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Nawabi Karnatak: Muhammad Ali Khan in the Making of a Mughal Successor State in Pre-colonial South India, 1749-1795

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Chapter 2: The Walajahs

> But the King of kings, the Glorious and the Most Hight Lord had granted me this kingdom as a hereditary right; the Pādshāh of Hind was pleased to select me for the administration of the important affairs of this kingdom.[1]

2.1 The Walajahs and the Mughals

The Walajahs were a northern Indo-Muslim family from the *qasaba* town of Gopamau, in the region of Awadh, which they claimed had been their homeland since the thirteenth or fourteenth century. As Juan Cole states, qasaba were typical small northern Indian towns with rural or semi-urban environments, containing local trade depots with small permanent bazaars, small forts, mosques, and irrigation facilities. Despite their peripheral nature, such towns fostered a literate culture amongst their Muslim noble families that helped enable them to send their sons to the imperial court as civil officers and religious scholars and thereby to maintain links with the imperial center.[2] The Walajahs were one such family.

According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz,* during their early period in Hindustan the family's patriarchs were mostly religious scholars. Many of them were appointed to the position of Muslim judge (*qadi*) in various towns during the period of the Delhi sultanate. However, their involvement in state affairs stopped there. The family's first significant connection with the Mughal Empire was forged in the mid-seventeenth century, during the lifetime of Muhammad Anwar, the grandfather of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan. Muhammad Anwar made his way to the imperial court and offered his services to Emperor Shah Jahan, who appointed him manager of the chamber for praying (*tasbihkhana*). Leaving the court during the succession struggle, he returned there sometime during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, who granted him his previous post. When Aurangzeb led the Mughal forces to South India in 1683, Muhammad Anwar was one of the servants who accompanied the emperor. However, shortly after his arrival in the Deccan, Muhammad Anwar fell ill and passed away, his body being interred in his hometown.[3] A few years later, his son Anwar al-Din (1674-1749)—who would be the father of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan—left his hometown in Gopamau to join the emperor's "victorious army," which at that time must have

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[1] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 75-76.
[2] Juan R.I. Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism in Iran and Iraq: Religion and State in Awadh, 1722-1859* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 75.
[3] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 14-15; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 58.

been a royal encampment somewhere on a Deccan battlefield. Anwar al-Din was first appointed to serve in the *diwankhana*—the imperial male guest room. Following Aurangzeb's death, Anwar al-Din Khan went on to serve Emperor Bahadur Shah (r. 1707-1712). After this, references to Anwar al-Din Khan resurface during the reign of Emperor Muhammad Shah (r. 1719-1748), who granted him the post of *naib-wazir* (deputy to the wazir); at that time, the wazir was Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, the leader of the Turani group discussed in the previous chapter. When Nizam al-Mulk moved south to establish the Deccan state in 1724, Anwar al-Din Khan was one of his followers.[4]

The eighteenth-century biographical survey *Maathir al-Umara* gives more details regarding Anwar al-Din Khan's career. According to its authors, when he first met Emperor Aurangzeb, he was given the mansabdari rank of 400 and position of *amin* (commissioner) for the *jizya* (poll-tax), first in the district of Gulbarga, and later also in Sangmanir. At that time, he became a close friend of Khwaja Muhammad Amanat Khan, a prominent official under Emperor Aurangzeb.[5] This Mughal notable helped develop Anwar al-Din Khan's career in the imperial service: when the former became *mutasaddi* (superintendent or manager) of the port of Surat, Anwar al-Din Khan was appointed as its jizya commissioner; when Amanat Khan went to fight in Malwa, Anwar al-Din Khan, who had performed his duties well, was appointed as his *mukhtar* (manager); when Amanat Khan was promoted to governor of Hyderabad, Anwar al-Din Khan was appointed his diwan for that province. At some point after the death of Amanat Khan in 1700, Anwar al-Din Khan became an associate of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah. The Nizam also helped him to gain promotion within the empire, becoming fawjdar of Kora Jahanabad, in Allahabad. Afterwards, due to a problem, he was removed from this position and went again to Nizam Asaf Jah, who at that time was beginning to establish an autonomous state in the Deccan.[6]

Between the 1720s and the 1740s, Anwar al-Din Khan was appointed by the Nizam as governor of several districts in coastal Andhra Pradesh. According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, these were Chicacole (aka Srikakulum), Rajbhandar, and Masulipatnam, while the modern historian Yusuf Husain adds Ellore and Rajahmundry to this list.[7] Although these districts were by no means vast nor important political centers in the same way that Aurangabad and Hyderabad were, they were fertile coastal regions and thriving commercial centers with trade

[4] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 32-39.
[5] Further details regarding Amanat Khan can be found in *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 230-231.
[6] *Maathir al-Umara*, II: 1065-1066.
[7] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 38-42; Husain, *The First Nizam*, 225.

routes to other ports in the Bay of Bengal.[8] They were thus coveted by powerful rulers in the region. The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* depicts Anwar al-Din Khan and his family as having played a vital role in subjugating petty local Muslim and Hindu chiefs and in quelling the aggression of the Marathas in these regions. Prior to becoming the Nawab of Karnatak, Anwar al-Din Khan was promoted to the position of governor of Hyderabad, the most important province in the Deccan.[9] Such appointments help highlight the high status that Anwar al-Din Khan enjoyed among the followers of the Nizam. They also reflect the significant career transformation of members of the Walajah family. While their ancestors in the pre-Mughal era had mostly been religious scholars, both Muhammad Anwar and Anwar al-Din Khan served in the imperial court in civil positions, but, after only a few decades, the latter became a Mughal warrior-*cum*-administrator, leading his own warband under the banner of Nizam al-Mulk.

