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 5: Nawabi Pen

This chapter discusses "the people of the pen." Like the chapter on the people of the sword, it will begin by sketching some important background information and the main debates regarding the early modern South Asian court, the main workplace of the people of the pen. Then, I will briefly examine the Nawab's self-representation as a "man of the pen" and some of the most important sub-groups of the people of the pen. Finally, I will discuss what these people, their changing circumstances, and their rise and fall can tell us about broader historical developments in Karnatak and in eighteenth-century South Asia as a whole.

5.1 Early Modern South Asian Courts

Perso-Islamic Court Culture

Of all the Muslim conquerors, it was the Turanis and Afghans from Central Asia who were the most successful at establishing long-lasting polities in South Asia in the late medieval and early modern periods. As such, various aspects of Turkic rule were visible in many Indo-Islamic states and courts, and some examples were given in the previous chapters. No less obvious a characteristic that was shared by all the Indo-Islamic realms was the highly-Persianized state apparatus and court culture.[1] Here, I will briefly discuss the process of Persianization in South Asia and some of the most significant consequences it had for local elite society.

According to Alam, the domain of Islam can be divided (though certainly not in any clear-cut way) into two main politico-cultural zones. The first is the so-called Arab sphere—areas that have an Islamic culture based primarily on Arab traditions and often use Arabic as the main language of religion. The other is the Perso-Islamic cultural sphere, where Islamic ideas and practices are heavily influenced by Persian language, literature, tradition, and court and elite cultures; this area includes most of the non-Arab areas of the eastern part of the Islamic world.[2] South Asia was gradually integrated into the Perso-Islamic world, as many semi-nomadic warriors of various ethnicities—Turanis, Afghans, Iranis—invaded the region from that sphere. In the wake of these conquerors came large numbers of warriors and administrators from various parts of the Perso-Islamic world, ready to join the armies and administrations of the new Indo-Muslim states of North India and the Deccan. These people

[1] Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India: c. 1200-1800* (London: Hurst, 2004), 115-119, 143-144.
[2] For further discussions on this division in universal Islam, see: Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 7, 142; Francis Robinson, *The 'Ulama of Farangi Mahall and Islamic Culture in South Asia* (London: Hurst, 2001), 9-12.

brought with them Persian-style statecraft, court culture, and scholarship. The zenith of Persianization in North India occurred in the mid-sixteenth century, during the reign of the third Mughal emperor, Akbar. According to some scholars, his motives for this Persianization policy were his wish to bring in Iranis to balance the power of ambitious Turani nobles and his desire to elevate his semi-nomadic Mughal house to the same status as the Iranian shahs, both culturally and intellectually.[3] Persianization also took place across the Deccan sultanates, both earlier and more consistently than it had in the North, mainly as a result of their strong links with the Safavid Empire through sea routes and their shared Shia faith, as discussed in Chapter Three.

The Integration of Islamic and Indic Elements

From the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, "orientalist" ideas regarding Hindu-Muslim communalism (Hindu-Muslim conflict) dominated the historiography of South Asia. This has had a profound impact on popular understanding of all aspects of early modern states and court society in the region up to the present day. In the last three decades, a group of scholars has attempted to correct this "anachronistic" perspective by arguing that, in reality, Hindu-Muslim communalism played a far less significant role in early modern South-Asian states than has been portrayed previously. These historians, including Phillip Wagoner, Muzaffar Alam, Susan Bayly, Catherine Asher and Cynthia Talbot, have together developed a new framework for early modern South Asia as being highly tolerant to different religion and culture. For them, the term "Muslim period"—which is often given to South Asia in the period roughly 1200-1750 to differentiate it from the preceding "Hindu era"—is inappropriate. To prove the veracity of their argument, these scholars have highlighted various examples of how various "Indic" elements—people, material cultural, rulership rituals, artistic styles, etc.—were embraced and integrated into early modern "Islamicate" courts by many Muslim rulers of both North India and the Deccan.[4] A movement in the opposite direction—the embrace of Islamicate personal and cultural elements—was also visible in the contemporaneous Indic courts of the Vijayanagara Empire and its Nayaka and Poligar successor states in South India.[5] Hence the distinction becomes rather blurred.

[3] Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 122-128, 133-134; Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 24.
[4] Phillip B. Wagoner, "'Sultan among Hindu Kings': Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55, 4 (1996): 853-854; Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 3-5, 64. More examples of the existence of various Indic elements in Indo-Islamicate courts can be found in: Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 129; Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 88, 105, 132, 168-169; Sharma, *Mughal Government and Administration*, 132.
[5] For further illustrations of the embrace of Islamicate culture in these South Indian "Indic" courts, see: Wagoner, "Sultan among Hindu Kings," 853-854; Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 53, 70-74, 163, 176-177, 221, 239-240; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 61-62.

According to a strict interpretation of the Sharia, one propounded by some Muslim theorists, the incorporation of Indic elements by Muslim rulers breaches its rules. This, then, leads to questions regarding the ideological basis of such incorporations. It is understandable that, in a context like South Asia, where Muslims were ruling over a majority Hindu (and other non-Muslim) population, accommodation with these elements was necessary to ensure peace. However, Alam has gone on to argue that the South Asian Muslim rulers' approach was not based simply on pragmatism or compromise. From the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries, Muslim elites in South Asia had developed important ethical concepts that allowed and even encouraged cross-cultural integration, both at their courts and in wider society. These principles can be seen in a set of Islamic political texts, known as *akhlaq*, that circulated widely in early modern South Asia, and especially in the Mughal intellectual sphere.[6] The akhlaq texts, highly influenced by the Greek legacy of rationalism, encourage generosity and openness in bringing non-Islamic norms into the Islamic sphere. The famous akhlaq of Nasir al-Din, for example, suggests that the ideal ruler can be either a Muslim or a non-Muslim; a non-Muslim who is just and talented can serve society better than an unjust Muslim sultan. The ideal leader of a polity is thus one who protects all members of society. Therefore, in akhlaq norms, people's rights are not determined by their religion.[7]

Tolerance in Eighteenth-century South Asia?

