

⁴⁵ Alavi, *Studies in the history of Medieval Deccan*, 28.

⁴⁶ Shakeb, *Jāmi' ul-'Atīyāt*, 250 – 255. Anand Ram Kayasth *Siyāq Nāmah*, Lucknow, 1696.

between them. The method of recording a *chehrah* is generic and formatted. But the repetitive, formulaic quality of its language simplifies and renders legible ethnic diversity in a Mughal imperial army that was constantly on the move, absorbing new soldiers and officials from different regions and social backgrounds. The enormous and expensive task of maintaining an imperial army in a space with less entrenched institutions required ensuring that everyday tasks of governance - confirming the health and strength of men and horses as well as the disbursal of soldiers' salaries – be carried out at regular intervals.

Table 4.1 lists all of the unique categories of caste and community in the '*arz-o-chehreh*' from 1641-1654:

Table 4.1
Ethnographic categories of Mughal soldiers in the Deccan, 1641-1656

<i>Rajput</i>	<i>Afghan</i>	<i>Irani & Turani</i>
Rajput	Afghan	Turkman
Rajput Solanki of Burhanpur	Afghan-i-Sherwani	Rumi
Rajput Chauhan	Afghan-i-Amazai	Sistani
Rajput-i-Sajawat	Afghan-i-Turki	Hirawi
Rajput-i-Solanki	Afghan Mehmand	Qipchaq
Rajput Kachhwaha	Afghan-i-Gurzani	Isfahani
Rajput-i-Sanghawat	Afghan-i-Bakhtiyar	Uzbek
Rajput Janon	Afghan-i-Dawoodi	Mashhadi
Rajput-i-Kurd	Afghan Pani	Jaujani
Rajput-i-Chauhan	Afghan-i-Lodhi	Jauzjani
Rajput-i-Bhadurya	Afghan-i-Khalil	Mughul-i-sur
Rajput-i-Rathor	Afghan-i-Turbati	Mughul Tuni
Rajput-i-Khokar	Afghan-i-Niqazi	Mughal Mazandrani
Rajput Badgujar	Afghan-i-Rohella	Mughal Sadat
Rajput-i-Jadun	Afghan-i-Sur	Mughal Isfahani
Rajput Rawat	Afghan, Niyazi	Mughal Badakhshi
Rajput Bundela	Afghan-i-Turki	Mughal Musawi
Rajput Maratha	Yusufzai	Mughal
Chauhan	Kabuli	Nihavandi
	Afghan Nojani	Garji
	Miyana	Astarabadi
	Afghan-i-Tabrizi	A native of Turkistan
	Afghan-i-Afridi	Tashqandi
	Afghan-i-Khalil	Khurasani

	<p>Afghan-i-Gandhari Afghan-i-Qandhari Qandhari Afghan Afghan-i-Mewati Afghan Kakar Afghan-i-Bakhtiyari Afghan-i-Ghori Lodi Afghan-i-Mewati Sherwani Andjani</p>	<p>Sistani Kolabi Khwajazada Qibchaqi Baharlu Gilani Fathabadi Kurd Samarqandi Hamadani Bukhari Badakhshi Harwi Balkhi Tarkhan Mazandarani Mavaraunnahri Tuni Ghuri Barlas Sabzwari Kolabi Turbati Shirazi Asfkahni Ghaznawi Qaqil Maidani Gurzani Tabrizi Hisari Hurrani Jalayer Khafi Char Zamin</p>
<p>Indian Muslim <i>(Hindustan zād)</i>⁴⁷ Khilji Siddiqi Baloch Kamboh</p>	<p>Deccani Deccani Pandit Pandit Zunnardar Deccani* Dhangar</p>	<p>Non-Muslims Khatri Agarwala Kayastha Nagar Gaikwar</p>

⁴⁷ Athar Ali explains the use of this category for Sayyids and Sheikzadahs born in India. Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 18, footnote 1.

Sadat Sadat-i-Bukhari Mughal Sadat Sadat-i-Mahkari Shaikhzada Behlam Shaikhzada Siddiqi Shaikhzada Shaikhzada Quraishi Shaikhzada Husaini Shaikhzada-i-Ansari Shaikhzada-i-Baqari Shaikhzada-i-Faruqi Shaikhzada Junaidi Shaikhzada Chishti Syed Mewati Sharifzada Kashmiri Ansari Husaini Sadat-i-Husaini Sadat-i-Razwi Sadat-i-Bukhari Faruqi Quraishi-i-Sherwani Quraishi Jalayer Rizvi	Habashi Maratha Rajput Bhonsla Rajput Chauhan Deccani* Rajput-i-Deccani*	
Miscellaneous: Arab Bukhari, Iraqi, Sindhi, Arab, Sudri, Dotali, Choba (?), Juna (?), Bhatti, Jalayir of Andjan*, Khaliq, Kamyun, Kashi, Kalbi, Kolabi, Kakar, Zigiya, Qalmaq, Quschi, Kalach		

It was crucial for the *chehra nawīs*, stationed at a check post, to record the horse's branding when a soldier was first enlisted and without which he could not move. Despite the stipulated rule that a Mughal soldier employed under a *mansabdār* had to procure a certificate at six to eight months' intervals, there were usually gaps of several years between the first and second branding of a soldier's horse. This may have meant that cavalry were not necessarily serving in the Mughal army full-time even when stationed in the frontier. Surely, the unique set

of skills, the cavalry possessed, were easily transferable. In the frontier, there was always the possibility of finding employment in the neighboring sultanates' armies. Or perhaps they supplemented service in the Mughal army with other occupations as agriculturalists or pastoralists in the frontier. Whether this was an indication of "the slackness in army administration" or the general, "patchwork" nature of 'the Mughal state' ⁴⁸ the recording of these soldier's identifications suggests both sides of Mughal governance in the Deccan. While it was true that Mughal administrative procedures such as the recording of soldiers were brought to the frontier, the full implementation of these was far more difficult away from the imperial heartland. Although new groups were being incorporated into the Mughal army, they could just as quickly switch sides in the frontier. In such a scenario, soldier's identifications were critical in ensuring that resources were not being wasted and it was difficult to take on a false identity in order to claim salary.⁴⁹ The question is not if these administrative practices conform to a normative ideal of 'the Mughal state.' But rather, irrespective of the state's intent, did different levels of Mughal personnel make it possible or impossible to implement such heavy regulation in a frontier region, far removed from the empire's center?

We can zoom out now from the specific form and content of description rolls to the wider context within which they were produced. As stated earlier, description rolls are analogous to broken potshards found in an excavation site where we also stumble upon other kinds of fragmentary contextual evidence such as the kiln where pots may have been fired and finished, giving us clues on how they were produced. We may move then from the description rolls to other documentary genres that relay the challenges of implementing enumeration and

⁴⁸ Alavi, *Studies in the history of Medieval Deccan*, 22. Alam and Subrahmanyam, "Introduction," *The Mughal State*, 55-57.

⁴⁹ Athar Ali even notes that Mughal chroniclers such as Lahori chose *not* to record grants of mansabs to Deccani nobles because they defected later on. Athar Ali, *The Apparatus of empire*, xiv.

branding in the Deccan. An undated *yaddasht-i dāgh* (memorandum on branding), from Shah Jahan's reign, reports from Daulatabad that the *chehra nawīs* or muster recorder assigned specifically to the task of recording *chehreh* had run away. To fill up the gap, *topchīs* or commissaries of ordinance along with the *darogha* were appointed to record muster rolls and branding, but they too were not present to attend to the work.⁵⁰ Military laborers and officials, assigned to oversee weapons and the storage of gunpowder, refused to complete tasks that went beyond their assigned duties and skills. Presumably, ordnance supervisors, not at all neither trained in the specialized task of recording muster rolls nor paid enough to do extra work, refused to comply altogether. How could a weapons keeper be expected to quickly describe the shapes of noses and eye color of a soldier and inspect a horse when he had never done so before? We may imagine that at Mughal outposts in the newly acquired *subahs* of the upper Deccan, hundreds of new soldiers were being employed, yet offices and posts in the frontier faced shortages of staff and skilled personnel to properly enlist and incorporate these new contingents. Technically, it was impossible for a Mughal soldier to move without having his horse(s) branded and having his *chehrah* recorded, although even the fixing of a location for branding seems to have encountered indecision around Daulatabad.⁵¹ Faced with a shortage of personnel, *mewrah* or runners (who also occasionally served as soldiers) were hastily asked to attend to the writing of description rolls. Given the specialized nature of each of these military occupations in the Mughal army, the non-cooperation of any one set of staff would have generated confusion and frustration among the soldiers turning up to get their horses branded and collect their pay at frontier checkpoints. In a volatile frontier, where writing the Mughal

⁵⁰ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol. I*, 321.

⁵¹ Ibid.

document itself was periodically threatened, the administrative function of rendering legible Mughal soldiers hardly attests imperial governance's durability and coherence.

Now I turn to a second category of documents, *fihrist-i mulāzimān*, rolls of imperial servants, from the frontier capital of Burhanpur and its surrounding areas. These lists on the disbursal of soldiers' salaries are higher up in the hierarchy of documents, as the action and orders given in them passed through the offices of Mughal princes stationed in the upper Deccan. These individual lists were part of much larger bound folios that recorded the grants, additions, and reductions to imperial staff, employed in different kinds of military occupations at each fort and checkpoint. In Image 4.2, Roll of imperial servants Acc. No. 3076, we see features distinct from description rolls. Descent from a common male ancestor rather than the ethnic category is listed in these lists that recorded changes in salary and rank. For instance Muhammad Arab, son of Kamuluddin Turbati, doing the work of a macebearer, although not explicitly marked as a Mughal or an Afghan, hailed from the city of Turbat in Balochistan. He was granted a *paināmī jāgīr* or a smaller territorial or subsidiary area within a district. This document records the appointments and grant increases of multiple servants. While the first person had the work of a macebearer, the second, Muhammad Sharif and his brothers – all of whom were the sons of a certain Khwaja Nad 'Ali Sabzwari - held the hereditary office of the *waqāi' nawīs* or intelligencer. On the document's front we may note that Prince Aurangzeb gave an additional grant to Khwaja Nad 'Ali Sabzwari's family. But on the same document's reverse, we can see that Prince Murad Baksh reversed this decision and instead reduced the officer, Muhammad Sharif's grant, which Prince Aurangzeb had increased. Such disagreements among the princes at the most everyday levels of Mughal governance were probably not rare. When stationed simultaneously in the Deccan frontier, Mughal princely

households would have had disagreements over appointments and salary increases. Noteworthy on all these documents as well is also the approval of Shah Nawaz Khan, a partisan of Prince Dara Shikoh, and whose office in Burhanpur either reaffirmed or contradicted the orders of Mughal princes. Lastly, record of *zimm* or witnesses to these appointments and actions as well as the guarantors who gave surety were particularly important to frontier governance. Soldiers, officials, and staff assigned to specialized tasks routinely deserted their posts and duties. Endorsements and testimony recorded on these documents were meant to control and regulate Mughal staff, who often slipped away from forts and checkpoints, at times found employment in the neighboring sultanates.

To sum up, a range of financial issues emerge from this ground up portrait of the Mughal empire. In order for the Deccan frontier to be a productive and worthwhile addition to the empire, revenues from this region would have had to be greater than expenditures. In an ideal situation where the periphery feeds the center, the task of maintaining the Mughal Deccan would not have been an onerous burden on revenues collected from the frontier, which would, after expenses, go directly to the imperial treasury. In practice, as we see here, things looked far from perfect. At the highest level of actors - princes and revenue officers - were most concerned with revenue collection. The first thing required to increase yields was to increase the number of people living in newly conquered territories. This practice was called (*ābādānī*), literally to make populated or prosperous any given territory. It was only if this was accomplished the next - second rung of actors - the nobility, usually *mansabdārs* with a revenue collection assignment within the Deccan, could pay their soldiers - the third and lowest set of actors - in this stratigraphy of governance in a conquest region. In the lowest echelons, a gap appears in the collection of revenue versus the expenditures required to maintain skilled

staff in imperial institutions and to accomplish the task of populating and generating productivity. If cavalry that collected a regular salary could not be regulated consistently, then the entire edifice of Mughal governance stood on uncertain, precarious grounds in the frontier.

The maritime viewpoint of the Mughals

The documents we have seen thus far offer a glimpse of empire's day-to-day tasks of regulating staff through mechanisms such as the identification of soldiers, branding of horses and approval of rank and salary increases in the upper Deccan. We may now turn to yet another level of Mughal provincial governance to observe how imperial officials apprehended the Deccan's maritime operations. The offices of intelligencers or *waqāi' nawīs*, stationed across the empire, offer a unique vantage point to further understand imperfect and precarious frontier conditions that restrained Mughal governance.

Unlike the regulatory documents produced in the provincial headquarters in the upper Deccan, intelligencer reports emerged from the Mughal imperium's furthest, coastal limits. For instance, an intelligencer report, from Aurangzeb's fourth regnal year (1661) (See Image 4.3 - Intelligencer's report Acc. No. 480), captures imperial anxiety and unease, especially towards a trading nexus between regional officials and European trading companies. To Mughal officials, matters of administrative purview and governance in regional sultanates were clearly haphazard, even alarming and the ruler of Golkonda-Hyderabad somewhat inept. The regional sultan was often at odds with his port officials. Often his rival extended kinsmen, who were relatively autonomous, controlled coastal areas, a pattern common in the regional, non-imperial states of the Deccan (as shown in Chapters Two and Three). To the Mughal intelligencer, it was obvious that port officials often worked in tandem with European traders to consolidate and accumulate their own resources. The intelligencer cited the success of Mughal controls in

the empire's eastern and western fringes. The Deccan needed to be brought under imperial control in order to set right disobedient Europeans and unruly local port officials, but it was quite unlike Gujarat and Bengal. One thing to note here - Mughal intelligencer made clear distinctions between the Dutch and the Danish, although the latter company had included the English and other merchants in its ranks. To Mughal intelligencers, the ethnographic distinctions between the Dutch and the Danish were apparent and obvious, but both shared the trait of disobedience, (*atā'at*) refusing to follow regional regulations. The office of the *havāldār* (we also saw in Chapter Two) once again played a critical role in blocking foreign merchants entirely, or colluding with them to siphon off profits in private trade. The relatively decentralized character of regional sultanates was far more conducive to maritime trade. This Mughal viewpoint of the frontier confirmed anxieties that the Dutch constantly expressed in the 17th century's second half - of the perpetual threat of the empire overrunning the sultanates and stomping out the autonomy and de-regulation of coastal areas under regional sultanates. Such features had enabled the accumulation of resources for local power holders and private European traders in the 17th century Deccan. If the Mughal empire were to fully absorb the southern Indian peninsula it would spell bad news for the Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, and the English who were operating with relative autonomy along its coasts. Thus far, we have seen different degrees of control and mostly non-control within the Mughal empire's penumbral presence in the upper Deccan and in its coastal frontiers. Signing a treaty with the Deccan sultanates in 1636 did not mean an immediate incorporation of the region into empire in the decades that followed. Rather, empire's footing in newly conquered territories was precarious. Revenue generation and collection could come only after imperial institutional structures functioned smoothly in the frontier. All of the above examples indicate the contrary – Mughal

mechanisms of rule were only partially implemented in the frontier. Mughal governance's daunting priorities included the regulation of cavalry and ensuring staff stuck to the tasks assigned to them. This may explain why, between 1636 and 1687, the Mughals consistently badgered the sultanates for tribute, as the empire was not generating enough of its own revenues to maintain both material and abstract semblances of conquest.

The case of Aman Beg c. 1640s: Working within imperial constraints

Thus far, we saw empire's land-based operations in the upper Deccan as well as its unrealized maritime reach along southern India's coasts. Here, I turn to another level of materials to illustrate an example of negotiations between Mughal princes and provincial-level officials who attempted to operate within the frontier's resource-scarce conditions. From this level of governance, once again, the Mughal march south appears all but easy. The Mughal conquest of the Deccan was never pre-given nor fully consolidated throughout the seventeenth century is most apparent when we look at Mughal Prince's Aurangzeb's two viceroyalties in the Deccan, when he struggled to bring order to these newly acquired territories. The process of this uneven and unrewarding conquest had little to do with Prince Aurangzeb's personality.⁵² Rather, the entangled, contingent and often, uncertain footing of empire in the frontier had more to do with the pre-existing sultanates at its borders, which now encountered, apprehended, and constrained it. Between 1636-1656, Mughal India included Khandesh, Berar, Telangana and Daulatabad, areas that included remnants of the Nizam Shahs of Ahmadnagar but had been conquered with Bijapur's assistance.⁵³

While little is known about Aurangzeb's first time as viceroy in the Deccan (from 24 July 1636 to the beginning of June 1644), some clues on Mughal governance's earliest trials in

⁵² Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, 29-30, 95-96.

⁵³ Irfan Habib, *An Atlas of the Mughal Empire*, Sheets 14 A & B, 15 A & B.

the frontier emerge in the prince's exchanges with local officials.⁵⁴ Here, I turn to an important military occupation, of a fort keeper, and its relationship to the princely household in the provincial capital of Burhanpur to illustrate Mughal governance's limits in the frontier. This exchange is a rare instance of a continuous series of documents between a single provincial official and the Mughal Prince (often referred to as *Shahzada Jeo*⁵⁵ in the documents). Between the 9th and 11th Regnal year of Shah Jahan (1636-1638), we find a certain Aman Beg (امان بيگ) who submitted a *wājib-ul-'arz* (petition) requesting repairs on the fort of Qandhar (in current day Nanded district in the state of Maharashtra but back then under Telangana *subah*),⁵⁶ which was the last and furthest south of Mughal strongholds in the Deccan after Asirgarh in Burhanpur and Daulatabad near Aurangabad. We also find a sequence of nine *nishān* (princely orders) issued from Mughal princes to Aman Beg, from which some, but not all, of his requests were granted.⁵⁷ In 1636-1637 Aman Beg, began with a rank of 700/300, which increased by a promotion of 300/700 brought him up to 1000/1000. Aman Beg held a *mansab* of 1500 *zāt*/1500 *sawār* at the time of his death around 1063 / 1652-1653 and held the post of *qila 'dār* (fort keeper) of Qandhar.⁵⁸ He is listed as such in Athar Ali's *Apparatus*, also known with the title of Alaf Khan given in 1651-1652. Ali marks him both as (T) or Turani and as (X) or "Racial group not known."⁵⁹ In *Ma'āsir-al-Umarā* he is identified as a Chagtai Barlas whose ancestors had served under Timur. His son Qalandar Beg had a rank of 100/30 in 1636-1637 and later rose to 600.⁶⁰ After the end of their father's service in the upper Deccan, Mirza

⁵⁴ Shakeb, Indices to Shah Jahan's documents, Vol II-III.

⁵⁵ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 184.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 96 - 98.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 16-19.

⁵⁸ Athar Ali, *The Apparatus*, S1300 on page 136 whereas S3923 on page 216 and S5618 on page 268. Ali refers to Lahori, p. 729 and Waris' *Badshah Nama*. f. 148a/b, f. 262b.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, see S3923, S5618, S5645, S5661.

⁶⁰ Athar Ali, *The Apparatus*, 140. S1425 and S1426. Shah Nawaz Khan, *Maasir-ul-Umara*, 204-205.

Parvez Beg went on to be the governor of Mulkher, near Gulbarga, and other siblings held forts as far south as Bankapur and Adoni, forts that were previously under Bijapur and various *nayaka* kingdoms. Aman Beg and his sons spent much of their lives guarding Mughal forts in the Deccan. His household specialized in fort keeping in frontier areas in newly acquired territories.⁶¹ We can gather a sense of Aman Beg's duties and responsibilities and of how he moved up in rank during his tenure and as a result of his service. We can shift our attention away from the Mughal center or imperial household and its frontier headquarters in the upper Deccan to the reception and incomplete implementation of imperial policies and what these meant for provincial officials located in the empire's distant outposts.

The frontier government, strapped for resources, struggled to keep expenditures well below what was allowed and provincial staff in their positions. When it came to the question of allocating expenditures, the provincial government had two choices. The first was to let inefficiency persist by allowing only low-cost maintenance and expenditures in the short term, but which would need to be repeated more often. Imperial officials avoided sanctioning expenses that would have high short-term costs but yield a long-term reduction in expenses. This second option would have given provincial officials more tools to effectively maintain Mughal outposts and checkpoints in the frontier. Exchanges between different governance levels evince a tension between what provincial officials needed and what higher decision makers conceded to them.

We can see how rarely Aman Beg's various requests were granted and observe that higher ups in Mughal governance consistently chose the first option – allowing inefficiency to persist and keeping short-term costs low. In a *wajib-ul-‘arz* or petition, Aman Beg first asked for the repair of around 3000 yards of a *fasīl-i-khandaq* (an entrenchment wall) with lime

⁶¹ Athar Ali, *The Mughal Nobility under Aurangzeb*, 11.

plaster instead of mud which had been used earlier but did not last long. But, to save money, the imperial government ordered that the moat just be repaired with mud as had been done before. The mud wall would have, of course, repeatedly disintegrated in the rains each year, requiring Aman Beg and his men to mend it every year. Second, Aman Beg reported that the fort's towers were also cracking, had been repaired repeatedly and at least one of them, *burj-i-hayāt khān*, could collapse at any moment. The imperial response to this request is illegible (in the original document), so we cannot conclude whether it was fulfilled. Third, he added that the *zinpayas* or the turrets of certain towers were also in disrepair, and orders were issued to fix them. Further, he noted that teakwood was required for the wooden stands used to mount cannons on each of the fort's thirty-one turrets and for wooden panels used to strengthen its walls. The timber required for this was previously brought over from Pala, Rajura, or Biloli and other *parganas* (districts) and currently it was being brought from Indur. In response, the imperial government had learnt that quality timber was available in the suburbs of Qandhar and that there was no need to send men far away to procure better quality wood. Again, in order not to waste resources, Aman Beg was ordered to complete the work with timber procured from within the *pargana* of Qandhar.⁶² Aman Beg's sixth request concerned old stock of food grains which were to be given to *ahshām* (attendants or retainers) in lieu of two-month's salary every year and new grains were to be purchased and stored in the granary. Commenting on the consistent problem of de-population of newly conquered domains, he observed the double pressure of collecting revenue from this area and paying his men from it. Aman Beg complained that *banjāras* (nomadic groups that carried supplies for armies) and *beopāris* (merchants) had stopped visiting Qandhar and it was impossible to buy fresh food-grains. The provincial government responded with little sympathy for Aman Beg's pleas. They seemed to

⁶² Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 96-97.

think that Qandhar *pargana* was sufficiently populated and there would be no problems in procuring and storing fresh food grains from its villages. The fort's material upkeep and feeding the men who had won it were lowest on the provincial government's priorities.

Even for the fort's primary purpose, that of defense, and the maintenance of weapons, provincial officers had to make do with whatever limited supplies they had available. Only after they tried everything possible and overstretched supplies to prepare cannon, did the provincial government grant requests for more resources. Aman Beg's final request concerned gunpowder, an estimated 600 *maunds*⁶³ of it were required monthly to secure the fort but only 200 *maunds* were available in the fort's inventory. After the fort had been conquered, 200 more *maunds* were collected from dust or the debris where cannon had been fired. Some of this residual gunpowder, presumably of weaker strength, was improved and made more explosive, yielded around 400 *maunds*, still two hundred short of the 600 required to maintain the fort's cannon. An order was sanctioned to send 500 *maunds*, a hundred of which were already on way and a *barūt sāz* (gunpowder maker) had been sent from court to aid in improving the gunpowder's quality.⁶⁴ Meeting demands to maintain hard-won forts should have been a priority for imperial officials in the frontier. Aman Beg had to first make the most of whatever little resources he had at his disposal before requesting more assistance from the provincial government. We see here that a lot more followed conquest's initial outcome or winning a particular battle or siege. Such examples illustrate how frontier governance was negotiated

⁶³ General commodities like gunpowder, food grains, metals, woods, spices and even liquids were sold by weight. The lowest unit of heavy weight was a *misqāl* and the next immediate higher unit was a *man* (*maund*), which represented different standards from place to place in the country. In the southeastern Deccan, for instance, one *maund* was very roughly 12.5 pounds. Shakeb, "Commercial Contacts", *Relations of Golkonda with Iran*.

⁶⁴ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 98.

after conquest. Managing and sustaining conquest would then determine the depth and resilience of Mughal presence in the frontier.

The above documents, written from an inferior to a superior, gives a sense of not just the top-down of what imperial officers intended to do, but of the reverse, of a provincial Mughal fort keeper's challenges and obstacles. We get a sense here of the limits of Mughal resources and a constant tussle between the demands that a volatile frontier made on the imperial treasury. In nearly all instances, Mughal princes and officers at provincial centers let inefficiency persist, conceding only the bare minimum resources required to sustain imperial outposts in the frontier. This is not because they would have liked Mughal governance to be ineffective but because presumably, there were innumerable more Aman Begs all over the Deccan frontier. Exasperated provincial officials, short staffed and struggling to populate their domains and increase revenue - all while dealing with limited resources for expending towards the most daunting and crucial task in front of them - maintaining, holding the conquest together.

To reverse the lens on this particular case, between 1635 to 1644, we may now turn to *nishān* or orders issued by Mughal princes (in this case mostly from Aurangzeb and one from Murad Baksh) to Aman Beg, which further elucidate the common challenges and occasional successes of Mughal governance in the frontier.⁶⁵ In one *nishān* dating from 3rd Ramazan 1045 A.H. or 31 January, 1636 we learn that the old stock of food grains, mentioned earlier in Aman Beg's request, were so spoilt that the soldiers/attendants refused to accept them in exchange for their cash salary. It was then decided to split the payment in kind for one month and in cash for the remaining period. To prevent waste, Aman Beg was urged to sell the remaining grain at prevalent rates as soon as possible. The *qila 'dār* (keeper) of Qandhar was moreover expected

⁶⁵ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 16-22.

to report to the *diwān* of Telangana *subah*, Sunder Das, and record in detail all expenditures for the fort's repair.⁶⁶ Finally, Prince Aurangzeb learnt that the *pargana's* population had increased and thus, granted a *mujrai* or allowance⁶⁷ to Aman Beg. Reports of the keeper's success reached the Prince around 4th Sha‘ban 1047 A.H. or 12 December 1637, who, although pleased, still urged that utmost care should be taken of Qandhar, one of Telangana *subah*'s best forts. Following from such small successes therefore, Aman Beg asked to go to Delhi and present himself to the Emperor, but the Prince turned down the request. He told him instead to remain at the fort, which required his presence and full attention.⁶⁸

By late 1639, trouble once again started brewing around Qandhar, and we learn of a certain Amar Singh oppressing Aman Beg, who was also encountering “rebellion from [other] pernicious persons” in his *pargana*. By this time, 9 Zilhijja 1049 A.H. or 22 March 1640, Prince Aurangzeb was moving towards the Deccan and would soon reach Burhanpur, he advised the fort keeper to subdue such disturbances.⁶⁹ On 19 Rabi I 1052 A.H. 17 June 1642, Aurangzeb reached Burhanpur. Three days later, Aman Beg once again sought permission to observe *mulāzamat* (attend court) in Burhanpur. But Prince Aurangzeb told him to protect the fort, increase the *pargana's* population and agriculture. He added that the Emperor was pleased with reports of Aman Beg's service and had thus sent him an *'alam* (standard or flag) affirming his services and tie to the Mughal court.⁷⁰ In November 1643, Aurangzeb was moving with forces eastwards towards Deogarh and Aman Beg was asked to move north towards Ellichpur to join him, appointing his son to protect Qandhar fort. The last of these orders that we have dates from 14th Safar 1054 or 12 April 1644, in the last year of Prince Aurangzeb's first vice-

⁶⁶ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 16.

⁶⁷ Wilson, *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms* (London: W. H. Allen Co., 1855), 351.

⁶⁸ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 18.

⁶⁹ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 19.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 21.

royalty. We learn here that one village in Qiyampur *pargana* assigned to Aman Beg as *jāgīr* had been completely plundered and ruined. The prince ordered that the fort keeper should be compensated for his loss and no one should disturb him further for any reason.

The point of following the ups and downs of Aman Beg's tenure at Qandhar fort and his correspondence with Prince Aurangzeb is to observe Mughal administration's rhythms and pauses. Frontier governance was not smooth and cogent nor entirely disaggregated and ad-hoc. On the one hand, there is ample evidence for the centralization thesis, where everything passed through the imperial household. We need look no further than the day-to-day diary or *siyaha-i-huzūr* or detailed record of the provincial court's activities, where Prince Aurangzeb's every appearance and absence was observed along with the reception of gifts, grants to officials, branding of horses, witnessing of conversions, bestowal of robes of honor and so forth.⁷¹ On the flip side, at the other end of evidence from provincial offices, such as Aman Beg's, severe limits impinged upon the imperial center at the level of operations. Moving beyond the moment of the court's reception of its personnel, gifts, and subjects to what was possible and achieved suggests it was not so much the implanting of Mughal structures in the Deccan but a process of negotiation between local officials that circumscribed empire's pre-existing practices.

Aman Beg's trials as a Mughal fort keeper should give us pause, to reflect on the old and most sacred adage, 'the Mughal ruling class'. What do we make here of the nature of 'ruling' in Aman Beg's struggle to govern, populate, and defend Qandhar fort? Imperial authority cast a long, constraining shadow, delimiting the actions of such local officials. Instead of an overbearing role, imperial and provincial centers played a penumbral role in the nature of rule and ruling the frontier. At times, they even seemed to have absolved themselves

⁷¹ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 144-155.

of the burden of governance. Different layers of Mughal governance sometimes met the ideal demands of rule, but on many, if not all, occasions they simple could not fulfill them. If rule meant collecting revenue, then certainly, in moments right after conquest when the populace fled, this imperial aspiration was entirely unrealized. The first pre-condition was to populate conquered domains, to produce subjects, engaged in agriculture and trade. If rule meant simply to maintain contingents of Mughal officers and soldiers in the frontier, that too, was an uphill battle. The set of actors that constituted Mughal institutions - Mughal princes, provincial officials, and soldiers - were not entirely co-terminal either. While tied to each other through the fundamental unit of the Mughal *mansab*, in practice, these actors often, even if implicitly, seemed to disagree on the priorities of rule and ruling. The mechanisms of rule continuously wavered from uniform implementation to strategic improvisation of institutions in the frontier - all of which delivered contingent outcomes far from the ideal.

Further details in Aman Beg's profile and place in Mughal provincial authority can be found in his muster rolls, which provide a list of his *tābinān* or soldiers. Before coming to the Deccan for his appointment as a fort keeper, Aman Beg probably picked up soldiers along the journey south to Qandhar. I counted a total of 58 retainers from his description rolls. Central Asians of various kinds made up the majority of Aman Beg's contingent. Among these troops, roughly a third were Afghans, numbering around twenty. Next were the Rajputs with a total of eleven. All of Aman Beg's retainers were Afghan, Rajput or 'Mughal' who came from different parts of north India and Central Asia. A provincial Mughal official relied on soldiers who had already served him in the imperial heartland and traveled down with him to the frontier. In this table, we see also see the dates his soldiers horses were branded and inspected.