Shortly before Anwar al-Din Khan followed the Nizam south, his third son, Muhammad Ali Khan, was born to his second wife, Bibi Fakhr al-Nisa Begam, in Delhi in 1723. The boy spent his early years in North India with his mother, first in Delhi and then in his family's ancestral hometown of Gopamau. When he turned six, his father ordered the family to move to the South to join him. This turned out to be a permanent departure from North India for Muhammad Ali Khan, who would spend the rest of his life in the Deccan and Karnatak.[10] He was one of five sons of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan. His eldest brother, Badr al-Islam Khan Bahadur, lived and died in the North, while Muhammad Ali Khan himself, together with three of his siblings—Muhammad Mahfuz Khan Bahadur, Abd al-Wahhab Khan Bahadur, and Muhammad Najib Allah Khan Bahadur—stayed with their father in the Deccan, and from a young age assisted him and Nizam al-Mulk in stabilizing that area.[11]

2.2 Walajahi Karnatak

According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah always wanted to bring Karnatak under his control. However, the opportunity to do so did not arise until civil war broke out among the Nawayat princes in the early 1740s, leading to the Maratha intervention and the assassination of Nawab Safdar Ali Khan in 1742. Proclaiming that he was acting on Mughal orders to oust the Marathas and restore peace to the country, Nizam al-Mulk marched into Karnatak with an army of 280,000 men, and Anwar al-Din Khan was summoned to join

[8] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 136, 159.
[9] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 40-51.
[10] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 5-6; Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 90.
[11] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 30-31; *Maathir al-Umara*, II:1066-1067.

the Nizam's army. In early 1744, after incarcerating many members of the Nawayat elite, Nizam al-Mulk chose to enthrone the underage Nawayat heir, Sa'adat Allah Khan II, the son of the late Nawab, Safdar Ali Khan, as ruler of Karnatak. The fact that the Nizam did not dare put an end to the dynasty suggests that the Nawayats were still very powerful in the region. However, he took the opportunity to establish his rule there and appointed his own officials as regents to the underage Nawayat Nawab. Initially, the Nizam made Khwaja Abd Allah Khan, one of his Turani officials, regent, but the latter's sudden death led to the appointment of Anwar al-Din Khan.[12] Just four months later, in July 1744, the last Nawayat Nawab was murdered by an Afghan soldier backed by an unidentified faction. Various rumors of plots circulated in the capital. Some believed that the murderer was the Nawayat prince Murtaza Ali Khan, the half-uncle of the deceased, who had killed the previous Nawab and was thus afraid that the latter's son, Sa'adat Allah Khan II, might exact revenge when he grew up. Others believed it was the regent, Anwar al-Din Khan, and possibly also the Nizam himself, who had plotted the murder, as it was they who benefitted most from the assassination, although it was said that the Nizam reproached Anwar al-Din Khan for failing to protect the young boy.[13] Yet, immediately, the Nizam used the opportunity to put an end to Nawayat rule and reintegrate Karnatak into his Nizamate by appointing Anwar al-Din Khan as the new Nawab of the area.

2.3 The Nawayat-Walajah Wars

Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan enjoyed a spell of relative peace from 1744-1748. Yet, after this time, stability both there and in the Deccan was compromised by a series of wars that lasted for decades. These wars were the result of two main events. The first was the death of Nizam al-Mulk in June 1748 in the Deccan and the succession of his second son, Nasir Jang (r. 1748-1750), as the new Nizam, whose accession was immediately challenged by his nephew, Prince Muzaffar Jang. The second was the release of the Nawayat, Chanda Sahib, who had been a Maratha hostage since 1741. Chanda Sahib returned to Karnatak with the goal of restoring his family's dynastic rule, hence directly challenging the Walajahs.

The resulting conflicts within the two states were intensified as result of the formation of two trans-regional alliances. In one, the new Nizam of the Deccan, Nasir Jang, and Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan of Karnatak decided to support each other in order to maintain their positions. In the other, Muzaffar Jang made an alliance with Chanda Sahib to seize the two

[12] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 82-83; *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 84-85.
[13] *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, I: 256-258; Husain, *The First Nizam*, 226-227.

thrones for themselves. The situation was further complicated when new but powerful groups of jamadars within the South Asian military labor market—the forces of the European Companies—joined the struggle.[14] The French Company (CIO), under Governor Dupleix, decided to ally its powerful army with Muzaffar Jang and Chanda Sahib because it felt that its power in coastal Karnatak had been diminishing under the rule of Anwar al-Din Khan's family, to the advantage of the EIC.[15] Hostilities started when the combined forces of Muzaffar Jang, Chanda Sahib, and the French invaded Karnatak. As described in the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Anwar al-Din Khan, who was already 77 years of age, foresaw his own death and so chose his third son, Muhammad Ali Khan, who was then governing Trichinopoly, to stay behind and defend Karnatak, and advised his son to form an alliance with the British if required.[16]

	The Walajah Alliance	The Nawayat Alliance
Karnatak	Anwar al-Din Khan (the father) Muhammad Ali Khan (the son)	Chanda Sahib
The Deccan	Nasir Jang (the second son of Nizam al-Mulk)	Muzaffar Jang (a grandson of Nizam al-Mulk)
European	The British (EIC)	The French (CIO)

Diagram showing the two camps of the trans-regional alliances during the Nawayat-Walajah wars

This suggestion by the elderly Nawab, as well as the efforts of all factions to form alliances in the face of this power vacuum in the Deccan and Karnatak, is reminiscent of Wink's analysis of fitna, a political mechanism or process of state (or power) expansion. Fitna essentially

[14] I will discuss the entry of European warbands into the South Asian military labor market further in Chapter Four.
[15] The conflict between the Walajahs and the French CIO in Pondicherry began in the year 1746, because the French attacked the British EIC in Madras against the order of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan who had requested both Europeans to stay in good terms in his territory. Thereafter, the feeling of mutual hostile between the Walajah dynasty and the French gradually developed and minor quarrels frequently occurred during 1746-1749. Eventually the French decided to join Muzaffar and Chanda Sahib to eliminate the Walajahs. For the details of their conflicts and how the British EIC had been involved in these events, see: *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, I: 336; II: 178, 201, 291-293; 304, 311; III: 125-127, 136-137, 174, 217, 303, 310-314; 358-360, 367-383; Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, II: 388-389, 427.
[16] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 139.