Scholars have, up to now, mostly accepted that there was, in general, a syncretic atmosphere in the South Asian courts, at least up to the first decades of the seventeenth century. However, for the subsequent period, opinions on the subject differ. The classical narrative, suggested by both older and more recent generations of scholars, is that the level of religious tolerance in South Asia fundamentally changed during the reign of the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan and was ended in the late seventeenth century, during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. Both these rulers followed the orthodox Islam, and the latter was particularly zealous in attempting to enforce its principles.[8]

[6] As Alam explains, there is a set of Islamic political literature that had a considerable impact on the political thought of Muslim rulers and elites, one which is collectively known as "mirrors for princes." These "mirrors for princes" can be divided into two types. One is *adab*, which emphasizes a narrow interpretation of Islamic law that is based on a theological interpretation and conforms to strict orthodox Islam. The other is akhlaq literature, which allows more liberal interpretations and often deviates from orthodox principles. The influence of akhlaq can be seen in many famous Mughal texts, such as the *Ain-i Akbari*, the *Mau'izah-i Jahangiri*, and large numbers of Mughal edicts that were sent to subordinate princes and governors throughout the empire. Akhlaq was also a basic requirement of Mughal courtiers, both Muslim and Hindu, something that can be seen in the writings of Chandra Bhan, a renowned Brahman secretary at the imperial court during the seventeenth century. See: Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 3-5, 11-12, 50-52, 62-65, 130.

[7] Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India*, 10-13, 17-19, 55-59. Nasir al-Din Tusi was a prominent thirteenth-century scholar whose akhlaq writings were influential on many South Asian courts.

[8] Sharma, *Mughal Government and Administration*, 179-180, 185, 188-190, 193-194.

On the other hand, a number of "revisionist" historians—such as Muzaffar Alam, Catherine Asher, Cynthia Talbot, John F. Richards, and most recently Rajeev Kinra—have argued that communal conflict was a legacy of British colonialism and only began in the nineteenth century, not in the Mughal period and not in the eighteenth century. They argue that the few exceptional cases of religious discrimination during pre-colonial times were merely political tools used by individual rulers in response to opposition; while the two aforementioned Mughal emperors presented themselves as pious orthodox Muslims and issued many orders to remove Hindu elements from the imperial apparatus, in reality, such orders were only applied to a few Hindu mansabdars who had caused serious strife. It was thus caused by political conflict rather than religious discrimination. According to Asher and Talbot, the 96 new Maratha mansabdars who were enlisted in the imperial service is a good example of Emperor Aurangzeb's pragmatism.[9] Their argument follows that of Richards, who states that Aurangzeb's dismissal of high-ranking Brahmin officers in Golconda after its annexation was an exceptional case, the result of political expediency rather than religious motives.[10] Kinra has investigated the Mughal court during the reign of the emperors Jahangir, Shah Jahan, and Aurangzeb, and declared that, up to and including Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperors and their courtiers remained committed "to justice in the akhlaq tradition" and "to a relatively nonsectarian ethos of civility and gentleman conduct that crossed communal boundaries."[11]

Despite new arguments and fresh evidence from many revisionist scholars on this issue, lately a number of rebuttals to this perspective—which re-confirm the classical narrative of communal conflict—have appeared. One historian who supports the classical assumption is Gijs Kruijtzer, who has studied the seventeenth-century Deccan. According to Kruijtzer, while there certainly was a large degree of religious tolerance within the Islamic courts of pre-colonial South Asia, this was significantly reduced in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, especially during the conflict between the Emperor Aurangzeb and the Maratha ruler Shivaji and following the annexation of the Deccan sultanates by the Mughals. In his words, after 1687 "it was simply no longer possible for political elites to experiment quite so freely and uninhibitedly with religious boundaries in India, or at least not in the way in which they had done previously."[12] Furthermore, he argues that modern Hindu-Muslim

[9] Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 226-227, 231, 236.
[10] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 64-67.
[11] Rajeev Kinra, *Writing Self, Writing Empire: Chandar Bhan Brahman and the Cultural World of the Indo-Persian State Secretary* (South Asia Across the Disciplines; Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2015), 292-293; see also 2, 5, 48, 51, 53.
[12] Gijs Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India* (Leiden: Leiden University Press, 2009), 267.

communal conflict has its roots in the period shortly after the 1680s. The eighteenth century, especially in the Deccan, thus unquestionably saw increased xenophobia and communalism. According to him, the eighteenth century might not have been a time of "pervasive Hindu-Muslim conflict," but it was certainly one of "uncontained group conflict," when large numbers of people "defined along lines of religion, language, region of origin, or occupation (not to say caste or class), or a mix of several of these […]."[13] Another historian, Juan Cole, who studies eighteenth-century Awadh, has argued similarly, stating that there were signs of less tolerance and more factionalism, something caused by the religious policies of the Awadh Nawabi government. Its strong support of Shiism resulted in increased tensions between the Shia and all other sectarians, both Muslim and non-Muslim, and this laid the foundations for increased religious communalism in the nineteenth century.[14]

The recent works of revisionist and counter-revisionist scholars, discussed above, demonstrate that the nature of South Asia as regards communal conflict during the late pre-colonial period continues to be debated. We have seen in previous chapters that, while no Hindu women married into the Walajah family (as did happen with the Mughals), the men of the sword who surrounded the Nawab were not discriminated against due to their beliefs or ethnicities. Chapters Five and Six will shed more light on the Nawab's court components and networks, and the case of Nawabi Karnatak will lead to some fresh observations and clarifications regarding this on-going debate.

5.2 Nawabi Self-Fashioning

> He [God] placed you, o scribes (kuttab), in the most honoured position of the men of good education and virtues, of knowledge and composure. By your efforts the good things of the caliphate become well organized.[15]

These words, from the treatise *Risala ila al-kuttab*, written in the first half of the eighth century by the administrator Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya, are quoted by Van Berkel to reflect how the ideal penman was defined. As Van Berkel goes on to point out, in pre-modern Perso-Islamic "mirrors for princes" or "advice" literature (such as adab, akhlaq and *wasiyya*—advice from father to son or an administrator to his replacement), the basic qualities for which

[13] Kruijtzer, *Xenophobia in Seventeenth-Century India*, 277; see also 8-9, 257, 262, 266-268.
[14] Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 115, 223-228.
[15] 'Abd al-Hamid b. Yahya, "Risala ila l-kuttub," in Muhammad Kurd Ali (ed.), *Rasa'il al-bulagha* (Cairo, 1913), 172, quoted in Van Berkel, "The People of the Pen," 384.

someone could be praised were—in addition to personal virtue and good character—an extensive education in many subjects and skills related to epistolary, literature, history, law, religion, geography, poetry, and so on. He also had to be refined and urbane—as opposed to uncouth—in all social and cultural situations, should know how to eat properly, dress codes, and rules of conduct, and know rhetoric or diplomatic conversation, among other things. For people with a specific profession—such as court administrator, scribe, or revenue collector—scribal and accounting skills and financial knowledge were also required.[16]