Table 4.3
The *tābinān* or retainers of Aman Beg

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community
317-1039	15 Jamadi II 1056 19 July 1646	Alank Raj Son of (S/o) Kakku Ji	Rajput-i-Rathore
318-1249	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Jan Khan S/o Husain	Afghan-i-Sherwani
319-1250	8 Ziqada 1056	Husamuddin S/o Nizamuddin	Mughal
320-1251	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Muhammad Amin S/o Muhammad Husain	Mughal
321-1252	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Khizar S/o Bahadur	Afghan-i-Sherwani
322-1253	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Ramji S/o Mahoji	Rajput-i-
323-1254	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Muhammad Beg S/o Rustam Beg	Sindhi
324-1255	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Noor Muhammad S/o Shaikh Husain	Shaikhzada-i-Siddiqi
325-1256	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Khusrau Beg S/o Amir Beg	
326-1257	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Shaikh Fathullah S/o Shaikh Abdullah	Shaikhzadah
327-1258	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Osman S/o Lalu	Afghan-i-Niyazi
328-1259	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Bahram Beg S/o Aqil Beg	
329-1260	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Muhammad Baqer S/o Malik Shah	Behlam
330-1261	8 Ziqada 1056	Bahadur S/o	Lodhi

	6 December 1646	Sher	
331-1262	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Fateh S/o Ghazi	Rajput-i-
332-1263	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Munsif S/o Abdullah	Shaikhzada Behlam
333-1264	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Sayyidullah S/o Fatehullah	Ghori
334-1265	8 Ziqada 1056 6 December 1646	Rustam S/o Husain	Afghan-i-Miyana
335-1282	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Mir Tazi S/o Qasim	Lodhi
336-1290	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Amir Beg S/o Ali Aqa	Rumi
337-1291	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Muzaffar Beg S/o Ismail Beg	Shirazi
338-1292	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Muhammad Sayeed S/o Muhammad Sharif	Husaini
339-1293	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Murad Beg S/o Muhammad Yar Beg	
340-1295	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Barmanand S/o Banwari Das	Rajput
341-1297	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Shaikh Bhikkhan S/o Shaikh Faizullah	Husaini
342-1303	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Shaikh Makhdum S/o Shaikh Salar	Siddiqi
343-1304	12 Ziqada 1056 10 December 1646	Soniji S/o Harji	Rajput-i-Chauhan
344-1312	22 Ziqada 1056 20 December 1646	Him Raj S/o Nathman	Rajput-i-

345-795	2 Ziqada 1056 20 December 1646	Iraz Beg S/o Peki Beg	
346-1371	7 Rabi I 1057 2 April 1647	Khuda Dad Beg S/o Ilahdad Aqa	Turkman
347-1378	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Han Muhammad S/o Shaikh Husain	Siddiqi
348-1379	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Haji Madari S/o Jalal	Rajput-i-Khokar
349-1379	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Alawal S/o Kamal	Afghan-i-Sherwani
350-1381	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Farrukh Beg S/o Mafaqir Beg	Hisari
351-1382	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Munshi S/o Mubarak	Afghan-i-Tabrizi
352-1383	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Shah Muhammad S/o Haji	Ghori
353-1384	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Masum Beg S/o Yar Beg	Andjani
354-1386	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Kamal S/o Qiyam	Afghan-i-Lodi
355-1387	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Syed Jamal S/o Syed Mustafa	Sadat-i-Bukhari
356-1388	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Arif Beg S/o Sher Beg	-
357-1389	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Khori S/o Jamal	Afghan
358-1390	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Iraz Beg S/o Qader Beg	Andjani
359-1391	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Shaikh Ahmad S/o Shaikh Bazid	Shaikhzada

360-1392	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Mukand Ram S/o Kapur Chand	Kayastha
361-1393	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Fateh Muhammad S/o Maiji Murari	Rajput-i-
362-1394	12 Rabi I 1057 7 April 1646	Haider Muhammad S/o Vali Muhammad	Badakshi
363-1395	17 Rabi I 1057 12 April 1647	Adam S/o Mubarak	Afghan-i-
364-1396	17 Rabi I 1057 12 April 1647	Ali Muhammad S/o Ali Ahmad	Quraishi
365-1408	22 Rabi I 1057 17 April 1647	Muhammadi Beg S/o Ali Beg	Badakhshi
365-1517	27 Rabi II 1057 22 April 1647	Ahmad S/o Feroz	Quraishi
365-1517	27 Rabi II 1057 22 April 1647	Ahmad S/o Feroz	Quraishi
366-1518	27 Rabi II 1057 22 April 1647	Qaim Beg S/o Haldar Beg	
367-1519	27 Rabi II 1057 22 April 1647	Shaikh Jamal S/o Shaikh Bahauddin	
368-1520	27 Rabi II 1057 22 April 1647	Abdul Jalil S/o Abdul Salam	Quraishi
369-1639	23 Jamadi II 1057 16 July 1647	Malik Khan Muhammad S/o Jama	Shaikhzada-i- Behlam
370-1778	1 Zilhijja 1057 18 December 1647	Alam S/o Fath	Rajput-i-
371-1772	3 Zilhijja 1057 20 December 1647	Syed Alauddin S/o Syed Amin	Bukhari
372-1783	3 Zilhijja 1057 20 December 1647	Maher S/o Adam	Afghan-i-

373-1832	17 Muharram 1058 2 February 1648	Kirpal Das S/o Mukand Das	Kayastha
374-2381	22 Rajab 1058 2 August 1648	Zarif Beg S/o Mir Sharif	Jalayer
375-2382	22 Rajab 1058 2 August 1648	Sharfuddin Husain S/o Muhammad Sadiq	Mughal Jalayer

We can see above that none of Aman Beg's soldiers were local Deccanis. Stationed in the Deccan frontier, Aman Beg's contingent was more uniformly 'Mughal', ethnically different than its immediate frontier environs. Having men from beyond the Deccan was no guarantee that the average rank-and-file soldier would stick with the patron-military commander with whom they had initially arrived in the Deccan. Soldiers were just as likely to desert to the Deccan sultanates that promised similar prospects of military employment. Such defections were just as common as the more frequently acknowledged defections of high-ranking sub-imperial elites from the regional sultanates to the Mughal empire. This phenomenon of Mughal soldiers joining the Deccan sultanates also explains the increase in the number of Afghans in Bijapur by the middle decades of the seventeenth century (which I discuss in Chapter Five).⁷² Aman Beg's troops were not operating in a vacuum nor did their presence necessarily implant Mughal institutions in the Deccan frontier. Rather, empire's penumbral domains – the regional sultanates – greatly constrained its operations and activities in the frontier. We may now turn to a level further up in the imperial provincial government – Prince Aurangzeb - to see how members of the Mughal household apprehended regional polities at empire's threshold.

Region taming empire: Mughal observations of the Deccan frontier

⁷² Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 171.

Many studies have paid attention to events symptomatic of decline (defection of nobility, tribute extraction, symbolic expressions of a subordinate regional sovereign to the Mughal emperor), leading to a one-sided story portrait of Mughal incorporation of regional kingdoms. Instead of understanding the Mughal empire as sitting on top of regional states, we can interpret its uneasy presence in the frontier as a set of layers – a compromise between a nested, processual series of sovereignties. Prince Aurangzeb’s correspondence with Mughal emperor Shah Jahan clearly articulated the Deccan conquest’s incomplete, processual character. The two quarreled over the frontier’s mismanagement and the reforms implemented by the *diwān* (Revenue Minister) Murshid Quli Khan. The Mughal empire’s contained ambitions in the frontier depended upon three modalities—gifts, revenue resources, and the exchange of military technologies with the Deccan sultanates. The first of these - gift giving - had set up the hierarchical and asymmetrical relationship between the empire and its satellite states since the late 16th century. Since then the Deccan sultans agreed to pay tribute or *peshkash* to the Mughals but this did not translate into complete subordination nor was it an abnegation of their sovereignty. Rather, it was just a way of keeping the Mughals at bay.⁷³ These gifts did not reduce the urgent need to generate revenue in newly conquered territories, which Mughal officials had to do irrespective of gifts going to the imperial center.

Between Delhi and Burhanpur, different actors in the imperial household were most alarmingly concerned with the second modality - revenue generation. Early into his second tenure as viceroy of the Deccan, Aurangzeb insisted to his father that he had “remedied [the Deccan's] desolate and distracted state” during his first viceroyalty and hoped his measures would not be meddled with, so that he would be able to restore prosperity to the peasantry and

⁷³ Alam and Subrahmanyam, “The Deccan Frontier,” 370-371, 382-383.

increase cultivation.⁷⁴ After the prince's arrival in Burhanpur in 1653, the Payan Ghat's affairs remained in great disorder. The Prince reached Baglana, which contrary to the news he had received, was also a mess and in administrative disarray. The new Deccan territories were yielding little in terms of revenue since large chunks of these areas had turned into jungle and were no longer being cultivated.⁷⁵ In the period up to and including his second time as viceroy (from 28 October 1653 to 5 February 1658) when Aurangzeb left to contest the throne of Delhi, the upper Deccan did not fall under the Mughal state's fiscal purview. Arterial regions, such as Baglana (between Surat and Burhanpur), barely yielded enough revenue to afford the Mughal personnel who had been appointed to administer them.⁷⁶ Nor were periodic Mughal attempts to conquer the Deccan throughout the 17th century rehearsals for 1687. When looked upon from the frontier, such moments of military confrontation were the end result of a constellation of disagreements within imperial circuits on what to do about the Deccan. That coupled with a whole bunch of logistical difficulties, which the empire had not confronted with the same intensity in its western and eastern frontiers. Aurangzeb observed the lack of rainfall in Bijapur and the poor harvest. The drought in the Deccan did not necessarily put the Mughals in a better position to attack the sultanates in both 1657 and 1665, as their own army was not well stocked and prepared to follow through with the attack.⁷⁷ More territorial conquest was no guarantee for generating more revenue. If anything, it further drained imperial resources already overstretched in the frontier.

Moreover, the main reason for the unproductive *jāgīrs* in the Deccan was not just agrarian nor a problem of lackadaisical Mughal personnel or the fault of previous Mughal

⁷⁴ Flynn, Letters 37, 48, pp. 144, 185.

⁷⁵ Flynn, Letter 49, p. 188. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb III*, 100-110

⁷⁶ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb III*, 94, 100. Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 96-98.

⁷⁷ Flynn, Letter 77, p. 287.

governors, but the imperial administration felt much a greater constraint on itself as result of the presence of the sultanates at its borders. Explaining the unique character of the Deccan frontier to his father Aurangzeb thus wrote:

These four provinces of the Deccan - a great stretch of territory, which your Majesty has been pleased to place in my care - are not to be compared with Bengal and Gujarat (*nisbatī ba sūbah-i-Bangāla wa Gujarāt nadārad*), because they adjoin the territories of rulers who possess copious treasuries, and large armies.

For these reasons, I thought it necessary to write on this point (*dar īn wādī*) lest I be saddled in future with accusations of neglect and incompetence.

Hail to the saintly protector! It is (no doubt) clear to the luminous mind, that the (military) force actually present in this province cannot discharge with ease even the task of managing its own *tuyūl mahāls* while the rulers of Bijapur and Golkonda (*duniyādārān-i-Dakan*) have vast armies. The new regulations may increase the quality of (our) army; but they will hardly attain the necessary quality (*kaifīyat kī matlūb ast aslan namīmand*).⁷⁸

Here, we see a discussion around the third modality – the exchange of military knowledge and technologies – between empire and region. The military strength of Bijapur and Golkonda, observed here, is contrasted with the inability of Mughal forces to adequately protect even those lands that were being held as *jāgīr* by members of the royal family,⁷⁹ let alone manage all other kinds of revenue assignments that were being given to old and new non-royal *mansabdārs* in the Deccan. The quality of imperial and regional armies depended upon regular and sustainable pay but structurally they were quite different in region and empire. In the imperial army, it depended on periodic and systematic regulation and in the case of the sultanates, a steady supply of mercenaries, whom the Mughals thought made for a formidable, potentially stronger rival. The point of contention in this letter was Shah Jahan's suggestion to reduce the pay of servicemen.⁸⁰ In the same letter, Aurangzeb critiqued his

⁷⁸ Flynn, Letter 65, pp. 239-240.

⁷⁹ Wilson, *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue terms* 497. Often used to describe the totality of an officer's *jāgīr* but not limited to those just of princes. Habib, *Agrarian System*, 258, footnote 2.

⁸⁰ Flynn, Letter 65, pp. 239-240.

father's suggestion, by describing the irregularity of branding, which confirms the pattern of irregularity that we already saw in the soldiers' descriptive rolls:

Because the servicemen's pay is to be reduced from 20 to 17 or 15 rupees, as required by the new regulation; because the cavalry is to be increased by about nine thousand above its former strength, while the *jāgīrs* of most of the *mansabdārs* remain below the three months' scale; then it will soon become clear that the horses of such men, drawing so miserable a salary, will be in a wretched condition, and useless for any worthwhile service.

Before the new regulations (the *mansabdārs*) were paid on a three months' salary scale, they also got ten percent (*dah yak*) extra for the expenses of administering their *parganas*, and a further payment of thirty-two rupees a month for each cavalryman (they maintained in their contingents). *Yet most of them have still neither brought in their horses for branding, nor mustered their men; so (already) on account of their inability to comply with the (old orders upon) branding and muster, large amounts of arrears have been entered (as outstanding) in the registers of this province against every man [emphasis added].*

But now, they are going to be paid on a scale of one month or two months. What will happen to them is only too obvious, especially at a time when the system of *batā'ī* has been introduced, and the expenses of administering *parganas* have been doubled because the grain (in which the peasants now pay their dues) has to be collected and stored.

Yet an exalted *farmān* has been issued, peremptorily requiring outstanding amounts to be collected; one quarter of the assessed income is to be taken from most *jāgīrs*, and one fifth or one sixth from many others. After this demand is met, they will have nothing left. How will they maintain their contingents? Conditions are not always peaceful; it might happen that one day strong contingents will be urgently needed.⁸¹

Aurangzeb's arrival in the Deccan could not change the fact that imperial practices of managing human resources could not be imported and uniformly implemented in the southern frontier. Branding was the lowest but possibly one of the most critical tasks upon which the efficient maintenance of the imperial army depended. Without the systematic monitoring of cavalry, the entire *mansab* system would be undermined. The presence of other possible employers at empire's doorstep no doubt dis-incentivized Mughal soldiers from keeping up with their duties, let alone staying loyal to their patrons.

⁸¹ Ibid.

A lot more unfolded in the next few months of Prince Aurangzeb's stay in the Deccan. Shah Jahan continued to disparage his son's efforts in the frontier. The prince, in turn, insisted he was doing his best to increase revenues and get everything in order. Most often they disagreed about assignments and salaries of provincial officials. All the while, Shah Jahan rebuked Aurangzeb to move to Daulatabad at the latest by August 1653, but he preferred to dawdle in Burhanpur instead. The Mughal emperor was even more infuriated when he heard of Aurangzeb's affair with Hirabai, the concubine of a maternal uncle, Mir Khalil. The prince's distractions notwithstanding, managing the frontier was no easy task. Perhaps no other Mughal would have felt as close an affinity to the Deccan as Aurangzeb, who spent most of his life on the frontier and oversaw its evolution through the seventeenth century. He attempted to make his father understand its challenges:

The decay of the Deccan is not of a kind that can be quickly restored; the province has been neglected these ten years. In my absence, I could not put the affairs of those territories in order as well as I could if present; and I know that it is a matter of concern to your Majesty, that these districts be administered well. Further, there is no business so urgent in Daulatabad as to justify my hurrying there without concluding my arrangements for the Payan Ghat. So, even though the climate of Daulatabad is pleasant and agreeable, and I hold that region in high regard, I would prefer to remain some time in Burhanpur, to compose my mind about Khandesh, Berar, and the Payan Ghat.⁸²

After Aurangzeb had been in Burhanpur for over two months, the Deccan sultans finally sent ambassadors with gifts to him. At the same time, Mir Salih, the son of Mir Qawamuddin Mazandarani, son of Shah 'Abbas' maternal uncle, arrived from Surat. But when he reached Aurangabad and was about to proceed directly to Golkonda, Aurangzeb summoned him at Burhanpur.⁸³ Flynn incorrectly notes that both the Deccan sultans at this time were Shi'i, although sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah of Bijapur was a Sunni. Whether or not the

⁸² Flynn, Letter 51, p.197.

⁸³ Flynn, Letter 50, p. 192.

king's denominational affinity mattered or that it translated to a natural solidarity with Safavid Iran is debatable. While there is evidence for the traffic of ambassadors between Bijapur and Iran during the reign of Muhammad 'Adil Shah, there is very little evidence that this was for the purpose of forging an alliance against the Mughals, with whom he maintained relatively peaceful relations till 1656. On overall good terms with Muhammad 'Adil Shah, Mughal emperor Shah Jahan was therefore always reluctant to invade Bijapur despite frequent suggestions from Prince Aurangzeb to do so. Although dismissing the gifts of Muhammad 'Adil Shah (gold turban-fringes, a gold-encrusted thumb ring and an elephant with trappings) with the remark, "never before has he sent me such a miserable gift" the Prince nevertheless obeyed Shah Jahan's orders and did not return the presents.⁸⁴ He also urged that both Golkonda and Bijapur should recognize that they should direct their dealings with the Mughals through the *subahdār* of the Deccan. Aurangzeb's observations during the earlier part of his viceroyalty make it apparent that the sultanates, left to their own devices after 1636, had done as they pleased in the following two decades after the treaty. Gifts, tribute and periodic ambassadors to either Daulatabad or Delhi did little to compromise their sovereignty.

At one point, observing the makeup of the Deccan's armies, Aurangzeb commented on the excellent gunners who served in Bijapur and Golkonda, bemoaning how "the rulers of those places (*duniyādārān-i-ānjā*) because they make a great show (*lāf*) of their devoted submission, and are accorded a far greater share of the limitless imperial graces and favors than they deserve, have (in fact) performed no sort of service to us (in providing and training artillery-men). For the fourth time now, we are launching a victorious campaign (to the north),⁸⁵ if an imperial order were issued to them, (to offer aid) in that matter, they would

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Flynn, Letter 58, p. 218. The third and final siege of Qandahar that began on 28 April 1653.

recognize it for a source of good fortune, and obey.”⁸⁶ The great number of European gunners employed in the sultanates was a feature of regional armies that Dakkani poets too often emphasized as a point of contrast to the Mughal army. As early as 1637, *barqandāzān* or matchlockmen from the Mughal army were sent to Bijapur and possibly brought back arms, methods, and techniques of war making from the Deccan courts to Daulatabad.⁸⁷ The Viceroy did not think it was unreasonable to have the Deccan Sultans contribute to the campaign at Qandahar in the northwest frontier by sending their well-trained gunners to the empire’s northernmost fringes. While he struggled to take charge of the four provinces, Aurangzeb had to grudgingly acknowledge the relatively stability and military strength of the Sultanates, and repeatedly raise the possibility that such regional resources should be incorporated into the empire.

Further, how did Aurangzeb and the court at Delhi apprehend the conquest of the Karnatak, which had gone on more or less unhindered under the Sultanates for the last twenty years? As the sultanates reached Madurai and divided up the Karnatak amongst themselves, Aurangzeb observed their quarrels and noted that they were on the worst terms with each other and Bijapur intended to occupy the territories newly occupied by Golkonda, and in the event of an invasion, the Mughals would assist the latter. On one level, it may seem that the Karnatak conquest was unfolding under Mughal auspices but on another, there was always the possibility that any one of the players involved could accumulate enough maritime, agrarian, and military resources to break away from both the sultanates and the empire, as came to be in the cases of Mir Jumla and later the Marathas.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Shakeb, *Mughal Archives Vol I*, 171. A *siyaha-i-huzur* dating from 19th Rajab, 1047 A.H. or 27 November, 1637 mentions gifts sent by Bijapur to Prince Aurangzeb and the return of *barqandāz* or mounted matchlockmen and *tir andāz* or archers to Daulatabad from Bijapur.

In Aurangzeb's correspondence, the interdependency between the sultanates and the empire and the contested nature of sovereignty during a nested conquest comes to the fore clearly around 1653-1655 when Sri Ranga III, the last ruler of the Vijayanagara dynasty, wrote to the Mughal prince. Rather than interpreting this incident through the ill-intentioned “psyche” of Prince Aurangzeb (held synonymous with ‘the Mughal state’) as did Jadunath Sarkar,⁸⁸ this correspondence confirms that the process of Mughal conquest was never pre-figured, and always contingent upon the actions of the Deccan sultanates. Around this time and prior to the Mughal war of succession, the Mughal prince had sought to gain his father's approval to invade both Bijapur and Golkonda, while simultaneously intriguing major courtly elites to defect to the Mughal empire.⁸⁹ A acute sense of alarm arose when Sri Ranga Raya III wrote to Aurangzeb from Chandragiri, offering to convert to Islam if the Mughal prince would crush the Deccan sultans who were about to take over the Karnatak’s remaining parts and harassing him incessantly. Having failed once in his plea, the beleaguered ruler sent another Brahmin named Sri Nivas to intervene on his behalf, with a gift of a somewhat skinny elephant to Prince Aurangzeb.⁹⁰ The latter rightly pointed out to Emperor Shah Jahan that the scale of Bijapur and Golkonda's territorial gains in the Karnatak had everything to do with the rights granted to sultanates in the Deed of Submission in 1636, which had meant to reduce their sovereign status. The conquest had gone on more or less unhindered, such that the rate of tribute, although fixed and annual, was no longer a strain on the sultanates who had gained much more materially by conceding symbolic aspects of their sovereignty (such as imposing the *khutba* or Friday sermon in the name of the Mughal emperor etc.). No longer highly regionalized polities,

⁸⁸ Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Volume I and II, 138 - 140.

⁸⁹ Jagadish Narayan Sarkar, *The Life of Mir Jumla*, 103 - 135.

⁹⁰ Flynn, Letter 83, p. 301. Letter 84, p. 306.

the sultanates had expanded well beyond their capitals encompassing more social and linguistic groups in their domains, beginning to look not very different from the Mughal empire.

Faced with the prospect of the sultanates swallowing up the rest of the Deccan, Aurangzeb explained to Shah Jahan that by joining the Mughal court, Sri Ranga Raya would “gain both the true religion, and its worldly benefits (*kāmyāb-i-dīn wa duniya khwāhad shud*).”⁹¹ Aurangzeb detained the Rayal's emissary, awaiting his father's approval for the proposal. But Shah Jahan insisted that Sri Ranga's professed claims would need to be verified before sending an envoy to him, whom the prince had dispatched all too soon.⁹² Urging his father to issue an *farmān* to warn the Deccan sultans, Aurangzeb reminded him that for too long these regional rulers had relied “far beyond their rights upon Your Majesty's trust and generosity.” More so than Golkonda, the Bijapur sultan, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah, who Shah Jahan looked upon favorably, had taken the fort of Vellore, “the finest fort in the Karnatak.” He also took the best elephants which were originally meant for Delhi while seeking to destroy Sri Ranga Raya III completely.⁹³ In this exchange it is apparent that the Mughals, the highest in the political hierarchy of a nested conquest, could incorporate the smallest sovereigns but not without the mediation of regional states, who stood physically and temporally in between the empire and its ambitions in the Karnatak. Even though these areas had come under nominal imperial control around 1600, the frontier's resources and extent oscillated throughout the seventeenth century. Aurangzeb's perceptions of the Deccan confirm, what Alam and Subrahmanyam have argued for the earlier part of the 17th century,⁹⁴ that to contemporaries Mughal expansion was all but inevitable.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 302.

⁹² Ibid., Letter 85, p. 308.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 309.

⁹⁴ Alam and Subrahmanyam, “The Deccan frontier,” 362.

In the second half of the seventeenth century, we find echoes of Prince Aurangzeb's sentiments on the Deccan in Bhimsen Saksena's retrospective memoirs in which the author expressed similar anxieties about the frontier. Bhimsen Saksena (b. 1649) was a news-writer for the Mughal forces in the Deccan during the reign of Aurangzeb (d.1707).⁹⁵ The earlier sections of his memoir recount moments soon after Aurangzeb return to north India from the Deccan, after the war with Dara Shikoh had begun in 1657. In these years Bhimsen was still a child and his father was in service at Burhanpur and Daulatabad. The later sections of the text explain why the Deccan conquests had proven so unwieldy, sapping imperial energies by the late seventeenth century. He too described the Deccan as incomparable to any other part of India:

The Dakhan is a huge territory which is surrounded by the sea from three sides and in the north it touches the territory of Khandesh. In the one-fourth inhabited land of India, no other territory has got such magnitude and dimensions. And it has so many masters and *zamindārs*, that they all cannot be numbered. During the reign of Sahib Qiran, and the king Alamgir, a greater portion of the Dakhan and most of its forts came into the possession of *zamindārs*. And still there are as many as one thousand forts in the possession of *zamindārs*. And the old *zamindārs* had been particular to select strong and firm places in the mountains where water could be found in abundance. Their military forces mainly comprised cavalry and infantry.⁹⁶

For, Bhimsen, the Deccan's political diversity mirrored its expansive and variable physical topography. It was not just its intimidating size but also the presence of innumerable landholdings and semi-sovereign units of power within the Deccan that made for an obstinate and unmanageable frontier. Its physical topography allowed the proliferation of interconnected but somewhat autonomous nodes of military and political strength. Towards the end of his

⁹⁵ Richards, "Norms of Comportment among Mughal imperial officers" in Barbara Metcalf ed., *Moral conduct and authority: The place of Adab in South Asian Islam*. Univ of California Press, 1984, 255-258.

⁹⁶ Bhimsen Saksena, *Nuskha-i Dilkusha*, trans. Jadunath Sarkar, in V.G. Khobrekar, ed., Sir Jadunath Sarkar Birth Centenary Commemoration Volume: English Translation of *Tarikh-i-Dilkasha* - Memoirs of Bhimsen Relating to Aurangzib's Deccan Campaigns (Bombay, 1972), 11.

career, Bhimsen witnessed late Mughal contestations with the Marathas, yet another political competitor, who had begun to acquire territories in Khandesh and Berar by the 1660s. He lamented the state of lawlessness, the inability of the Mughal army to keep up strong numbers at major forts and the breakdown of revenue collection at the district level.⁹⁷ Most telling are his judgments on the fickle character of Deccani soldiers:

The soldiers of the Deccan carry no arms except sword and spear, and the Bijapuris have not even the spear – except with the Marathas. When they took service under the Emperor they professed great loyalty. But as they have no constancy of faith, their loyalty is not certain. For this reason, they were supplanted from many of their ancestral places. Although they procure artillery material in imitation of the people of Hindustan, no work can be expected of them. For example Rustam Khan, deputy *subahdār* of Berar, a *7-hazārī*, came out of Elichpur with a good force to fight the Marathas, but at the time of encounter made no exertion and the order in his troops was lost and he became a prisoner in the hands of the enemy.⁹⁸

This later disparaging assessment stands in stark contrast to Bhimsen's earlier far more positive rendition of Deccani armies. According to Bhimsen, even if Deccani soldiers pledged allegiance to the Mughal emperor they could not be trusted, especially in the battlefield. Even though the Deccan was subordinate to the imperial court since 1600, the existence of many other sovereigns allowed only an intermittent control of its different territories.

To close, we can return here to the theme of self-similarity and contingency in this dissertation - two persistent features of the Deccan conquest. Making a 'Mughal state' in the Deccan frontier required the fulfillment of many pre-conditions. The mere ingenuity of Mughal imperial institutions was not enough to succeed. The first step in Mughal conquest, military victory, while delivering an initial political outcome could not guarantee the entrenchment of imperial structures nor could the execution of imperial intent be predicted with any certainty. Even in the period from 1636 to 1687, generally understood to be of Mughal ascendancy, to

⁹⁷ Bhimsen, 230.

⁹⁸ Bhimsen, 240.

contemporaries such as Prince Aurangzeb and Bhimsen Saksena, the Deccan conquest's unrealized, contingent character was all too apparent. To participants like the fort keeper, Aman Beg, Mughal conquest entailed a series of mistakes, negotiation, improvisation, and many failed attempts to hold it together. These contingent outcomes lent conquest its halting, ambiguous character.⁹⁹ On the first feature of self-similarity, Mughal operations in the upper Deccan, composed of complex institutions and mechanisms of imperial rule, although stylistically very different from the sultanates, nevertheless echoed the latter's orientation towards conquest in the western and eastern Karnatak, already seen in Chapters Two and Three.

It maybe useful here to open up the case of the paradigmatic form of state across the early modern world, that is, the large, agrarian empire. One difference between the Mughals in the Deccan and the Qing in Central Eurasia is that in the latter case, the concomitant intensification of maritime trade routes did not affect the frontier, which was much more mediated by the presence of other empires. The Mughals encountered a very different set of prospects in the Deccan, a region with similar Indo-Islamic polities that had had a maritime orientation for much longer. We could for a moment, indulge in a thought experiment (and commit the sin of teleology), and measure an absolute value of 'stateness,' or more broadly, early modernity in the Deccan and the Mughal empire. The former region with its array of political actors exhibited features such as the consolidation of land and sea-based resources, intensification of commercial networks, and new emerging experiments with language and writing that were sometimes parallel to but sometimes preceded the agrarian empires of northern India. In many ways, when it's all said and done, it seems to me that the Deccan was

⁹⁹ Peter Perdue, "Military Mobilization in Seventeenth and Eighteenth-Century China, Russia, and Mongolia." *Modern Asian Studies* 30, no. 04 (1996), 761, 786.

more (and had been for a longer time) more early modern than the Mughal empire of northern India. This is precisely why the incorporation of this frontier posed the greatest set of challenges for the Mughals. It was in this frontier that Mughal institutions of governance, after many trial and errors, grew to an enormous but precarious scale by the seventeenth century's end.

Competing regional sultanates had faced different 'outside' forces (Mughals, the Portuguese, and the Dutch) for centuries, and were themselves constituted through long-distance connections and circulation. The absence of a large, agrarian empire in peninsular India meant many different actors could accumulate a range of resources. The threat of the Mughals, in some curious ways, also sporadically united the Deccan sultanates with the Portuguese and the Dutch because all three feared the possibility of Mughal annexation of peninsular India.¹⁰⁰ The idea of an anti-Mughal alliance forged between European traders and a regional court would have been inconceivable, entirely impossible in north India. Such strange political calculations were only possible in a non-imperial region, away from the empire's Indo-Gangetic heartland. From its coastal frontiers to newly conquered centers of provincial imperial government, Mughal actors remained anxious about the de-centralized nature of authority in the Deccan and its persistent unruliness.

Insulting empire's arrival: Frontier observations of the Mughals

Moving away from the physical, material, and administrative layers of Mughal conquest, we may now turn to the second running theme of this project - the ethnography of conquest. We have witnessed thus far how the Mughal empire tenuously held itself together in the frontier, frequently encountering problems of personnel management as well as disagreement between its imperial, provincial, and local officers. We have seen how the empire

¹⁰⁰ Alam and Subrahmanyam, "The Deccan Frontier", 386.

conceived the frontier. Now, we may turn to how the frontier understood the empire and its place in the Deccan's wider landscape of conquest.

Chapters Two and Three illustrated that the Deccan sultanates expanded relatively uninterrupted for at least four more decades after 1636. From the late 1650s to roughly the late 1670s, Mughal intervention in the Deccan increased, albeit episodically. Simultaneously, a new set of players such as the Marathas complicated the relationship between the empire and its regional satellite polities. Regional observers from the sultanates began to observe these changing political equations and the rise of new players in the Deccan conquest. I turn once again to Nusrati's *'Alī Nāmāh* to analyze how Deccani poet-historians perceived Shivaji and other rebel constituents within Bijapur and vis-à-vis the Mughals.

Even at this late stage, Mughal supremacy in the Deccan was far from inevitable nor absolute. Although always on the alert about the possibility of a Mughal invasion in the Deccan, Dutch observers of both the eastern and western Karnatak too apprehended the fragile and volatile alliances and rivalries between various court factions within the Deccan.¹⁰¹ At exactly the same time that Nusrati began writing his critiques of Siddi Johar and Shivaji in the *'Alī Nāmāh*, the Dutch too grew increasingly insecure about how these new rebels would hinder their access to coastal resources. Like the seventeenth century's first half, in its second half, the continuation of a nested conquest meant a series of sovereignties existed, conflicted, and overlapped simultaneously. Different actors within the Deccan sultanates accumulated resources of their own but their gains always depended on smaller potentates within their domains. Just as the Mughal empire's penumbral presence in the Deccan was contingent and continuously evolving, the Deccan sultanates' expansion in the Karnatak too was neither pre-given nor ineluctable.

¹⁰¹ VOC 1236, Coromandel, Letter of Lauren Pits to Batavia, 4 August 1661, f. 605, f. 593.

We may now turn to the seventeenth century's second half to understand how Deccani literati understood new rivalries and conditions of alliance under empire's penumbral shadow. In literary sources produced in the Deccan, poet-historians produced a multivalent ethnography that recorded conquest, apprehending former friends and new allies. While the Mughals were the Deccan sultanates' greatest source of anxiety, it seems all rivals were subject to the same degree of mistrust. Although the Mughal army lay at the center of conquest ethnography, I place Nusrati's imperial portrait within a larger landscape of rivalry in the Deccan. The Mughal empire confronted not just the Deccan sultanates but also a whole host of other threats who now gathered and accumulated resources in the frontier. I turn here to different ways in which Mullah Nusrati pathologized rivals in the *'Alī Nāmāh*, setting up contrasts and similarities among them, while putting each of them on a spectrum of mistrust based on shifts in the Deccan's political conditions.

As stated at the outset of this dissertation, I am least interested in the question of whether an apocalyptic shift occurred in the seventeenth century's second half, when it comes to the question of political rivalries in the Deccan and the motivations for them. Nor is this period some sort of point of origin to understand later, retrospective castings of different social groups and their respective ambitions. I will stick here closely to the text itself, its language and to the historian-poet's emplotment of events. In Nusrati's ethnography, insult and praise, hatred and adulation, were two sides of the same coin. Either could be hurled within a span of a few days, months, years upon the same character, who at one point was Bijapur's ally and at another, its enemy, venturing out on his own or shifting to another camp. There are even rare occasions in this unambiguously eulogistic work that Nusrati unveils a subtle critique of his patron, sultan 'Alī 'Adil Shah II, who according to him, placed his trust too easily in new

allies. I turn to such instances as well as show how the poet's moral criteria or rubric for dislike was evenly applied across all allies and rivals, irrespective of whether the character in question was a Mughal, Maratha, Siddi, or Rajput. The battle poem's texture is such that we will need to follow, meander at times with the poet and his dilemmas over which enemy or rebellion to record. He memorializes encounters of this precarious, nested conquest as and when they happened over time, rather than according to pre-planned template of what his history should look like and which events and personalities it should cover. Before I turn to Nusrati, we may turn to the broad political context of the 1660s within the Deccan sultanates.