means the abandonment of one allegiance for another, and thus always generates shifting sovereign rights. From a Western perspective, such an action has often been viewed as an act of "rebellion" or "treason." But in the pre-modern Islamic world, Wink suggests, such acts were viewed as "no more than the forging of alliances" and were a practical and legitimate exercise of state power.[17] Unlike pre-modern Europe, political expansion in many parts of the Islamic world rested not so much the use of pure military power but on the manipulation on networks of alliances and rivals, i.e. the acts of fitna. Wink uses this concept to explain the rise of the eighteenth-century Maratha state and suggests that it is applicable to many other South Asian polities of the period. In eighteenth-century South Asia, the scramble for power after the decline of Mughal authority meant that virtually anyone with sufficient military backing could exercise fitna. They could strike up alternative alliances and "entice away" their enemy's supporters to build their own power. Fitna, in fact, significantly reduced the chances of actual physical battle; as eighteenth-century South Asia has shown, due to the widespread of such practice, big battles involving entire armies and seeing significant violence—not including minor skirmishing—were the exception rather than the rule.[18]

Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan's army in 1749 was quickly defeated by their opponents. The elderly Nawab was killed, and many of his family members and servants taken prisoner. The death of the Nawab is described differently in the various accounts, which I will not describe in detail here. However, one point is worth noting. The official Walajah chronicle, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, blames their defeat on the treachery of certain individuals in the dead Nawab's army, which led to him being attacked by three enemy soldiers. The one treacherous figure named in the chronicle is Muhammad Husain Khan Tahir, a Nawayat noble who had been integrated into Walajah service, while the three killers were supposedly Yusuf Khan, Abd al-Qadir, and Munawwar Khan. Munawwar Khan was the *sipahdar* (military commander) of Kurnool, an Afghan, and a descendant of Da'ud Khan Panni.[19] The Nawayats and the Afghans both played important roles in the Walajah court and they will be discussed later. This battle is also a good example of the concept of fitna at work, since, although it involved tens of thousands of soldiers on both sides, it was primarily won by bribery, treachery, and the murder of a ruler.

After his father's death, Muhammad Ali Khan became the family's new leader and immediately initiated a process of fitna. He gathered his remaining forces and paid a ransom

[17] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, 22.
[18] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India*, 6, 21-35, 54-55.
[19] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 75, 110-111, 138-147; Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 114-115.

to his enemies to secure the release of all his captive family members and warriors. He wrote letters and sent presents to Nizam Nasir Jang in Aurangabad and the emperor in Delhi, requesting formal recognition of him (and not his Nawayat rival) as the new Nawab of Karnatak and asking for their immediate military assistance to suppress "the rebels."[20] At the same time, Muhammad Ali Khan also approached another potential ally, the EIC, offering them the valuable Karnatak district of Poonamallee as a jagir in exchange for British military assistance.[21] The British were evidently concerned by the French alliance with two potential candidates for the Deccan and Karnatak thrones, and they also enjoyed cordial relations with the Walajah family, who in previous years had assisted them in securing their Coromandel settlements that had been besieged by the French. Hence, they agreed to send military aid to Muhammad Ali Khan, despite the fact that it was, in this early period, relatively limited, as British involvement in local politics was still half-hearted. This was in stark contrast to the French, who strongly supported the Nawab's enemy.[22]

In 1750, Nizam Nasir Jang marched down from the Deccan with a large army. He successfully regained northern Karnatak, imprisoned his rebellious nephew Muzaffar Jang, and officially confirmed Muhammad Ali Khan as the rightful Nawab. However, this situation was short-lived. In December 1750, Nizam Nasir Jang was murdered by some of his allies, in the form of the three Afghan Nawabs of Kurnool (Himmat Bahadur), Cuddapah (Abd al-Nabi Khan), and Savanur, as part of a conspiracy with the French. Muzaffar Jang was released, and he immediately proclaimed himself the new Nizam of the Deccan, while the Nawayat prince Chanda Sahib was then appointed the new Nawab of Karnatak. Lacking recognition by his Mughal masters, Muhammad Ali Khan was now reduced to merely being a pretender. However, less than three months later, Muzaffar Jang was also murdered. Fearing a consequent vacuum of power, the French promptly threw their support behind another potential candidate for the Deccan throne, Salabat Jang, the third son of Nizam al-Mulk.[23] In Karnatak, Chanda Sahib gradually seized more land and made himself master of the northern regions. Various local officials and zamindars, who were either relatives of the Nawayat dynasty or old servants who were still loyal to them, gave him their full support. Many others, willing to back any winner, saw that the Nawayat prince was supported by the new Nizam and the French and so also pledged their loyalty to him. Many of Muhammad Ali

[20] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 24-27.
[21] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 17 Dec. 1750, no page.
[22] For details of the assistance rendered by the Walajah family to the EIC during the First Carnatic War (1745-1748) between the British and the French, see: *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, III: 360, 367-383; Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras*, II: 340-343, 372-375.
[23] *Maathir al-Umara*, II: 398-408; Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 136-139. 145-146.

Khan's family members and servants, led by his older brother Muhammad Mahfuz Khan and younger brother Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, sensed the change in the Walajah family's fortunes and decided to return north to Hyderabad, their former stronghold in the Deccan. Muhammad Ali Khan himself, however, did not want to give up. He took a different route, south to Trichinopoly, accompanied only by a small group of loyal companions.[24]

Both claimants to the throne of Karnatak, Muhammad Ali Khan and Chanda Sahib, sought to gain it using both military and diplomatic means. In early 1751, Chanda Sahib was in a far more advantageous position than was Muhammad Ali Khan. As the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* notes, possibly with some degree of exaggeration, Chanda Sahib's force was 60,000-strong and included horses, infantry, 2,000 Europeans, 10,000 "Negroes," and 100 French cannons. He is said to have rapidly subjugated various southern Karnatak districts, before marching to besiege Trichinopoly and force Muhammad Ali Khan to submit. Meanwhile, the latter, cornered in his fort, became seriously ill and was on the verge of death. Seeing their leader in dire health, all the neighboring Poligars changed side and two-thirds of his own army deserted him. In despair, all of his companions decided to sue for peace. However, the tables were soon turned as Muhammad Ali Khan recovered from his illness and resumed the fight.[25]

His efforts to secure Karnatak during this period had two main thrusts. First, he was working on the Mughal imperial stage. As such, he sent letters with valuable presents to Delhi: one to the Mughal emperor, Ahmad Shah (r. 1748-1754), requesting the latter's recognition and confirmation of his rule, and another to Ghazi al-Din Khan, the eldest son of Nizam al-Mulk, who held a high position at the imperial court. According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, after news of Nasir Jang's death reached Delhi, the emperor nominated Ghazi al-Din Khan to be the new ruler of the Deccan (rather than Salabat Jang, the third son of Nizam al-Mulk, as Muhammad Ali Khan's enemies then claimed). Muhammad Ali Khan expressed his allegiance to Ghazi al-Din Khan—as his father had done to Nizam al-Mulk—and convinced him to come to the South in order to right the wrongs committed by Chanda Sahib's forces.[26] However, as it was uncertain when or whether assistance from the North and/or the Deccan would come, Muhammad Ali Khan poured the rest of his energy into forming regional alliances. He sent representatives to negotiate with all the powers who were stakeholders in Karnatak—the rulers of Mysore, the Marathas, the numerous Karnatak

[24] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 58-59.
[25] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 69-70, 76.
[26] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 79-82.

zamindars (namely Tanjore and various Poligars), and the EIC—and in the process offered rich rewards in return for their military and financial assistance.