The Nawab was often praised by Europeans when they first met him as a result of his affable manners and courtesy.[17] Texts produced at his court and European records both describe how, in public ceremonies, he often dressed richly, presenting a majestic image of himself. For instance, it was once recorded that the Nawab had jewels on his head bound to a turban, to which was attached a fine feather on one side. His body was also decorated with jewels, strings of very fine pearls, and a necklace with an enormous square diamond pendant of immense value.[18] He went to great lengths to present his court as refined and civilized. In public ceremonies, it was always richly decorated and all the courtiers were neatly and richly dressed and trained in how to behave correctly.[19] He learnt the English language and European manners and customs well enough to interact with foreign visitors without experiencing any sense of inferiority. However, beyond such general displays of civility, the sources are silent regarding the Nawab's attempts to represent himself as possessing the other qualities, mentioned above, required by men of the pen. The Nawab's education and scholarly talent are not highlighted. Despite being known as a benefactor of many scholars, there is no indication that he composed anything himself. The main court chronicle certainly describes the Nawab's virtues—such as his generosity (*sakhawat*), modesty (*tawadu*), mercy (*rahim*) and kindness (*shafaqat*), justice (*adl*) and impartiality (*insaf*), intelligence (*fahm*)and sagacity (*firasat*)—but the examples that are given to illustrate these are all related to his pious religious acts or military skill.[20] In sum, the Nawab's self-representation made little attempt to present himself as possessing the qualities required of a man of the pen, especially when compared to those of the sword that he possessed.

[16] Van Berkel, "The People of the Pen," 386-387, 415, 428.
[17] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/1, DGP, Jul. 1770, 293.
[18] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 25 Jan. 1771, 161.
[19] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 9 Sep. 1773.
[20] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 12-14, 20-21; for the Persian version, see: Handi, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, xix.

5.3 People of the Pen

Persianized Hindu Scribal Castes from Hindustan and the Deccan

Unlike the men of the sword, in the short list of elite officers who surrounded Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan that are recorded in the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* there is found only one name of a Muslim who clearly occupied a civil position: Malik Aslam Khan. He is referred to as "a good-natured Nāiṯ [Nawayat]" who was entrusted with the position of head of the chronicle office.[21] Certainly, there must have been other Muslims who held civil posts at the Karnatak court, yet both the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and EIC sources suggest that, during the time of the old Nawab and in the early period of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's reign, the court administration was dominated by various Persianized Hindu officers from the Kayastha and Brahmin communities who had followed Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan from Hindustan or the Deccan. Some of the most important were: 1) Raja Sampat Rai, a Kayastha who occupied the position of chief diwan; 2) Rai Ganga Bashan (aka Bashan Das), a Kayastha or Brahmin who was appointed court treasurer; and 3) Manu Lal, a Kayastha who held the position of head clerk (*mir-munshi*) in the administration office (*daftar-i kardani*). Raja Sampat Rai had been a qanungo at Gopamau, and thus was a fellow-countryman of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan. There is no information regarding when or how he started to serve the old Nawab, but it was certainly before the latter became the ruler of Karnatak. Rai Ganga Bashan had served the old Nawab from the time the latter was the governor of Chicacole, and the Deccan seems to have been his home region. Manu Lal began to serve the old Nawab when the latter was the governor of Hyderabad.[22] Also listed are the names of other high-ranking Hindu officials whose castes or communities are not clearly identified. They were the underlings of the Kayastha officers mentioned above, so it may be assumed that they belonged to the same interest group(s) at court. The names most often seen in the sources are Antagi Pandit and Ninaree, who may have been Marathi Brahmins.[23] It is extremely likely that there were many other Kayastha and Brahmin migrants from North India and the Deccan who worked in these three main offices of revenue collection, treasury, and secretary.

His position as chief diwan means that Raja Sampat Rai had been one of the highest officials within Karnatak. The diary of Ananda Ranga also reflects that from the perspective of the diarist and his French employer in Pondicherry Raja Sampat Rai was the most

[21] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 109.
[22] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 109; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 49.
[23] IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 25 Jun. 1753, 110-111.

important Karnatak minister during the reign of Nawab Anwar al-Din, whom they supposed to please next to the old Nawab and his two eldest sons, in dealing business with Arcot.[24] Yet the struggle between the two sons of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan—Muhammad Mahfuz Khan (the elder prince) and Muhammad Ali Khan (the Nawab)—over the governorship of Trichinopoly in the mid-1740s may provide the best indication of the influence that this Kayastha minister and his associates had. Originally, Trichinopoly had been granted to the elder prince, Mahfuz Khan, but after he made a number of mistakes the old Nawab retook control of it and was going to grant it to Muhammad Ali Khan instead. It was at this point that the Kayastha diwan revealed himself to be a supporter of Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, because he immediately secured a bill of exchange (*hundi*) of 300,000 rupees and gave it to the elder prince to buy back his position from the senior Nawab. However, this move failed, because, in response, Muhammad Ali Khan's faction immediately provided his father's treasury with 300,000 rupees in cash. Raja Sampat Rai, who understood that the removal of Mahfuz Khan would signify a decline in his influence, continued trying to save the fortunes of that prince. Through his diplomatic skills and his network at the Deccan court, he was able to procure a letter from Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah recommending that Anwar al-Din Khan appoint Mahfuz Khan as the na'ib of the Arcot suba; this implied that the Nizam was acknowledging that Mahfuz Khan was the heir-apparent of his father as the future Karnatak Nawab.[25] In this anecdote, while doubts could be raised about the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*'s details regarding the old Nawab's preference for Muhammad Ali Khan over Mahfuz Khan, there is no reason to doubt the parts related to Raja Sampat Rai's role at court. Evidently, the power of this Kayastha diwan could make him a kingmaker. As a group, his faction was likely very influential at the Walajah court during this early period. In a work by Bellenoit on Hindu scribes in North India, he suggests that the Kayasthas were usually petty, subordinate scribes and revenue managers in the Indo-Muslim courts, who did not match the Muslim nobility, and not even with the Hindu Rajputs.[26] However, the case of Raja Sampat Rai in Karnatak proves that this assessment was not always true.