Khadija Sultana's regency: Keeping rivals at bay in the 1660s

Diplomatic maneuvers and rhetorical threats to the Deccan sultanates increased even though, as we saw above, the Mughals were struggling to regulate their immediate domains in the upper Deccan. Political historians often mark the death of sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah (d. 1656) as one of the many starting points of regional decline as well as the interim rule of his wife, Queen Khadija Sultana, who presided over the two kingdoms in the 1660s.¹⁰² In this decade, relations between the two Deccan kingdoms had become particularly entangled and interconnected as the stepmother of the new Bijapur sultan, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II (r. 1656 - 1672), Khadija Sultana, controlled court politics in both kingdoms. Presiding over and across both Deccan sultanates during the 1660s, Khadija Sultana was also known as Bari Sahiba or Haji Bari Sahiba. She was one of the wives of late Bijapur sultan, Muhammad 'Adil Shah (d. 1656), and the sister of Golkonda sultan, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah (d. 1672).¹⁰³ The illegitimacy of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II's birth has frequently been cited in Mughal chronicles and the English-language

¹⁰² Ghauri, "Central Structure of the Kingdom of Bijapur" *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 18, no. 2 (1970): 97-98 and Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 195.

¹⁰³ Zeenat Sajida, 'Alī 'Adil Shāh Sānī ke hālāt aur kalām par tabsirah, 19-21. Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-century India*, 49-51.

political histories extracted from them that cast her regency as a mark of decline.¹⁰⁴ But Khadija Sultana's regency held several rivals in balance, including Shivaji and European traders. The Portuguese tried to persuade her to be on their side, but instead she sent troops to reclaim Salsette and Bardes.¹⁰⁵ Like Mustafa Khan before her, Khadija Sultana made it clear to the Dutch that they would not be rewarded unless they agreed with her position. Even when it had been decided in 1661 that VOC would take her on their ship for the *hajj*, Goa made a counteroffer to do so, which the Queen promptly ignored.¹⁰⁶ It was all too clear to VOC officials in Vengurla, working along the southwestern coast, that the Queen had already impeded the English East Indian Company's operations in the eastern Karnatak. It was reported that the Queen had, in the territory of her brother, the King of Golkonda, done a lot of damage to stop English trade. Goods that had been bought in Golkonda had been given back to the owners who could not trade them or they had been repossessed. The Queen promised to recommend the Dutch to all the leaders in the Deccan region. But VOC merchant, Pieter van Santvliet, added that they knew better than to believe her with too much zeal and passion because such rulers only did things for their own interests. If things would go wrong, the Queen would just blame it on someone else and ask to be compensated for bad advice.¹⁰⁷ Khadija Sultana mediated the terms of dividing up the Karnatak conquest's southernmost frontier between the sultanates, just as she prevented any new rivals from openly declaring revolt. The Queen mother's role in the early years of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II's rule suggests political differences between two sultanates had collapsed somewhat in the 17th century's latter part, even though they continued to bicker over dividing up conquest territories in the Karnatak.

¹⁰⁴ Verma, *History of Bijapur*, 195.

¹⁰⁵ Nayeem, *External Relations of Bijapur*, 256

¹⁰⁶ VOC 1236, f. 496, f. 494.

¹⁰⁷ VOC 1243, f. 751, Copy of a letter by the merchant Pieter van Santvliet and Leendert Leendertzsz to written to Batavia, dated 5 May 1663.

Marriage alliances and a uniform opposition to the Mughals had brought them closer as did the movement of patrons and literati across these two regional kingdoms.

In the decade after her husband sultan Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s death, Khadija Sultana's relationship to her adopted son, ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II, has not been clearly understood. An account of Khadija Sultana's attachment and love for her adopted son first appears in a dream narrative recounted in Nurullah Qazi's *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Adil Shāhiyāh*, a chronicle that predates Nusrati’s *‘Alī Nāmāh*.¹⁰⁸ Muhammad ‘Adil Shah had been childless for years. When ‘Ali was born, Khadija Sultana dreamt that a bejeweled necklace illuminating all of nature lay suspended above her. She was told in a vision that this necklace was a part of her own being and by acquiring it she would follow the way of success in the world. After this dream, she requested that the sultan of Bijapur give her the responsibility for the upbringing of newborn heir, ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II.¹⁰⁹ From the outset, the Mughals opposed the ascension of this adopted son to the throne. Due to his mother’s inclination, the young sultan grew up to be Shi‘i despite his late father's very articulate and public Sunni disposition, which was apparent in the chronicle histories as well as in the monumental architecture of mid-seventeenth century Bijapur. Khadija Sultana’s formidable presence held things in balance only until she departed for her travels in 1661. She seems to have deterred, or at the very least, delayed an attack on Bijapur by Shivaji who waited to do so until she departed for *hajj*.¹¹⁰ The Queen regent had the capacity, therefore, to control foreign traders but also rivalries among factions within the two sultanates.

¹⁰⁸ See Chapter One.

¹⁰⁹ Nurullah Qazi, *Tārīkh-i ‘Alī ‘Adil Shāhiyāh*, 22-23.

¹¹⁰ VOC 1236, f. 497, Vengurla, Letter to the Governor General Joan Maetsuijker and the Council, 11 July 1661.

Khadija's Sultana's role in Bijapuri literary production can be indirectly inferred from her relationships to contemporary poets and chronicles. It was on the occasion of her marriage in 1633 that Malik Khushnud, an Abyssinian slave, brought up in the court of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (d. 1612), followed her from Bijapur to Golkonda as part of her wedding entourage. This itinerant poet then served as an ambassador between the two kingdoms and translated texts like Jami's *Yūsuf Zulekha* from Persian to Dakkani.¹¹¹ On the same occasion Mullah Nusrati wrote a commemorative *masnawī* for her brother and Golkonda sultan, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah (d. 1672) which was inscribed in the calligraphy of 'Ali ibn Naqi al-Husaini Damghani.¹¹² Finally, under the patronage of the Queen and her adopted son, sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah II (d. 1672), Mullah Nusrati would complete in 1665 the most ambitious of his works, the Deccan's longest verse chronicle - the *'Alī Nāmāh*. Khadija Sultana's regency exhibits a similar pattern of regional rule, as seen in Chapters Two and Three, where sub-imperial elites and members of the royal household mediated an equilibrium among European traders as well newly defiant rivals such as Shivaji. In the next section, I analyze literary portraits of the 1660s and the spectrum of enemies the Queen and her son, the sultan, negotiated with within the Deccan along with a critique of a superimposing Mughal presence from the frontier's viewpoint.

Mapping the landscape of conquest: Ethnographies of friends and rivals

Before turning to different sets of rivals, Nusrati laid out an elaborate theory of political rivalry and the nature of competition in the Deccan. Early on in the *'Alī Nāmāh*, he began by comparing the uncertain world around him to a game of chess. A game, within which each

¹¹¹ Sharif, *Dakan me Urdu Shairi Vali se Pehle*, 416-434.

¹¹² See Chapter One, 36.

player, despite moving with great caution, would inevitably prove fickle and untrustworthy.

After describing the ascension of ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II, Nusrati thus begins:

The talk of the king taking the kingdom begins here
And what actions he took, upon ascending the throne.

I will say a useful thing or two
Of how the Deccan kings came to execute
When a new king came to the Deccan kingdom
All works were begun anew.
And a new game appeared before all
Friend and enemy found opportunity
Friends became joyful
Enemies in a deplorable state
The work of *Shāhī* (‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II’s pen name) appeared
Like a game of chess,
The ones who have the talent for it,
Each a master of his method
One plays his move and leaves,
And another plays the same move, but with a twist
It seems difficult when you don’t understand the game,
When you first get it, the game then unravels
That which has come before you

Set all hasty moves aside,
Careful thought needs to be at hand
When you have to approach the opponent
Even if you have to sacrifice a *mohra* or two
With caution, stop! And then, gather!
The *wazīr* or minister¹¹³ has to create a fort.
Even if he must have the force of the horse,
And the petty pawn must become king
Attack in such a way
Such that the enemy cannot turn against [you]
That each piece *mohra* is perfect in its action.
Keep an eye on the enemy from all sides,
One man’s cheating can finish our game,
Who has ever been able to seize this game?
Like *al-Lajlaj*¹¹⁴, a pawn delivers checkmate (the most insulting defeat)
To cut the story short
The work of the king was such
That all enemies were set right

¹¹³ The Queen in European chess.

¹¹⁴ A 9th century chess player and champion.

Small and big were all scoundrels.
On all four sides there was treachery
Opponents became friends,
The agreeable became disagreeable,
Like a great tower, a young king came to the throne
All seemed like a new day
He ('Ali) faced the most difficult moves,
Fights unfolded everyday
He collected the courage
And went back and forth to find a new way.

*mulk lene kī bachan shāh kī hen yān te shuru ‘
rāj shāh baithe pe āye hen kis dhāt ‘amal*

*katā hūn atā bāt ik kām kī
dakhan kī shāhī kī saranjām kī
jo mulk ke dakhan mai huā shāh navā
jitā kām yek bār kin to havā
nazr mai navī yūn bāzī padhī
hue dost dushman ko fursat padhī
lage dostān khush ho shādī manī
padhe dushmanān bad nahādī manī
shāhī kī jo at kār sāzī ahe
badhī yek yū shatranj bāzī ahe
jo men band bāzān ke kamāl
har ustād kī yek rush kī hai chāl
jo koī kheltā khel jāta hai chod
wahī kheltā khel dusrā madhod
na samjhiyā talak khel mushkil padhe
avval ār tujhe āke bāzī khade
nazr liyā ke rakhnā lage hāt main
dahi dahiyān bharnā padhe zāt main
shatābī kī bāzī ko rakh sab te pust
andeshe ko karnā lage pish dast
jo kayīn te mukhālīf u jāna padhe
yek ādhā bi mohra ganvāna padhe
kamī thārvī aur adak sāndna
yek yek khūb farze kā band bāndna
apas ko kā samajhnā lage ghod bal
chalāna padhe band saun pāye dil
rehne ke na dena merī hor zid
ke ta mohre har kām par rah bejad
mukhālīf taraf sab te rakhnā nazr
ke u kis dagha ke hai bāzī apār
kine liya sake khel yun apne hāt
sake karā u lelāj par piyād māt*

*ke alqisse yun badshāhī hai kām
 durust huye lak u ghaniyān tamām
 nanhe aur bade the sau sab bad nihād
 achāle u chāron taraf se fasād
 mukhālif te aksar munāfiq hue
 muvāfiq bhi kaye na muvāfiq hue
 bade burj kī shāh apnī kām san mane
 navī bādshāhī nave din mane
 kabl sakht bāziyān che padhne lagiya
 ladiyān shadtān ruz ghadne lagiya¹¹⁵*

Nusrati has a very elaborate explanation of sedition here, but one that changed over time. His was a very broad theory of rivalry rather than a civilizational typology based on pre-determined, natural affinities of each group or individual. Note that in these lines, disloyalty is an acquired rather than ascriptive trait and changes according to what is politically expedient in this game of chess. In these portions when he theorizes the Deccan's landscape of conquest, he rarely uses the word *fitna*, which was reserved for more specific contexts among rivals. For rivals such as Maratha upstart, Shivaji, or a dissident Habshi commander such as Siddi Johar, Nusrati always deploys a contrast between the values of loyal and affinity and disloyalty and betrayal. This is very different than the language used to describe enemies like the Mughals, who were beyond the sovereign unit of the Deccan. It is within a landscape of imminent danger from all sides that the Mughals entered and the Deccan sultanates found themselves in the seventeenth century's second half.

When friends becomes enemies: Shivaji and Siddi Johar in the 1660s

In the '*Alī Nāmah*, the Mughals make an appearance after Nusrati has laid out the profile of other rivals and political threats. Before turning to the Mughals, he narrates events (that occurred before the text was written) such as Shivaji's infamous encounter with 'Adil Shahi general, Afzal Khan, in 1659 at the Battle of Pratapgarh. Shivaji, Siddi Johar (an ally

¹¹⁵ '*Alī Nāmah*, 43.

who turned first into a bandit, and later into an enemy),¹¹⁶ the *nayakas* and others have already appeared in the drama prior to the Mughals. There are many verses on several other friends, allies, enemies, bandits and troublemakers from the seventeenth-century Deccan that are worth examining further. But here I will limit myself to a sample from these, specifically Shivaji and Siddi Johar, who appear early on in the poem, and contrast them with Nusrati's understanding of the Mughals. We may then read those on the lower register of the poet's spectrum of mistrust against his perception of the Mughals, the highest and most compelling type of enemy, who first appear in the poem's middle chapters.

Shortly after the chess analogy in the poem's opening, Nusrati introduces the major political players. Foremost among these was Shivaji. While there was enough pretext to mistrust him, it was his alliance with the Mughals and ability to drive an even greater wedge between the sultanates and the empire in the 1660s that infuriated Nusrati the most. Early on in the poem, Nusrati lays out the threat from this upstart explaining he was different from others:

The lowly, seditious, accursed Shivaji
Who was the cause of all disorder in the land of Deccan

The one who is a sinner and does all bad deeds
Till the world exists, he will be cursed,
He will never benefit from God,
From the people, he shall be rejected.
They say repeating that crafty fellow's name
From where all sedition begun
Shivaji, who was seditious.
A great thief and bloodsucker,
In the land of the Deccan, he sowed the seeds of sedition,
You were the first to sow this deterioration
The populace knew of this bad omen,
From this owl, the land became barren,
He was in essence and origin bad
From him they learnt to be rebels,
Digging his feet, he taught all infighting

¹¹⁶ For the sequence of events on Shivaji and Siddi Johar, see Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb, Vol. 4*, 41-42.

From him many a homes were destroyed
In such adversity, all sedition intensified

Among great kings struggles began
In between the Deccan and the Mughals
He left his land and hid in the mountains
His essence was filled with cunning
He appeared to be a man but was actually a beast
Show your disguise now
In the way when we say *lā haul*, Satan escapes.
He is a worse disbeliever than the Franks
The greatest enemy of faith
The reason for his business of murder is not worship
He was caught killing even in the house of god
He was always a *namak harām*
He even killed those who were loyalists.

*fitna angīz ke bad zāt sivaya lam ‘avan kī
kiyā so mulk dakhan mai jo ū bunyād khalal*

*jo koī kār bad ka jo pāpī hai bad
huā nānun tis l ‘anatī tā abād
khudā bas us ko behbūd hai
khalāyaq kane nat nat u mardūd hai
atā bāt ko kādh mauzī ka nām
ke kāyam huā jis te fitna tamām
sivaya kar jo yek fitna angīz thā
badhā duzd mauzī wa khunrīz thā
dakhan kī zamīn bich tukhm fasād
jo pīraya sau avval yahī bad nihād
ri ‘ayat jīta khwār us shom te
huā mulk virān us bom te
jo bad asl tha sau badhaya nahna
sakiya is te saun bāghi pana
apein kin ladhain sakiyan paun gādh
pan us te hue jag mai kai ghar ujādh
fasād us kī nuqbat te ho tīz*

*sakiyā nayīn kadhein bahin te jhagdhe kā
chetanī ho miyanī ki ho chup ladāyī
bade badshāhan main pādhyā ladāyī
dakhan aur mughalān ke dar miyān
watan deher kuhistān main thā u nahād
bhariyān thā sab us zāt mein
dise ādmī rup ban nasl dev*

*dikhā de tu tak apnī talbīs kon
 lage vird la haul iblīs kon
 firangī te tha kufr mai at ashad
 kare dīn saun dushmanī sakht bad
 na is qatl te ‘ibādat nahnī
 haram mai be san padhe tu thā kushtanī
 sadā sahibān saun namak bar harām
 kiyā nit namak khār kariyān kār kām¹¹⁷*

Unlike the general outline of political loyalty and betrayal he sketched at the poem’s beginning, in this section focused on Shivaji, Nusrati begins with the idea of *fitnā* or political sedition. Note that Shivaji belonged to the same homeland or *watan* as Nusrati, that is, the Deccan. This is precisely why later on he would become an ever more troubling rival for Bijapur than the Mughals, who were of a different land, Hindustan. Those who were more familiar deserved more scorn than those who were of a different sovereign unit all together. Further, the Franks or Europeans (*firangī*) are another interesting point of comparison here to Shivaji. Nusrati very frequently points to platoons of European gunners in Bijapur’s armies as well as to European traders’ mischiefs at sea. In the above example, he uses the category ‘Franks’ to evaluate and position Shivaji. In his spectrum of varying intensity the characteristic of ‘non-belief’ is measured in both rivals. No doubt, both Europeans and Shivaji were non-believers. But the latter’s status as a former ally and friend made him worse than the Franks. This use of the abstract idea of non-belief here confirms what Ali Anooshahr as argued for similar terms such as *kāfir* or infidel, which must also be translated as ingrate, indicating someone who was previously tied to a lord or political authority.¹¹⁸ Rebels were usually those already part of a political unit and who formerly held an obligatory and affective tie to a pre-existing authority. Nusrati deploys the conventional binary of believers and non-believers but the pre-condition of loyalty that Shivaji meets leads to a greater ethnographic contrast between

¹¹⁷ *‘Alī Nāmāh*, 47-48.

¹¹⁸ Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 14.

him and Europeans. For Nusrati then, the feature of once being a friend made Shivaji a worse kind of non-believer.

The poet, no doubt, perceived his times as exceptional, especially when it came to capricious friendships and rivalries. Trouble between the Mughals and the sultanates was, of course, nothing new. But fomenting, instigating rebellion in others, in those who were relatively peaceful or among those who only dissented occasionally, was what set Shivaji apart from previous rivals. Nusrati uses the convention of marking unbelief to measure all enemies, regardless of their actual terms of ‘belief’. The repetition and frequency of these tropes in battle poems indicated how one rival was different from another rival at various levels on the poet's spectrum of mistrust. The language of difference is the same for all rivals, what we can gauge are degrees of enmity within this rubric. The fact of non-belief alone was not enough reason to dislike Shivaji, for his motivation for murder was not worship (*‘ibādat*). Rather, the way Shivaji threatened, undercut Bijapur's sovereignty was what made him distinct. This political threat along with his purported lack of civility and disregard for the proper rules of military and diplomatic engagement set him apart from other rivals such as the Franks, who were also a kind of denominational other, but (at least in this specific moment) not driven by the motivation to completely destroy sovereignty and its natural corollary, civility.

The unprecedented threat that Shivaji posed to the Deccan sultanates was also very frequently commented on by Dutch officials who reported that the great rebel (*de groote rebel*) Shivaji threatened to invade the city of Bijapur as early as May 1663.¹¹⁹ The rebel moved back and forth between the forts of Sangli, Panhala, and Karnala, which lay along arterial routes to inland production areas connected to the Kanara coast (See Map 4). VOC officials feared that

¹¹⁹ VOC 1243, Vengurla, f. 750, f. 803. Copy of a letter by the merchant Pieter van Santvliet and Leendert Leendertsz to written to Batavia, dated 5 May 1663.

the factory at Vengurla, in particular, was in danger of becoming unsustainable as they were dealing with a bunch of *onstuijnige volcken* (wild people) who were completely unpredictable. The spectre of war in the Karnatak did not appeal at all to the Dutch, who noted that residents of formerly productive areas on the eastern Coromandel coast, around Pulicat and Tegenapatnam, were refusing to trade.¹²⁰ VOC officials described Shivaji as a *vuilenroop* or criminal who plundered all the merchants who came from Persian Gulf and confiscated the VOC's goods along the Kanara coast.¹²¹ Presumably, news of Shivaji's destruction of the port-city of Surat in 1664 would have reached southern coasts, causing panic among foreign traders. Nusrati would return many more times to Shivaji's treachery throughout the '*Alī Nāmāh* and again, in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (c. 1672), covered in Chapter Five.

The '*Alī Nāmāh* also offers several instances of the rapid evolution of an ally into an enemy – all within a span of few pages within the *masnawī*. Nusrati's tone shifts so quickly and unexpectedly from profuse praise to disdain that we must conclude that he was bearing witness to these events in great proximity to the events. After profiling Shivaji, in the next *masnawī* Nusrati recounts how 'Ali 'Adil Shah II gave the title of Salabat Khan to Siddi Johar, Abyssinian or Habshi commander, and appointed him to tackle Shivaji. The chapter begins with the title:

Qissa johar kā jo shāh de kar salābat khānī
Bheje jā ko saunpā jang wa jadal

In this section Siddi Johar is described as a “devoted friend of the people” (*ra 'ya kā mukhlis*) and “a friend of soldiers” (*sipāhī kā yār*). 'Ali 'Adil Shah II is pensive and pacing back and forth when his eye falls upon Siddi Johar, who was a slave of Abdul al-Wahab the

¹²⁰ VOC 1248, Coromandel, Report of Cornelis Speelman to the Council at Pulicat to the governor Joan Maetsuijcker, 10 July 1664.

¹²¹ VOC 1236, Vengurla, f. 497.

son of Malik Rehan ‘Adil Shahi. Abdul Wahab had been imprisoned and was the *hākīm* of Kurnool from Bijapur. When his son Malik Rehan came to power, Siddi Johar rebelled, jailed Malik Rehan and seized control of Kurnool. Although ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II was angry with Siddi Johar’s actions, after the death of Afzal Khan, the latter again offered the sultan his services against Shivaji.¹²² The King forgave him and gave him the title of *Salābat Khān*. Upon receiving the title from the king, according to Nusrati, he rose in stature at court, turning from a tiny, insignificant grain into a mountain (*ke yek pal mai kādhī kon daungar kiyā*). When political conditions were favorable, Nusrati accenuated traits like valor and bravery in those who were friends, bound by fealty to the sultan. Again, these expressions of loyalty cannot be read as only and just that. These patron-client relationships were just as likely to crumble as and when a friend fell out of favor and political expediences changed.

Historical time and Nusrati’s emplotment of revolt

Before I get to the insults that Nusrati hurls upon Siddi Johar, the sequence of events and how the poet's emplots this scene within the larger landscape of rivalry in the Deccan is crucial. An elaborate description over the battle at Panhala in 1660 precedes the description of Siddi Johar's rebellion. In that battle, Siddi Johar aided sultan ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II in defeating Shivaji. The *masnawī* then proceeds to describe Shivaji’s flight from Panhala fort. Nusrati explains how the sultan planned the siege:

*ke ru be dhare nhāth (bhāg) jab ko hisār
usse jiyu chupāne hazar ek hain ghār*

He (Shivaji) hid himself and he ran.
To hide him there were a thousand caves

*na karna bachan sharzeh khargosh sāt
ke in mār na mast hāthī pe hāth*

¹²²Shanti Sadiq Ali, *African Dispersal in the Deccan*, p. 124. D.V. Apte and S.M. Divekar, “The Rebellion of Siddi Johar” in *Bharata Itihasa Samsodhaka Mandala Quarterly*, 9, 3 (Pune, n.d.), 19-22

Don't talk as if you fear a rabbit
Because it is like hitting an intoxicated elephant

*kahe shah padhe hain badhe bhut kām
har ek namak lakām karna tamām*

They said the king had many works
First, to kill off all *namak harāms*.

Aside from Shivaji, the sultan had to set right a whole series of other untrustworthy *namak harāms* (ingrates). At this point, the sultan moved camp to Malnad to put down the revolt of a petty landlord or *zamindār*, Raja Bhad Rup Nayak. Nusrati was undoubtedly moving along with his patron on this path of conquest. Just as he began to talk about one revolt, within a few days another revolt or rebellion broke out and his attention shifted to record it. Nusrati recounts a series of incidents, of variable intensity, that threatened the sovereignty of Bijapur. He categorizes these acts of political disloyalty into different kinds of revolts - *baghī* (banditry), *ghadārī* (traiter) to *fitna* (sedition).

For Nusrati, time is the most important axis for observing, assessing, and writing about the sequence of revolts. Caught in the middle of periodic skirmishes, Nusrati's larger objective, of recording the arrival of the Mughals (the most formidable enemy of the Deccan), often gets lost throughout the narrative. This delay in getting to the Mughals occurs because new political priorities lent urgency to the present, which Nusrati wished to record accurately and as it unfolded. He then fits these events into the deliberate framework of the whole work - the game of chess - capturing the volatility of affinities during conquest. In the *masnawī* on the revolt in Malnad, the poet even professes that his original task was to record the Mughals, but the immediate, more proximate rebels commanded his attention first:

*atā qissa avval ka avval kahūn
muffasal vale bāt majmal kahūn*

This little story I will tell in short first
I succinctly say a detailed story

*ke yū ibtedā te kahe bāj bāt
na āta hai qisse kā sar rishte hāt*

From the beginning I only say a little
So the jist of incident can be grasped

*likhiyā ninche lak men Mughal kī ladāyī
yehī qissa kehne hai mujh badhāyī*

Below I wrote of the battle with the Mughals
In recounting this I am proud

*samajh dekh har nikat bārīk ben
rakhe yād har sheh kī karne yaqīn*

Understood from seeing every minute detail
Believing and remembering all

*mughal son padhiya nayīn talak shāh ko kām
kayī kām kon kiyūn diyā intezām*

The King had no business to deal with the Mughals
Why then did he make arrangements for them?

*panāle ka jab shah gadh fath kar
ghanimān pe dusre rakhīyā jūn nazr*

After the victory over Panhala fort
He should have kept an eye on other enemies

*dis āya nazar men wahīn ādh kā
avval kām us sab te molnād kā*

There appeared another (enemy) close by
First the task was in Malnad

*ke paidā kar us kā dahānī sarkashī
phabiyā lag kiyā thā u ke dar kashī?*

When the King discovered this revolt
He saw clearly how this rebel could bite.

*na rakhna padhiya shah saun kis tai nifāq
mile mukhtalif sab bī kar itefāq*

The King was not in a position to keep up differences with anyone
He came to an agreement with those with whom he had differences¹²³

Never missing an opportunity to praise the skills necessary for writing history, which he had in abundance, Nusrati reminds the reader of his brevity, eloquence, memory, and attention to detail. He fulfills a double role of a storyteller-historian. Events in real time identified as a *qissa* or story must first be distilled. These stories, in essence oral, need to be told (*kahan*) versus the actual historical event, the war with the Mughals (*Mughal kī ladāyī*), which needs to be written (*likhiya*). He is not just a *dastangū* or storyteller, a narrator of famous, well-known tales. The poet-historian also had the power of observation and the ability to summarize/synthesize stories or events. Above all, he remembered a true story that could be relied on or believed (*karne yaqīn*). The imperative of following chronology compels Nusrati to set aside the Mughals, the poem's most immediate subject, and Bijapur's most daunting political enemy. Instead, he follows encounters with rivals as and when they troubleshot before him in the present.

In the above verse's second part, Nusrati articulates a critique of his patron, sultan 'Ali 'Adil Shah II, in keeping with a longer tradition of Islamic advice literature, especially on the question of the sovereign's response to *fitna* (sedition or rebellion) and his dealings with the nobility and enemies.¹²⁴ Given the state of confusion and political volatility around him, he observed that the indecisive sultan could not discern which troublemaker to attend to first. Nusrati's tone here is prescriptive, almost annoyed, for he does not know why, after each hard won battle, the sultan failed to keep an eye on trouble brewing within or in close proximity to

¹²³ 'Alī Nāmāh, 79.

¹²⁴ Sajida Sultana Alvi, "Introduction" to *Advice on the Art of Governance*, 15, 22-23.

his domains. Perhaps exhausted from recording an endless cycle of defeats and victories, he thus cast some doubt on the sultan's tendency to forgive so easily, and forging alliances with former traitors and dubious allies. In these lines, we can glean the poet's critique of the sultan. Nusrati was the closest of 'Ali 'Adil Shah II's advisors but as the court historian, in addition to the task of valorizing the patron, he also formulated a measured and opinionated critique of the ruler.

Events unfolding in real time compelled Nusrati to digress from the poem's central plot, as much as they led him to reflect on advice for the sultan. The king's inability to discern those who were untrustworthy and forgive them too easily was most apparent in the fallout with Siddi Johar:

*khusūsan yū johar salābat son tab
jo le hāt shāhī ke lashkar kon sab*

especially at the moment with Johar Salabat
Who had taken control of all the royal troops

*chadī thī so bakhton kī mastī nayī
pakadtā chaliyā thā halūn (ahista) kaj ravī*

Intoxicated with his newly found fortune
He gait slowly took on a crooked demeanor.

*achun shāh 'ādil ne krishnā pe jon
na utāre talak jā tujmil son yūn*

'Adil Shah reached the banks of river Krishna
And stepped down with grandeur

*salābat pe avval mahābat padhī
atā 'at son tā 'at te lāzim khadī*

At first, Salabat shook with fear
For obedience had become a necessity

*nadī purā tar ne te shāh bal zarurī
hazārān che dehshast son āyā huzūr.*

When he stepped down in the river
Thousands trembled with fear of the master¹²⁵

Then, Nusrati implores:

*shahenshāh ke jis par karen lak 'atā
na liyāven nazr mai hue lag khatā*

the King endowed them with grants
he never considered their faults

*apas sāf dil sāt shah be khilāf
usse phir nawāze khata kar m'af*

with a clear heart, they were in favor of the king
he honored them by forgiving their faults

Arguably, the relationship between Nusrati and the sultan was not an easy one of 'legitimizing' the latter. In these lines, the king almost comes off as naive, if not foolhardy. While out on a campaign to tackle the rebel in Malnad, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II received news of Sidi Johar's revolt. The rapid, abrupt turns in the poem's plot suggest Nusrati was very much present as these events unfolded. While the title of this section indicates it is about the rebel at Malnad, Bhadrup Naik, less than a fourth of the way through this poem word reaches that Siddi Johar or Salabat Khan has turned coat. The *masnawī* then shifts abruptly to talking about the treachery of Siddi Johar:

*siyāh rū ticheh thā ū ghadār
jiyā thā honth zagh murdār khwār*

Black face, it was he who was the traitor
His lips red like raven that gorges on dead corpses

*kavā na thī us son anast kase
sadā thag pane kī che thī gat usse*

No one liked him even a bit

¹²⁵ 'Alī Nāmāh, 80.

He only knew how to inveigle

*ussī thār koī din ū sūrat harām
kiyā thā na shaistah kī dhāt kām*

Seeing his forbidden, unholy face
He did not do any work in any way

*pichāniyā ke yahān āye jab sar dhanī
liyā so badī kyā badhī kyā nahnī*

When the King reached here
He had done all bad works, big and small

*‘ayān hue to yek beyek ū atāl
abr se nā hargiz marā kuch bhī hāl*

It became apparent that all were restless (*itāl*)
Never had all been so out of its element¹²⁶

The poet's attention to a formerly familiar ally's physical features (skin color etc.) occurs at precisely the moment he turns into a political other. The poet now describes Siddi Johar in hyperbole, apprehending him through analogies with beasts and animals. These lines stand in contrast to the section only slightly earlier in the poem when the sultan rewarded Siddi Johar his title, Salabat Khan. Siddi Johar was neither black face nor a bloodthirsty raven when he was a trusted friend. Nusrati made no sharp ethnographic distinctions when an actor was being absorbed into or strengthening Bijapur's sovereignty. Racial, ethnic and denominational differences carried much more value when and if sovereignty came under threat. The question here and in many other events in the seventeenth century is not whether groups or individual actors understood or were motivated from a pre-supposed collective 'identity.' Instead we may ask why, a poet-historian such as Nusrati, picked a specific feature of a former ally and used it to cast him as an other, and why such differences were offset, contrasted (implicitly or explicitly) against one's own in specific political situations and contexts. In the next sections,

¹²⁶ Ibid., 82.

the poet extols the sultan's bravery and contrasts it with Siddi Johar's cowardice, how he turned into a bandit (*qissa ū hai ke jo Johar ne ho shah son baghī*), followed by a long *qasida* on his treachery and death.¹²⁷ To sum up Siddi Johar's treachery, the poet concludes:

*chirag-i islām kā koī dahān na lāyā thā jo nichiyā hai
jadhān te dīn ke ghar til bhansiyārā fikr arzal kā*

No one had brought the lamp of Islam to the one below
The home of the rascal infidels, hiding in cellars below the house

*nawāzayā shāh ke ghar kā ho athā shāh son phir bhāgī
na thā bin fitna angīzī fan us gumrāh utangal kā*

The who had been reared in the king's court once again turned into a rebel
For sedition was the only skill known to this lost soul

*shahenshāh tis upar rukh kar ghazā kon naukrī dete
rivāj kufr kam karne bhansā kar mohar ajhal kā*

The king being generous, raised him and gave him service.
He used the custom of ignorance to reduce the traditions of infidels¹²⁸

The fundamental rule governing such rivals was that in the past they had been friends. At first glance, the rapid shift in alliances and rivalries may seem arbitrary. No rivals, even the Mughals and Shivaji, the 'Adil Shahs and Shivaji, or the 'Adil Shahs and Siddi Johar, were absolute rivals. What they shared, as a result of years of cohabitation and borrowing, was an idiom of political affinity premised on constituting a house or household that needed to be kept together and never fundamentally disturbed. When it was destroyed from within, the rules of the game and the ways of apprehending rivals changed radically. In such a landscape of political competition, casting a former friend in terms of an absolute ethnic, confessional, and linguistic other was plausible and necessary in a moment of conflict.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 83, 98-99.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 146.