One point is particularly worth noting here. During this chaotic period, although every claimant to any regional throne sought official acknowledgement from the Mughal emperor, this legitimation was less important for local actors than the results of the military operations and diplomatic negotiations that took place around the subcontinent. Any local party in the Deccan or Karnatak could seize power and, without any hesitation, claim that they were the rightful Nizam or Nawab before receiving official Mughal recognition. Furthermore, having no fear of Mughal retribution, all of them falsely claimed that they had received letters of support and official acknowledgment from the Mughal emperor for their claims. Such fabrications were frequently used in their diplomatic maneuvers with other power holders in order to secure allegiances and/or attempt to bluff their enemies. However, these attempts were usually of no consequence because Mughal endorsement of a local ruler was hardly regarded as decisive in the middle of a war.[27] On the other hand, however, during this period the EIC continued to hold Mughal legitimation in high regard. For one thing, the EIC was afraid of incurring the wrath of both the Mughals and the rightful Nizams, as it feared such could greatly damage their interests. More importantly, EIC servants needed legitimate reasons to defend their actions to the Court of Directors in London. As observed by Michael Fisher, unlike some other European companies who, in the same period, virtually denied the authority of local polities, the EIC repeatedly emphasized that it supported the rights of the legitimate rulers, not only in Karnatak, but also elsewhere.[28] And because it regarded the signing of treaties as crucial for the establishment of diplomatic relations, the possession of an imperial *farman* (royal edict) confirming the legitimate status of the power-holders was indispensable. In its correspondence throughout this period, it is clear that the EIC often pressed Muhammad Ali Khan to push his interests at the Mughal court in order to get official sanction for his—and consequently their—activities. Understanding the high British regard for proof of legitimacy, Muhammad Ali Khan consistently emphasized his status as the Mughal-backed governor in his correspondence with the EIC and sought its cooperation in the name of his Mughal masters, either the emperor or the Deccan Nizam.[29] At the same time, in his letters to the EIC, the Nawab wrote that he had obtained farmans from the Great Mughal and the rightful Nizams of the Deccan (first Nasir Jang and later Ghazi al-Din Khan),

[27] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 2 Oct. 1752, no page.
[28] Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India*, 97.
[29] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 18 Oct. 1750, no page.

in which they ordered the British to support their representative.[30] Muhammad Ali Khan's enemies also used similar tactics, sending the EIC letters claiming that the Mughal court had ordered the British to withdraw their support from Muhammad Ali Khan. The EIC, however, could prove that some of these "imperial letters," presented by both sides, were forgeries.[31] As such, I would argue that the principal reason why the Nawab went to great lengths to establish contact with and request recognition from the Mughal court during this early period was not in the hope of acquiring political legitimacy or immediate military assistance from them but to gain credibility in his dealings with the EIC.

When Muhammad Ali Khan sought to begin the process of fitna, it was the British who were the first to respond positively to his request, although they were almost blackmailed into assisting the Nawab as the latter threatened that he would enter into an agreement with the French if the British were unwilling to offer him assistance. The British, moreover, showed a strong commitment to help the Nawab regain control of the region because the Nawab agreed to cover the full cost of the wars.[32] However, it was only after the middle of 1751 that the situation took a positive turn, when the EIC decided to send reinforcements to Karnatak under the command of its able commander Stringer Lawrence, while also promoting Robert Clive from Madras civil servant to military commander. In August 1751, having agreed to follow the challenging plan proposed by Muhammad Ali Khan, Clive and Muhammad Madina Ali Khan, one of the Nawab's generals, regained control of the capital city of Arcot and its surroundings. The success of Clive in using only 200 men to defend the place against enemy forces numbering some 15,000, who tried in vain to retake it, significantly turned the tide of the war. By thus opening up another front, this time in the north, they managed to distract their enemies and reduce the pressure on Trichinopoly.[33] To unexpectedly lose Arcot was, in turn, a massive blow to the prestige of Chanda Sahib and the French among their South Indian supporters. Simultaneously, it was the first time the EIC's military talent—which, up until the Siege of Arcot, had appeared to be much poorer than that of the French—was clearly evident.[34] This—the first time that the South Asian princes may have thought that the British might, after all, be a match for the French—greatly helped Muhammad Ali Khan to gain the fruits of the diplomatic labors that

[30] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 18 Feb. 1751, no page; 1 Apr. 1751, no page; Madras Consultation, 8 Jun. 1752, no page; 10 Aug. 1752, no page.
[31] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 29 Aug. 1751, no page; 17 Oct. 1751, no page; Madras Consultation, 2 Oct, 1752, no page; 24 Sep. 1753, 218.
[32] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 17 Jan. 1751, no page.
[33] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Fort St David Consultation, 16 Mar. 1752, no page; Love, *Vestiges of the Old Madras*, II: 428.
[34] For details of Clive's siege of Arcot, see: Robert Harvey, *Clive: The Life and Death of a British Emperor* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998), 65-80.

he had invested in other directions. He successfully convinced one ambitious Mysore prince, Karachuri Nand Raj, the younger brother of the-then Mysore raja, to enter into an alliance with him instead of going over to his rivals. The prince not only loaned Muhammad Ali Khan an enormous sum of money, but also, and at his own expense, marched to Trichinopoly more than 5,000 Maratha mercenary horsemen and 10,000 infantrymen, led by the Maratha general Murari Rao. Soon afterwards, the Maratha raja of Tanjore and the Tondaiman raja of Pudukkottai also sent military contingents to Muhammad Ali Khan.[35]