Considering their long history working at various Indo-Muslim courts, it is not surprising that Persianized Hindu scribes dominated the Karnatak court. Obviously, in the ancient Indic political system, while Kshastriya were supposed to be "of the sword," it was the Brahmins who generally held positions of the pen. The Brahmins were in great demand,

[24] *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, I: 281; II, 382; III, 346.
[25] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 130-134.
[26] Hayden Bellenoit, "Between Qanungos and Clerks: The Cultural and Service Worlds of Hindustan's Pensmen, 1750-1850," *Modern Asian Studies* 48, 4 (2014): 879, 881, 885-886.

for both their religious ability (e.g. in ritual and religious law) and their secular administrative skills. However, in the early medieval period, several other Hindu professional scribe communities gradually emerged in northern India. The most prominent of these were the Khatris and the Kayasthas, who were to challenge and compete with the Brahmins for secular administrative positions.[27] Each of these Hindu scribal communities would teach their members, from a young age, the specific knowledge and skills required for administrative and financial roles in government service, such as languages, writing, and accountancy. When Muslim courts were founded across South Asia, large numbers of Khatris, Kayasthas, and Brahmins were recruited to serve as assistants to the Muslim administrators, who were mainly immigrant Iranis. These Hindu scribes gradually became integrated into the Perso-Islamic world, acquiring the knowledge, culture, and (Persian) language of the Muslim rulers. Over time, Persianized Hindus not only came to dominate the lower strata of court administrations but some talented individuals even rose to high positions, such as chief or minister, posts which had previously been dominated by Indo-Iranis. According to Alam and Subrahmanyam, many of these Persianized Hindu scribes and administrators were also recruited into the Mughal courts, and their numbers rose quickly as Mughal territory expanded. Later, from the early eighteenth century, there was "a veritable explosion in their ranks" in many post-Mughal states, the most prominent being the Khatri officers in Bengal and Karnatak.[28] Bellenoit also highlights the domination of the "Rai Kayastha family of Lucknow" of the lower-ranks of the civil administration in eighteenth-century Awadh. According to him, since the 1600s these Kayasthas had worked as revenue and paper managers for the Mughals, continued to do so during the Nawabi state, and carried on even later, during the British Raj.[29] In another study, on the region of Banaras in the late eighteenth century, Cohn suggests that one third of qanungo posts in the region (out of a total of 168) were occupied by the Kayasthas or Baniyas. They were the largest proportion; Muslims numbered only seven.[30]

In South India, before the eighteenth century, Khatris and Kayasthas were also recruited into the courts of the Deccan sultans, but their numbers and influence were less than

[27] Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Contested Conjunctures: Brahman Communities and 'Early Modernity' in India," *American Historical Review* 118, 3 (2013): 774-775. The origins of the Kayasthas or Khatris are still the subject of debate. According to Arnold Kaminsky and Roger Long, some Brahmanical religious texts refer to them as early as the seventh century. The Kayastha was originally a mixed community of literate men from different castes, recruited to work as scribes in various courts and provincial administrations. But later, they gradually cut their ties with their original castes, married among themselves, and developed into a new sub-caste based on this profession. See: Arnold P. Kaminsky and Roger D. Long, *India Today: An Encyclopedia of Life in the Republic*, vol. I (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2011), 403-405.
[28] Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad," 357; Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 320, 369.
[29] For more details about the position of qanungo, see: Bellenoit, "Between Qanungos and Clerks," 904.
[30] Cohn, "The Initial British Impact on India," 228.

in the northern Indian courts. This is mainly because large numbers of Brahmin families or communities in South India also became professional, Persianized scribes in order to advance socially and economically and to compete with both the Irani migrants and the Hindu scribal castes from the North.[31] The most prominent of these were the Marathi-speaking Brahmins of the western Deccan and the Telegu-speaking Brahmins of the eastern Deccan. There is evidence of Marathi-Brahmin scribes serving in the courts of the Vijayanagara Empire and its Nayaka successor states, the Bahmani state and later Deccan sultanates, and the regional courts of local petty rulers, as well as in European enclaves along the Malabar Coast. The influence of the Marathi Brahmins increased in the western Deccan from the late seventeenth century in the Maratha state founded by Shivaji. However, they reached their political zenith in the eighteenth century, when the Maratha state was *de facto* ruled by Chitpavan Brahmin Peshwas.[32]

According to Richards, in the eastern Deccan the Telegu Brahmins dominated the lower strata of the Golconda administrative and revenue departments during the reigns of many Qutbshahi sultans, yet they reached their zenith in the period 1670-1686, when Sultan Abdul Hasan appointed Madanna Pandit, a Telegu Brahmin, as his wazir. This was the first time in history that a non-Muslim had been wazir of an Indian Muslim state, and Madanna wasted no time in seizing control of both pillars—sword and pen—of it by appointing members of his own community to important positions. However, this was short-lived, as in 1686 Aurangzeb forced Abd al-Hasan to dismiss the Brahman and his faction. This was followed by a massacre of Brahmin officials in Golconda by a Deccani mob who were angered by their rule. The Brahmins who survived the massacre lost their positions, and they disappeared completely when the Mughals brought Golconda into their Deccan province, replacing them with Muslim governors and northern Persianized Hindu scribes.[33] According to Alam and Subrahmanyam, the Khatris were the first of the northern Hindu scribal communities to rise to prominence in the administration and revenue offices of that Mughal province. However, after the Deccan fell to the Turani faction of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah and his successors, it was the Kayasthas who came to dominate.[34]

[31] O'Hanlon, "Contested Conjunctures," 775.
[32] Wink, *Land and Sovereignty*, 51; O'Hanlon, "Contested Conjunctures," 775, 783. See also Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are? Pandit Networks and the Problem of Livelihoods in Early Modern Western India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 45, 3 (2008): 381-416; David Washbrook, "The Maratha Brahmin Model in South India: An Afterword," *The Indian Economic and Social History Review* 47, 4 (2010): 597-615.
[33] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 38-47, 64.
[34] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 369; Leonard, "Hyderabad Political System and Its Participants," 580-581.

Developments in Karnatak were closely related to those in the eastern Deccan. From the 1670s until 1686, the Telegu Brahmin minister Madanna's brother, Akkanna, and various other relatives were the governors of Golconda territory in northern Karnatak, causing a new wave of Telegu-Brahmin migration to the Coromandel Coast.[35] In the early eighteenth century, when the Mughals gained control of the region, large numbers of Khatris were sent to assist the newly-appointed Muslim governors. When the Mughals appointed Da'ud Khan Panni as the fawjdar of Karnatak and Sa'adat Allah Khan as the diwan, the posts of peshkar and sarishtadar were given to two Khatris. After Nawab Sa'adat Allah Khan, a Nawayat, founded an independent state, it is said that a Khatri—Lala Dakhni Rai—played a significant role in it. Many other members of Dakhni Rai's family were also part of the entourage of the Nawayat Nawabs.[36] One such individual who is particularly significant for us is Khub Chand, because in Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's reign there was a prominent court poet and munshi named Rai Khub Chand;[37] it is highly probable that he was the same person as the Nawayat's Khatri officer. Furthermore, we can probably assume that other Khatris, who had moved to the region during the Mughal or Nawayat period, were also integrated into the Walajah court. However, after the Walajahs gained power, the leading civil positions, at least in the early period, were all occupied by Kayasthas; they had served in the Deccan and moved to Karnatak in the 1740s, along with the Walajah rulers.