The speed at which alliances and friendships transformed into disdain and rivalry during the Karnatak conquest was also alarmingly commented on by VOC officials who could not keep track of who was on which side. Well before Nusrati's record of rebellion, Pieter Santvliet reported that Siddi Johar, or Salabat Khan, who had been sent to attack Shivaji in Panhala, had plotted to murder the king, 'Ali 'Adil Shah II.¹²⁹ In the meantime, 'Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan (who I will turn to in Chapter Five), tried to persuade the sultan to remove Salabat Khan, who in turn set off for the Kanara coast to blackmail a local ruler, Venkatapa Nayak of Ikkeri to provide him money and arms to attack his rivals in Bijapur.¹³⁰ Bahlol Khan was dead set against this plan and claimed instead that he was more than enough to scare the local ruler and the ingrate, Siddi Johar. In the early 1660s, this Afghan commander had already begun to control the flourishing mercantile city and fort of Bankapur, the gateway to the southern Karnatak. Bahlol Khan also hated Siddi Johar and assured the sultan to teach this rebel a lesson.¹³¹ For European observers, within courtly circles in Bijapur and in different pockets of the Karnatak frontier, rapidly evolving political equations were difficult to keep up with.

Both, the 'internal' Persianate literary sources and the 'external' European archival record, attest the uncertain and imperfect terms of patronage ties and friendships during conquest. Nusrati's repetition of the feature of infidelity, the degree of which he gauges in enemies, was coterminous and always synonymous with a threat to Bijapur's sovereignty. In other words, the ascriptive features (or identity) of Siddi Johar such as him being a Habshi and a Muslim were not why he turned into a rebel nor the reason why Nusrati perceived him as an opponent. Both Siddi Johar and Shivaji were deeply troubling rivals because they had once

¹²⁹ VOC 1236, Letter of Resident Pieter Santvliet to Governor General Joan Maetsuijker, 28 April 1661, f. 497 - 498.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

been good friends. The act of biting the hand that once fed you, of turning against your patron, is what determined a higher degree of distrust and rivalry. Ethnographic features were *then* used to mark a political rival and explain his position on the poet-historian's spectrum of mistrust and political insecurity.

Nusrati on the Mughals

Now that several smaller, but disturbing rivals of Bijapur have entered the drama, we may now turn to the Great Satan among them all - the Mughals. After a long and elaborate appraisal of Bijapur's armies, Nusrati shifts his focus to the Mughals. He begins first through the observation of weapons, armor, the profile of soldiers in regional, Deccani armies before comparing them with the Mughals. At first, Nusrati, beholden to the imperial army's sight, describes its sheer size, strength, and diversity. Then, he critiques the degenerate moral character of a 'Mughal' and lists a shared set of pan-Mughal vices and behaviors that eventually bring its army and the empire down.

Nusrati expresses wonder and consternation towards the enormous Mughal army coming towards the Deccan. Familiar with its system of organization and administration, for a Dakkani poet, the sight of the imperial army marching into the Deccan was undoubtedly intimidating. The literary strategy usually, however, was to size the enemy up before sizing it down, disaggregating it and insulting all its constituents. These constituents - the diverse, ethnic, regional rank and file of 'Mughal' soldiers, whom we saw performing empire's everyday, menial tasks in this chapter's first half, now capture the Deccani poet-historian's imagination. These soldiers along with the royal household, all the different levels of personnel that constituted an idea called 'Mughal' were what, according to Nusrati, finally undercut and compromised the immense and enormous breadth of resources at empire's

disposal. Once again, one feature that set Deccani armies apart from the Mughal's was the presence of Franks or Europeans in the former. The analogies of local actors vis-à-vis the Franks, like the aforementioned one with Shivaji, are worth a second glance:

*fīrangī kā kādhā yek yek be misāl
dise daudhtā jiyūn kā tukhdā ubhāl*

The Frankish troops peerless in skill,
Appearing to the eye like clouds running through the sky.

*na thī top koī kam pakadne saun mār
badhe ko tuk kiyān hor sapein bachedār*

Their large and small cannon ready,
in the manner of a snakes and their offspring.

*yūn jab shah ke huzūr āyī chal
khūsusan 'arabe mein thī sau kul*

When the army appeared before the king,
Especially the two-wheeled carriage, singular in its appearance.

*dise āne lage yūn fīrangiyān ke thāt
bhare jiyūn ke daryā makrān ke lāt¹³²*

The pomp of the Frankish troops apparent,
Proud like a bask of crocodiles.

*dhariyān dil ke daryā mein ho chel pel
fīrangiyān te chondhar nehangān kā khel*

Like the grandeur and fervor of a river of troops,
The Frankish troops surrounded in all directions.

Why are the Franks always a point of comparison to other, more familiar and proximate enemies within the Deccan and from Mughal north India? And why do they appear so frequently in the vernacular *masnawī*? There may be several reasons for this. In Persian court chronicles, references to Europeans of any kind are few and far in between, but we cannot presume this absence necessarily renders them as insignificant political players in the

¹³² *Alī Nāmāh*, 372.

Deccan.¹³³ Perhaps this may have to do with the stationary character of court chronicles, produced at capital cities. No doubt, ambassadors and emissaries from all parts of the Indian Ocean and beyond were received in court and Persian chroniclers sometimes remarked upon them. But prose chronicles were quite unlike mobile genres such as letters (exchanged between places) and the vernacular battle poem, recorded along conquest pathways. Historian-poets such as Nusrati wrote while travelling along with the sultan and his army, which was often incorporating new troops as it moved along the frontier. Mobile genres such as the battle poem therefore, recorded the presence of more mobile social groups - all kinds of soldiers who had traveled great distances to earn a living and to fight wars. The Portuguese had, of course, been in the Deccan long before the Mughals, going back to the Vijayanagar empire in the late fifteenth century. Often listed as gunners or cannon bearers, they clearly specialized in certain types of military labor in regional sultanates' armies. By the late seventeenth century, they had long since detached from the *Estado* and settled in other parts of the Deccan, often serving as mercenaries in the armies of Bijapur and Golkonda.¹³⁴ Nusrati observed that a critical mass of such units were not present in the Mughal army, whose gunners and musketeers were overwhelmingly either Central Asian or Rajputs, as we saw in the ethnic composition from the muster rolls of Mughal soldiers (See Table 4.2). We also already heard Prince Aurangzeb's comment to Mughal emperor, Shah Jahan, comparing the Deccan's better skilled gunners vis-à-vis those in the Mughal army. He urged his father to draw upon such specialized forms of military labor from the Deccan for campaigns elsewhere in the Mughal empire. This demand for gunners from the Deccan in the Mughal empire may also have to do with the relative

¹³³ Fischel, "Society, Space, and the State," 75.

¹³⁴ Maria Augusta Lima Cruz, "Exiles and Renegades in early sixteenth century Portuguese India" *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 23, 3 (1986): 249-262. Cruz sifts through major Portuguese chronicles for references to mercenaries. One could potentially mark all references to such troops in Dakkani *masnawī* to gauge the scale of their presence in the armies of Bijapur and Golkonda.

difficulty and inefficacy of using matchlocks on horsebacks versus the more agile flintlock musket used by Ottoman and European troops which were more common in southern India.¹³⁵ Contrasts of the military techniques used in region versus empire as well as the profile of social groups that specialized in particular sorts of military labor together offer a material and sociological ethnography of the Deccan conquest. The Franks were another unit on Nusrati's scale of ethnography, also indicating the much longer maritime orientation of the Deccan vis-à-vis the Mughal empire's agrarian basis in northern India. The administrative portraits of soldiers, fortkeepers and recordkeepers (we saw in this Chapter's first part) share much with the Mughal army's literary depictions in battle poems. Nusrati describes the imperial army further in the following section:

*katā hun itā fauj dehlī kī bāt
chalī thī dil pe kis dhāt sāt*

Now I say a bit about the army of Delhi,
And how it set out with a mission in its heart.

*ke kis fauj kon dekhne mai samaj
dise na kise inteha hor apaj*

Upon seeing this army, one understands,
It appears it has no beginning nor end.

*hatiyān ka arābah chale mail mail
nahnā jis main sardārā ashāb-i fil*

carriages drawn by elephants, marching together,
Abraham looked like a speck before this army.¹³⁶

*sarāsar agar bhār sārā disse
to yek faujdār us main dārā dise*

If you saw the entire army
Each captain of it appears like Darius.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Khan, "Gunpower and Empire: Indian Case," 61.

¹³⁶ *The Qur'an*, Sura Al-Fil (105:1-5)

¹³⁷ *Alī Nāmah*, 276-277.

The empire, despite its ethnic, regional and linguistic diversity, was united by certain inherent traits of disloyalty, untrustworthiness and treachery, shared across the highest and lowest levels of it. For instance, Nusrati seized every opportunity to take a jab at the Mughal war of succession among its princes, to belittle an empire where sons do not even spare their fathers and nor brothers for the sake of their own gain (*dekhen kuch hai jān fāidah āp ko / na chode sageh bhai aur bāp kon*). This imperial trait of betraying one's own manifested itself in different ways at empire's more humble echelons. Hailing from different parts of India and Transoxiana, the whole empire was united by the quality of *fareb* or the quality of lying, inveigling others. The Mughal army was strong in numbers and weapons, but trickery was the primary strategy through which they won in diplomacy and war.

Take for instance, the following lengthy description of the Mughal army. An imperial army with a universalist ambitions, drawn from across the world, failed to compensate for the empire's uncompromising and unethical moral conduct.

*subk mansabī hor bhārī kate
athe kayī sadī u hazārī*

The smallest and highest mansabdar
From the rank of a hundred to a thousand

*yek yek mulk ke nām āvar javān
do aspah seh aspah sapeh begumān*

Each soldier, the bravest of his nation
Ranks of two horses, three horses, all beyond the imagination.

*mughlān kate mulk wa kayī shahar ke
kate hindu wa koyī māvarānnahr ke*

Say, Mughals came from many cities and kingdoms
Say, some from Hind and some from Transoxiana

chaghtai qizilbāsh uzbek balī

qandahārī kate balkh hor kabulī

The bravest Chagtai, Qizibash, Uzbek
Say, Qandahari, Balkhi and Kabulis

*murawwat ke muflis muhabbat ke shom
farāsāt ko tutī nahūsāt ko bom*

The lacked compassion, love
Inauspicious owls they were

*fareb un ke fan men badhā burd hai
janam jag jā iblīs shāgird hai*

In any challenge, deceit is their art,
for ages, the devil has been their student.

*nichī jin mai aslā murawwat kī būye
karen us pe bad jis te nek un pe hue*

The do not have even a little stench of compassion,
Those do bad to those who did them good.

*thikāna īch duniyā ko māder kahen
chupa laudh zāhir kon khwāhar kahein*

To show the world, they call someone their mother
Hiding their lust, they will call a girl their sister

*badī bāp saun apnī mirās jān
birādar ka khūn shīr mader pehchān*

To mistreat their father is hereditary,
the brother's blood is like mother's milk.

*dekhen kuch hai jān fāidah āp ko
na chode sageh bhai aur bāp kon*

When they see their own benefit
they will not spare their brother or father

*athe mirzā mīr kashmīr ke
gharaib sipeh pan men chon dhair ke*

Those who came from Kashmir
In a strange way create darkness

khurasāniyān isfahānī kate
damāvandī hor wa dāmghānī kate

Say, Khorāsānis, Isfahānis
Say, Damāvandis and Dāmghānis

katak sabzwāri bukhāri kate
herātī wa tusī wa lārī kate

Some Sabzwari, some Bukharis
Heratis, Tuis and Laris (Iranis & Turanis)

katak turk wa gurjī kate rumiyān
samarqand wa shīrāz wa jharūmiyān

Some Turks, Georgians and Ottomans
Samarqandis, Shirazis and Jahromis (near Kerman)

huvizāyī wa harawī wa hamkarī
sujistāniyān asl wa nasl āzarī

Ahvazi, Harawi and Hamkari
Sujistanis, their essence and the race of fire (idol) worshippers

kamandār koi garz bāzī mai chust
tīrandāz koi nizeh bazān durust

some skilled in archery, others skilled in spear throwing
Some archers and others spear throwers

bhūke hoke jhakde ko phirte diler
lavah chabte dil na huā unkā sīr

On hungry stomachs, in search of a fight
Chewing on iron, their hearts never content nor full

khalāl un ke dātān kā jhāla dise
girān garz mon kā navālā dise

When they awoke from sleep,
They washed their mouth with the blood of the sword

piye bāj apain apne lahu kā sharāb
achain pī magat ho ghusse son kabāb

Without drinking the wine of blood
...they could roast kebabs with their fury

rohille katak zāt ke the ūvat
zabardast panjabiyān dil ke ghatt

Rohillas, with an essence of deceit,
And Punjabis who were never afraid.

bahūt rāo rāne athe raj ke paut
ghurūrī son shaitān jhagde pe bahūt

Many Raos, Rane and Rajputs
With arrogance they had turned into devils

sisodhī wa kajvī wa kābī chunwār
suraj vans wa sarsāt wa kubal panwār

Sisodhias, Kajvis, Kabis and Chunwars
Sons of the sun, and Panwars

ummat devde chandar adat chandel
saindahal son bansī kīnji navā najhel

the highest of Devde, some Rawats and Chandels
?

more jhūtve hor jhāle kate
solankī wa parmār dhāle kate

Say More, Jhutve and Jhale
Say Solanki and Parmar, Dhale.¹³⁸

Several observations maybe deduced from Nusrati's description of the Mughal army above. He begins first with the fundamental, organizing unit of the Mughal empire – the *mansab*. Contemporary observers, beyond the empire's territorial limits, clearly understood these imperial institutions. Nusrati's reference to double and triple rank (*du aspah seh aspah*) confirms his familiarity with standard Mughal practices that had been implemented differently

¹³⁸ Ibid., 276-303.

in the Deccan since 1636.¹³⁹ These imperial systems of organizing the army and nobility were different from the more mercenary-based armies of regional sultanates.

Second, Nusrati's foremost and most detailed observation is on the different kinds of people, places, ethnicities, and lineages that constituted the abstract idea of a 'Mughal.' This kind of enumeration was common across early modern courtly vernaculars that had emerged from encounters and intersections of and in between many different peoples and places.¹⁴⁰ From Central Asia to Hindustan, spatial units rather a single religious identity defined the expanse of the Mughals. These empire's two geographic endpoints encompassed many other affiliations of caste, ethnicity, cities and ritual denominations. Some constituents of the Mughal army, such as Central Asians, of course looked no different than the Deccan's courtly and military ranks. But Nusrati goes deeper into the specificity of various Rajput lineages to demonstrate his observation's accuracy and precision. And yet, moments later in the poem, Nusrati strips the Mughals of their cosmopolitan grandeur. There is clear sense here of being wronged by the empire. Presumably, this is an implicit reference to all of the previous treaties between the regional sultanates and the Mughals that had been disregarded throughout the seventeenth century. Certain pan-Mughal vices – deceit, lying, cheating, ruthlessness – united the empire's diverse constituents.

Lastly, Nusrati critiqued the Mughal household and factionalism among its princes. The *'Alī Nāmah* was written only a few after the Mughal war of succession in the late 1650s, an event that writers and poets in regional and imperial polities across the seventeenth century had observed. This imperial trait went back at least a few generations, perhaps this is Nusrati's implicit reference to the succession struggle between Jahangir, Nur Jahan, and Shah Jahan

¹³⁹ Iqtidar Alam Khan, "Gunpowder and Empire: Indian Case," 62. William H. Moreland, "Rank (mansab) in the Moghul state service," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1936): 642.

¹⁴⁰ D'Hubert, "Poets, pirates, and merchants," 51.

when the latter was prince (*badī bāp saun apnī mirās jān / birādar kā khūn shūr mader pehchān*) in the 1620s. This imperial feature stood out to Deccani observers, whose sovereigns and their households had, for most of their tenure, been relatively free of such crisis. Perhaps to Indo-Muslim observers in southern India, the Mughal household would have seemed fraught. According to Nusrati, its very survival and prosperity depended on the ability to cheat and deceive one's own.

On other occasions, drawing out the comparison between the Mughals and the Deccan, Nusrati turns to qualitative features as well as material differences such as the kinds of weapons and techniques the two armies used:

*mughal asal nāmard pan hīleh gar
shujā ‘at hamārī hamen sit peh var*

A Mughal in essence is unmanly and a cheat
We are the victorious, putting our lives in line

*mughal kā hai hatyār tīr wa tufang
haman qabzeh jamdhar wa garz afrang*

The Mughal's weapons are arrow and matchlock
We have the punch dagger (*jamdhar*) and Frankish clubs

*lage chup Mughal le ‘arābe ka aut
hamen pas dil mein karein lot pot*

The Mughal takes cover under the two-wheeled carriage
As he nears us, his heart is in tumult

*mughal ā ke avval jo lat khāte hain
dakhan ki ladāyī te kuch ate hain*

When the Mughals come they get their ass kicked
Many have come for the Deccan's fight

*yek yek maut ke waqt farzand kon
kahīn yād rakh phūt us pand kon*

For the every death of each son

Remember that populace

dakhan par muhem huī to sut rozgār
ke zunhār nayīn phir ū āne ke thār

Set your important task upon the Deccan
To defend it such that they never return (here)

Nusrati evokes a local Deccani patriotism of sorts everytime he discusses the Mughals. Several battles against the Mughals close with the poet calling upon king, nobles and soldiers to defend their land, the Deccan. Bayly has located the earliest instances of such sentiments of territoriality and loyalty in the case of the Marathas in the eighteenth century.¹⁴¹ But both the idea of homeland (*watan*) and kingdom (*mulk*) predate the Marathas, who were simultaenously emerging as political foci within the Deccan. Like the category of ‘Mughal,’ I have demonstrated throughout this inquiry, who was within, and outside the political identity of “Deccani” too varied considerably over time. Nusrati’s definition for loyalty was primarily predicated on a violation of friendship codes, which threatened the Deccan’s actual and abstract territorial integrity.

Conclusion

The many meanings of ‘Mughal’: Conquest as Contingency

This chapter borrowed its title and inspiration from a much heftier tome on early modern conquest, Peter Perdue’s *China Marches West: The Qing conquest of Central Eurasia*. But it only accomplishes less than an fifth of what Perdue does for the Qing, if that! Limitations of languages and materials, not to mention the very different state of historiography in South Asia and China fields, prevents us from tracing a fuller arc of the Mughal conquest in the Deccan. I have drawn on a slice of extant materials from the Mughal

¹⁴¹ C.A. Bayly, Chapter 1, *Origins of Nationality in South Asia: Patriotism and Ethical Government in the Making of Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998)

Deccan, foregrounding the role of regional states in constituting imperial operations and aspirations in the frontier. A fuller appraisal of the Mughals in the Deccan, as I said in the opening chapter, requires an evaluation of documents from Aurangzeb's (d. 1707) reign and shifting conceptions of Mughal sovereignty in the late 17th century. Revisiting Aurangzeb's relationship to the Deccan would enable us to trace larger changes from Shah Jahan's (d. 1666) period, which I focused on here. Methodologically, this chapter has attempted to build a 'bottom up' social history of early modern political formations, which together mobilized a range of resources that cut across agrarian and maritime frontiers.¹⁴² I have shown that territorial expansion does not bear a neat relationship to the actions of a single, politically consolidated state nor does it stem from specific geographic characteristics that predisposed only empires, towards centralization.¹⁴³

It will be useful here to close with a discussion on existing debates on the typologies of understanding conquest across early modern empires. In one model, a distinction is made between those early modern polities 'exposed' to conquests from Inner Asia (namely, northern India, China and the eastern Mediterranean) and 'protected rimlands' that were immune to such interventions, such as Burma and Vietnam, and thus exceptional in their drive towards consolidation.¹⁴⁴ In a critique of this approach, Wong has emphasized that late imperial China witnessed similar processes although it does not fall under Lieberman's geographic typology.¹⁴⁵ In using impermeable geographical characteristics to define what creates frontiers,

¹⁴² Kenneth Pomeranz, "Social history and world history: from daily life to patterns of change," *Journal of World History* 18, no. 1 (2007): 73-79.

¹⁴³ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 246.

¹⁴⁴ R. Bin Wong in his critique of Lieberman. "Did Late Imperial China have an Early Modern Era?" to be published David Porter, ed., *Comparative Early Modernities* (Palgrave, 2012). Also see a similar argument for Mughal India in Alam and Subrahmanyam, "The Deccan Frontier and Mughal Expansion, CA. 1600"

¹⁴⁵ Wong, 11-12.

Lieberman tends to ignore the interfaces of political and economic exchange between ‘exposed’ empires (Qing, Mughal etc) and the auxiliary, ‘protected’ polities (Deccan sultanates, post-Vijayanagara *nayaka* states) around them. In this position, the modern nation-state unit remains the underlying unit to analyze early modern states. In the case of South Asia - the Mughals and Hindustan - indisputably occupy a much greater space in the nationalist imagination than the Deccan sultanates, which may explain the uni-directional narratives of Mughal conquests.

In seventeenth-century South Asia, contiguous landed empires were, however, inseparable from littoral polities. The Mughal empire (in a so-called ‘exposed’ zone) attempted to expand and incorporate non-imperial, coastal competitors in peninsular India. We cannot categorize the Deccan sultanates as ‘protected rimlands’ due to their major ecological differences from the northern plains and due to their proximity to the Indian Ocean. Nor was the Deccan region immune to migrations from Central Asia, if anything, it received even more settlers from Inner Asia. Even at the level of the different kinds of sources available to us, the maritime and the agrarian worlds often converge, even if they do not entirely collapse in the historical record.

Imperial agendas and aspirations in regions of expansion were contingent and fragile, even if accompanied with intense military campaigns. We need to look at governance structures that were shared across competing polities rather than setting up arbitrary spatial frontiers through which only one polity pushed forward. This chapter took a cue from Wong’s observations of “uneven institutionalized results” of Qing government-directed initiatives in the eighteenth century.¹⁴⁶ The mobilization of resources to extract taxes in distant parts of the

¹⁴⁶ R. Bin Wong, “Formal and Informal Mechanisms of Rule and Economic Development: The Qing Empire in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 5,4 (2001): 404.

empire required the use of informal and formal designs of rule. For instance, Wong notes that the Qing state set a low rate of land taxation, to which other taxes were added only as and when needed,¹⁴⁷ instead of implementing a standardized, regionally-uniform rate. The Qing government bureaucracy therefore deployed a range of strategies, which varied from the incorporation of local methods of governance or taking decisions that were not necessarily well reasoned or regularized.¹⁴⁸ Both, Mughal imperial officers and low-level staff similarly tapped into pre-existing forms of administration that were not entirely contingent upon normative imperial Mughal state structures. Despite repeated military campaigns and diplomatic missions, Mughal officials had to rely on rival political sovereigns and their mechanisms of rule even after they had effectively dismantled them in the late seventeenth century.¹⁴⁹ The correspondence from Mughal Prince Aurangzeb to Emperor Shah Jahan, from his time as viceroy of the Deccan, dating from the 1650s, revealed imperial attitudes that were both confident and insecure, in a moment when the Mughals sought to expand territorially but faced an acute scarcity of resources in the frontier.

Lastly, the phenomenon of conquest also offers a dense temporal zone to analyze cultural identities, which shifted in such moments at an unprecedented speed. In the case of China, Perdue's example of Mongols and Manchus assumes that two distinct, self-aware identities were at stake in the frontiers of the Qing empire.¹⁵⁰ Ethnic identity formation seen in "a sharper consciousness of difference" in such interfaces¹⁵¹ receives a much more nuanced in Perdue's longer treatment of this problem at the intersections of three early modern empires –

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 403.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 405.

¹⁴⁹ John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda 1687- 1724* (United Kingdom: Clarendon Press, 1975)

¹⁵⁰ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 260-262.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 249.

the Manchu Qing, the Muscovite-Russian and the Mongolian Zunghars.¹⁵² Early modern empires did not have impermeable cultural characteristics different from their rivals. When applied to frontiers elsewhere, as in Mughal India and the Deccan, a conflation of geographic and cultural identities does not work; given that elites in the north and south were often of proximate genealogical stock, circulated in between competing polities and lacked a clearly defined notion of loyalty towards an empire or a regional polity. In the case of Mughal expansion towards peninsular India, actors who operated within an imperial institution's hierarchy were often at odds with each other. These operations coalesced with regional polities that lacked such structures, producing a layered and nested conquest in the frontier. The literary perceptions of empires, elaborated on in this chapter, undoubtedly point to early modern assertions of affinity and disloyalty. But, these articulations of self and other point to the processual formation of political identities rather than fixing them into mutually exclusive containers of space, language, religion or ethnicity.

¹⁵²Ibid., 51 – 93.

Image 4.1: 'Arz-o-chehrah or soldier's muster roll Acc. No. 35-669

Handwritten document in Persian script, likely a soldier's muster roll (Arz-o-chehrah). The text is written in black ink on aged, yellowed paper. At the top, there are several lines of text, including the word "صورت" (Surot) and "دارالارمنستان" (Darul-Armanistan). A circular seal is visible on the right side, containing the text "امپراتوری عثمانیه" (Imperial Ottoman Empire) and "دارالارمنستان" (Darul-Armanistan). A purple stamp is located below the seal. The main body of the document contains a list of names and titles, such as "امجدوله ملک دولت اس ملک رس الدی قوم را صورت کو لکھا" (Amjadullah, King of the State of the Sultan, the appearance of the people of the Sultan). The document concludes with the signature "حصار دار" (Hissardar) and the name "محمد علی" (Muhammad Ali).

طریق صدور درین لاسمند
رسیده است و در دو صکر دایه
از آن بولدر دایه کماهی با برود
عاجط سمند

مها در کف ۴۰

ماری و پروکی و کراس
سید

ردار ک

Image 4.1: English translation Description Roll Acc. No. 35-669

FRONT

Description Roll

mansabdārān-i khassah

Seal:

Hussamuddin Hassan Khan

has truly become a slave of Shah Jahan

Dated 1055

Circular *nasta'liq* seal of Hussamuddin Hassan Khan, engraved with the year 1055, from the reign of Shah Jahan.

True Copy.

Malik Ahmad, son of Malik Daulat, son of Malik Zainuddin, from the *qom* (caste) of Rajput Solanki, resident of Burhanpur, wheatish complexion (*gandum gūn*), broad forehead (*firākh pishānī*), open eyebrows (*kushādah ābruh*), sheep-eyed (*mīsh chashm*), high nose (*buland bīnī*), beard and moustache black (*rīsh-o-burūt siyāh*), one mole on the cheek, close to the nose, with one small pox mark on top of the abovementioned mole, one mole on the neck on the right side, piercing in the left ear, a scar on the left eyebrow.

Zāt of chahār bīstī

Approximate stature of 33 years

BACK

Turki horse

some white hair on the forehead

on the left lobe dry scars

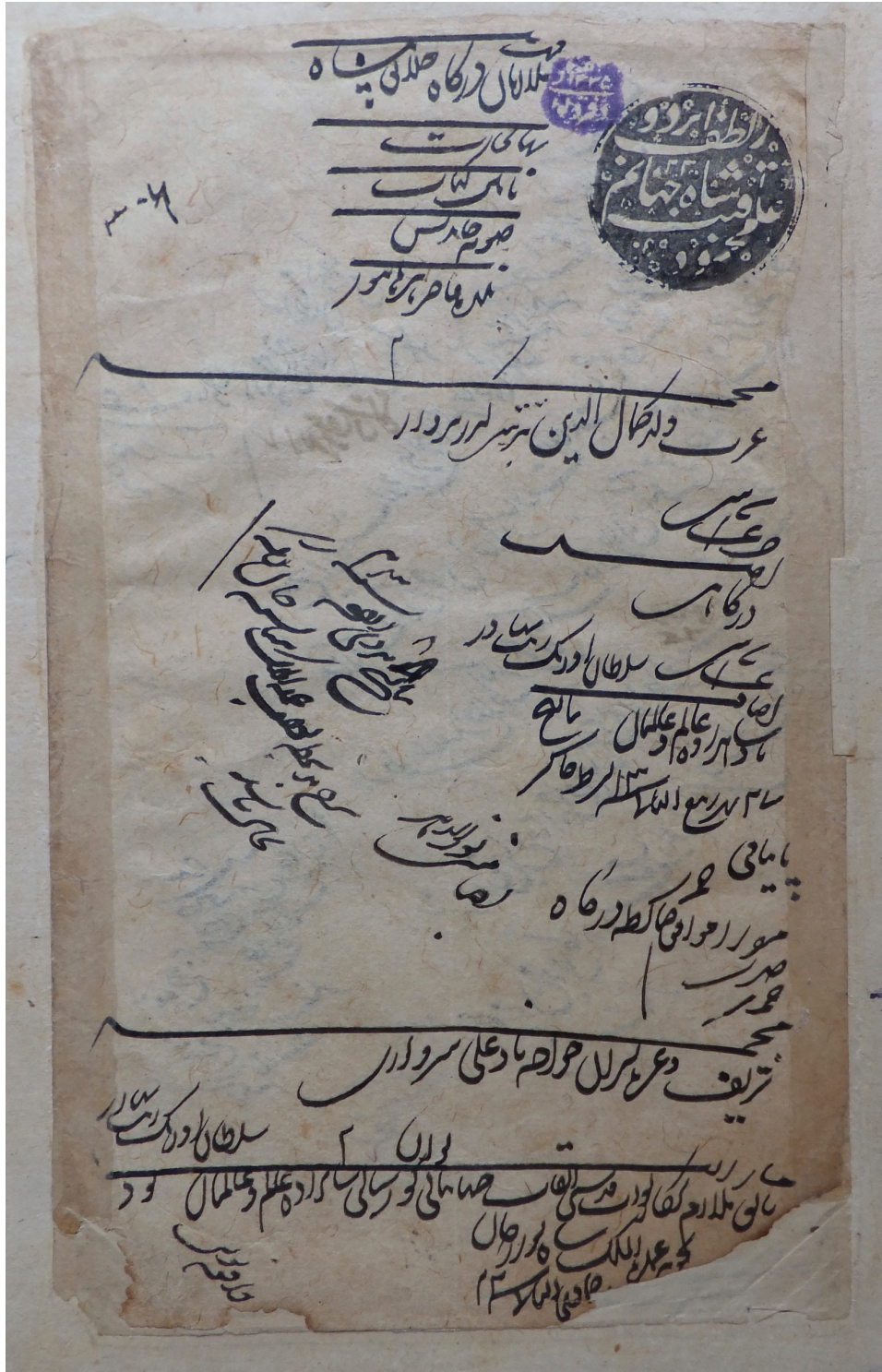
on the thigh few less visible scars

with a white line on either side.

Dated on the 8th of *Zu al-Qa'dah* (of the 19th Regnal Year)

It was checked and declared that the horse has become weak/infirm.

Image 4.2: *Fihrist-i-mulāzimān-i-Burhānpur* or Roll of imperial servants Acc. No. 3076



in Payan Ghat

SEAL:

With the grace of God and Shah Jahan
The future becomes fortuitous
1059

Circular *nasta'liq* seal of Shah Jahan from the year 1059 or 1649

From the 306th folio of the register

Muhammad Arab, the son of Kamaluddin Turbati, with the designation of *gurzburdār* (Mace bearer),

had an original grant or ASL *dargahī* (part of royal retinue) of 15 *mansab* (p. 47)

Additional grant or IZĀFE of 15 given by Prince Aurangzeb on the date 27 of *Rabi' ussanī* in the 13th Regnal year, on the condition of a partial tract of a *subah* or a *paināmī jāgīr*.

Fixed according to the official regulations (*zabita-i dargāh*) of the court.

100 *zāt*
and 5 *sawār*

Muhammad Sharif and other sons of Khwaja Nad 'Ali Sabzwari

The aforementioned were previously in the service of [Title] Prince Aurangzeb as Intelligencer (*wāqi'a navīs*)

According to the proposal of, 'Umdat-ul-mulk Shah Nawaz Khan on the date of [illegible] *Jamādī ussanī* in the 23rd Regnal Year

ZIMN

Attested by Nuruddin
on the date 8 *Zu al-Qa'dah* in the 23rd Regnal Year

True Endorsement of Nawab 'Umdat-ul-mulk Shaista Khan saying that it may be continued.

BACK

16
100
50

[Title] Prince Murad Baksh reduced the *mansab* on the 17th of the month of Ramzan in the 23rd Regnal Year

Sharh (True Copy)

Memorandum from the 29th of the month *Jamadi ussani* of the 23rd Regnal Year permitted according to the advice of [Title] *'Umdat-ul-mulk* Shah Nawaz Khan for Khwaja Muhammad Sharif, the son of Nad 'Ali Sabzwari. It was seen or noticed on the date 12 *Jamadi ussani* of the 23rd Regnal Year by *'Umdat-ul-mulk*, who said that since he is an industrious young man, the aforementioned be appointed at the rank or *mansab* of *nūr bāshī* (100) *zāt* and 15 *sawār*.