In mid-1752, the combined forces of Muhammad Ali Khan's allies (primarily consisting of the EIC, Mysore, Tanjore, and Tondaiman) fought his enemies, and Chanda Sahib was finally defeated and killed. Many French soldiers were taken prisoner, which forced Governor Dupleix to negotiate a temporary peace with Muhammad Ali Khan and the British.[36] The situation in the Deccan also helped the Nawab. In November 1752, Muhammad Ali Khan received news that his ally and the claimant to the Deccan throne, Ghazi al-Din Khan, had died. As a consequence, Salabat Jang (r. 1751-1762), the French candidate to the Deccan throne became its ruler. This coincided with a Maratha invasion of the Deccan, which forced the new Nizam to rethink his political strategy; not wanting to wage wars on multiple fronts, Salabat Jang (temporarily) became less antagonistic toward Muhammad Ali Khan and instead requested that the latter and his allies, the British, make peace with the French.[37]

2.4 Muhammad Ali Khan: Sole Ruler of Karnatak

The death of Chanda Sahib and the retreat of Nizam Salabat Jang from Karnatak were crucial turning points for Muhammad Ali Khan's ambitions to rule the region. However, this by no means signified the end of his struggles. The wars between Muhammad Ali Khan and the French, who had given their support to Raza Sahib, Chanda Sahib's son, as a new candidate, continued, while most local governors and Poligars in Karnatak were still in a state of rebellion and refused to acknowledge his sovereignty. Furthermore, by this time, Muhammad Ali Khan had exhausted the treasury and many of his mercenaries mutinied over unpaid salaries.

The Nawab's alliance with Mysore also crumbled. Some time before, in order to secure its assistance, Muhammad Ali Khan had promised to grant its prince, Karachuri Nand

[35] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 168; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 89-94, 100-101.
[36] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 8 Jun. 1752, no page; 15 Jun. 1752, no page.
[37] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 14 Dec. 1752, no page.

Raj, the district of Trichinopoly. Yet Muhammad Ali Khan had only made that agreement in a desperate bid to buy time. He had never had any real intention of giving up such a strategically important area, one which was also regarded as the southern capital of Karnatak, and, after the conflict had ended, he attempted to offer other areas to the prince instead. In retaliation, the latter stopped paying the Maratha mercenaries who had participated in the war, causing them to start plundering Karnatak. The loss of these old allies risked leaving Muhammad Ali Khan vulnerable to a French attack. With mounting debts and many enemies, the Nawab's situation was in a precarious state in late 1752. Ironically, however, this difficult situation for the Nawab was also a central factor in allowing him to retain the throne, for although the Mysore prince's alliance with Muhammad Ali Khan was greatly strained, the former hesitated from severing relations with the Nawab completely because he feared that, if he did so, the money he was owed would never be repaid.[38] For the same reason, Muhammad Ali Khan's debts to the EIC also ensured that the Company became his staunch ally. By late 1752, the EIC had decided, in contrast to its prior position, that it needed to support him irrespective of whether the Nawab had acted ethically in the conflict (since he had gone back on promises made to the prince of Mysore) or whether he had received Mughal legitimation to rule Karnatak. It would appear that it saw its fate as being deeply intertwined with that of Muhammad Ali Khan:

> In regard to the King of Mysore as he has certainly advanced large sums of money on the Nabob's account, […] we think he ought in justice to assign some rents for the payment, [but] if the King should not be satisfied with this but declare openly he will be the aggressor and we must assist the Nabob against him as an enemy.[39]

> […] it will still be the Company's interest to support him [the Nawab] to the utmost extremity not only in prospect of being reimbursed what [money] the Company are in advance of his account but because the withdrawing our assistance would inevitably bring on his ruin. The consequence of which would be that the Arcot would become a prey to the French and the [British] Company be excluded from any investment there.[40]

[38] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 29 Jun. 1752, no page; 8 Jul. 1752, no page; 13 Jul. 1752, no page; 28 Aug. 1752, no page; 13 Nov. 1752, no page; 3 Jan. 1753, no page; 15 Jan. 1753, no page; 17 Mar. 1753, no page; see also Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 177-180.
[39] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 16 Sep.1752, no page.
[40] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 4 Sep. 1753, 191.

With the EIC as his ally, Muhammad Ali Khan was able to continue the wars against his many rivals for several years when, in 1753, Mysore and the Maratha forces under Murari Rao joined the French and together attacked the Nawab. The strong British support also raised the Nawab's credibility in the eyes of the Karnatak zamindars, and many of them decided to send him further military support.[41] The situation became even more favorable for Muhammad Ali Khan in 1754, when the French government in Paris sensed that Governor Dupleix's ventures into Indian politics had gone too far and decided to recall him. In October of that year, the new French governor of Pondicherry agreed a truce with the EIC not to interfere in the disputes of the Indian princes in the region. Mysore was then left to fight for Trichinopoly without an ally. Around the same time, news broke that the Marathas and the Deccan Nizam were planning to invade Mysore together. These circumstances compelled Karachuri Nand Raj to withdraw from Karnatak in April 1755 without having been able to extract payment for the assistance that he had rendered to the Nawab.[42] By this time, Muhammad Ali Khan had more or less secured the position of Nawab of Karnatak from the perspective of other Indian rulers, although various internal problems in the war-torn state of Karnatak still awaited his attention. After the death of his father, his family and court were in disarray; his brothers eagerly searched for opportunities to establish independent domains, and most of his vassals had failed or were refusing to pay tribute.[43] Adding to the internal chaos, hostilities broke out between the Nawab-British alliance and the French (who supported the Nawayat prince Raza Sahib) once more, in the Third Carnatic War (1756-1763), a conflict that was part of the Seven Years War fought between the two European nations. Hence, for another decade, Muhammad Ali Khan was both facing external wars and attempting to reform the Karnatak state.[44]

It was only after the mid-1760s that the Nawab experienced a period of relative stability, because by that time many of his internal rivals had been subjugated. On the wider South Asian stage, he also made diplomatic progress, receiving official recognition from all power holders of any significance. These diplomatic overtures can be divided into three main phases: 1) the Treaty of Paris (1763); 2) the Mughal farman (1765); and 3) the treaty with the Deccan (1768).