Returning briefly to the previous anecdote regarding the competition between Prince Mahfuz Khan and Prince Muhammad Ali Khan over Trichinopoly, the account suggests that the Kayastha diwan Raja Sampat Rai had been a firm supporter of Mahfuz Khan and thus, it could be inferred, the natural enemy of Prince Muhammad Ali Khan. However, after gaining the Karnatak throne, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan chose to keep this Kayastha in his post and let him control the Karnatak treasury throughout almost all the 1750s. In 1758, he was entrusted with another important post, that of the Nawab's representative in his business-dealings with the EIC in Madras, especially those relating to the ruler's financial affairs.[38] Why were this Kayastha diwan and his faction so important to the Karnatak court that the Nawab chose to reconcile with them? Certainly, part of the answer is the skills, influence, and experience in revenue management within the region that they had gained during the reign of the Nawab's father; the fact that the diwan could quickly raise 300,000 rupees for Mahfuz

[35] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 38-44.
[36] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World*, 368-369.
[37] Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 92; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 26 Jan. 1774.
[38] IOR, P/240/10, MPP, Madras consultation, Jun. 1752, 217; P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 17 Mar. 1753 (no page), 25 Jun. 1753, 110-12; E/4/861, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 23 Mar. 1759, 1078.

Khan is good evidence of this. Also, in a time of conflict it may have been difficult for the new Nawab to find a replacement of similar quality. Yet, another possibility is the influence of this Kayastha beyond Karnatak's boundary. Raja Sampat Rai's success in lobbying the Hyderabad court to declare the eldest prince to be the heir of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan suggests that he possessed a useful network of Persianized Hindu administrators in the courts of the Deccan and Karnatak.

Another example may help confirm the existence of such a network between the two courts and demonstrate how it could impact politics in Karnatak. In this second case, the network proved extremely useful for Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan. According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Rai Ganga Bashan, the previously-mentioned Karnatak court treasurer, was an old friend of and had good connections with one Raja Ram Das (aka Raja Raghunath Das). The latter was a Brahmin, a soldier, a native of Chicacole, and one of the most prominent Deccan courtiers, and he had been a bakhshi of the army during the reign of Nizam Nasir Jang. In the early 1750s, Nizam Nasir Jang—the Mughal superior and supporter of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan during his wars with the Nawayats—ordered the Nawab to end his relationship with the British and drive them from the Coromandel Coast. In an effort to prevent his allies—who were also a potential new source of military support—from being expelled, the Nawab sent his diwan Raja Sampat Rai and his treasurer Rai Ganga Bashan, along with a large sum of money, to ask for help from Raja Ram Das, who at that time was bakhshi of the Deccan army. As the story goes, it was as a result of the "sweet words" of the two Hindu officers and "the familiarity of their long friendship" that Raja Ram Das eventually agreed to help the Karnatak Nawab convince the Nizam to reverse his decision. Eventually, they were able to calm the rage of the Deccan ruler and stop him from marching against the British settlements.[39] According to the *Maathir al-Umara*, this Brahmin would later play a significant role in the murder of Nizam Nasir Jang, and was promoted by the next Nizam, Muzaffar Jang, to the Deccan diwan. After Muzaffar Jang was murdered, Raja Ram Das and other grandees made Prince Salabat Jang the new Deccan Nizam, and the former held the position of wazir.[40] Thus, we again find a Hindu holding an extremely high-level position at a Muslim court. This Brahmin not only survived the wars of succession but his influence in the Deccan was that of a kingmaker, similar to the contemporaneous case of Raja Sampat Rai in Karnatak. These examples suggest that it was not only their scribal and financial skills but also their influence in and lucrative networks with other South Indian courts that made these

[39] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 46-50.
[40] *Maathir al-Umara*, II: 433-434.

northern Hindu scribes or administrators valuable to Muslim rulers, including Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan. One may compare this to the network of the Marathi Brahmins of the western Deccan in the mid seventeenth century, as depicted in an article by Rosalind O'Hanlon and Christopher Minkoski. During that period, Marathi Brahmin scribes were used by all the regional rulers—Shivaji, the raja of Savantwadi; the sultan of Bijapur; and the Portuguese in Goa—as political agents to make contact and conduct negotiations with each other.[41]

Although Raja Sampat Rai and his network were valuable to the Nawab, time proved that the former never warmed to the new monarch. Either his allegiance to the elder prince never wavered or his career under the Nawab did not progress as he had wished, but when Mahfuz Khan rebelled against the new Nawab in the mid-1760s, Raja Sampat Rai chose to join him once more. He acted as Mahfuz Khan's envoy to the Mysore and Deccan courts, attempting to secure their assistance in the fight against Nawab Muhammad Ali.[42] After this, the Kayastha diwan never served the Nawab again. Antagi Pandit, a subordinate Brahmin colleague, was appointed as his replacement and as the Nawab's agent in his dealings with the EIC.[43] Yet, soon after, the career of this old Brahmin servant also ended badly; as the Nawab told Paterson in the early 1770s, Antagi had played various tricks on the Europeans—or was corrupt—so the Nawab had felt obliged to remove him.[44]

From the late 1760s, sometime after the loss of Raja Sampat Rai and the removal of Antagi Pandit, some interesting changes at the Karnatak court can be discerned, particularly the rise of prominent new figures within the sphere of "the pen," details of which will be discussed below. However, I would like to emphasize here that the rise of these newcomers did not mean the total expunging of those who were already at the court. Those from the latter group who caused the Nawab no trouble were promoted. For example, the Kayastha mir-munshi Manu Lal is said to have received "the right to ride an elephant and the title of 'Rāj'" from the Nawab.[45] In records from the 1770s and 1780s, one still can find many Persianized Hindu officers serving at the court, and it is highly likely that these were migrants from the North and the Deccan who had moved to the region during the Mughal expansion and subsequently.

[41] O'Hanlon and Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are?," 391.
[42] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 264.
[43] IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 316; P/D/44, MP, MMSC, 31 Aug. 1760, 736.
[44] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Jan. 1773, 129.
[45] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 25.