With the surety of Beg Vardi.

Image 4.3: *Waqā' or* Intelligencer's report Acc. No. 480

روزگار
وقایع مدینه حیدرآباد
محرّم الحرام ۱۲۰۵
۸ نومبر در باب غراب ملک پیک کہ ولندیز
و دیمار در بندر کھاکل گرفتہ اند قطب الملک
سوریرا و حوالہ دار بندر کھلی ہتی نوشتہ ہو جو
غراب از کپتان ولندیز کیہ و جون سوریرا
پر ولندیز و دیمار دستہ نڈار و این جمعہ
در بندر کھلی ہتی اطاعت کسری کندی سوریرا
حوالہ دار عدزی نوشتہ لہذا انمقدمہ در بندر
کھاکل واقوشند حیدر فوجدار انجا باید غراب

را بکیر و حقیقت نیست که اینجا در مادر
و طب ملک هر چه بنویسند میکنند و حواله داران
برین جهت دست ندارند و مذکور میشود که حیدر
درین کار با پنجاه شریک بود در صورت حیدر
مذکور چون غراب را خواهد گرفت اگر حکام
بمقار و بنذر بارک سورت حکم بمطاع ^{مطهر} امیر
صادر کرده که به کپتان و لذیز تاکید نمایند
غراب و مالک است خواهد آمد

Image 4.3: English translation Intelligencer's report Acc. No. 480

Roznamche

Waqāi ' Hyderabad

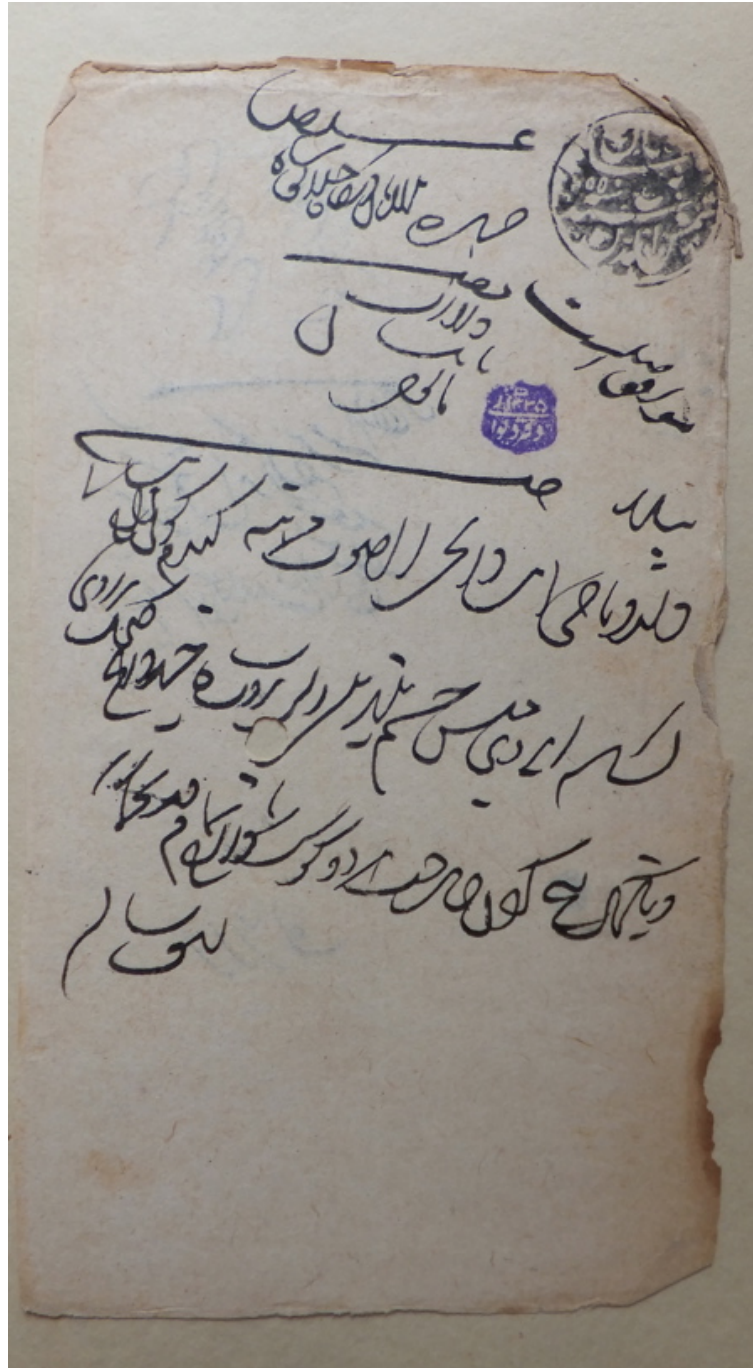
the 4th Regnal Year (Aurangzeb)

On Tuesday, the 8th of the month of Muharram

The Dutch and Danish have captured a ship of Malik Beg at the port of Sicacole. Qutb-ul-Mulk wrote to Surya Rao, *havāldār* of Machlipatan that he should take the ship back from the Dutch captain. But the aforesaid Surya Rao has no control over the Dutch and Danish. At the port of Machlipatan, this group (*īn jamā'ah*) obeys no one (. Surya Rao, the *havāldār* had written, making an excuse that this incident happened in Sicacole. Over there, Haider Faujdar should take back this ship. But the reality is that this group does whatever it pleases (*har che ke mī khwāhand mī kunand*) in the ports of Qutb ul Mulk and their *havāldārs* cannot control them. It is said that that the aforesaid Haider Faujdar was involved in this work with this group and wanted to capture the ship of Malik Beg. If the Mughal Emperor (whom the world obeys) issues *farmāns* such as the ones issued in the ports of Bengal and Surat, to warn the Dutch captain, the ship and its goods shall be returned.¹⁵³

¹⁵³ See a different translation in Y.H. Khan, *Selected Waqai of the Deccan.*, 5.

Image 4.4: 'Arz-o-chehrah or soldier's muster roll Acc. No. 1203



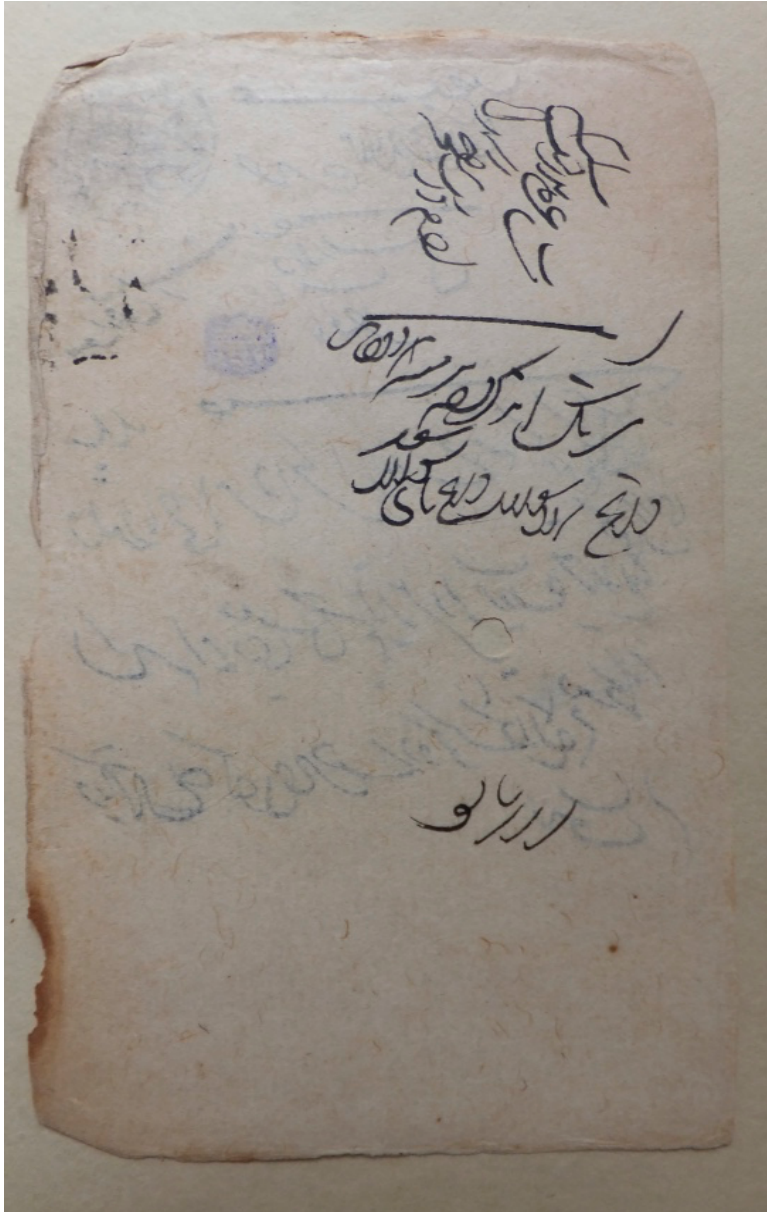


Image 4.4: English translation soldier's muster roll Acc. No. 1203

FRONT

Description Roll

Imperial Servants

Of the retainers of *mansabdārs*

Malwa

SEAL:

Syed Shamsuddin, servant of Shah Jahan, dated 1050 Hijri

This is a true copy.

Belaji, the son of, Dayaji, son of Dayiji, Rajput Maratha, wheatish complexion, wide forehead, split eyebrows, sheep-eyed, long nose, beard and moustache black, some small pox marks on top, one red-colored mole on the left side, holes in both ears.

Height approximately around 40 years

BACK

Horse

A bit *surang* or hole on both sides of fee. One mark on the bareback. A white mark on the foot of the mount/back.

Yābū horse breed or *rās*

On the first day of Rajab 1057 (21st Regnal Year)

23 July 1647

Man and horse were checked.

Image 4.5: Roll of Imperial Servants Acc. No. 3128

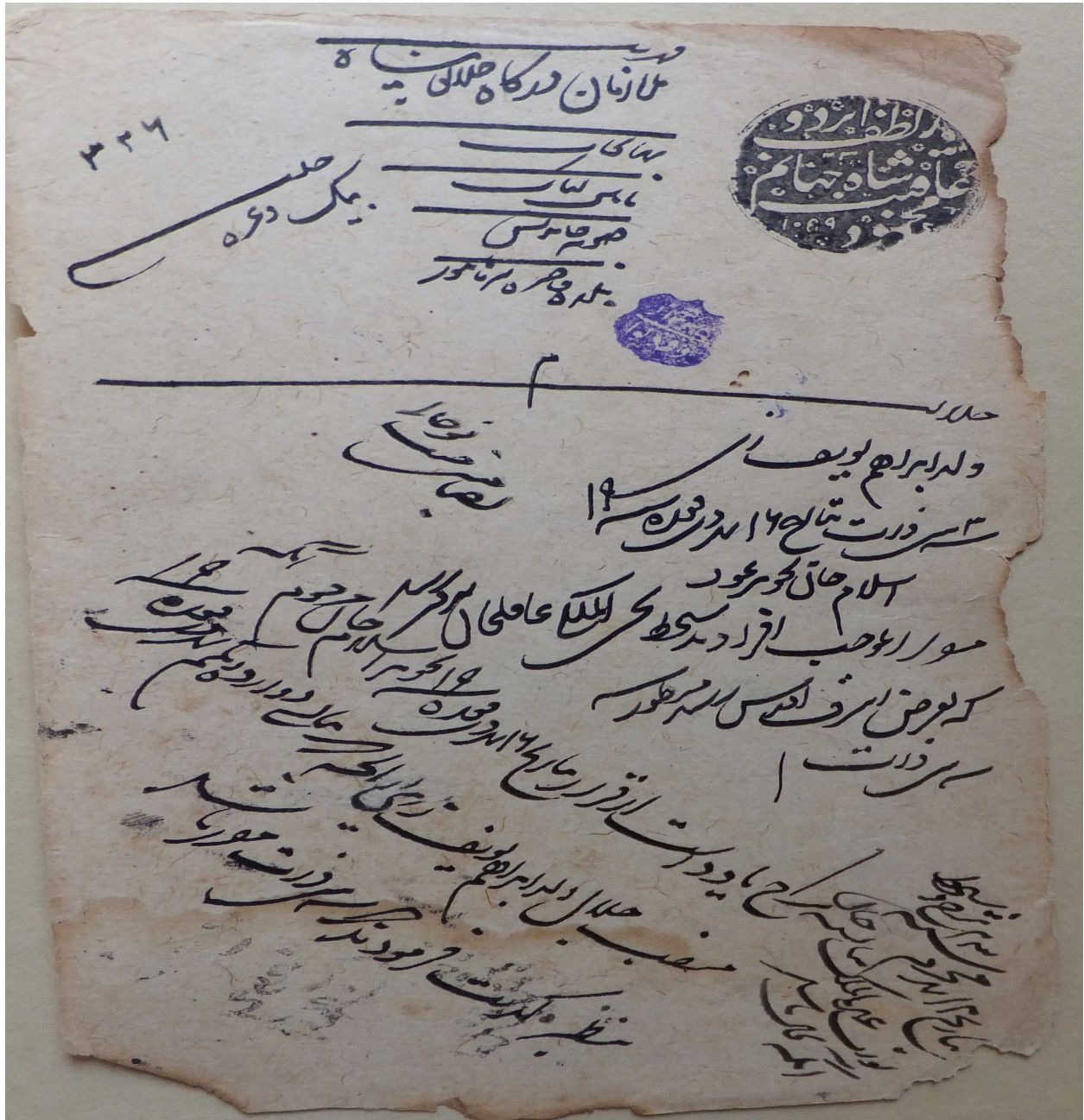


Image 4.5: English translation Roll of Imperial Servants Acc. No. 3128

FRONT

Roll of Imperial Servants

at the military station (*thānajāt*)

at prosperous city of Burhanpur in Khandesh *subah*

in Payan Ghat

SEAL:

With the grace of God and Shah Jahan

The future becomes fortuitous

1049

Circular *nasta'liq* seal of Shah Jahan from the year 1049 or 1639

From 326 folios

Jadi Beg etc.

Jalal, son of Ibrahim Yusufzai

23 (*seh bistī*) *zāt*, approved by Islam Khan, on date 16 of the month of *Zu al-q'ad* in the 19th Regnal Year.

He was appointed with the signature of the office of the *bakshī ul-mulkī* Aqil Khan and was approved as petitioned at the rank of 23 (*seh bistī*) *zāt*.

True copy of a memorandum established on the date 16 of the month of *Zu al-q'ad* in the 19th Regnal year approved by the late Islam Khan, that the *mansab* of Jalal, son of Ibrahim Yusufzai, on the date 12 minus 1 (11) of *Zu al-q'ad* in the 19th Regnal Year. This was noticed and he ordered that rank of 120 *zāt* should be appointed.

On the date 12 of the month of Muharram in the 23rd Regnal Year, true signature of the Nawab Umdat-ul-Mulk Shaista Khan who ordered that it be continued.

Table 4.2 RAJPUT MOUNTED MATCHLOCKMEN IN THE MUGHAL DECCAN c. 1656

1. Barq andāzān-i Hindustān Hazārī Ghanshām (Hindustani mounted matchlockmen of Ghansham, 1000 sawār rank)

Acc. No.	Date of Branding	Name and Parentage	Caste and community	Special features
2237-641	1 Shawwal 1055 19 November 1645	Narsing Bhan S/o (son of) Hardas	Rajput	Seal 1. Dated 1055 A.H. He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> (monthly salary) of Rs. 4 ³ / ₄ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2238-1087	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Bal Ram S/o Mani	Rajput	Seal 1. Same as in Doc. No.641 He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs.5 with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2239-1088	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Bishan Das S/o Dharam Das	Rajput	Seal 1. Same as in Doc. No.641 He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs.4 ³ / ₄ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2240-1092	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Hasan S/o Musa	Quraishi	Seal 1. Same as in Doc. No.741 He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs.4 ³ / ₄ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2241-1094	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Mukesh S/o Jai Ram	Rajput	Seal 1. Same as in Doc. No.641 He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs.4 ³ / ₄ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.

2242-1095	20 Sha'ban 1056 21 September 1646	Keshudar S/o Dilpat	Rajput	Seal 1. Same as in Doc. No. 641
2243-1096	20 Sha'ban 1056 21 September 1646	Khimkaran S/o Bhavansen	Rajput	Seal
2244-1098	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Gopal S/o Alam	Rajput	Seal
2245-1099	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Ganga Ram S/o Khanna	Rajput Chauhan	Seal
2246-1100	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Khimkaran S/o	Rajput	Seal
2247-1101	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Moham S/o Ajit	Rajput	Seal
2248-1102	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Dhanpat S/o Bhan	Rajput	Seal
2249-1103	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Hardhore S/o Sharaksen	Rajput	Seal
2250-1104	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	..... S/o Hari Ram	Rajput	Seal
2251-1105	23 Sha'ban 1056 24 September 1646	Ranjit S/o Kalyan	Rajput	Seal

2252-1106	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	..... S/o Parmanand	Rajput	Seal
2253-1107	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	Harkishan S/o Ghansham	Rajput	Seal
2254-1108	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	Dasrath S/o Kiran Das	Rajput	Seal
2255-1109	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	Chandar Bhan S/o	Rajput	Seal
2256-1110	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	Sheo Ram S/o Kesho Ram	Rajput	Seal
2257-1111	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646		Rajput	Seal
2258-1112	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	Bhopand S/o Damudar	Rajput	Seal
2259-1113	23 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 24 September 1646	..... S/o Madhu Das	Rajput	Seal
2260-1114	25 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 26 September 1646	Chander S/o Ram Das	Rajput	Seal
2261-1116	27 Sha ⁴ ban 1056 28 September 1646	Dharam Das S/o	Rajput	Seal

2262-1118	27 Sha'ban 1056 28 September 1646	Ballub S/o Bishan Das	Rajput	Seal
2263-1119	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Pahlad S/o Lakha	Rajput	Seal
2264-1120	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Hari Ram S/o Tiyag Das	Rajput	Seal
2265-1121	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Banvari S/o Madhu	Rajput	Seal
2266-1122	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Pir Muhammad S/o Lakhmi	Rajput	Seal
2267-1123	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Chandi S/o Badle	Rajput	Seal
2268-1124	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Jagannath S/o Maha Deo	Rajput	Seal
2269-1125	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Mohan S/o Padam Nath	Rajput	Seal
2270-1126	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646		Rajput	Seal
2271-1127	28 Sha'ban 1056 29 September 1646	Khimkaran S/o Harsen	Rajput	Seal

2272-1130	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Bidyapat S/o Rama	Rajput	Seal
2273-1131	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Mansingh S/o Pahadi	Rajput	Seal
2274-1132	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Bhagvanti S/o Jairam	Rajput	Seal
2275-1133	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Ramchand S/o	Rajput	Seal
2276-1134	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Ganga Ram S/o Harbans	Rajput	Seal
2277-1135	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Ram Das S/o Bhavani Das	Rajput	Seal
2278-1136	29 Sha'ban 1056 30 September 1646	Udai Bhan S/o Shiyam DAs	Rajput	Seal
2279-1137	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Dwarak S/o Kashi Ram	Rajput	Seal
2280-1138	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ganga Ram S/o Ramchand	Rajput	Seal
2281-1139	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Babu S/o Tam Das	Rajput	Seal

2282-1140	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Pahlad S/o Jairam	Rajput	Seal
2283-1141	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ballabdar S/o Harsingh	Rajput	Seal
2284-1142	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ganga Ram S/o Patan	Rajput	Seal
2285-1143	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Chandi S/o Ramchand	Rajput	Seal
2286-1144	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Dasrath S/o Hari	Rajput	Seal
2287-1145	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Lalmal S/o Ramchand	Rajput	Seal
2288-1146	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Alawal S/o	Quraishi	Seal
2289-1147	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Bhagvan S/o	Rajput	Seal
2290-1148	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Pashu S/o Saheb	Rajput	Seal
2291-1149	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Chandersen S/o Har Ram	Rajput	Seal

2292-1150	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Hiraman S/o Askaran	Rajput	Seal
2293-1151	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Narhar S/o Damuder	Rajput	Seal
2294-1152	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ram Das S/o Keshu	Rajput	Seal
2295-1153	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Khan-i-Jahan S/o Harsen	Rajput	Seal
2296-1154	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ajit S/o Surbhan	Rajput	Seal
2297-1155	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Sheru S/o Bodhan	Shaikhzada	Seal
2298-1156	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Ghansham S/o Nathi	Rajput	Seal
2299-1157	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Bansi S/o Madhai	Rajput	Seal
2300-1158	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Kashi Ram S/o Dharam Das	Rajput	Seal
2301-1159	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Hari Ram S/oDharam Das	Rajput	Seal

2302-1161	1 Ramazan 1056 1 October 1646	Gauhar S/o Naheer	Rajput	Seal
2303-1169	9 Ramazan 1056 9 October 1646	Chauhan S/o Mahesh	Rajput	Seal
2304-1174	20 Ramazan 1056 20 October 1646	Inayat S/o	Rajput	Seal
2305-1175	20 Ramazan 1056 20 October 1646	..... S/o Alam	Rajput	Seal
2306-1176	20 Ramazan 1056 20 October 1646	Askaran S/o Himra	Rajput	Seal
2307-1186	27 Ramazan 1056 27 October 1646	Ram Das S/o Narayandas	Rajput	Seal
2308-1188	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646		Rajput	Seal
2309-1189	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Damudar S/o Manik	Rajput Zunnardar	Seal
2310-1190	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Mani Ram S/o Udhu Das	Rajput	Seal
2311-1191	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Lal Chand S/o Banvari Das	Rajput	Seal

2312-1192	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Ram DAs S/o Narayan	Rajput	Seal
2313-1193	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Prag Das S/o Kishan Das	Rajput	Seal
2314-1194	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Khimkaran S/o Man Singh	Rajput	Seal
2315-1195	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Muni Ram S/o Chaman Bhan	Rajput	Seal
2316-1196	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Kuhnaram S/o Ranjit	Rajput	Seal
2317-1197	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Lachan Ram S/o Narayan	Rajput	Seal
2318-1198	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Keshu S/o	Rajput	Seal
2319-1199	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Keshu S/o Kalyan	Rajput	Seal
2320-1200	1 Shawwal 1056 31 October 1646	Udekaran S/o Ganga Ram	Rajput	Seal
2321-1313	20 Ziqada 1056 18 December 1646	Arjun S/o Bhansingh	Rajput	Seal

2322-1341	1 Muharram 1057 27 January 1647	..... S/o Jagdes	Rajput	Seal
2323-1367	5 Rabi I 1057 31 March 1647	Mira S/o Jauhar	Behlam	Seal
2324-1368	5 Rabi I 1057 31 March 1647	..... S/o Hari Ram	Rajput	Seal
2325-1369	5 Rabi I 1057 31 March 1647	Ghansham S/o Ratan Sen	Rajput	Seal
2326-1370	5 Rabi I 1057 31 March 1647	Lachan S/o Basdeo	Rajput	Seal
2327-1593	1 Jamadi II 1057 24 June 1647	Damuder S/o Chamani Bhan	Rajput	Seal
2328-1786	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Madhu Das S/o	Rajput	Seal
2329-1787	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Shaikh S/o Jalib	Rajput	Seal
2330-1788	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Bahari S/o Maan	Rajput	Seal
2331-1789	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Bansi S/o Hari	Rajput	Seal

2332-1790	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Murad S/o Khem	Rajput	Seal
2333-1791	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Narotan S/o Harnath	Rajput	Seal
2334-1793	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Bhagvan S/o Sundar Das	Rajput	Seal
2335-1794	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Dayal S/o Hari Ram	Rajput	Seal
2336-1795	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Khem S/o Babban	Rajput	Seal
2337-1796	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Narotam Das S/o Narayan	Rajput	Seal
2338-1797	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Lachan Ram S/o Govar Dhan	Rajput	Seal
2339-1798	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648		Rajput	Seal
2340-1799	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Narsing Bhan S/o Bhau Singh	Rajput	Seal
2341-1800	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Sang Ram S/o Maha Das	Rajput	Seal

2342-1801	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648	Masa S/o Banwari	Rajput	Seal
2343-1804	1 Muharram 1058 17 January 1648	Nirotam S/o Rut Bhan	Rajput	Seal
2344-1818	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648		Rajput	Seal
2345-1819	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	..... S/o Tulsi	Rajput	Seal
2346-1820	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Lachan S/o Bhau Singh	Rajput	Seal
2347-1821	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Puranmal S/o Arjunmal	Rajput	Seal
2348-1822	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Gardhar S/o Kapurchand	Rajput	Seal
2349-1823	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Chand S/o Feroz	Behlam	Seal
2350-1824	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Jauhar S/o Jai Ram	Rajput	Seal
2351-1825	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648	Karamchand S/o Mani Ram	Rajput	Seal

2352-1826	5 Muharram 1058 21 January 1648		Rajput	Seal
2353-1865	15 Muharram 1058 31 January 1648	..... S/o Jai Ram	Rajput	Seal
2354-1866	15 Muharram 1058 31 January 1648		Rajput	Seal
2355-1873	15 Muharram 1058 31 January 1648	Bahari Das S/o	Rajput	Seal
2356-3426	15 Safar 1061 31 January 1648		Rajput	Seal
2357-3432	15 Safar 1061 31 January 1648	Mahmud S/o Lal	Ghori	Seal

2. Barq andāzān-i-Hirāman (Mounted matchlockmen of Hiranman)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community	Special features
1	2	3	4	6
2358-212	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	He was posted at the fort of Ahivant.
2359-213	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	

2360-214	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	
2361-215	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641	Ajit S/o Sri Ram	Rajput	
2362-218	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	
2363-224	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	
2364-216	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	
2365-217	3 Shawwal 1051 26 December 1641		Rajput	

3. Barq andāzān-i-Syedi Ismail (Mounted matchlockmen of Syedi Ismail)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community	Special features
2366-4253	25 Rabi II 668 20 January 1658	Shah Muhammad S/o Chunnu	Rajput	Seal : 1. 2. 3.

4. Barq andāzān-i-Hindustān Hazārī Bahādur (Hindustani mounted matchlockmen of Bahadur, 1000 sawār rank)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community
2367-3534	3 Rajab 1061 10 May 1654		Rajput
2368-3535	3 Rajab 1061 10 May 1654	Kalyan S/o Harjan	Rajput
2369-3536	3 Rajab 1061 10 May 1654	Gardhar S/o	Rajput
2370-3537	3 Rajab 1061 10 May 1654		Rajput
2371-			Rajput
2372-3556	19 Sha‘ban 1060 7 August 1650	Ghansham S/o Askaran	Rajput
2373-3557	27 Sha‘ban 1061 15 August 1650		Rajput
2374-3581	3 Ramazan 1061 10 August 1651	Ghansi S/o Rahim	Rajput

5. Barq andāzūn-i-Syedi Harī Rām (Mounted matchlockmen of Syedi Hari Ram)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community	Special features
2375-1627	15 Jamadi II 1057 8 July 1647	..... S/o Kanvar	Rajput	Seal: 1. Same as in Doc. No. 641. He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs. 4¾ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2376-1758	1 Ziḡada 1057 18 November 1647	Kimkaran S/o	Rajput	Seal: 1. Same as in Doc. No. 641. He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs. 4¾ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2377-1760	1 Ziḡada 1057 18 November 1647	Bahzad S/o Aman	Rajput	Seal: 1. Same as in Doc. No. 641. He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs. 4¾ with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.
2378-4285	26 Jamadi II 1068 21 March 1658	Hari S/o Mehtari	Rajput	Seal: 1. Taher Khan 2. Bhogan Das
2379-4420	21 Sha‘ban 1068 14 May 1658	..... S/o Khan Jahan	Rajput	Seal: 1.
2380-4421	21 Sha‘ban 1068 14 May 1658	Gobind S/o Bhan Singh	Rajput	Seal: 1.
2381-4425	21 Sha‘ban 1068	Nirotam Das S/o	Rajput	Seal: 1.

	14 May 1658	Hari Ram		2. 3.
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6. Barq andāzān-i Syedi Shyām (Mounted matchlockmen of Syedi Shyam)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community	Special features
2382-1792	20 Zilhijja 1057 6 January 1648		Rajput	Seal: 1. Same as in Doc. No. 641. He was granted a <i>māhiyānā</i> of Rs.4 with effect from the date indicated in Column 2.

7. Barq andāzān-i-Hazārī Ahkar Sen (Mounted matchlockmen of Ahkar Sen, 1000 sawār rank)

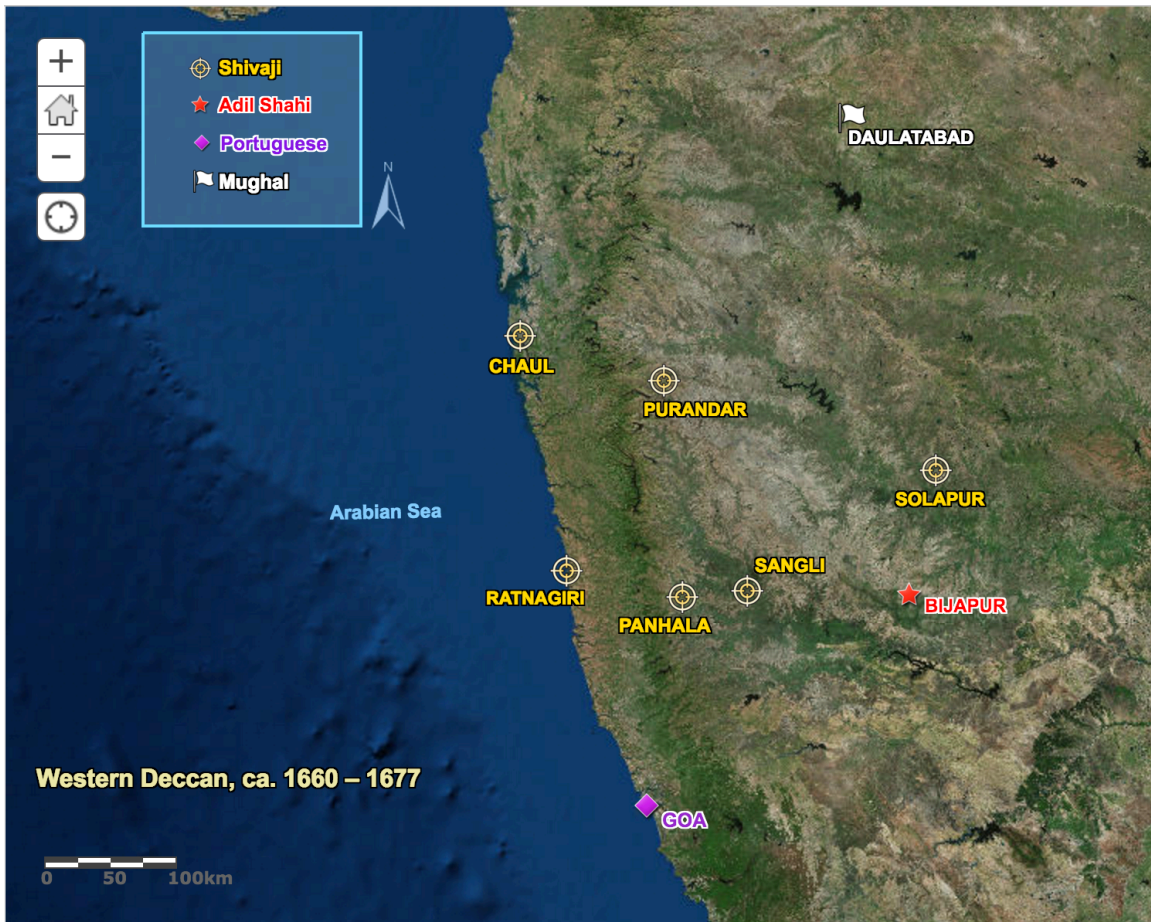
Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community	Special features
2383-4419	21 Sha‘ban 1068 14 May 1658	Hasan S/o Ilah Dad	Husaini	Seal: 1. 2. 3.
2384-4422	21 Sha‘ban 1068 14 May 1658	Amrati S/o Saroon	Rajput	Seal: 1. 2. 3.
2385-4423	21 Sha‘ban 1068 14 May 1658	Manku S/o	Rajput	Seal: 1. 2. 3.