[41] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 27 Aug. 1753, 174.
[42] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 182-183.
[43] These internal issues will be discussed in Chapter Three.
[44] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 189-197.

First, in 1763, after the Nawab-British alliance had won the Third Carnatic War, Muhammad Ali Khan was acknowledged as the lawful Nawab of Karnatak by both the British and the French in the eleventh article of the Treaty of Paris.[45] The negotiations surrounding this were mainly carried out by the British, and the Nawab played no role in the discussions leading up to the signing of the treaty. However, the significance of the treaty for local politics lay in the fact that the Nawayats could no longer rally the support of the French in their bid for the Karnatak throne. It also guaranteed Muhammad Ali Khan a long period of undisturbed peace, as war between the Nawab and the French did not resume until the 1780s, when he supported the British in their bid to take Pondicherry.

However, what was far more significant for Muhammad Ali Khan was the farman he received from the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II (r. 1759-1806) in 1765. This farman officially confirmed his position as ruler of Karnatak. On this occasion, the Nawab was also given the title of "Walajah" and the right to pass on the throne of Karnatak hereditarily to his successors. Furthermore, Karnatak was declared independent from the Deccan suba, which meant that, in the nominal Mughal hierarchy, Nawabi Karnatak was elevated to equal status with the Deccan Nizamate.[46] From then on, the farman was seen and often used by the Nawab as the main source of his political legitimacy. The means by which he acquired this farman is also worth noting. According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, the Nawab initiated these efforts in the early 1760s, when he learned of the coronation of the new emperor. He sent his *wakil* (envoy) Khwaja Shamsu al-Din Khan to offer *arddasht* (a type of ceremonial letter) and *nadhr* (a symbolic monetary gift to show respect) to the emperor and report to him the conquest of French Pondicherry. The wakil did not go directly to Delhi, but instead first went to meet General Robert Clive in Bengal. Clive, as previously mentioned, was an old friend of the Nawab in the EIC, and had helped him take back Arcot from Chanda Sahib and the French in 1751, the step which helped turn around the Nawab's fortunes. Now, Clive was the EIC's governor in Bengal (1765-1767) and also Commander-in-Chief of the EIC forces in India. As the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* narrates, the two men—Clive and Shamsu al-Din—then went to the imperial court together. The process of requesting the farman went smoothly; the emperor praised the Nawab for the capture of Pondicherry, accepted his nadhr, and granted him presents and titles, as well as giving other titles and mansabs to his five sons.[47] Yet why did the Nawab not send his wakil directly to the imperial court? And why was the wakil first

[45] IOR, H/286, HOME, Papers Relative to the Succession to the Nawabship of the Carnatic 1763 to 1784, 5-8; Lucy S. Sutherland, "The East India Company and the Peace of Paris," *The English Historical Review* 62, 243 (1947): 180.
[46] IOR, H/286, HOME, Papers Relative to the Succession to the Nawabship of the Carnatic 1763 to 1784, 6-7, 12-14.
[47] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 272-273.

sent to Bengal to meet Clive? These are questions that the Walajah chronicle does not answer. In reality, the granting of this farman was primarily the consequence of Robert Clive's negotiations with Emperor Shah Alam II in the aftermath of the Battle of Buxar (1764). This historic battle was fought between the EIC forces, led by Clive, on one side, and the combined armies of the Mughal emperor, the Nawab of Bengal, and the Nawab of Awadh on the other, which ended in a decisive victory for the British.[48] As the vanquished, the three northern Indian powers were obliged to sign various treaties and agreements that granted the EIC significant wealth and political power. As a further repercussion, the Nizam of the Deccan lost part of his territory (see below). As an ally of the victor, the Nawab of Karnatak, on the other hand, had the opportunity to significantly advance his interests. The farman was thus primarily the result of political maneuvers conducted by the British to please their local ally, and they probably viewed this approach as a long-term diplomatic investment in the Karnatak Nawab. However, from another perspective, the acquisition of this farman may also be seen as the fruit of the Nawab's long financial and diplomatic investment in the EIC, of both the corporation as a whole and individual servants.[49]

The farman officially granted the Nawab independence from the Deccan, but this was by no means something that its ruler, the Nizam, could accept. This led to the third phase of diplomacy on the part of the Nawab, which was designed to gain the recognition of the Deccan Nizam. An opportunity to do so arose not long after, when war broke out between the Nawab-EIC alliance, on the one side, and the joint forces of Hyder Ali (the sultan of Mysore, r. 1761-1782) and Nizam Ali Khan of the Deccan (r. 1762-1803) on the other. This conflict is known as the First Anglo-Mysore War. For a brief background to the war, after Hyder Ali had occupied the Mysore throne, tensions between Mysore and Karnatak—two ambitious powers who shared a common border—reached boiling point.[50] In 1766, Hyder Ali Sultan complained that the Karnatak Nawab had committed atrocities against his people, while the Nawab argued that his enemies—Raza Sahib, who was the fugitive son of Chanda Sahib, and Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, the Nawab's rebellious brother—were being protected by the sultan.[51] At the same time, the Nizam of the Deccan sought to counter Karnatak's push for

[48] Peter J. Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead: Eastern India, 1740-1828* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 87-94.
[49] From the late 1740s to the mid-1760s, the Nawab granted many tracts of land and villages to the EIC as thanks for their assistance. These grants will be discussed further in Chapter Seven (7.3). As Ramaswami argues, from the late 1750s, the Nawab no longer borrowed money from Indians and only did so from EIC servants, with very high interest rates. In so doing, he wished "to create an interest for himself among the Company's people," and then "the British creditors would not allow him to go under because they would go under with him." The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* also mentions the Nawab's generous acts to the EIC's elite servants who were serving him, saying that English sardars "gained in a single *majlis* (council or meeting) lacs [lakhs] of rupees as presents." See: Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 238-239; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 15.
[50] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 253; IOR, P/251/49, MP, MMSC, 25 Jul. 1763, 91.
[51] IOR, P/251/55, MP, MMSC, 7 Jan. 1766, 10-11. The Nawab's brother will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

autonomy. He was also antagonized by the EIC, since it had not only helped Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan become ruler of Karnatak but had also annexed the Northern Circars (from the Nizam's territory) by the imperial farman of 1765. The rise of the EIC and its occupation of the Northern Circars was also a cause for alarm for Mysore, since her borders were threatened by British politicking.[52] These shared political insecurities resulted in an alliance between Mysore and Deccan Hyderabad in 1767 against the Nawab of Karnatak and the EIC in Madras. The alliance was short-lived, though, as the Nizam of Hyderabad, beset by financial difficulties, sued for peace, and the treaty that was subsequently signed was of great importance for the status of Karnatak. The seventh article of the treaty declared that the Nizam had released the Nawab and his successors "forever from all dependence on the Deccan," and from all demands made by the Deccan in the past, present, and future.[53] The final obstacle on the path to Karnatak's independence had thus been cleared.