These included Rai Rayan (the mir-munshi), Rai Venkatesh Das (the head clerk of the treasury), and Rai Bishamdas (the Nawab's treasurer),[46] as well as Bhog (or Bog) Chand and Kishan Chand, who worked as a munshi; the latter was also the writer of the *Ruznama*.[47] There was also Rai Khub Chand, the court poet who, according to my earlier assertion, was one of the Khatris who had previously served the Nawayats. There are also signs that there were some northern Rajput servants, since one can find various courtiers with the surname Singh. These include: Rai Singh, who seems to have worked in a financial post because he was ordered by the Nawab to settle the account of sahukars; Jai Singh, who was appointed treasurer after the previous treasurer, Rai Bishamdas, had died; and Chater Singh, who was ordered to take care of the rice supply.[48]

Muslim Counsellors

As is reflected in the *Ruznama* and the diary of Paterson, by the early 1770s there was no individual officer or faction at the Karnatak court in possession of exceptionally high executive power or the ability to control the court or state affairs apart from the Nawab himself. It could be said that the Nawab was relatively successful in centralizing power, since all important affairs of state had to be referred to him before any decision was made. Yet, the Nawab was not able to decide or manage everything by himself. For almost all issues, he would summon a small group of his most trusted men, whom he would consult; I will collectively term these the Nawab's "Privy Council." In the Privy Council, the head of which was the Nawab himself, sat two Muslim officers—Saiyid Asim Khan and Abd al-Rashid Khan—who were the most indispensable. They were his two principal counsellors, and the Nawab would summon them daily to request advice on and assistance in all matters, both large and small, related to the affairs of state, whether public or private issues. Saiyid Muhammad Asim Khan Bahadur is referred to in various documents as the Nawab's chief diwan, while the post of Abd al-Rashid Khan is rather confusing. He is sometimes referred to as the "steward" and sometimes also as the diwan. As such, they were not just the Nawab's closest counsellors but were also the controllers of the civil administration and revenue management. As they are rarely seen in the historical record prior to the late 1760s, it can be assumed that these two Muslims were part of a new generation of administrators who had only recently gained the Nawab's trust, and they had been promoted to prominent positions to replace some of the older and more influential courtiers from his father's reign, such as Raja

[46] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 2-3 May 1773, bundle 67, 26 Jun. 1774.
[47] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 26 Apr. 1773, bundle 67, 26 Jan. 1774.
[48] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 12 May and 2 Jun. 1774.

Sampat Rai and Antagi Pandit. To these Council members could be added the Nawab's two eldest sons (Prince Ghulam Husain and Prince Modar al-Mulk), one of the Nawab's Brahmins, named Venkatachalam, and various other courtiers, depending on the matter under discussion.

Abd al-Rashid Khan was the second son of General Muhammad Najib Khan (senior) and the younger brother of General Muhammad Najib Khan (junior), both of whom held the post of supreme military commander of Karnatak and whose lives were discussed in the preceding chapter.[49] Abd al-Rashid Khan was likely one of the Nawab's companions who had grown up with him, similar to his elder brother. After the death of his father while fighting alongside the old Nawab in 1749, his family temporarily migrated to the Deccan. Abd al-Rashid Khan returned to Karnatak around the late 1750s and, after some time, gained the confidence of the Nawab and obtained the post of diwan-i khas.[50] In an EIC document from 1767, he is called a "steward" to the Nawab, and he appears between the late 1760s and the 1770s as the Nawab's representative in various vital matters relating to land revenue, trade, the payment of the Nawab's debts, and other affairs related to court administration.[51] It is very possible that he remained in this trusted position until his death in 1777.

At this point, the nature of Abd al-Rashid Khan's family should be underlined once more. While his elder brother became the commander-in-chief of Karnatak's forces, he—the second brother—was made the Nawab's diwan, steward, and one of his closest advisers. The third brother, Abd al-Quddus Khan, also held an important position at the Nawab's court. Two other relatives, Manauwar Ali Khan and Chisti [Ya…] Khan, held the posts of *mir saman* (a type of steward) and amildar of Chidambaram, respectively.[52] This family must have proved their loyalty to the Nawab to the utmost as its members were trusted with the highest posts of both pen and sword.

Saiyid Asim Khan, like the Walajahs, had been in the company of the first Deccan Nizam. His grandfather, Muhammad Abd Allah, had been a merchant at Surat, and had known Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan in northern India. Later, Saiyid Muhammad Asim Khan served Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah in the Deccan, and the latter appointed him governor (*hakim*) of Masulipatnam. After that, he was chosen to be a tutor to Prince Nasir Jang. But, during the

[49] While the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* refers to Abd al-Rashid Khan as the second son of Muhammad Najib Khan, Gurney, instead, thought he was his son-in-law; see: Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 233.
[50] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 244. The term *khas* (which is both Arabic and Persian) means special, particular, or private.
[51] IOR, P/240/25, MPP, Madras Consultation, Feb 1767, 67; P/240/34, MPP, Madras Consultations, (no date) 1772, 568, 683, 703.
[52] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 19; Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 233; Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 147.

tumultuous years of the early 1750s, he was suspected by Nasir Jang of having treacherously given assistance to the French, and fell from favor. After the end of the war with the French he found employment in Karnatak under Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan. He was, for a time, the amin at Palnaud. In the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*'s account of the subjugation of Nellore in the early 1760s, it is reported that the Nawab sent one Khwaja Asim Khan to demand that his rebellious brother, Najib Allah Khan, return to obedience. This Khwaja Asim Khan was the grandson of Khwaja Abd Allah Khan and the Nawab's boon companion.[53] This figure is very possibly Saiyid Muhammad Asim Khan, and the story thus reflects the long friendship between the Nawab and this officer. In 1771, Saiyid Asim Khan was appointed Karnatak's diwan.[54] The Saiyid was often assigned by the Nawab to be his representative, with full power to manage the most important political and diplomatic negotiations with other actors. For example, he was sent to both the Maratha camp and the EIC Governor-General in Bengal when the Nawab wanted to conclude a treaty with each of them.[55] When Tanjore was conquered, everyone in the Nawab's circle wanted the responsibility of managing its revenue. However, the Nawab chose to send Muhammad Asim Khan to be the head of the administration there. At this time, the Saiyid requested that he be permitted to appoint his own peshkar. This was contrary to the usual custom, because a peshkar was supposed to be appointed by the central government to assist and check the work of the regional governor. As such, many of the Nawab's officials were against this request. However, the Nawab agreed to it because he did not want to cause the Saiyid offence. This account reflects just how high was the esteem in which Saiyid Muhammad Asim Khan was held by the Nawab.[56] However, his career in the Nawab's service did not end well. In 1788, almost at the end of the Nawab's reign, he ran into financial difficulties that involved the Nawab and fell dramatically from favor.[57]

The Madras Dubashes: The Nawab's Brahmins

In both Persian and EIC archives from the early 1770s, in addition to the two Muslim counselors (Saiyid Asim Khan and Abd al-Rashid Khan) and the Nawab's two eldest sons can be found the name of a Hindu officer, one Avangheddela (or Avanipadeli, or Avinigaddala) Venkatachalam, a participant in the Nawab's Privy Council. He is often referred to in English documents as the "Nabob's Brahmin" or "the little Brahmin." There is

[53] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 281.
[54] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 19-20.
[55] *CPC*, VI, Nawab to Governor-General, 26 Mar. 1781, 42.
[56] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 5 Jul. 1773; IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Sep. 1773, 148-149.
[57] Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 233.