2386-4424	21 Sha'ban 1068 14 May 1658	Khande S/o Shyam Das	Rajput	Seal: 1.
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8. *Bandūqchīs* (Musketeers)

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community
2406-139	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639	..... S/o Bhagvan	Rajput
2407-150	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639	Gopinath S/o	Rajput
2408-151	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639	Grudhan S/o	Rajput
2409-152	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639	Keshu Rai S/o Bhagirath	Rajput
2410-153	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639		Rajput
2411-160	12 Jamadi II 1049 30 September 1639		Rajput
2412-205	19 Rabi II 1051 18 July 1641		Rajput

2413-1090	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Kosanidas S/o Askaran	Rajput
2414-1128	29 Sha‘ban 1056 30 September 1646	Kalyan S/o	Lach
2415-2683	21 Muharram 1059 25 January 1649	Hari Singh S/o Durug Das	Rajput
2416-2705	1 Jamadi II 1059 2 June 1649		Rajput
2417-1091	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Dharam Das S/o	Zunnardar
2418-1093	20 Sha‘ban 1056 21 September 1646	Chand S/o Bhagvan Das	Rajput



Map 4 - Bijapur's changing landscape of conquest, ca. 1660 - 1677

Chapter Five

Between Persian and Dakkani: Familiar rivals in an Indo-Afghan history from late 17th century Bijapur

The late seventeenth century occupies a highly complicated position in histories of the Deccan and Mughal empire. For several reasons, the period from the late 1660s to the 1680s has produced a minefield of debates among historians working in different linguistic (and political) turfs. Whether from the angle of Mughal, Maratha or ‘Adil Shahi political history, three generations of historians, anxious to explain the present, trace an originary moment in the late seventeenth century that answers the staid question of the rise of identity politics.¹ Much of this debate, drawing on a well-known body of Mughal sources in Persian as well as iconic Marathi materials, essentially explains Shivaji’s political ascendance. Across the board, scholars have assumed that there were no contemporary accounts produced within ‘Adil Shahi Bijapur on this messy period of ‘decline.’ In this chapter, I introduce an exception to this rule, the last of four Dakkani battle poems - Mullah Nusrati’s *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*. This poem records the battle of Umrani in 1672 between the Afghan commander, ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan (d. 1677) and Shivaji. Written eight years after the *‘Alī Nāmah*, the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, also known as the *Tārīkh-i Bahlol Khānī*, was Nusrati’s final and last *masnawī*. This final conquest narrative bound a new set of patrons, the Afghans, to the pan-regional vernacular, Dakkani, and the uneven, uncertain terrain of its ‘homeland,’ the Deccan.

¹ For a range of different positions, see A.R. Kulkarni, “Maratha Policy towards the Adil Shahi Kingdom,” *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 49 (1990), 221-226. Iftikhar Ahmad Ghauri, ““Regency” in in the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda,” *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society* 15, no. 1 (1967), 19-37. Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in seventeenth-century India*, 169-170.

This versified history is unique for several reasons. First, it is the earliest account on relations between the Afghans and the Marathas, two rival court factions of Bijapur that have for long been considered as polar opposites for their obvious religious, geographic, ethnic, and sectarian differences. The singular thread of “Foreigner” vs. “Deccani” stretched all the way from the Bahmani period to the Deccan sultanates, critiqued throughout this dissertation, breaks once again when we freeze frame on a moment of conquest in Deccan. The question of the form in which poet-historians recorded the seventeenth century’s final decades is closely connected once again to the question of multilingual patronage and what it meant for a new set of patrons in the Deccan - the Indo-Afghans. The battle poem at the center of this chapter unsettles several received wisdoms of Deccani and Mughal historiography. I contend that ‘Afghan’ and ‘Maratha’ do not correspond to the modern categories of “Foreigner” vs. “Deccani” employed for the study of the period from 1500 to 1700. The category of “Foreigner” is not present in late 17th century Persian and Dakkani materials. The term “Deccani” is, at best, a moving target. It is not at all clear that these foundational categories in modern historiography were valid in the late 17th century Deccan. Here, I argue that narrative, rather than essential characteristics of ethnicity, religion, and region, as constructed by the Deccan’s poet-historians, produced political categories in a conquest context.

I show here that both of them emerge from a shared notion of what it meant to be part of the spatial unit of the Deccan and the sovereign unit of ‘Adil Shahi Bijapur. Rather than instinctively separate entities, a generic and specific language of loyalty and affinity and its opposites, betrayal and antagonism, produced shared notions of space and sovereignty among court factions. The poem, presented in this chapter, clearly articulates

sectarian difference. But a stark ethnographic contrast captures the relationship between bitter rivals who were all too familiar with each other, being part and parcel of the same political unit, that of, a rapidly atrophying Bijapuri or ‘Adil Shahi sultanate. The intervention of the poet, Mullah Nusrati is critical in understanding this radical reversal of what it meant for both Marathas and Afghans to be “Deccani.” Nusrati had, by the time of his final poem, been an active observer of Shivaji for over thirty years. There is no two ways about it - he despised this homegrown upstart. In his lifetime, he also witnessed a gradual increase in the number of Afghans in Bijapur’s army as well in the ranks of its nobility. To him, there was no contradiction in casting the Afghan, ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan, as “Deccani” in a characteristic early modern “appraisal of the self and denigration of the other.”² Through this technique he wished to outdo an other, Shivaji, who made a claim to sovereignty in exactly the same terms. Nusrati’s heroic representation of Bahlol Khan in *masnawī*, a form that articulated political power, was part of a conscious effort of binding a courtly vernacular’s prestige to a new patron. I emphasize that the poet’s strategic linguistic and formal choices here surpassed the patron’s agency in producing this commemorative verse. Embracing a new mode of expression in a non-imperial regional court was very much in sync with an Indo-Afghan literary culture that had embraced courtly vernaculars, gone beyond the bounds of Persian recurrently in the past. However, in the Deccan’s conquest context, choosing to record history in a certain linguistic medium was as much about reconfiguring volatile political equations. Nusrati’s ability to construct a narrative of power in this particular poem simultaneously created and subsumed the subject and hero, his patron, ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan. The poet-

² Nile Green, *Making space: Sufis and settlers in early modern India*, (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), 86.

historian, conquest's most diligent observer, decided the answer to the question of who belonged to, or what was in or outside of, the political category of "Deccani."

In his work on the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Nile Green has suggested that the Persian language and its idiom had a tendency to flatten out social differences and cast social phenomena in terms that were alien to the actual subject under description. I push this point further by demonstrating that despite the use of generic types to discuss conquest and rivalry, this Dakkani poem nevertheless offers an ethnographic depth not produced by any contemporary or later Persian texts. In the next section, I lay out the relevant historiography that bears on the evidence and arguments presented in this chapter and then go on to present an analytical reading of the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*.

Afghan and Maratha in political histories of the 17th century Deccan

Without recounting all of the moves and counter-moves recounted in several political histories, I briefly lay out the sequence of historical events that lead up to the moment recorded in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* in 1672. I then posit the arguments of political histories alongside more recent, broader works on Indo-Afghan history while limiting my questions spatially, to Bijapur and temporally, to the seventeenth century's second half.

In a concise article on the Marathas in Bijapur, A. R. Kulkarni laid out Shivaji's political career and his attempt at creating a united front in the Deccan against the Mughals. Kulkarni and several other pioneering Maratha historians were working through well-known texts such as the *Sabhasad Bakhar* (c. 1694),³ the *Shivabharata* of Parmanand (c. 1674) and actively debating the veracity and provenance of two letters by Shivaji to Maratha chieftains who refused to cooperate with him. These included one from 1677 to the Ghorpades of Mudhol and the other from 1680, to his stepbrother,

³ For a detailed analysis of this text, see Prachi Deshpande, *Creative Pasts*, 40-48.

Vyankoji.⁴ Kulkarni, like Eaton before him, kept the theme of ruler-centered political history and ‘age-old’ rivalries between “Foreigners” and “Deccanis” that had, since the Bahmani period, laid the foundation of court politics in the Deccan.⁵ He did so despite much of his evidence strongly indicating that the Marathas, synonymous with “Deccanis”, were not internally coherent entity nor a politically united group. As late as the 1660s, pro-Mughal Marathas loyal to Aurangzeb and supporters of Shivaji were evenly divided.⁶ Nonetheless, a shift from Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II’s ‘harmonious’ reign to Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s problematic ‘divide and rule policy’ led to Shivaji’s revolt.⁷ By the time of ‘Ali ‘Adil Shah II’s reign (discussed in the previous chapter’s discussion on the *‘Alī Nāmāh*), the Afghans were at the opposite end of Bijapur’s political spectrum from the Marathas. It was in this context that Shivaji wished to oust Bahlol Khan and his household from Bijapur. After numerous treaties between the Mughals and Shivaji and the ‘Adil Shahs and Shivaji in the 1660s, disagreements once again arose after the four-year old sultan, Sikander ‘Adil Shah was put on the throne in 1672.⁸ To counter claims of Maratha nationalist historians, secular nationalist historians have thus understood Shivaji’s maneuvers in the 1670s as a Deccani (rather than Hindu) patriot, who wished to unite all political forces against the Mughals.

At the other end, from the viewpoint of Bijapur’s political history and Persian chronicles, Ghauri looked upon the problem of ‘regency’ in the Deccan in moral terms,

⁴ A. R. Kulkarni, “Maratha policy towards the Adil Shahi Kingdom,” *Bulletin of the Deccan College Research Institute* 49 (1990), 222. Strangely this article finds no mention in the bibliography nor the chapter in Kruijtzter’s rehashed version of these letters and the same set of events. Kruijtzter, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-century India*, 153-190.

⁵ Kulkarni, “Maratha Policy,” 223. Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur*, 187- 188.

⁶ Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 174.

⁷ Kulkarni, “Maratha policy,” 222.

⁸ Ibid. Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, 227.

placing blame on ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan’s ‘nepotism’ and ‘maladministration.’ He relied on Ibrahim Zubairi’s retrospective early 19th century history as well as Mughal sources such as Bhimsen’s *Tārīkh-i Dilkasha*.⁹ According to him, whenever a non-royal was entrusted to power in the Deccan, they basically worked in their own faction’s interest instead of sustaining kingship.¹⁰ Late seventeenth century Bijapur saw three regencies – Khawas Khan (1672 -1675), ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan (1675 – 1677) and Sidi Mas‘ud (1677 – 1683).

One interesting point to take away from Ghauri is that the Afghans – ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan Lodi in particular - was the grandson of a Mughal *mansabdār*, of a rank of 3000 under the circuit of Khan Jahan Lodi (d. 1631).¹¹ Faruqui too observes that Prince Aurangzeb tapped into contingents of Afghans and Marathas from the Deccan when he returned for his campaigns to north India in 1657.¹² During Shah Jahan’s period, ‘Abdul Karim’s grandfather deserted to the Deccan and his sons quickly rose up the ranks in ‘Adil Shahi Bijapur.¹³ One of many in the Mughal court, in a regional polity it was far easier for these new groups to accumulate resources. ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan’s family made its first appearance in the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* from 1644, covered in Chapter Two of this dissertation. ‘Abdul Karim’s father was listed as one of the nobles who accompanied Mustafa Khan’s Karnatak campaigns, nearly thirty years earlier, alongside

⁹ Iftikhar Ahmad Ghauri, ““Regency” in the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda,” p. 32 and Ghauri, “Kingship in the Sultanates of Bijapur and Golconda” *Islamic Culture* 46, 2, (1972), 137-151.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 21, 28. Like Kulkarni, Eaton, Ghauri too frames the problem in the classic binary between Deccanis, loyal to the ‘Adil Shahi dynasty, and ‘*pardesis*’ or Foreigners, disloyal to the Deccan.

¹¹ K. N. Chitnis, *The Nawabs of Savanur* (Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2000), 21-23. Ghauri, ““Regency” in the Sultnates,” 29.

¹² Faruqui, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 171.

¹³ Chitnis, K. N. *The Nawabs of Sawanur* (Atlantic Publishers & Distributers, 2000), 21-22, 230.

Marathas such as Shahaji, Shivaji's father.¹⁴ Thus, when 'Abdul Karim confronted Shivaji in the 1660s and 1670s, his family had been in the Deccan for several decades and was very familiar with the Marathas.

Lastly, Jadunath Sarkar, drawing on Persian, Marathi and English materials, mentions the series of skirmishes between Bahlol Khan and Shivaji and the battle of 1672 covered in this chapter.¹⁵ In the successive battles of Umrani and Nesari, Bahlol Khan succeeded in blocking Shivaji's northern access to his dominions in Panhala (see Map 4).¹⁶ Although Sarkar does not mention nor engage with it, nineteenth-century chronicler, Ibrahim Zubairi, observed that Bijapur's poet-laureate, Nusrati, composed the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* in *zabān-i-hindī* to commemorate the Battle of Umrani.¹⁷ Before I present my reading of this battle poem, let us turn to the case of the Indo-Afghans and multilingual patronage in early modern South Asia at large, and in late seventeenth century Bijapur in particular.

Multi-lingual patronage under Indo-Afghans

The eighteenth century has been recognized as the moment, when after decades of migration and settlement to the subcontinent, Afghan history 'came into being' in regional courts in the late Mughal empire's shadow.¹⁸ The horse trade, in particular, sustained new states with commercial links across Central Asia and northern India.¹⁹ Given the concerns of this dissertation with history-writing and multilingual patronage, I limit myself here to Green's more pertinent analysis of the genealogy of Afghan history

¹⁴ See Chapter Two, see section 'Reading the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī* along the grain'

¹⁵ Sarkar, *Shivaji and His Times*, 229-234.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 229-231.

¹⁷ Ibrahim Zubairi, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 441.

¹⁸ Green, *Making Space*, 65.

¹⁹ Jos Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire: C. 1710-1780*. Vol. 8. (Brill, 1995), 43.

writing and its relationship to Persian, rather than surveying Gommans' significant contributions to the socio-economic context of Afghan state-formation in northern India.

Both authors note the resilience of an early seventeenth century work, from Mughal emperor Jahangir's period, the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī wa Makhzān-i Afghānī* (1613), in setting up both a textual and human genealogy for late eighteenth century histories produced in Afghan courts across north India.²⁰ Green argues that despite the text's insistence on the distinctiveness of Afghan tribal lineages and their affiliation to Sufis, this practice was, by no means, unique to the Afghans. Rather, it was shared across different historical and hagiographical writing in the Persianate tradition. The *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* had a long afterlife in many histories of the late eighteenth century that articulated Afghan sovereignty, especially vis-à-vis a rapidly disintegrating Mughal center. In the early seventeenth century, the Afghans, like many other ethnic and social groups, participated in the cosmopolitan literary ethos of Mughal Hindustan. Green also notes that beyond Persian, the Afghan patron of the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, Khan Jahan Lodi, was also praised in texts such as *Jahāngīrjāscandrika* (c. 1612) of poet, Keshavdas.²¹

Locating Indo-Afghans in a landscape of conquest

Drawing on these insights, we may turn spatially, to the case of the Afghans in the Deccan, and temporally, to the period *after* the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī* but almost a hundred years *before* the late eighteenth century's better-known Afghan histories from north India. For much of the seventeenth century, the period after the *Tārīkh-i Khān Jahānī*, we may deduce from the bibliographies of Green and Gommans, histories on the

²⁰ Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire*, 160-161 and Green, *Making Space*, 108-109.

²¹ Green, *Making Space*, 102.

Afghans in the mid 17th century, especially in the Deccan, are few and far in between. To partially fill this gap, we may turn to the provincial records of the Mughals from the period 1636 to 1687, as I did in Chapter Four, where Afghan soldiers appear in the lowest rung of Mughal governance, performing the everyday tasks of the empire. These included fighting battles, policing forts across the Deccan or delivering horses and weapons to garrison towns located along the frontier. It was within the context of the imperial army's military circulation, starting from the 1630s, that Afghans slowly came to serve in the Deccan sultanates.²² By the middle decades of the seventeenth century, they rose from being soldiers to the highest ranks in the Deccan's courtly circuits. The heroic portrayal that Nusrati assigned to 'Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* in 1672 was, therefore, not without precedent, as his father had already participated in Bijapur's conquests in the early seventeenth century. By the mid seventeenth century, the Afghans had already been part of the social fabric of both Bijapur and the Mughal empire. Throughout the seventeenth century, they were active facilitators, commanders of the nested conquests in the Karnatak, analyzed in previous chapters of this dissertation. By the late seventeenth century then, Afghans and Marathas crystallized together as social categories and as serious political contenders in the Deccan.

In Chapter Four, I demonstrated the correlation between certain ethnic groups and specific kinds of military labor performed in the imperial army stationed in the Deccan. The recording of Afghan lineages as well as city affiliations in description rolls, in Mughal documents from 1636 – 1656, confirm that these variegated and specific

²² Ghauri, ““Regency” in the Sultanates,” 29.

categories were already well defined in the seventeenth century's first half.²³ Soldiers' muster rolls record both diasporic Afghan lineages such as the Rohila and Bundelas as well as those who traced themselves back to Central Asia such as Amazai, Yusufzai, Niyazi, Sherwani, and so forth. While some Mughal *mansabdārs* had retainers overwhelmingly of only Afghans, others had an uneven number of them serving alongside Iranis, Turanis, Turks, Arabs, Marathas, and Rajputs.²⁴ The mid-century military expeditions of the Mughal empire in the Deccan thus congealed Afghans as a political and social unit in the Deccan. It was in the frontier, far removed from the learned environs of the capital city of Delhi, that Afghans, in their capacity as 'Mughal' soldiers, journeyed across the Deccan along with troops from many different ethnic and social backgrounds. In these lowest realms of the Mughal empire is perhaps where many unfamiliar groups encountered a cacophony of languages, customs, and social practices. Mughal administrative offices clearly marked each soldier according to his ethnic background, physical features, clan lineages and spatial affiliation to many distant homelands (*watan*). Administrative practices that were meant to run an army efficiently thus also created a systematic enumeration of Afghan lineages. We may surmise then, by the late seventeenth century, Afghans and Marathas were all too familiar with each other, having served together in the armies of both the Mughal empire and the Deccan sultanates. The empire's lowest rung, located in the pathways of a frontier, engendered a very different kind of cosmopolitan milieu than the one in imperial literary circuits of northern India.

²³ Mughal *arz-o-chehreh* Acc. No. 24-624, Shah Jahan documents, State Archives Andhra Pradesh. See at the end of this chapter.

²⁴ See Table at the end of this chapter.

But could there be limits to these literary and military cosmopolitanisms? Surely, the landscape of conquest and conflict was not just one of the merry assimilation of social differences. Moving the above questions beyond empires, how did rival court factions compete for authority in a regional, non-imperial system? New forms of writing history were one mode wherein patrons and poets expressed sovereignty and power. As stated earlier, the Deccan sultanates were very much within the bounds of the Persianate imperium. But by the late 17th century, instead of Persian, the courtly vernacular of Dakkani was the lingua franca *de jure* in Indo-Islamic courts in peninsular India. To a new set of patron-conquerors - the Afghans - it was a pragmatic decision then to choose this language as their mode of self-expression and self-fashioning. Against this longue durée background of Indo-Afghan history in the Deccan, this chapter reverses modern teleologies of equating language with identity while recognizing the context-specific uses of language to articulate social difference. At stake here is the idea that the vernacular somehow represents a more ‘authentic,’ territorially-defined, ethnically-bound social identity whereas transregional languages (Sanskrit, Persian), unbound spatially, have the ability to absorb and assimilate social difference. The pan-regional courtly vernacular of Dakkani, by way of its generic and orthographic proximity to Persian, fulfilled the latter – a more cosmopolitan role in the seventeenth century Deccan. New social groups such as the Afghans embraced new modes of writing history in Dakkani to locate themselves within the political landscape of the seventeenth century Deccan, while concomitantly asserting a context-specific sectarian affiliation through it.

Listening and hearing courtly vernaculars was nothing new for the Indo-Afghans. Long before Nusrati immortalized ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*

in the late 17th century, Afghan patrons were invested in projects of translation across northern India, of iconic works in the romance genre from Persian into Avadhi in the 16th century and from Persian into Bengali in the 17th century.²⁵ In the same way that Afghan histories cultivated memory through lineages and genealogy rather than citing facts or previous works of history, literary and social gatherings (*majlis*) were represented differently in the new vernacular genres that Afghans patronized. D’Hubert thus suggests that Afghan modes of courtly sociability were horizontal and polycentric rather than pyramidal like the Mughal and classical Indic models.²⁶ The romance genre in particular shared a unique relationship with *tārīkh* or “history” and thus, needs to be read alongside and against it.²⁷ As d’Hubert points out, further research may confirm connections forged through Persian transmission of vernacular romances from northern India to southern India. This specific question remains beyond the scope of this chapter. I would, however, include the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* in between the generic axis proposed by d’Hubert. It is another piece in the puzzle of multilingual patronage under Indo-Afghans from the second half of the seventeenth century, for which the evidence is much more scarce. Quite unlike the romance genre, the four narrative poems in Dakkani discussed in this dissertation were indeed ‘historical’, as emphatically declared by the poets who composed them and thus, pretty close to *tārīkh* or the chronicle form. But they simultaneously exhibited features of orality and discursive narrativity (not of stories but of events in ‘real’ time) detected in the romance genre.

²⁵ Thibaut d’Hubert, *In the shade of the Golden Palace: Ālāol (fl.1651-1671), a Bengali Poet between Worlds* (Forthcoming, 2016)

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4.

In the next sections, I read the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* to illustrate certain thematic arguments while outlining what it shares with and how it differs from works discussed previously. I specifically probe the uses of a series of inter-related terms broadly signifying various senses of space, space-making and units of sovereignty – the home, the household, the sultanate, the Deccan, Hindustan – to trace the poet’s reasoning for locating ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan and Shivaji within these categories.

Following a set pattern from previous battle poems, Nusrati divides his last work into seven chapters, six of which have Persian titles. The format here is comparable to any of the sub-*masnawīs* on specific battles that made up Nusrati’s *‘Alī Nāmāh*. The chapter sequence after the *hamd* is as follows:

2) *khil‘at dādan bādshah-i dakhan nawāb bahlol khān rā behar-i lashkar-i sivājī*
Presentation of a robe of honor to Nawab Bahlol Khan on account of the army [attacking] Shivaji

3) *mashwarat kardan nawāb bahlol khān bā lashkar-i khud dar bāb-i jang-i sivājī*
Nawab Bahlol Khan consults with his troops at the door of the battle with Shivaji

4) *sawār shudan bahlol khān jahat-i jang-i sivājī*
Bahlol Khan mounts his horse and sets out in the direction of the battle with Shivaji

5) *jang kardan nawāb bahlol khān roz-i avval bā lashkar-i sivājī*
Day one of Nawab Bahlol Khan's battle with the army of Shivaji

6) *jang kardan nawāb bahlol khān roz-i duvvam bā lashkar-i sivājī*
Day two of Nawab Bahlol Khan's battle with the army of Shivaji

7) *fath yāftan nawāb bahlol khān bar lashkar-i sivājī va ū ra hazīmat dādan*
Bahlol Khan attains victory, defeats the army of Shivaji

Recasting loss and destruction: Nusrati’s image of Bijapuri ‘decline’

The poem’s first chapter opens with God's praise and an appraisal of Bijapur's volatile political climate. Nusrati casts the problem of political uncertainty once again in moral terms while observing desolation and loss at every place and at every turn.

Decidedly different than the triumphant declarations that opened the '*Alī Nāmah*, Nusrati's begins his final poem with two inter-related themes. First, he lays out the social chaos, state of war, and loss of lives that marked the preceding decade, the 1660s. Second, he broods once again over Shivaji, a deeply familiar and thus, an inordinately troubling rival, whose rise he had been observing now for over three decades. Since only one enemy takes center stage in this poem, there is no ambiguity about the poet's disdain for this particular rival nor a comparison of him with other enemies. In all certainty - Nusrati disliked Shivaji.

Like *tārīkh*, citing time in Dakkani *masnawī* was standard practice; poets would often begin by noting the date and place of composition. Nusrati synchronizes a two-day battle in this *masnawī*, placing it in the longer context of the previous decades' rapidly shifting conquest conditions. The event therefore is not discrete and autarkic but inexorably tied to pre-existing causal factors and conditions that bear upon the poet-historian's narrative strategies.²⁸ In addition to marking time, the poet's preference of a certain language is the most deliberate of his literary choices. Nusrati had some notion of a spectrum of audiences. These of course included the patron - Bahlol Khan and his friends but also the enemy - Shivaji and his allies, as well as Maratha chiefs who did not support the latter. To all of these contemporaries, the repeated name-calling and brazen insults, common to all Dakkani verse, would have been entirely comprehensible.

So, the poet opens by evoking the omnipresence of God and laying out the reason for composing this work:

*bahan hār hai jis zamīn par jo khūn
bahe kiyūn nā huve sabab kuch zabūn*

²⁸ Eggers and Wang, *A Global History of Modern Historiography*, citing Rao, Shulman, Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 45 – 46.

The land in which blood flows
What were the terrible reasons for which such blood was shed?

*kahan hār yū tārīkh iskandarī
lage jis kī guftār yūn sarsarī*

I say this History of Sikandar
with such brevity of speech

*sahas hor āsī par jo the tīn sāl
kare yek men bar sab zamāne ne hāl*

One thousand eighty three
This was a moment of time in that year

*jo mulk-i dakkan men huā shāh nau
libās āp duniyā kare gar zamāne kā ghāt*

When the new King [was enthroned] in the Deccan kingdom
The world adorned itself anew.²⁹

The poet-historian's prime objective therefore was to explain the process, that is, the past, of the current (present) political tumult. Nusrati's tone shifts from hope to dismay throughout the opening chapter. Quite unlike the 'Alī Nāmah's opening framework, the game of chess wherein all players were roughly equal, here Nusrati alternates between hope of the kingdom's survival along with observations of factions within Bijapur's nobility:

*havas thī jo har kun kon ghar ghar judā
ke honā shahī ke apen kad khudā*

The greed of each and everyone created a divided house
Such that each King considered himself God overnight?³⁰

....

*dilāsā ū 'umadiyān kā huve lag madām
havas hue harāmiyān kon khāne harām*

²⁹ Mullah Nusrati, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, 17.

³⁰ Ibid.

Some nobles continually remained sympathetic
But those who were bastards grew greedier from eating *harām*

Verses of lament, placed next to God's praise, deviate from the general outline and sequence of previous three Dakkani battle poems, analysed in this dissertation. In previous works, portraits of courtly gatherings and encounters had an ethos of a duel, a playful game, between rivals. Under more volatile political conditions, Nusrati was compelled to express anxieties about rapidly shifting affinities at the very outset of the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*. By the late seventeenth century, Bijapur's courtly milieu was fraught with contenders and disagreement. For the poet-historian, the very question of Bijapur's survival and sovereignty was inseparable from the ambitions of its courtly elites. Several of these Bijapuri courtiers had, by this time, also shifted to the Mughal camp while others such as Shivaji were on the verge of declaring themselves independent. It was in such a context of extremely unpredictable shifts in affinity and loyalty within Bijapur that Shivaji had emerged as a viable political rival.

Nusrati narrates this political tumult's spatial limits. The scale of destruction stretched from Bijapur city to the Deccan, to Mughal Hindustan and the maritime frontier where all of these political contenders converged. Nusrati had already described in great detail Shivaji's destruction of the Mughal port of Surat in 1664.³¹ He attests in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* to European merchants' difficulties in port-cities:

giryā chadh jahāzān jo daryā pe daud
kiyā lūt bandar firangiyān ke chaud

The ships were being chased into the ocean
Looting the port of Franks

sadā tis te daryā wa tūfān dise

³¹ Mullah Nusrati, *Alī Nāmāh*, 183-186.

zamān nahas tis pag te virān dise

It appeared that there was storm over the seas
Unto desolate lands where no one had ever stepped

This sense of loss was not uncommon in the latter part of the century and is also echoed, for instance, in the Mughal account, Bhimsen Saksena's *Tārīkh-i Dilkasha*, who looked upon disapprovingly on both Shivaji and Aurangzeb.³² Nusrati, in a coded way, begins by referring to Shivaji not by his name, but as *uste* or *us se* (in modern Urdu), from him or because of him. He cites him as the underlying cause of problems of not just in the Deccan kingdoms but as well in Mughal Hindustan:

*khadhe chār mulk uste khāte hain khān
gire dekhte yek yek dūsre kī hān*

We witnessed the gradual destruction of four kingdoms
They fell seeing each other's decline

*mughal kā mulk te uste aisā ujād
divā lāne kā nayīn hai jiyūn ghar ko chār*

He destroyed the Mughal kingdom in such a way
No one is even there even to light a lamp

*katak sār āfat ke us bhet men
na yek danen bhaven ke padhe pet men*

All the armies caught in this calamity
Not a grain left to satiate their stomachs

*sate bāt sārū jo ūs bhūyen peh pānun
mile nā yek yek hafteh bastī kā nāvun*

A traveller could walk for days on end
With no one in sight to even tell him the villages' names

...

*na ubariyā disiyā aman ken kis bī dhāt
uthīyā mulk main cho kadhan yūn angāt*

³² John Richards, "Norms of Comportment among Mughal imperial officers" in Barbara Metcalf ed., *Moral Conduct and the place of adab in South Asian Islam* (University of California Press, 1984), 280-286.

It appeared that peace would not prevail
and at all times, in the kingdom there would be sparks

nagar sut chaliyā ... be jatan
huā jag kon begāneh apnā watan

As the cities were destroyed in a concerted manner
Our own homeland became a stranger to us³³

Nusrati builds a portrait here of hunger, loss, and destruction on a progressively larger urban and spatial scale as well as through different degrees of affinity towards political units such as *mulk* (kingdom) and *watan* (homeland). He transports a metaphorical traveller from a desolate *bastī* or village to an abandoned *nagar* or city, both destroyed through human action. Much has been said about the *shahr āshob* (the disturbed city) genre in Urdu poetry from eighteenth century Delhi. Petievich traces its origins in north India to Shah Hatim Dihlavi (1699 – 1782).³⁴ Sharma has tracked an arc of this topos from 17th century Indo-Persian poets such as Zuhuri and Kalim Kashani to Urdu poets like Vali and Ghalib in the 18th century.³⁵ Nusrati's observations, of Bijapur and the Deccan, suggest a chronological bridge between Persian (celebratory) and Urdu (morose) cityscapes. Nusrati's lament for Bijapur links the Deccan's flourishing cities, praised in Zuhur's *Sāqī Nāmāh*, and the much later famous dirges for Delhi of Mir, Sauda and Ghalib in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Compared to Nusrati's earliest romance poem, *Gulshan-i 'Ishq* from 1657, his last work *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* expresses a palpable sense of loss. Undoubtedly, as a young poet in the 1630s, Nusrati

³³ Nusrati, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, 18-19.

³⁴ Carla Petievich, "Poetry of the declining Mughals: The "Shahr Āshob"" *Journal of South Asian Literature*, 25, 1 (1990): 100.

³⁵ Sunil Sharma, "The City of Beauties in Indo-Persian Poetic Landscape" *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24, 2 (2005), 80.

would have heard and listened to Zuhuri's poems, and of many other Persianate literati in Bijapur. As an old man in the 1670s, he had to come to terms with momentous events including a deeply contentious political milieu in Bijapur, a sense discernable in the above verse. Yet, his verse has rarely been given as much credit as Vali (d. 1720), for serving as a transition or bridge between seventeenth century Persian poets and the celebrated 'classical' Urdu poetry of the eighteenth century.

Planning war, pathologizing the enemy: Portraits of the Indo-Afghan *majlis*

Let us turn now to a courtly gathering's opening portrait in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*. Unlike the '*Alī Nāmah*, the king's presence is either auxiliary or goes unnoticed in these gatherings, suggesting the child-king, sultan Sikander 'Adil Shah, had little or no role to play in court politics. According to later court chronicles, it was Khawas Khan, an ally who later turned into an enemy who sent Bahlol Khan to fight Shivaji.³⁶ In such horizontal portraits of courtly gatherings, no single minister or king presided over public meetings to praise the hero, Bahlol Khan. Instead, responses to Bahlol Khan's speeches come from a collective of courtiers, soldiers, and officials. In the first chapter, the court convenes with all its ministers, advisors, and nobles who share a common opinion on Shivaji:

*bade khān ke nole bade khān kī rāye
karāmat hai jāno jo tis dil mai āye*

Young & old nobles were of the opinion
Their hearts filled with generosity

*sivā ne jo pakadyā hunar napasand
sikhāne usse it adik khūb pand*

³⁶ Interestingly, however, in this *masnawī* Nusrati does not mention Khawas Khan, perhaps because Bahlol Khan and him would have a fall out two years later, leading to the former's murder. Ibrahim Zubairi, *Basātīn al-Salātīn*, 440-441.