2.5 Relations with the Mughal Emperors

Although he was an independent sovereign, the Nawab never lost sight of his status as a servant of the Mughals and so continued to maintain links with and show deference to the Mughal emperor throughout his reign. He assumed the title of "Walajah Amir al-Hind (…)" and had other honorifics granted to him by the imperial court.[54] Coins were struck and Friday prayers read out in the Mughal emperors' names.[55] Furthermore, he continued to send arddashts, nadhrs, and presents to Delhi to celebrate important events. In turn, imperial letters and presents were sent to his court. It is, nevertheless, important to note that all these exchanges were mediated by the EIC via the Governor of Bengal.[56] One may interpret this as an indication that the Nawab was already under the full control of the EIC, and that the EIC did not allow the Nawab to have direct contact with his imperial master. But this is not my opinion, and I have not been able to find any evidence of any such restriction being placed on the Nawab by the EIC before the signing of the 1787 treaty between those two parties.[57] Using the EIC as a vehicle to mediate with the imperial court before 1787 instead of sending his own wakil there was, it seems, the Nawab's own decision. I suggest that the Nawab may have preferred to use the growing influence of the EIC in Delhi to facilitate his diplomatic

[52] The conflict over the Northern Circars will be discussed in Chapter Seven (7.3).
[53] IOR, E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Nawab, 12 Jan. 1768, 42-43; IOR, H/286, HOME, Papers Relative to the Succession to the Nawabship of the Carnatic 1763 to 1784, 12-14; Charles U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neigbouring Countries*, vol. IX (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1973), 27-33.
[54] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 30.
[55] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 231.
[56] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Sep. 1773, 194; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 20 Sep. 1773; bundle 67, 5 Apr. 1774; *CPC*, IV, Nawab to Governor-General, 11 Oct. 1773, 101; Mughal Emperor to Nawab, 23 Feb. 1774, 150.
[57] I will discuss this treaty further in Chapter Nine.

missions. In so doing, he could display to the imperial court and other local rulers that he had the powerful EIC behind him should any of them wish to harm his state (certainly at the cost of being viewed as the EIC's dependent). There is another illuminating example of how the Nawab of Karnatak deliberately used the influence of the EIC in Bengal to further his interests, this time with the Nawabs of Awadh. From the mid-1760s, the Karnatak ruler had repeatedly requested that the Governor of Bengal (who, after 1773, was to be the Governor-General of India) help him negotiate with the Awadh rulers to grant Gopamau—the hometown of the Walajah family—to the Nawab of Karnatak as a gift, or at least to rent it out to him for a long period. The rental plan was eventually accepted in 1780, after two decades of negotiation. On other occasions, the Nawab requested that the Governor of Bengal use his influence in the region to rescue the Nawab's Walajah relatives, who were at odds with the Awadh rulers, and to facilitate the transfer of his money to businesses and charities in the town.[58] From its perspective, the EIC seems to have been pleased with such an arrangement, as it could ensure that its ally was not secretly plotting with other local powers behind its back.

The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* go into elaborate detail about the links that the Walajahs built and maintained with the imperial center. Notably, their connections with the last Great Mughal, Emperor Aurangzeb, receive special mention. According to these chronicles, the Nawab's grandfather, Muhammad Anwar, became one of the emperor's favorites and received coveted mansabs and honorable titles, such as *Bahadur* and *Haji Muqaddas*,[59] and the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* depicts the recruitment of Anwar al-Din Khan, his father, as having been predestined. On the death of Muhammad Anwar, the family's service at the court was interrupted. In his youth, Anwar al-Din had wanted to follow in his father's footsteps into imperial service, but he worried about not possessing the contacts at court required to support his cause. Yet, by "divine intervention," a royal farman from Emperor Aurangzeb arrived in Gopamau with an invitation to the son of the deceased Muhammad Anwar to join the Mughal's service. Anwar al-Din was first enrolled in the army, but, as a result of the emperor's special kindness to this young man, he was moved up the ranks to be the *peshkar* of the diwankhana. The chronicle thereby emphasizes the enviable position that the Nawab's father held, as he had both love from and proximity to the emperor, the highest dignities to which nobles in pre-modern courts could aspire. The chronicle then

[58] *CPC*, II, Governor of Bengal to Nawab, 22 Mar. 1767, 53; Nawab to Governor of Bengal, 16 Oct. 1767, 163-164; *CPC*, IV, Nawab to Governor-General, 5 Sep. 1773, 92 and 19 Oct. 1775, 348; *CPC*, V, Governor-General to Nawab, 11 Apr. 1776, 12 and 6 Apr. 1780, 429.
[59] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 14-16; Muhammad H. Nainar, trans., *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz of Muhammad Karim, Part II* (Madras: University of Madras, 1944), 58.

goes on to record Anwar al-Din's rapid rise at the Mughal court. Like his father, he was entrusted with the imperial mansab of 2,000 with 2,000 horses and received the titles of *Khan-i Jahan Khan* and *Bahadur*. The subsequent emperors, Bahadur Shah and Muhammad Shah, were also pleased with his service, promoting him to higher ranks and endowing him with more, and more illustrious, titles.[60]