no clear information as to when he started to serve the Nawab. He worked mainly as the Nawab's Persian-English interpreter and secretary, and the nature of his job meant he was present for all the important discussions between the Nawab and various British individuals, either EIC officers, private traders, or the British king's representatives. He was also summoned by the Madras Governor when the latter needed to talk about the Nawab's debts to the EIC, a task that had previously been the responsibility of the Kayastha Raja Sampat Rai.[58] According to an anecdote in Paterson's diary, on one occasion a British group tried to bribe some of the Nawab's close counsellors in order to get some business done with the court. They offered to give the diwan Saiyid Asim Khan 20,000 pagodas and the Brahmin Venkatachalam 3,000 pagodas.[59] Considering the different amounts proposed, the Brahmin's rank and prestige at court must have been small compared to the Muslim elites. However, the trust that the Nawab placed in this Brahmin does not seem to have been any less. In 1771, Paterson referred to this Brahmin servant as someone "who was now entirely in the Nabob's confidence," and in 1773 as "who by being constantly at Chepauk [Palace], and ministering to the lowest foibles, has got the ear of the Nabob."[60] Once more, in 1774, Paterson wrote: "this Brahmin knows the Nabob's disposition to a hair and in such trifles he suits his advice to the Nabob's weak side, in order to preserve his own influence."[61] Avangheddela Venkatachalam appears most often in the sources, but he was not the only member of his community or caste at the Nawab's court. In fact, the first Telegu Brahmin with that surname to have been in the Nawab's service was Guntur Venkatachalam, known as "the Nabob's Brahminey," who worked for him in the early 1760s. He was the Nawab's business agent in dealings with the EIC regarding revenue-farming, but left his post in 1765.[62] At the same time as Avangheddela in the 1770s, there were at least three other Brahmins with the same surname—Amarapundi, Kuppu, and Unigaddala Venkatachalam—at the Karnatak court. They mainly did general scribal work, made Persian-English translations of correspondence, and facilitated transactions between the Nawab and various European nations.[63]

These Venkatachalams were Telegu-speaking Brahmins from a scribal community. What made their background distinct from other groups of Hindu scribes was their close connections with the European enclaves on the Coromandel Coast in general, and the EIC in particular. Many of them were dubashes (for details, see below) for the Company or

[58] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 26 Jun. 1774.
[59] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Mar. 1773, 67.
[60] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Nov. 1771, 45; E/379/7, Dec. 1773, 125-126.
[61] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/9, DGP, Oct. 1774, 185.
[62] See the discussion in Chapter Seven.
[63] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 2, 17, 22, and 25 May 1773.

individual British officers. Guntur Venkatachalam, (possibly) the first of these Telegu Brahmins to serve the Nawab, left his court in 1765 because Robert Clive had requested that he move to Bengal to become his dubash during his second period as governor there.[64] Being summoned as Clive's favorite, it is likely that he had served Clive during the latter's time in Madras, before serving the Nawab. Due to these connections with high-ranking Company officers, it is not surprising that the Nawab used this Brahmin dubash as his agent in his business dealings with the EIC. Similarly, before Avangheddela Venkatachalam became the Nawab's Brahmin in the 1770s, he had been the dubash of various important EIC officers in the Madras Presidency, such as General Eyre Coote, Calliaud, Monson, and General Joseph Smith. [65] Also during this time, another member of his community, Aya Tamba Venkatachalam, served as the dubash of Madras Governor Joseph Dupré (1770-1773).[66] According to Gurney, the dubashes never worked alone. Their sons, brothers, and nephews also attached themselves to the Company's servants, and their jobs were passed on, from one to another, as a syndicate.[67] Hence, it may not be wrong to assume that there were many other Telegu-Brahmins who served as the dubashes of EIC officers, as well as in the Nawab's court, during this period.

What was a dubash? In her study of the eighteenth-century institution of Madras dubashes, Susan Neild-Basu explains that the word "dubash" literally means a man of two languages, and it was generally used in pre-modern South India to refer to an interpreter. But the usefulness of the dubashes, especially for the eighteenth-century Europeans in their enclaves along the Coromandel Coast, extended far beyond their language skills. They could be found in most departments of the European companies and performed a variety of tasks, including interpreter, translator, secretary, accountant, and mediator between European officials and local people and societies.[68] In more personal roles, a dubash could also function as a household steward, advisor, broker, and frequently moneylender for a European master. Many of them also supervised and took care of their patrons' private investments. Nearly every European, both officers of the companies and free traders, had at least one dubash as a personal assistant. Many dubashes first developed their skills as servants to lower-level traders, accumulating knowledge of different local regions regarding the mercantile system and the supply of and demand for commodities, as well as improving their diplomatic skills.

[64] Arasaratnam, "Trade and Political Dominion in South India," 26; Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 21, 51; IOR, P/240/21, MPP, Madras Consultation, 1 Dec. 1763, 461; P/251/49, MP, MMSC, 28 Mar. 1763, 162.
[65] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Nov. 1771, 45.
[66] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 41, 163.
[67] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 43.
[68] Susan Neild-Basu, "The Dubashes of Madras," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, 1 (1984): 4.

Then they advanced their careers by becoming dubashes to higher-ranking company officials and large private entrepreneurs. Because of the increasing need of the EIC and private traders to make contact with the hinterland administrations and local societies in the eighteenth century, Madras became a city largely populated by a "tribe of dubashes." As an institution or a collective group, they had significant influence and played an important role in Madras and the Coromandel Coast, both politically and economically. Neild-Basu also points out that the rise of the dubashes was a sign of the ascendency, both socially and economically, of new groups of people who would eventually replace the local mercantile classes. The largest number of Madras dubashes came from scribal and administrative castes not traditionally associated with trade in South India, namely Vellalars, Kanakkapillais, and Yadavas, while many were Telegu and Marathi Brahmins.[69]

Particularly attached to the Karnatak court were the Telegu Brahmins. How did these Brahmins, originally members of the scribal and bureaucratic communities, penetrate the eighteenth-century mercantile world of the Coast as subordinate collaborators of the EIC? To understand this, we should refer back to the rise of Marathi and Telegu Brahmins in the state administration of the Deccan in an earlier period. As O'Hanlon points out, rapid economic expansion and social change in the Deccan during the early modern period pushed large numbers of Marathi Brahmin communities in the western Deccan to compete with the Muslim administrators and Hindu scribal castes from northern India in an attempt to gain political and social advancement. These administrative positions gave many Marathi Brahmin families the chance to gain access to and accumulate wealth in the mercantile world. Quickly, the Marathi Brahmins emerged as a powerful economic force in the region, being traders, revenue farmers, major landowners, bankers, and moneylenders.[70] A similar development occurred with the Telegu Brahmins in the eastern Deccan. According to Richards, by serving in Muslim courts as scribes, accountants, revenue managers, tax collectors, and agents for various powerful men, whether Muslim nobles or Hindu, Armenian, or European merchants, the Telegu Brahmins were able to amass substantial wealth. At least from the early sixteenth century, when Golconda emerged as the most important market for large diamonds in the world, Telegu Brahmins participated in this lucrative business.[71] According to Kanakalatha Mukund, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries some Telegu Brahmins started to appear as business competitors in the Tamilnadu markets that had previously been dominated by the