Shiva, who has taken to dislikable deeds
He needed to be admonished more

To address the Shivaji problem, the court calls upon Bahlol Khan, who Nusrati
introduces:

gun aisā hī gar mard apas man men liyāye
to kar yād nawāb ko ven bulāye

If there was a man with such virtue cultivated in himself
Thus they called upon the Nawab

dharyā jab te nawāb nāmī te dāb
khatā khān bahlol khānī khitāb

The weight of his name became apparent
He whose title was Bahlol Khan

dakhan ke tū yek mulk kā hai vazīr
vale dil men dehlī ke nayīn tis nazīr

You who is a minister of one of the Deccan kingdoms,
But the heart knows there is no one like you even in Delhi

rahīm āj kar rahm jag par ‘azīm
kiyā hai karam bakhsh ‘abdul karīm

God have great mercy upon him!
‘Abdul Karim, who has done blessed deeds³⁷

buzurgī nisbat tiso ‘alā nasab
bade nāmdārān men vala nasab

Of great and high lineage
Most fortunate among the great nobles

Two things are worth noting here. ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan’s renown transcended the Deccan and Mughal Hindustan. Again, the convention of citing nobles’ lineages (*nasab*) was common to many texts. But references to spaces (Delhi, Bijapur, Deccan and Hind), across which these lineages were spread, suggest that in Nusrati’s

³⁷ Nusrati, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, 20.

memory, the arrival and settlement of the Afghans in the Deccan was a relatively recent phenomenon. Space-making therefore, is as much about the subject under description, that is, the patron, but also about the way that pre-existing, established court participants, such as poets and historians, apprehended and perceived newer groups. Nusrati follows this description of lineage with praise for Bahlol Khan's attributes and valour. On the art of war in particular, Nusrati ties in his larger, urgent concern with loyalty and authority to his new patron's virtues and genealogy:

*apang dhas ke ladiyā ich ladne ke fan
buzurgān te pāyā hai mirās apan*

He who fights with such great skills
This he inherits from his ancestors

*bade kām par kharch apas jān-o-māl
mange nit namak shāh kā khāne halāl*

He puts his life and wealth on the line for the king
Because with respect, he has eaten his salt³⁸

Note that the patron-client equation, across many contexts in South Asia, has been defined with the expression of ‘eating the master’s salt.’ It places a moral burden of loyalty upon the person who is lower in the hierarchy, that is, the one who eats the salt. Yet, breaches and violations of this dynamic seem more pervasive than the rhetorical assertions of loyalty and gratitude. Nusrati sets up an obvious contrast between Shivaji (*namak harām*) or the ingrate and Bahlol Khan, (*namak halāl*) or the loyal one. The nobles, presumably included Khawas Khan, united in opinion, continue their dialogue. They come to the matter at hand, that of Shivaji. The discussion between Bahlol Khan and the court nobles follows a familiar template, where they go and back forth, insulting and abusing Shivaji:

³⁸ Ibid., 21.

*kahe khān kāfir khar be lagām,
sīkhīyā hai janam charke khāne harām.*

The Khan said, this infidel/ingrate, donkey, uncontrolled
He has learnt from birth to eat *harām*.

*jīyūn lā nihāre hai shirān kon dar
tu kān un kī nazarān men achtā hai khar*

He who is not even scared of a lion
What is a donkey before his eyes?

*vale ū jo hai ū khar be tamīz
ke jis waqt pātā hai fursat ‘azīz*

But he is an insolent donkey
Whenever he gets a great chance

*nar ke kuch dhanī ke ziyān pur nazr
kare khawār sab bāgh shāhī ko char*

He who keeps an eye on the weakness of the brave
Such animals ruin the royal garden

*garz yū ke ahl-i garz nābkār
lage khar te kam dekhne men bichār*

Thus, those with nefarious motives
Appear worse to the mind than a donkey

Just as Nusrati, in the case of the Afghans, cites a long lineage of service to the ‘Adil Shahs, he marks the opposite - mistrust and betrayal – in the generational service of Shivaji’s household in Bijapur. We may recall from Chapter Two that Shivaji’s father, Shahaji, accompanied Mustafa Khan on his expeditions to Karnatak and Malnad in the 1640s, alongside ‘Abdul Karim’s father. The convention of citing lineage, therefore, fulfils two different specific purposes, casting rivals in terms of fealty and loyalty on the one hand, and their opposites, treachery and mistrust, on the other.

Nusrati's technique of citing speeches between historical actors gives us a sense of a 'live' recording of events that occurred in (real) time. The dramatization of courtly dialogue enables the poet to tweak the courtly gathering's content. These courtly meetings undoubtedly took place but their highly stylized portrait, a convention common to all victory poems, conveys meanings that are symbolic and moral. Placing friends and enemies in a longer context and within the politics of the present confirm Nusrati's self-conscious choices to write a certain kind of history.

From home to homeland in late 17th-century Bijapur

Specific words in narrative poems can be traced along with their relationships to other words to understand how patrons and poets understood allegiance and disloyalty. For instance, we cannot understand the concept of *fitna* (used once in this poem, p. 21), without understanding the context and specific meanings of other terms related to it. In order of scale and size, other critical spatial units such as *gāon* (village), *ghar* (house), *sheher* (city), *mulk* (kingdom), *watan* (homeland), and perhaps a single instance of the use *mīhan* (native land, motherland, p. 31, depending on one's reading of the manuscript) undergird this critical category of *fitna*, which essentially implies a break from a pre-existing political unit. Further, critically related to this theme of political disloyalty are the proper nouns such as Bijapur, Delhi, Dakhan, and Hind that mark different physical spaces and which people fell under and outside them. Another axle in this wheel are words related to people and the social units they form, based on the concept of a household and the breakup or secession from it. This second category of words include - *qabīlah* (descent from common male ancestor), *nasl* (lineage or genealogy), *ajdād* (ancestors), *khwesh* (kinsmen) and *jamī* (group). Here I tabulate the first set of these

inter-related series of spatial terms (household and proper noun/place names) that appear in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*. Some words occur multiple times on the same page:

Term for	Number of occurrences	Page Number
Household		
<i>gāon</i> (village)	2	pp. 22, 18
<i>ghar</i> (house)	17	pp. 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 31, 36
<i>sheher</i> (city)	4	pp. 24, 21, 36
<i>mulk</i> (kingdom)	17	pp. 17, 18, 19,
<i>watan</i> (homeland)	4	pp. 24, 19, 18
Place Names		
Bijapur	3	pp. 36, 35, 22
Delhi	3	pp. 32, 22, 20
Dakhan	4	pp. 32, 25, 20, 17
Hind	1	pp. 25

It is worth noting that the two words that appear with the most frequency - *ghar* and *mulk* - always occur together. No doubt Shivaji was of the same *watan* or homeland, i.e. the Dakkan and the same *mulk* or kingdom as Bahlol Khan, but Nusrati repeatedly blames him for breaking away and destroying the household or *ghar*, the primary and foundational unit that underlay larger categories of sovereignty. It was the deep familiarity and intimacy of this Maratha upstart, rather than his more obvious characteristic, of being a Hindu, that made him so troubling. Nusrati does not identify Shivaji and his troops, marked with terms such as *ghanīm* or *dushman*, with the term “Maratha,” which was never synonymous with a proper name of city or a separate geographic space. For Nusrati, the Marathas were never exclusively co-terminal with the simultaneously well-defined but amorphous idea of the Deccan. The poet continues on how Shivaji's actions destroy an abstract notion of the household:

*ke jis ghar te jīkoī badyā ho ange
pachen tod ke phir vahī ghar mange*

The house from where he has risen,
Breaking that same house from the back

*ziyān kār kon kuch na us sūd hai
padyā ghar to apen bhī nābūd hai*

There is no profit in bad deeds
It destructively falls upon one's own house

*bad andesh bad kīsh ya 'nī sīvā
huā shād 'amal dekh shah kā navā*

Bad-intentioned, bad-minded meaning Shiva
He praised, pleased, seeing the king's action.

*atā 'at kī dī chod gumrah bāt
adak mārītā mulk āyā hai dāt*

He had digressed from the path of obedience
Killing so many along the way he has come to the kingdom

*huā je ū fitne kī yek āg dhar
chupe bhuyen vale tis te piyālān bisar³⁹*

He who has started a fire of *fitna*
Hiding it, but as if with a cup of wine (in a friendly manner)

*sukhan sanj kahe hain jo 'ārīf pechān
patīyānā na dushman kon koī sahal jān*

The great and wise have said
It is not easy to trust the enemy

*hamarī nazr men ū uchtā agar
to yūn kheltā kiyūn yatī tez hunar*

If he was good in our eyes
Why would he resort to such cunning deeds?

*yatī mulk men āg sulgī hen sānch
ke sab shehar be kul hai lagī hai ānch*

³⁹ Ibid., 21

So much fire has been set in the kingdom
Such that it ignites a spark in every city.

Here, we find the first and only instance of the use of the term *fitna*. According to Nusrati, just one fire of *fitna* had a domino effect, invariably spreading uncontrollably. Most of all, setting alight this fire within one's own kingdom produces destruction. Unlike Mirza Muqim in Chapter Two, Nusrati does not appraise the enemy's religious and cultural cosmology. To Nusrati, Shivaji and 'Marathas' were first and foremost Bijapuris. Ethnographic depth for a deeply familiar rival entailed rendering the other equal and recognizable. This was then translated into moral terms, into political behaviour that was beneficial and harmful to a shared idea of being 'Deccani.' The ministers surrounding Bahlol Khan continue:

*sivā garche us bom kā bom hai
kītī tis buzurgī so ma 'lūm hai*

If Shivaji is the omen of an owl
His abilities are well known

*tumarā jo shāyad hai khātir sharīf
ke tukiya hai vahī jo milyā koī harīf*

Perhaps the man you trust has pointed out
That a competitor has been found

*mavās ā lade mujh son kiyūn rachke bahār
ke hūn dil men dehlī ke men da 'avedār'⁴⁰*

Gathering their weight why the dead souls come to fight me
For in my heart, I am the true contender of Delhi

I shall vanish them by crushing their heads
In the way one crushes the head of a snake until the last breathe.

*na chalse hamārī pe kāfir kā had
ke hai dīndārān ko haq kā madad*

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

The ingrate/infidels have their limits and cannot have their way with us
For God or truth is on the side of believers

In comparison to previous shorter battle poems, where the rhetorical language of conquest appeared only in the beginning, Nusrati closes every chapter of the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* by framing the opposition to the enemy in sectarian terms. The repetition of a convention cannot be explained away by saying the poet did not ‘really’ mean it. Rather, constant repetition of it confirms the particularities of an intimate, alarming rival who had to be cast in absolute terms. Shivaji was no stranger to Nusrati nor to ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan. The above lines make it amply clear that as a fellow Bijapuri, Shivaji deserved more contempt than anyone else for destroying the home from within.

At this point, Bahlol Khan is given a robe of honor and a high rank. He sets out for the battle with Shivaji. Before embarking, he sends spies to collect news but they all turn out to be renegades:

*ū sab le ke dushman kon kare talaf
chalyā nau gazī de sive kī taraf*

Taking it all, making the enemy perish
Taking a spear nine yards-long towards Shiva

....

*badhāne kon qābū me namūs kon
diyā chū kadhan bhej jāsūs kon*

As a measure of precaution to contain that infamous
Spies were sent in all four directions

*vale ū to nedhīch the bevaḡā
na ma ‘lūm hue to de kar daghā*

But they were almost disloyal
In act of betrayal, they deserted them.

Nusrati captures the precarious political climate and its uncertainties in late 17th century Bijapur. Despite the heroic treatment accorded to the poem's protagonist and a seemingly uniform portrayal of his allies and enemies, smaller details such as rumours of spies turning coat were undoubtedly 'real' events. Even though the main task before Nusrati was to extol the patron, like his previous work, actual events unfolding in front of him were just as important to record. He worked within the limits of literary conventions, but incorporated events that fit into his larger observation and theory of political unpredictability.

In the third chapter the army prepares and spies bring news of Shivaji's troops to Bahlol Khan. Soldiers and commanders arrive to pay their respect to the commander, and ask him what to do next. Praising the troops's bravery, Bahlol Khan outlines the purpose of their war with Shivaji:

*sukhan sun yū nawāb adak rakh qarār
javab un kon detā ke ay kāmgar*

*ke yek amr amr-i ilāhī ahe
dujā hukm to hukm-i shāhī ahe*

*ke jab shehar-i islām par kar hujūm
chal āven to ghālib ho kufār-i shūm*

*watan khās 'ālam pe lak be siva ū
jo hai 'ām chondhar te nafren bulāo*

*ghazā dīndārān pe tab farz hove
har yek jiyū pe sar kharchna qarz hove*

*jo bānchiyā so nar hai ū ghāzī shahīd
movā so jiyā ya 'nī hove gā shahīd⁴¹*

Hearing such speech, the Nawab, firm as a tree
Answered them and set out their task

⁴¹ Ibid., 24.

There are two commands, the first of God
And the second the command of the King

When the city of Islam is attacked
If you leave when the infidel attacks, they will prevail

To protect the most special of homelands
Call for people from all directions

Then the duty of a holy war is upon those who believe
To spare each and every life becomes our debt

He who survives is a victor,
he who dies shall live as a martyr

Nusrati uses the language of martyrdom to frame the opposition between Bahlol Khan and Shivaji. This is third instance of the use of the word, *watan* or homeland, in the poem. The survival of Bijapur, the city of Islam (*sheher-i islām*) is at stake and tied to the protection of this homeland (*watan*). But why and how did this space come under threat? Again, it came under attack from *within*. Nusrati, by way of Bahlol Khan, explains this problem further:

*ke murratad ho nahatīyā jan us jang te
na do jag men dikhlāye mon nanag te*

Those who run away from that battle are apostates
[Those who do] cannot show their naked faces in both worlds

*jīte lag tu duniyā men sāhib te chor
mue peh jahanum men us kī hai gor*

If they continue living, like a thief in hiding
When he dies he will go to hell

*jo yū kāfir dār-i harbī yatāl
dharyiā yū jo ghar todne kā khayāl*

For that ingrate/infidel has turned [this] into a land of war
He harbors thoughts of breaking the house.

Note here the critical spatial units that make up Nusrati's framework of sovereignty. His land was previously not the territory of war (*dar-i harbī*). It has become so due to an internal threat from those who were formerly part of its foundational unit – *ghar* or the home. Nusrati stretches the home metaphor further and once again closes with the language of conquest and sectarian difference:

*haman bādshāhī ke acheh mu 'tamad
na badhnā yatī bāt to chodh had*

For we are the king's trusted ones
Remain in the limits, fighting for what is right

*bade bādshāh yān ke johar shinās
badhāye hen hamnā pe yū rakh qayās*

The Great King recognizes jewels [of this land]
And places great trust upon us

*jo sevāt pade ghar peh mushkil sabab
to jīyū kharch kar ghar yū rakhna hai tab*

At last, when difficulty falls upon the home
Then one must expend life for this home

*yatā nānūn karnā lagyā lā 'allāj
buzurgī kā tīka haman sar hai āj*

If you refuse this task, there is no solution
the mark of greatness is on our foreheads today

*yū mulk ahl-i islām kā hai watan
ke kufār ke hit te rakhnā jatan*

Indeed for this kingdom is the homeland of Islam
To struggle consistently against the ingrates/infidels

*ladūn men karan khet yūn gādh pāyūn
ke jug jug rehve yū to mulkān men navūn*

I will deliver a great defeat with my feet dug into the ground
Such that my name remains for generations across the world

Nusrati imagines a relational and nested space, which begins from the smallest unit - home - gradually increasing in size. From home (*ghar*), we move to *mulk* (kingdom). Both of these, in sequence, constitute *watan* (homeland). It was the limits of these spaces that the act of the *fitna* disturbed. Shivaji's attempt to forge an alternative political authority was not an external threat to the Deccan sultanates like the Mughals nor did it fall neatly into a civilizational 'top down' motionless notion of *fitna*.⁴² Nor could any and all forms of political transgression be encompassed in it. Shivaji's relationship to the Deccan and to the sultanates in particular, as several generations of Maratha historians have shown, was more integral rather than entirely new and unprecedented.⁴³ A conceptual definition of *fitna*, as put forth by André Wink, does not account for affective ties within courtly patronage networks, especially as they related to and evolved vis-à-vis spatial units of sovereignty.

Indo-Afghan lineages across region and empire

Bahlol Khan's speeches are not monologues but dialogues with his soldiers. In these we can gather a sense of the patron's reception among his peers. Again, the poet-historian's task of praising the patron is obvious here. But also central to Nusrati's portrayal of these collective speech acts is the social memory of genealogy. References back to 'Abdul Karim's grandfather as well as his service to the Mughals must have been common knowledge among his soldiers and colleagues. The recent memory of his family's arrival and settlement in the Deccan did not prevent him from embracing,

⁴² Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 29-30.

⁴³ Stewart Gordon, *The Marathas 1600-1818* (Cambridge University Press, 1993) and James Laine, *Shivaji: Hindu King in Islamic India* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003)

making this space a new (*watan*) or homeland. Although these conversations are highly stylized, it is worth noting that unlike previous patrons such as the Iranian, Mustafa Khan in Chapter Two, who were portrayed as users/speakers of Persian, Bahlol Khan and his Afghan soldiers are always depicted speaking Dakkani. Nusrati's representation of Afghans as users of the pan-regional vernacular strategically interlocks them to the Deccan. To Bahlol Khan's first speech in Dakkani, the troops therefore respond in unison:

*bachan jab yū khāse te lashkar suniyā
uthiyā bol tab har sipāhī chuniyā*

*tun potā hai us khān bahlol kā
na thā hind men mard tis tol kā*

*athā kun vazirān men aisā amīt
toliyā nayīn ke ū jān khadā dhar ke net*

The army upon hearing these special words
Each choicest soldier of [the army] rose up and said

That you are the grandson of that Bahlol Khan
Who no other man in all of Hindustan could match

Such a minister had never before emerged
Putting his life on the line, no one else could outweigh him.

*shujā'at kā jis mulk men ād thā
salābat te tis kis te it pād thā*

An exemplar of bravery in the kingdom
Like a mountain of firmness

*rakhein hind ke shah tas kā adab
bachānen bade vān ke umrāo sab*

Whom the kings of Hindustan held in respect
To save all of the great nobles there

*buzurgī son har mulk men thā nishān
jo dekhe so shāhān rakhe bahūt mān*

His mark of greatness was in each kingdom
The kings held him in respect.

*jo hen qadr dān jag men shah-i dakhan
kiye mulk men kār kārī zaman*

The kings of the Deccan are among those valued today
Doing the work of the kingdom in this moment

*sīdī dar sīdī yū buzurgī yaqīn
chade pan hue tujh te kursī nashīn*

Indeed, his greatness [rises] with each step
But from you, the throne was adorned

*bade roz tujh zāt te ay khalaf
terā bād-i ajdād kā nit sharaf*

Oh successor! From your essence the day rises
The wind of your noble ancestors

*kare dīn-o-duniyā kī daulat ton āj
donon jab men nit huye adak tujh rivāj*

You govern the sacred and profane
In both worlds, you set the trend

The business of relaying praise went beyond the poet-patron axis to the collective memory of soldiers vis-à-vis their commander in the battlefield. Again, the Afghans were a social group positioned across wider spatial units beyond the Deccan, especially Mughal Hindustan. Incorporating a more worldly, itinerant set of patrons into the pan-regional vernacular enhanced Dakkani's cosmopolitan credentials. And yet, this cosmopolitan vernacular's worldview was not one bereft of exclusions and clear articulations of who was outside it.

In the next brief chapter, Bahlol Khan mounts his horse. In chapter five, the battle finally begins. The dialogue between the soldiers and Bahlol Khan continues here.

Throughout this section, Nusrati captures the picturesque quality and spectacle of war. Rather than recounting a sequence of actual events, such descriptions follow well-established tropes in Dakkani *masnawī* such as observations of the effects of firearms and awe for the technology of weapons. Various types of fires, degrees of smoke that canon and guns produce as well as their velocity and speed intrigue Nusrati. The intensity of the effects of these firearms stand in as metaphors for great losses on the enemy's side:

*dhuven kā havā lahū te rang lāl yūn
milyā hai siyāhī men shangarf jiyūn*

The smoke [from the canon] reddened the color of the wind
In the manner of ink mixing with vermillion

Sociologically speaking, detailed ethnography of Afghan contingents and Maratha troops is less important in this poem. This is partly because both sides were far more homogenous than before. Even though both were fragmented internally, various Afghan households constituted and controlled Bijapur while some Marathas tried to consolidate themselves as a rival political alternative. In comparison to the *‘Alī Nāmah* and the *Fath Nāma-i Ikkerī*, in this poem, Nusrati does not list various ethnic, geographic, clan affiliations (Chagtai, Uzbek, Rajput, Pathan, Arabi, Rohilla, Niyazi) in the Bijapuri army. Instead, he sets up a stark contrast between his patron, Bahlol Khan and his rival, Shivaji, describing them through black and white analogies. Since there was no moment of political resolution and incorporation, the insults do not end in this poem but repeat and continue throughout - Shivaji is sly or crafty (*mozī*), a dog or *kukkar*, and his army made up of thieves (*chor*).

With this absolute, larger opposition in mind, Nusrati does not list differences among Bahlol Khan's troops. Rather, unity and camaraderie define the relationship

between Bahlol Khan and his troops and the dialogues between the two often close with an affective declaration of *yārī* or friendship (*har yek dil men yārī kā guftār ache* or each soldier's heart had the words of friendship).⁴⁴ At the outset, the troops once again declare to Bahlol Khan:

*dil-i islām kā jiyūn ū dekhiyā ghanīm
rakhīyā thā so yek jit son faujān 'azīm*

That enemy saw that the heart of Islam
and kept a great army beside[himself]

Understanding what they had in mind, Bahlol Khan responds immediately:

*kahyā yū to kāfir yatā kuch hai sānch
musalmān bānte pe hoven so kon pānch*

*nahve shart mardī kā ab hārnā
ke har pānch son so ko uth mārñā*

He said, 'that he is an infidel is true to such an extent'
That Muslims....?

Do not lose for your masculinity is on the line
For you must kill five hundred in a single blow.

In chapter six, Nusrati recounts the battle's second day. This is the first instance of the use of the term *pathān* to refer to Bahlol Khan's troops. The poet begins:

*pathānān te dekhe ke ran sūr dahūr
barsatā hai tīrān kīran jiyūnke sūr*

The sight of Pathan soldiers on the battlefield like the sun
The arrows raining like the rays of the sun

The chapter opens with Bahlol Khan talking again:

*ke bethā so har mār kā ho nishān
tun pakadiyā hai kyā ghar dubāne kī shān*

Sitting like snake with a target

⁴⁴Nusrati, *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*, 31.

for you who seeks glory by sinking the home

...

*sune soche nawāb yū bāt kaye
ke tumnā kon yārān yū ma 'alūm hai*

*ke dārā kon ā shāh-i aurang son
padī thī ladāyī so sondal ke jiyūn*

*athā shāh dārā jo hātī savār
padiyā jiyūn ghaluliyān kā chondhar te mār*

*na liyā tāb utar gaj tarang jiyūn chadiyā
lagyā fauj kon tab ke khassah padiyā*

*huī pal men us dhāt lashkar kī mod
ke nayīn lad sake phir kabhī fauj jod*

Upon hearing this talk, the Nawab thought and said,
Oh friends! You all remember this

That Princes Dara and Aurangzeb
Had gone to war with their armies

When Dara was on his elephant
He was surrounded by canon on all sides

Unable to withstand the situation, he dismounted his elephant
This special moment turned the tide for his army

In a moment his armies were turned
Such that they would never be able to gather their army and fight

Bahlol Khan speaks to a gathering of his troops, begins by comparing Shivaji to a snake wanting to sink his own home. Note here a discursive narrativity, but of actual, remembered historical events and the persistent feature of orality, retelling past stories, consistent in the battle poem genre. To instruct his troops on the art of war, Bahlol Khan recalls the famous Mughal battle of Samugarh that unfolded on May 29, 1658, between Mughal princes, Aurangzeb and Dara Shikoh. The poet-historian cites the critical

moment when Dara Shikoh descended from his elephant and his troops mistook his fleeing elephant as a sign of the prince's death. This tactical mistake turned the battle's outcome in Aurangzeb's favour. Reference to this famous tipping point from a recent battle's memory was more than just a lesson in a military strategy for Bahlol Khan's troops. It was also a means of illustrating a correspondence and partial similarity between different sets of political players across the Deccan and Mughal Hindustan. The curious analogy with players in the Mughal war of succession here raises two issues. First, like many of his contemporaries, Nusrati had a clear moral opinion on who was bad and who was good in the Mughal contest for the throne. But his partisan tone towards Dara Shikoh has less to do with latter's personality but more to do with Nusrati's trenchant critique of his rival brother, Prince Aurangzeb, whom he loathed at least as much, if not more than Shivaji! Already in the *'Alī Nāmāh*, we saw Nusrati's copious insults for the Mughal emperor, as well as an exaggeration of his neurosis and political paranoia in the 1660s. Strangely then, for Nusrati, Aurangzeb and Shivaji ended up on the same side, contrasted against an alignment of Dara Shikoh with 'Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan and his Deccani Afghan soldiers on the other.

Bahlol Khan once again concludes this speech on military strategy by evoking martyrdom:

rakhū mār yū fauj kāfir palīd
rakhū khet yā sab ho muslim shahīd

Either kill this army of unbelievers
 hold the ground, or all the Muslims will be martyred

After this speech ends, Nusrati returns to the narrator's voice. He praises Bahlol Khan and his bravery, a peerless warrior across Mughal Hindustan and the Deccan. For

the last time, the poet insults Shivaji and his ilk, in contrast to Bahlol Khan's victorious armies:

*sivā kā ū lashkar tu sūrat harām
magar nasl-i shaitān kā thā tamām*

Shivaji and his troops with faces of bastards
For they were all the lineage of the devil⁴⁵

*ke yek pesh āne jon girne kon pas
disen phir usī yek ke jāge pe das*

If even one of them comes forward and dies
Ten of them appear in the same spot

*dal-i islām kā thā so ma'dūd thā
kumak ghair haq un pe nābūd thā*

The troops of Islam were limited
There was no such thing as support for non-believers

Through this poem, the terms *kāfir*, *ghair haq* and *harām*, no doubt, refer to a non-Muslim enemy. But as noted earlier the word *kāfir* can also be translated as ingrate, someone who was previously tied to a lord.⁴⁶ Rebels were usually those already part of a political authority, and thus, formerly in an obligatory and affective tie to a pre-existing patron. As fellow Bijapuris, Shivaji and his army fit into this profile of ingrates perfectly. Nusrati closes the poem with the final court scene - Bahlol Khan receives a robe of honor from the king as well as with a return to a much older analogy for the city of Bijapur:

*huī lāl bhuvan yūn ū kālī sakat
bijāpur jiyūn ke jogī kā mat*

Brows turning from red to black with pride
Bijapur became, which had been, a monastery of ascetics

⁴⁵ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁶ Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam*, 14.

*bijāpur men 'eid kar āshkār
padhā khutbah us fath kā thār thār*

The day (of victory) appeared in Bijapur
and the sermon of victory was read all around

We learn that the story of the Battle of Umrani moved beyond the bounds of the actual text and the court. Its *qissa* or story was retold and recited in cities across the Deccan. Once again, we see the movement from smaller to larger units of space, from the city to the kingdom.

*diye shohrat fath yūn sheher men
ke hove qissa par mulk par dehar men*

In the city this victory was discussed
that this incident was known in all directions across the kingdom

*vahīn nusratī dhar ke sar te umas
likhiyā fan-i nawāb nāmī kā jis*

With all his passion Nusrati
wrote of skills of the famous Nawab

*ilāhī zamāne men jam thāvun thāvun
achū mujh bachan te yū mardān ke nāvun*

Till the name of God rings across
My good words shall spread the fame of such men.

More than just a record of a historical event, Nusrati's concluding words immortalized a certain narrative of Bahlol Khan's conquest. The story or *qissa* continued to circulate over time, through oral means, in the spatial unit of the *mulk* or kingdom. The poet-historian, in a sense, rendered new patrons, the Indo-Afghans, as morally and politically legible.

Conclusion

The many meanings of 'Deccani': Conquest as Narrative

The purpose of this chapter has not been to re-enter the sequence of battles, manoeuvres and rapid changes that unfolded in the late 17th century Deccan nor to recount the well-known trajectory of Mughal conquest that the sultanates would confront in 1686 and 1687. Instead, I close with a final, unassuming *topos* in the battle poem genre, which best captured the nested and self-similar features of seventeenth-century conquests. The representation of historical events through a specific mode and language of expression leads to a denouement in the *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī*. In a moment of political upheaval, the regional vernacular of Dakkani displaced Persian, albeit quite momentarily. The thread of multi-lingual patronage that I have followed throughout this dissertation culminates with the Indo-Afghans of Bijapur. Like the Iranians represented in previous Dakkani poems, the Indo-Afghans were also an internally fragmented social group with a long history of migration to the Deccan, generations of households had served the Deccan sultans and the Mughal empire. By affiliating themselves with the pan-regional vernacular of Dakkani, they were, as Pollock has argued, reshaping “the boundaries of their cultural universe” with “a full awareness of the significance of their decision.”⁴⁷ In the case of Dakkani, a language much more proximate to and directly derivative of its ‘high’ counterpart - Persian, this act of affiliation redefined the relationship between new patrons and the region itself. However, the critical agent in reconfiguring linguistic and spatial affinities in a moment of conquest was not the patron or the subject under description, but the narrator, the poet-historian – Mullah Nusrati. He constructed a conquest representation, simultaneously universal and cosmopolitan in its spatial imagination and strategically exclusionary and sectarian.

⁴⁷ Sheldon Pollock, “India in the vernacular millennium: Literary culture and polity, 1000-1500” *Daedalus* 127, no. 3 (1998), 42.

Working from the other end of materials, James Laine and several others have shown through a careful reading of late 17th century Marathi sources, how Shivaji was received, revealing he was more akin, rather than antithetical to, Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb.⁴⁸ I have tried to demonstrate another layer to this kind of early modern co-constitution within the Deccan by looking at the circuit of Bahlol Khan and his fundamental proximity to and familiarity with Shivaji. In political histories of the Deccan sultanates and Mughal Hindustan, the writings of Nusrati, the closest and most assiduous observer of Shivaji, have largely been neglected. For poets like Nusrati, fully immersed in an Islamic tradition of writing history and recording conquest, the easiest way to apprehend an intimate enemy was to mark him through the rhetoric of religious and sectarian difference. But the language used to articulate this competition, Dakkani, had the capacity to be simultaneously cosmopolitan and sectarian. At the level of patrons and listeners, it could incorporate new groups such as the Afghans while distancing others, such as the Marathas, who were also very much within the Persianate imperium. Concomitantly, Dakkani was a more intimate means of expressing context-specific senses of space-making and social difference among rivals who had been deeply familiar with each other for several decades. The subjects under description, Bahlol Khan and Shivaji, together constituted the basic unit of ‘Adil Shahi sovereignty. For Nusrati, both ‘looked’ similar, yet different, produced from a shared, abstract notion of a home, which was atrophying before his eyes. Following from his three-part theory of history laid out in the *‘Alī Nāmāh*, discussed at this dissertation’s outset, Nusrati remained committed to his practice of recording history in a new tongue. These criteria for writing history consisted of the patron's trust (*i ‘tibār, i ‘timād*), the historian's personal opinion (*rā ‘y*), and third, the

⁴⁸ Laine, *Ibid*.

capacity to observe (*mushāhidah*). Using this template, the choice to frame ‘Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan as a defender of ‘Adil Shahi Bijapur and the Deccan kingdom was thus, both deliberate and self-conscious.

I emphasized such narrative and linguistic choices in this chapter for several reasons. For quite a while now, we have known the cantankerous debate that unfolded over the term *fitna* in the aftermath of André Wink’s seminal work, *Land and Sovereignty*. In a sense, there is little point in taking sides on the debate. All contenders, embroiled in it, were chasing an absolute value for a term that was meant to explain anything and everything. Revisiting the debate now, one cannot help but be in awe of the sheer volume of materials and counter-materials each side knew well and argued from. And yet, the term’s ‘meaning’, decoupled from its multivalent and polyphonic narrative contexts, remained entirely unresolved. This chapter has sought to analyze an additional stratigraphy of terms that underlay such categories, analyzing them as narrative artifacts, part and parcel of wider philosophical and intellectual traditions and modes of sociability between poets, patron-conquerors, and intimate rivals.

The portraits of conquest, analyzed in this chapter and throughout this dissertation, return to the running thread of self-similarity in both the representation and the operations of it as a social phenomenon. Usually, all hell breaks loose if we use the words ‘conquest’ and ‘representation’ in the same sentence, that is, if the binary of colonialism and its purported representational others is the only form of conquest we can imagine. Curiously enough, when we go back a few centuries earlier, construction and denigration of a political other, for a slightly different set of reasons, was the normative form of self-definition. In this project, through Mullah Nusrati’s verse, I have traced the

evolution of conventions in practices of conquest ethnography. At the risk of giving authorship too much credit, this chapter contends that the poet-historian's intervention rather than that of the subject or hero, produced specific notions of affinity and space making in the Deccan. Casting the Indo-Afghans as 'true Deccanis' in sharp contrast to an illegitimate set of rivals, the Marathas, was much more than just an act of 'legitimation.' From home to homeland, Nusrati located both, 'Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan and Shivaji, within and outside the Deccan's coherent and incremental spatial units. Essential categories of religion, ethnicity, and religion mattered, but held contextually specific meanings, creating particular narratives of self and other. As an active observer-participant in conquest, the narrator's experiential knowledge, and pre-conceived, unambiguous opinions on each actor, shaped the narrative of who was what during conquest.