The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* presents Anwar al-Din Khan's decision to follow Nizam al-Mulk to the South in 1724 as one that was uncontroversial. In fact, this perspective seems to have been in sharp contrast to reality. The text states that the group had Emperor Muhammad Shah's permission to move south to restore order in the Deccan.[61] Although it is not stated in such a way, the departure of the Nizam and his party to the South could be interpreted—and has, in fact, been widely perceived in this way by audiences both past and present—as severing relations with the imperial court, and thus as an act of rebellion.[62] By mentioning this event in the chronicle, did Muhammad Ali Khan wish to emphasize his family's disloyalty to the Mughal emperors? Or can it be interpreted differently? Munis Faruqui's study of Nizam al-Mulk's career is worth considering here, as it helps us understand the intentions of the Nawab. As Faruqui suggests, in addition to their personal loyalty to Nizam al-Mulk, Mughal officials in his service in the early eighteenth century believed that the Nizam was Emperor Aurangzeb's living political legatee. The Nizam himself intentionally enhanced this notion by suggesting that his military conquests in South India were intended to fulfil his late imperial master's ambition of annexing the Deccan to the empire.[63] By adopting Faruqui's viewpoint, one can see Anwar al-Din Khan's attempt to shift the orientation away from Delhi in a new light. Instead of raising the standard of rebellion, both he and his new master Nizam al-Mulk are shown to have executed their duties as loyal Mughal servants. Despite being disloyal to the weak and immoral emperor, Muhammad Shah, they pursued and achieved an objective that the beloved deceased emperor had desired. By presenting Anwar al-Din as Aurangzeb's trusted servant, this narrative provided Muhammad Ali Khan's family with the greatest political legitimation that a ruler in South Asia could have. This was because Emperor Aurangzeb was, in the eighteenth century, regarded as the last Great Mughal ruler and the statesman who integrated Karnatak into the empire.

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[60] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 31-39.
[61] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 39; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 6.
[62] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 158.
[63] Faruqui, "At Empire's End," 22-23.

In reality, however, relations between the Deccan and the imperial center were strained after the Nizam had established his new state. In contrast, the Karnatak chronicle suggests that Anwar al-Din Khan's family maintained good relations with both the imperial center and the Nizam. For example, the text speaks of the gifts and farmans that the emperor bestowed on Anwar al-Din Khan for his military successes, all of which were dispatched via the Nizam's court.[64] By emphasizing the healthy nature of these relations, the chronicle sought to convince its readers that the Nizam and the Walajahs received continuous validation from the Mughal court as their rightful representatives in the South. These firm links are said to have continued after the death of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's father, and he had supposedly received recognition and support from the later Mughal emperors and the rightful Nizams of the Deccan (before Karnatak became independent in 1765). To support these assertions, the chronicle cites verbatim many passages from these letters sent between the courts.[65]

Why did Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan need to maintain good relations with the Mughal Empire? In other words, why were connections with the imperial court still meaningful to Karnatak in the late eighteenth century? Were they intended to save the state from any form of imperial aggression? This assumption is probably true in relation to the northern Indian regions but may not apply to Karnatak since it was situated a long way from the imperial center, with the Maratha and Deccan states acting as barriers to any potential assault from Delhi. I support the views of Alam, who suggests that Mughal connections were still a very useful resource for rulers in their negotiations, with both other eighteenth-century states and their local subjects.[66] It cannot be denied that, even at their twilight, the Mughals were still a reference point for political power for almost all polities in the subcontinent. As such, in successor states such as the Deccan, Bengal, and Awadh, the rulers did not abandon the Mughal titles of Nizam and Nawab, and even constructed fictional allegiances to the imperial court in their self-image. The Mughals' opponents, such as the Marathas, gained prestige and increased reputation by publicly challenging the weakened Mughal power and invading imperial territory. The EIC, another enemy, cemented its power locally by integrating itself into the Mughal hierarchy.[67] Similarly, the centrality of Delhi in the political

[64] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 42, 51.
[65] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 27, 29, 34, 61-62, 79, 80-81.
[66] Alam, *The Crisis of Empire*, 15-17.
[67] In 1765, after the EIC won the Battle of Buxar, it forced the Mughal emperor to appoint it as the imperial diwan of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa province. See Charles U. Aitchison, *A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neigbouring Countries*, vol. II (Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1973), 241-242; Barbara D. Metcalf and Thomas R. Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 53.

consciousness of South Asia can be seen in the Nawab of Karnatak's dispute with the VOC over the pearl trade. In a 1770 meeting with the Dutch envoy, the Nawab supposedly said that the business had to be carefully investigated because "the whole country up to Delhi" knew that the envoy had arrived to negotiate business with him.[68] In short, every party in late-eighteenth-century South Asia still considered themselves to be subjects of the Mughal Empire and their status within the Mughal hierarchy was still highly relevant to interstate competition. Some fascinating examples of how the Nawab of Karnatak and the EIC used their status vis-à-vis the Mughals to attempt to bluff each other while vying for political status will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

The work of Faruqui on Nizam al-Mulk highlights another interesting aspect of how Mughal validation had the potential to offer advantages to its successor states. He argues that Mughal links helped bring about the southerly migration of service people from the Mughal heartlands. Talented individuals from the old imperial centers—administrators, soldiers, and cultural agents—were indispensable to the formation of any newly-emerging polity. All the eighteenth-century Mughal successor states were in intense competition with one another to acquire manpower from the increasingly fragile Mughal Empire. Yet, a far-flung southern state like the Deccan also had to contend with the widespread perception that the South, despite offering lucrative opportunities, was an alien political and cultural environment and that the journey there was fraught with hardships. The recruitment of experts thus became a very difficult task, one that the Nizam of the Deccan desperately sought to achieve. It was by emphasizing his lineage and his continuing links with the Mughal Empire that the Nizam managed to negate such poor perceptions of the South and his dynasty. Largely as a result of this policy, the Deccan was ultimately successful in drawing large numbers of north Indians, Iranians, and Central Asians into the state's service.[69] In my opinion, this argument can also be applied to Karnatak. As shall be seen in Chapters Four and Five, a lack of soldiers and administrators was a significant problem, one that plagued the Walajah dynasty in its early years.

[68] NA, VOC 3292, Mission to Arcot by Pieter Sluiysken, Sep.-Dec. 1770, 721r-721v. In Dutch: "Door het geheele land ja selfs tot dielie toe, is bekend, dat zulk een groot heer om eenige saake aftehandelen is hier gekomen (…)."
[69] Faruqui, "At Empire's End," 35-36.