Image 5.1 English translation of muster roll Acc. No. 24-624

FRONT

Description Roll

mansabdārān khāssah

SEAL

Hussam, son of Hassan Khan

confirmed as the true servant of Shah Jahan

1069

22 Jamadi I 1055

16 July 1645

True copy.

‘Ali, son of ‘Isa, son of Aba Bakr, Afghan Amazai, wheatish complexion, wide forehead, slightly connected eyebrows, sheep-eyed, long nose, beard and moustache, a dimple near the edge of the right ear cut, one wound above the forehead on the left side.

Stature approximately 50 years

BACK

Two horses

1. Grey - red horse

Two or three white marks on the edge under the lower lip, two or three dry scars on the thigh, a scar on the left side below the knee.

Turki breed

2. Grey - red horse

White scars on top of the nose, two or three marks on the mount,
Below the foot of the mount, a white cord

Turki breed

On the date 22 Jamadi I 1055 (18th Regnal Year) this document was checked.

Two horses.

Tables 5.1
AFGHAN MANSABDĀRS WITH A MAJORITY OF AFGHAN SOLDIERS c. 1646

1. THE RETAINERS OF ASADULLAH

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community
384-906	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Nur Muhammad S/o Shahdin	Afghan-i-Niyazi
385-907	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Kanju ? S/o Murad	Afghan
386-908	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Qara S/o Qalandar	Afghan-i-
387-909	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Izzat S/o	Afghan
388-911	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Illah Dad S/o Shah Quli	Afghan-i-
389-901	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Karim S/o Suhag	Afghan
390-902	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Sulaiman S/o Jahan Kahan	Afghan-i-
391-903	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Mir ? S/o Darwir	Afghan-i-Afridi
392-904	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Nasib S/o Baqi	Afghan-i-
393-917	8 th Jamadi I 1056 12 th June 1646	Gadai S/o Kabuli	Afghan-i-Niyazi
394-1015	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Kanju S/o Murid	Afghan
395-1017	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Alam S/o Khwaja Abdul Rahim	Afghan
396-1018	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Ikhtiyar S/o Man Singh	Afghan
397-102	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Gadi S/o Kabuli	Afghan-i-Niyazi
398-1021	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Izzat S/o Bairam	Afghan
399-1022	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Rahim Dad S/o Mamal	Afghan-i-Khalil
400-1023	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Karim S/o Suhag	Afghan
401-1024	Jamadi I 1056 June 1646	Nur Muhammad	Afghan-i-Niyazi
402-1358	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Nazar S/o Khwaja Khizar	Afghan-i-Gandhari

403-1359	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Shaikh Hamid S/o Shaikh Hashim	Shaikhzade-i-Husaini
404-1360	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Nazar S/o Khwaja Khizar	Afghan-i-Qandhari
405-1361	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Khizar S/o Ilah Dad	Shaikhzada-i-Siddiqui
406-1363	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Syed Qasim S/o Syed Ali	Sadat
407-1366	4 th Rabi I 1057 30 th March 1647	Abdul Nabi S/o Khalil	Shaikhzada-i-Ansari
408-1871	14 th Muharram 1058 30 th January 1648	Raj Ram S/o Girja Ram	Khatri
409-910	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Baqi S/o Hayat	Afghan-i-Khalil
410-912	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Razm Ali S/o Mir Rahman	Afghan-i-
411-913	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Rahim Dad S/o Mamal	Afghan-i-Khalil
412-899	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Darya S/o Ni'amat	Afghan-i-
413-905	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Jamal S/o Musa	Afghan-i-
414-915	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Alam S/o Khwaja Abdul Rahim	Afghan
415-916	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Fazil S/o Abbas	Afghan
416-2463	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Baqi S/o Hayat	Afghan-i-
417-2451	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Qasim S/o Dawood	Shaikhzada-i-Behlam
418-2452	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Fazil Muhammad S/o Shaikh Jamal	Ansari
419-2453	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Ibrahim S/o Ahmad	Afghan-i-Niyazi
420-2454	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Khan Muhammad S/o Sadiq Muhammad	
421-2455	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Abdul Nabi S/o Khalil	Shaikhzada-i-Ansari
422-2456	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Syed Abdul Hakeem S/o Syed Abdul Latif	Sadat-i-Husaini
423-2457	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Bhikkan S/o Pila	Afghan-i-
424-2458	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Abdul Rahman S/o Tahir	Afghan-i-
425-2459	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Imad S/o Salim	Afghan-i-Sur.

426-2460	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Syed Jan S/o Osman	Afghan-i-
427-2462	16 th Shawwal 1058 24 th October 1648	Shaikh Chand S/o Shaikh Hashim	Shaikhzada-i-Husaini
428-505	26 th Shawwal 1058 3 rd November, 1648	Ikhtiyar S/o Man Singh	Afghan
429-900	26 th Shawwal 1058 3 rd November 1648	Bekan Das S/o Rangi Das	Agarwala
430-2468	26 th Shawwal 1058 3 rd November 1648	Khizar S/o Ilah Dad	Shaikhzada-i- Siddiqui
431-2469	26 th Shawwal 1058 3 rd November 1648	Yaqub S/o Khairuddin	Shaikhzada
432-2560	15 th Muharram 1059 19 th January 1649	Noor Muhammad S/o Mahdi	
433-2561	15 th Muharram 1059 19 th January 1649	Pirzada S/o Mirzada	
434-2562	15 th Muharram 1059 19 th January 1649	Kalu S/o Saidal	Nil
435-1019	25 th Shawwal 1059 22 nd October 1649	Razm Ali S/o Rahman	Afghan-i-
436-2848	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Baqi S/o Ismail	
437-2849	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Munir S/o Bahadur	
438-2850	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Chajju S/o Kajju	Sudri
439-2851	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Shardi S/o Baqi	
440-2853	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Jamal S/o Sultan Muhammad	Rajput
441-2854	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Vali S/o Yadi	
442-2855	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Karan S/o Kothi	Afghan
443-2858	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Nazar Beg S/o Hayat	Afghan
444-2859	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Qalandar S/o Mirza	
445-2860	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Sharif S/o Nandu	
446-2861	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Rashid S/o Ismail	Qandhari
447-2862	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Alam S/o Husain	
448-2863	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Kajju S/o Fath	

449-2864	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Salman S/o Osman	Bhatti
450-2865	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Hayat S/o Mubarak	Afghan
451-2866	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Daulat S/o Mubarak	
452-2867	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Yaqub S/o Khairuddin	Shaikhzada
453-2868	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Daulat S/o Lal	
454-2870	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Ali S/o Shamshir	Sudri
455-2870	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Khush Dad S/o Ilah Dad	
456-2871	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Raj S/o Kajju	Sudri
457-2872	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Nazir S/o Babar	
458-2874	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Bhikkhan S/o Alam	Rajput
459-2875	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Payinda S/o Jamal	Afghan
460-2876	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Jamal S/o Haji	Rajput
461-2877	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Ikhtiyar S/o Ali	
462-2878	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Jamal S/o Feroz	Ghori
463-2879	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Baqi S/o Omar	
464-2880	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Ikhlas S/o Bijori	Rajput
465-2881	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Khujam Quli S/o Allah Quli	Moghal
466-2882	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Dawal S/o Bazid	
467-2883	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Razm Ali S/o Shaikh Nanne	
468-2884	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Pashu S/o Mamriz	
469-2885	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Jamal S/o Shamshir	Sudri
470-2886	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Kamal S/o Saheb	Sudri
471-2887	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Nisar Muhammad S/o Jamal	Ghori

472-2888	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Mir Khan S/o Sahu	
473-2889	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Karam Ali S/o Byare	
474-2890	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Jan Beg S/o Himmat	Sudri
475-2891	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Ikhtiyar S/o Lal	
476-2892	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Man Singh S/o Tara	
477-2893	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Lal S/o Kamal	
478-2894	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Majnun S/o Kajju	Sudri
479-2895	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Saheb S/o Shamshir	Sudri
480-2856	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Khan Muhammad S/o Shahbaz	Sudri
481-2896	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Abdul S/o Sikandar	
482-2897	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Malhe S/o Byare	Rajput
483-2898	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Hindal S/o Ilah Beg	Afghan
484-2899	26 th Shawwal 1059 23 rd October 1649	Maddu S/o Mirza	
485-900	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Bekanth Das S/o Rangi Das	Agarwala
486-2917	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Baqi S/o Hayat	Afghan-i-
487-2918	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Ilah Dost S/o Kothi	Afghan
488-2919	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Syed Ali S/o Banda Ali	
489-2920	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Khan Muhammad S/o Sadiq Muhammad	
490-2921	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Azur S/o Batur	
491-2922	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Shahzada S/o Rustam	
492-2923	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Nasir S/o Bahadur	Agarwala
493-2924	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Haji S/o Aba Bakar	
494-2925	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Abdul Rahim S/o	Sudri

495-2926	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Sarmast S/o Arab	Sudri
496-2927	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Khan Muhammad S/o Dilrak	
497-2928	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Abdullah S/o Babukar	
498-2929	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Azmat S/o Izzat	Afghan
499-2930	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Mahabat Khan S/o Ghani	Ghori
500-2931	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Rahman S/o Habib	
501-3153	27 th Shawwal 1059 24 th October 1649	Saleh Muhammad S/o Jallu	Qandhari Afghan
502-2933	29 th Shawwal 1059 26 th October 1649	Hayat S/o Nabi	Khaleel
503-2986	13 th Ziqada 1059 8 th November 1649	Yar Muhammad S/o Rustam	
504-4505		Jamal S/o Bashir	Lodhi

2. THE RETAINERS OF AHMAD KHAN NIYAZI (Afghan)

See Athar Ali, S411, S979, S1164, S1261, S1580, S3875, S4371, S5291, S5623

Acc. No.	Date	Name and Parentage	Caste and Community
263-298	27 th Ziqada 1052 6 th February 1643	Shaikh Feroz S/o Shaikh Darya	Shaikhzada Siddiqui
264-299	27 th Ziqada 1052 6 th February 1643	Ilyas S/o Ahmad	Shaikhzada Behlam
265-330	6 th Safar 1053	Syed Muhammad S/o Syed Mahmud	Sadat, Husaini
266-331	6 th Safar 1053 16 th April 1643	..... (?) S/o Shahab	Afghan, Niyazi
267-340	1 st Rabi I 1053 10 th May 1643	Khan Muhammad S/o Shaikh Bhikhan	Shaikhzada Husaini
268-341	1 st Rabi II 1053 9 th June 1643	Qutb S/o Abdul Rahim	Kamboh
269-342	12 th Rabi II 1053 20 th June 1643	Hiraman S/o Ganga Ram	Rajput Chauhan
270-451	10 th Muharram 1054 9 th March 1644	Musa S/o Lad (?)	Afghan Nojani ?
271-453	11 th Muharram 1054 10 th March 1644	Dharam Das S/o Niranjan Dad	Khatri

272-452	9 th Zilhijja 1054 28 th December 1644	Abdul Hakim S/o Malik Hast	Afghan Pani
273-601	27 th Zilhijja 1054 15 th June 1645	Daulat S/o Shahab	Rajput
274-	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Shaikh Aba Bakr S/o Shaikh Bazid	Shaikhzada Husaini
275-413	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Sara S/o Shaikh Bahdin	Afghan Niyazi
276-415	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 November 1648	Afiq Ali S/o Abul Hasan	Kamboh
277-416	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Ali Muhammad S/o Nur Muhammad	Shaikhzada Behlam
278-417	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Taj S/o Alwal	Afghan Niyzai
279-449	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Burhan S/o Bahlul	Afghan Niyazi
280-592	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Shaikh Ishaq S/o Muhammad Khan	Shaikhzada Quraishi
281-593	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Khwaja Ahmad S/o Khwaja... (?)	Shaikhzada Siddiqui
282-2500	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	..... (?) S/o Bahai	Shaikhzada Siddiqui
283-2501	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Yusuf S/o Husain	Juna ?
284-2502	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Nur Beg S/o Subhan Quli	
285-2503	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Mir S/o Taj	Shaikhzada Siddiqui
286-2504	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Niamat S/o Feroz	Rajput
287-2505	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Hattam S/o Taj	

288-2506	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Khawaja Ahmad S/o Haji Sher Muhammad	Shaikhzada Quraishi
289-2507	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Shaikh Jan Muhammad S/o Shaikh Nur Muhammad	Shaikhzada Husaini
290-2508	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Abdul S/o Isa	Afghan Niyazi
291-2509	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Shaikh Yaqub S/o Shah Muhammad	Rajput
292-2510	16 th Ziqada 1058 22 nd November 1648	Syed Husain S/o Syed Mustafa	Sadat Husaini
293-3463	7 th Rabi II 1061	Mujahid S/o Dilawar	Afghan Niyazi

Chapter Six

The contours of a long seventeenth century?

It may appear strange to historians of Mughal Hindustan to be told that their exclusive focus on the Mughals has actually impeded the historical appreciation of the subcontinent's denser regional histories and wider maritime connections in the seventeenth century. When the Mughals finally annexed the Deccan sultanates in 1687, the Karnatak conquest came full circle, but with key variations. Mughal presence, not unlike that of the sultanates, would be fleeting in spite of more concentrated attempts to extract revenue from this region.¹ Heirs of nearly all the characters presented in previous chapters, now well-trained in the business of conquest for more than three generations, would consolidate themselves into independent sovereigns in the Deccan during and after the brief Mughal interregnum from 1687 to 1724. In this conclusion, I will summarize the findings of each chapter and briefly touch upon variations on the theme of self-similarity that carried into the eighteenth century, unfolding alongside and beyond Mughal conquest in 1687. I will stress the resilience of battle poems in the vernacular as a genre, still unexamined in later periods, to illustrate continuities rather than ruptures in the historiographies of seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lastly, I emphasize this study's conceptual and methodological intervention by urging a combination of the study of court culture with a more traditional analysis of state-formation – two artificially divided approaches to the study of early modern South Asia.

In Chapter One, I framed the theoretical and methodological axes of this project through an analysis of one of its central protagonists, the poet-historian Mullah Nusrati

¹ John F. Richards, *Mughal administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975)

(d. 1672). Nusrati's long career spanned nearly the full temporal arc of this dissertation from 1636 to 1687. Two themes emerged from his verse – the ethnography of conquest and social relationships within polyphonic circuits of patrons, poets, and commanders who participated in this conquest. Eschewing narratives of seventeenth-century Deccan decline, I analyzed the formal lineages and sociological context of new practices of writing history in the vernacular. These works were very much within the Persianate imperium, but self-consciously contrasted themselves within established literary traditions, affirming the originality of composing in a 'lower' linguistic register. At the level of content, Nusrati's work captures the fragility of political affinities, which although not based on pre-determined ethnic, linguistic, and confessional identities nevertheless deployed difference to elucidate each conquest's context. Ethnography in Dakkani battle poems unravels the certitudes of Persian court chronicles through a much deeper sociological appraisal of rivals and friends. Largely ignored in schematic political histories of the Deccan sultanates, the battle poem genre complicates questions of social identity and court culture, revealing context-specific articulations of social difference and novel methods of political incorporation during conquest.

When we look at questions of court culture and social identity in much smaller units of time, as in the fifty-year period of this inquiry, we cannot apply schematic models uniformly across big swaths of time and to each dynasty or court. South Asia historians often have a tendency to select massive chunks of time, yielding results that are thin on materials, often lopsided with evidence from one century, but quite heavy on

social science theory.² This is not to say that we cannot study the *longue durée* but to urge that we need to take stock of smaller units of time before observing much grander patterns. The obsolete ‘Deccani’ vs. ‘Foreigner’ debate that pervades studies of court culture in the Deccan has been applied with broad brushstrokes for each court and every time period. Given the density of materials on pre-colonial South Asia that remain unexamined, we may want to begin with more modest spatial and temporal units of analysis for our inquiries.

In Chapter Two and Three, I covered two inter-related themes - fragility and resilience - in the social worlds of two patron-conquerors, both of Iranian origin. Both the patron’s heroic representations in Persianate materials and the patron’s everyday operations in European archives revealed dense circles of kinsmen, allies, and rivals who often disagreed and contested each other. The stratigraphy of social networks constructed in these two chapters presents portraits of imperfect, volatile patrons. Given the rich visual and textual materials produced in the Deccan sultanates, it is tempting to fetishize the patron in the figure of the sultan or the Prime Minister. In the absence of empirical studies of the nobility or administrative and military institutions, such as the ones we have for the Mughals, the Deccan sultanates cannot be understood solely as spaces where cultural and social capital was shared and built among patrons and friends. The fractures and fissures within regional patronage and these friendships circuits suggest a very different evolution of courtly institutions. Courtliness was not just about living well, surrounded by a coterie of admirers. Material and affective ties within the patron’s world had certain palpable limits and constraints. Vertical ties within a patron’s world were cut

² In what are otherwise fruitful interventions, the reader wonders why they even stopped at 1991 or 1700. Sumit Guha, *Environment and ethnicity in India, 1200-1991* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) and Eaton, *Sufis of Bijapur 1300 -1700*.

through by horizontal linkages that actors on each level forged with external agents and with and against each other. We saw conflicts between Mustafa Khan and sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah, as well as the machinations of his brethren, such as Muhammad Reza. These inter-household dynamics at times intersected with, and on other occasions, conflicted with the Portuguese and the Dutch, illustrating the limits and cross cutting of material and affective patronage ties during conquest. Lastly, as a thread to the subsequent chapter, Mughal methods of governance in the upper Deccan echoed the patterns of conquest governance that we observe under Mustafa Khan and Neknam Khan in both parts of the Karnatak.

Patrons in the Deccan sultanates expanded regional polities' territorial limits under Mughal suzerainty. In Chapter Four, I turned to the big elephant in the room, the unavoidable question of Mughal presence in the Deccan, without which any study of the sultanates would be incomplete. I analyzed the narratives of conquests and its actual operations, but at an imperial scale and with new layers of evidence produced in the frontier. Mughal imperial institutions were not simply implanted in the Deccan but severely constrained by a frontier context. No doubt the Mughals were the most dominant layer in the frontier but the difficulties of 'ruling' here were tangible and often insurmountable. My limited evaluation of the Karnatak conquest as a set of uneven layers pre-conditions the patterns Richards already observed for the period after 1687. The Deccan sultanates did not rein in Mughal institutions but they did make it nearly impossible to implement ideal methods of revenue extraction, regulation of cavalry, and the efficient disbursal of expenses, quite unlike how the empire ruled in its north Indian heartland. From the imperfect mechanisms of rule in the frontier, I turned to how the

Mughals figured in the imagination of a landscape of conquest alongside other rivals, from the perspective of the Deccan's foremost poet-historian, Mullah Nusrati. In these vernacular ethnographic appraisals, the empire was simultaneously awe-inspiring and morally deplorable. Within Nusrati's spectrum of rivalry, the Mughals were by no means natural allies. If anything, their shared fundamental confessional, linguistic, and sociological heritage with the sultanates led the poet to cast them as more absolute others than other rebel rivals within the Deccan such as Shivaji and Siddi Johar. The category of 'Mughal' was sociologically specific and diverse but morally homogenous and pan-imperial, and invariably base and untrustworthy.

The political affiliation of 'Mughal' must be contextualized in terms of its presumed opposite, 'Deccani'. Chapter Five thus explored a radical re-alignment of this political affiliation in the final narrative of conquest, produced for a new set of patrons, the Indo-Afghans. I argued throughout this dissertation that political affinities were not neatly defined by ethnic, linguistic, and confessional distinctions in pre-colonial South Asia. The relationship of Indo-Afghans to different vernaculars across South Asia undoes the ethno-linguistic parochialism that has dominated the study of court culture. Vernacular battle poems once again offer an ethnographic depth not available in Persian court chronicles. The poet-historian played a more interventionist role than the patron in constructing a narrative of who was, and who was not, included in the idea of the 'Deccan'. Mullah Nusrati's final battle poem placed Miyana Afghan, Bahlol Khan, within this space and political affiliation to outdo a deeply familiar and intimate competitor, Shivaji, who claimed the same political unit. This chapter therefore affirmed

the context-specific meanings of political affiliations as well as the articulation of it in terms of sectarian difference.

After 1687, emperor Aurangzeb's first priority was to place newly acquired territories under the direct purview of the Mughal governor in Aurangabad, in the upper Deccan. Previously, the sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur had run the eastern and western Karnatak as single unified provinces. Now, instead of reporting to the provincial headquarters in regional capital cities, the Mughal governor would report directly to imperial office further north.³ After fifty years of a nested, halting conquest, the 'Hyderabad-Karnatak' finally crystallized as a political and administrative unit. Despite this centralization, new pockets of patrons, such as the Afghan Daud Khan Panni, who moved back and forth between the Karnatak and Delhi as Mughal governor.⁴ He continued sultanate-era policies of Neknam Khan, with even more force and regulation, blocking the English East India Company's access to St. Thomé in the early eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century 'successor' states across South Asia inherited Mughal forms of governance – from revenue administration to symbolic expressions of sovereignty to military organization and practices of the chancellery and bureaucracy.⁵ This dissertation has shown a precedential pattern: the Mughal empire emerged supreme in the Deccan at the seventeenth century's end, but only after overcoming and incorporating regional structures over the course of a long and protracted conquest. The descendants of Miyana Afghan 'Abdul Karim Bahlol Khan, later known as the Nawabs of Savanur, covered in

³ John F. Richards, "The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687—1707" *Modern Asian Studies* 9, no. 02 (1975): 241-242.

⁴ Richards, *The Mughal Empire*, 266-267. Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Reflections on state-making and history-making in south India," 411.

⁵ Alam, *The crisis of empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-48* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986)

Chapter Five, would establish an independent princely state that lasted until 1948.⁶ The frontier layers although absorbed into the imperial center would never entirely give up their proclivity towards semi-autonomy.

The two axes of this dissertation – patronage and practices of history writing across different languages – did not vanish with the sultanates’ political end. Following from the resilience of battle poems and the persistence of seventeenth century patterns, we could perhaps argue for a ‘long seventeenth century,’ no longer bound by temporal and dynastic limits. Rather than reflecting on Mughal power from the late eighteenth century, as has been done many times in ‘successor state’ historiography, we could begin with the innumerable fractures and pauses of Mughal power in the seventeenth century and then work our way forward.

On this longer continuum, at the beginning of this inquiry, I located the case of Dakkani, a regional language whose place in Urdu and Persian literary cultures is yet to be fully understood. Just as eighteenth century political histories loom large upon the seventeenth century, the era of ‘classical’ Urdu has largely overshadowed its seventeenth century predecessors and innovators. Urdu studies invariably begin with Vali Deccani (d. 1707), a poet from Aurangabad, who brought the *ghazal* or lyric poem form to Delhi. This narrative suggests Urdu, originated imperfectly in south India, but was eventually perfected in the more glamorous literary circuits of Delhi and Lucknow. But Mughal conquest was also accompanied with migrations and the circulation of literati in other unexpected directions. Poets from Delhi, such as the infamous Jafar Zatalli (d. 1713), traveled down to the Deccan with the Mughal army and spent time in Aurangabad and Daulatabad. We may surmise that these Mughal poets in the early eighteenth century

⁶ Chitnis, *The Nawabs of Savanur*, 20-22.

would have encountered Nusrati's iconic battle poems from the previous century, works filled with insults for Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. Perhaps Zatali and several other Mughal literati took back these literary models from the Deccan as well as ideas on poetics - separating the themes and meanings of poetry - including the idea of humiliating those in power.

We need to look further back therefore, if we are to fully apprehend changes in the poetics of 'Indo-Persian' and the evolution of different genres in its derivative tongues. Within south India, historical events continued to be recorded in Dakkani, long after the sultanates ended and new states had emerged in the eighteenth century. Several battle poems from the princely state of the Nizam of Hyderabad (1724 – 1948), as well as from Tipu Sultan's (d. 1799) reign, record battles with the English East India Company and survive in manuscript form. The broader question of translation from Persian to Dakkani also took on a more complex dimension. We come across Afghan poets such as a certain 'Abdul Muhammad Tarin, resident of the Karnatak, who translated a text *Shumā'il l-nabī* from Pashto into Dakkani, in the early eighteenth century.⁷ An exploration of translations between vernaculars may further elucidate the evolution of Indo-Afghan literary patronage. The point in citing the continuities in history-writing and polyphonic translation in the Deccan is to alert us to continuities rather than an abrupt overnight shift to all things Mughal in 1687. Literary scholars have too hastily shifted their focus to north India and the eighteenth century. Dakkani did not vanish but survived well into the end of the eighteenth century.

⁷ Communication with Mohammed Ali Asar, Hyderabad. Also cited in Zore, *Dakkani Adab kī Tārīkh*, 107.

I anticipate that the tradition of battle poetry moved from the Deccan to north India and possibly served as a preliminary model for other different but proximate linguistic registers such as Marathi and Khari Boli. The total number of battle poems in Dakkani and Urdu are less than a dozen, but these texts dispersed to other regions from south India. Two lesser-known battle poems from the eighteenth century in particular trace their lineages to Nusrati's seventeenth century works. The first of these is the *Jang Nāma-i 'Ālam 'Alī Khān* which records a battle between Nizam ul-Mulk Asaf Jah I (d. 1748) and 'Alam Ali Khan, the nephew and adopted son of one of the Sayyid Barha brothers, Hussain 'Ali Khan (d. 1720). A certain Ghazanfar Hussain composed this work to memorialize the twenty-two year old 'Alam Ali Khan, Mughal governor of the Deccan, who was sent to defeat Nizam-ul-Mulk.⁸ This battle took place on 1 Rabi' ul-Awwal 1132 or 1 January 1720.⁹ The poet recounts the dramatic injuries of the hero, 'Alam 'Ali Khan, who lay wounded on his elephant for hours after fighting a pitched battle. This poem is very much within the Dakkani tradition and shows very little Persianization nor does it have the flavor of 'high' Urdu of the later eighteenth century. Again, the poet deploys a curious reversal of political (and linguistic equations) and sets up a contrast between two familiar rivals - a Mughal governor's loss commemorated in Dakkani, the pan-regional vernacular of south India, cast in opposition to a fellow Mughal rival, Nizam-ul-Mulk, who was about to found his own independent state in the Deccan, the princely state of Hyderabad (1724 – 1948). The precision with which the poet cites dates and days of battle and adheres to a meticulous chronological sequence is

⁸ Communication with Aslam Mirza in Aurangabad. Copy consulted in library of Muhammad Ali Asar in Hyderabad.

⁹ The date of this battle is incorrect in the colonial account of Gribble and Pendlebury, *History of the Deccan*, 370. William Irvine, *Later Mughals*, 22-25.

quite striking in this work, as is the way he imagines and critiques the political crisis of the early eighteenth century. Again, the Persian chronicle sources of the early eighteenth century are well known. To my knowledge there is no work on this battle poem, but this text may help answer some questions on early Hyderabad state that have been defined in terms distance and proximity to Mughal norms as articulated in court chronicles.¹⁰

A second and much later work, from north India, owes quite a bit to seventeenth-century Dakkani innovators. Written mostly in ‘classical’ Urdu, Sayyid Zahid Sana’s *Waqāi’ Sanā* dates from around 1760 to 1762 at the time of famous third battle of Panipat. This poem is quite unlike the well-known chronicles and commemorative texts produced from both sides, the Afghans and Marathas. The earliest source on relations between these two groups was Nusrati’s *Tārīkh-i Sikandarī* (1672), discussed in Chapter Five, and it is this work that mediates the formal and contextual concerns of the *Waqāi’ Sanā* from 1760. The longer context of Afghan-Maratha relations from the seventeenth century, their overlapping affinities to the Deccan and to Dakkani, its pan-regional vernacular (comprehensible to both groups), defined later eighteenth century transformations and ideas about how these groups related to both the Deccan and Mughal Hindustan. There are a few other entirely unknown battle poems from the end of the eighteenth century from Tipu Sultan’s Mysore but I will save those for later. My point in citing these later ‘successor’ works to the battle poems explored in this dissertation is to end neat distinctions between the two centuries. Upon first appraisal, events such as the Mughal center’s decline, the rise of regional polities and the English East India

¹⁰ See two differing viewpoints in Nile Green, “Geography, empire and sainthood in the eighteenth-century Muslim Deccan” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 67, no. 02 (2004): 207-225 and Munis D. Faruqi, “At Empire's End: The Nizam, Hyderabad and Eighteenth-Century India” *Modern Asian Studies*, 43, no. 01, (2009): 34.

Company's interventions, might suggest radically different political conditions, as do the presumed absolute certainties of the seventeenth-century Mughal empire. Longer histories of the circulation and dispersal of literary traditions that moved across temporal and spatial zones might elucidate how political affinities and competition was imagined and expressed co-constitutively. Extending the seventeenth century's limits to include longer historical movements may help with the problem of reflecting backwards on the Mughals from the eighteenth century. We could work the other way around, beginning from the sixteenth and seventeenth complicated constitution of Mughal power to understand what was borrowed and altered later in the eighteenth century. The persistence of artifacts such as battle poems or the borrowing of Mughal norms of governance such as the chancellery in later administrative contexts offers a starting point for such inquiries.

Conceptually and methodologically, my study sought to interlace distinct reading techniques we use for 'doing' cultural, social, and economic history. As stated in the introduction, in periods and spaces beyond South Asia, namely in Europe and China, using multi-sited and multi-lingual archives is fairly common, if not the norm. I have chosen to analyze both the operations and representations of a nested, co-constituted conquest across region and empire for several reasons. Innovations in Mughal studies, have spurred recent work on Mughal cultural history, incorporating genres in Indian languages that were hitherto dismissed for their aesthetic qualities.¹¹ The exploration of narrative strategies and translation practices in Indo-Persian literature illuminates much more about the Mughal world, a welcome contribution after an epoch of taxes and

¹¹ Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*. Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, writing Empire*.

certitudes about ‘the Mughal state’ (euphemistically known as agrarian history). And yet, it seems there are some serious limits to all the appraisals of social capital, gentlemanly conduct, and literary connoisseurship in court culture, whether in Mughal Hindustan or the Deccan. At times, it seems we are still gauging how ‘great’ the Mughals (whether rulers, secretaries, or the nobility) were or giving the Deccan sultans their due in also being ‘good Muslim’ sovereigns. Questioning the limits of patron-literati and patron-kinsmen relations was one way to de-center normative ideals of imperial and regional courts.

The rejection of certain kinds of positivist concerns in reading Persianate materials need not require jumping to other end, dismissing all questions on ‘state-formation.’ It need not be posited as the opposite of, or the alternative to, the study of court culture.¹² If anything, the varied materials analyzed in this dissertation categorically demonstrate neither can be understood without the other. If we are to understand Mughal power *in praxis* there is no shying away from empire’s staid, numerical, everyday tasks, as we found in the cryptic documents from the Mughal Deccan, discussed in Chapter Four. Such traces do not confirm the empire’s centralized nor de-centralized ‘character’, but present a partial, uncertain portrait of imperial processes in a regional context. The mere abundance of Mughal documents from the Deccan is not enough reason to accept the truth claims of this archive or the Mughal empire’s bureaucratic coherence. From these materials, I sought to preliminarily show that administrative documentary practices were as much a part of cultures of writing and recording in a frontier context as courtly literature or projects of translation across different linguistic interfaces may have been in the learned Mughal courts of Delhi and Burhanpur. Placing the sociological and

¹² Daud Ali, *Courtly Culture and Political Life in Early Medieval India*, 5-6.

administrative function of these materials in their deeply constrained, resource-strapped frontier context allowed us to test imperial limits, not just in terms of political culture and the ideological imperatives of rule, but in terms what these meant in practice. Shifting the story to the Mughal empire's most attrite frontier - southern India - helps us see where imperial and regional governance intersected, faltered, and occasionally, reached a compromise. The Deccan sultanates did not have institutional forms such as the *mansab* nor regularly paid cavalry and in this gap imperial governance intervened. But Mughal institutional forms could not simply implant themselves into and transform the frontier. Through interstitial dynamics of region and empire, contingency emerged as the defining feature of Mughal conquest in the Deccan, where an initial political outcome of a battle or siege could rarely predict with certainty how imperial structures would eventually operate or what they would achieve in the frontier.

We need not make an absolute choice then, between assessing conquest processes or what is understood as state-formation, and conquest narratives or what is analyzed as court culture, since both constituted the phenomenon's stratigraphy. In both imperial and regional contexts, conquest representations too embodied multivalent and fragile social relationships. Throughout this inquiry, I analyzed a stratigraphy of terms for affinity and friendship on the one hand, and rivalry and betrayal on the other, which together captured conquest's subterranean meanings. In Chapter Five, conquest culminated as narrative, as it was the poet-historian who encoded historical actors – patrons and rivals - into certain political and spatial categories. In such a way, there was no contradiction between estimating 'what really happened' and 'how and why it was articulated in certain words.' Perhaps less so for us, but at the very least, for seventeenth-

century historical actors themselves, conquest as it was happening and conquest as it could be imagined were two inexorably inter-related imperatives.

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