[69] Neild-Basu, "The Dubashes of Madras," 1-2, 10-11, 14-15, 27; Arasaratnam, "Trade and Political Dominion in South India," 24-25.
[70] O'Hanlon, "Contested Conjunctures," 776; O'Hanlon and Minkowski, "What Makes People Who They Are?," 392, 396-398.
[71] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 15, 18.

mercantile castes of Balijas, Komaties, and Chetties, among others. One specific way in which they fiercely competed, especially from the mid-seventeenth century, was in their attempts to become the local business partners of European companies and European private merchants, by holding posts such as brokers, chief merchants, and dubashes.[72] The political expansion of Golconda into Tamilnadu during the period of Telegu Brahmin Madanna's leadership helped bring about an increase in numbers and influence of these Telegu Brahmins on the Coromandel Coast. The subsequent Mughal expansions brought about the rise of the Khatris and Kayasthas at the expense of the Telegu Brahmins in the state administration during the first half of the eighteenth century.[73] But it seems that, by this time, the Telegu Brahmins had already cemented their position in the Coromandel mercantile world, particularly in the European enclaves.

In her study, Neild-Basu examines a single Telegu Brahmin family whose members served the EIC for generations, from 1679-1746, as chief dubash (i.e. the dubash of the Madras Governor). It was only the temporary fall of Madras to the French in 1746 that led to a shift in the fortunes of the family, which at that time was headed by Vyasam Venkatachalam Papaiya. The family lost its dominance over the Madras dubashi institution to another dubash family, from the Vellalar caste. However, later, Vyasam Venkatachalam Papaiya and his successors were able to re-establish their old ties with the Company. Some members of his family got their jobs as Company translators back and regained the various economic benefits associated with being a dubash. In the mid-1770s, Vyasam Venkatachalam Papaiya, like other top dubashes who were associated with the EIC at that time, was able to acquire considerable economic influence by being a tax farmer and merchant in the region.[74] The background of the Nawab's Brahmin Avangheddela Venkatachalam—as a dubash to various high-ranking EIC officers—suggests that he was probably also a member of this Telegu Brahmin dubashi family that had served the EIC for many generations, or of another dubashi family with similar levels of influence. This link is also presumably applicable to all other Venkatachalam Brahmins at the Nawab's court whose names were mentioned above.

I argue that the recruitment of the Telegu-Brahmins to the Walajah court was closely linked to the rise of the EIC as a formidable power in the Coromandel Coast and the rise of the dubashes as an influential group under the British in the second half of the eighteenth century. In other words, it shows the effort that the Karnatak Nawab made to adapt his court

[72] Mukund, *The Trading World of the Tamil Merchant*, 43-44, 67-69, 160.
[73] Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda*, 38-47, 64.
[74] Neild-Basu, "The Dubashes of Madras," 5-6.

to the changing political and economic circumstances of the area, where the ascendency of British power at the expense of the formerly-dominant Mughal elites and their associates (including the northern Indian scribal castes) was increasingly clear. For the Nawab, whose links with the British were particularly strong compared to many other South Asian states at the time, the local anglicized scribes, with their ability to do business with the European enclaves, must have been particularly useful. Their networks of kinship and family ties with the Madras Presidency and British officers must have greatly facilitated the Nawab's business ventures.[75] In addition to the direct recruitment of various former Madras dubashes and their associates into the Karnatak court, there is further evidence of strong connections between the Nawab and other Madras dubashes at the time. Christopher Bayly mentions one Venkatanarayana Pillai, whose family had served both the British and the French companies since 1680 and who was himself the dubash of Warren Hastings, the EIC's first Governor-General of India. Over time, he secured the protection of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and helped him manage the Company's land-revenue holdings around Madras. A relative of Venkatanarayana had been a dubash of Straton, a member of the Madras Council, and was later appointed "revenue under-manager" for the Ramnad district by the Nawab. Furthermore, various other relatives and descendants of Venkatanarayana invested heavily in the bonds that were sold by the Nawab to accommodate his debts.[76]

European Servants

At least from the beginning of the 1760s, the Nawab employed a number of British civil-servants at his court, mainly medical doctors, secretaries, accountants, and political advisers. Some of them combined several or all of these tasks in one individual. Their origins were varied. Some of them had worked for the EIC or the British government and been sent to South Asia, after which they either resigned from their posts or waited until their contract expired and then moved into the Nawab's service. There were also private merchants and adventurers who left their homeland to try their luck in South Asia directly. As well as using their own skills—such as medical or scribal—they assisted the Nawab in improving daily communications between the Chepauk Palace and the EIC and British government, tasks which otherwise could only be done by the anglicized Brahmin scribes, as mentioned previously.[77] According to Henry D. Love, during the late 1770s, the Nawab had as many as

[75] The Nawab's business dealings with the EIC will be discussed in greater detail in Part III.
[76] Bayly, *Indian Society*, 60.
[77] Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 55-57; Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 300; Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 229; Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras,* II: 566.

eight British doctors in his service—two physicians and six surgeons. In addition, he had a number of European engineers, musicians, saddlers, and coachmen,[78] reflecting his keen interest in various branches of Western knowledge.

Here, I will focus on a number of British individuals or groups who were able to advance their careers by being political advisers to the Nawab and playing important roles at his court. The first two examples are Alexander Boswall, who was the Nawab's principle British secretary during the 1760s, and George Paterson, who rose to prominence in the period 1771-1774. The Nawab used these men as "walking encyclopedias" and as doors through which he could gain access to the European world. He learned from them European history, politics, culture, ceremonial, customs, and so on. He consulted them on everything related to Europeans to prevent any mistakes or misunderstandings on his part when dealing with them. The Nawab also hired various British men as his political advisers-*cum*-envoys, the most prominent of whom were a Scotsman, an Irishman, and an Englishman: John Macpherson, Lauchlin Macleane, and Paul Benfield, who served the Nawab in different ways and at different times. John Macpherson and Lauchlin Macleane served as the Nawab's political envoys to the British government in London and the Bengal Presidency several times during the late 1760s and 1770s.[79] Paul Benfield had been an engineer for the Madras Presidency before becoming one of the most important private entrepreneurs in Madras in the second half of the eighteenth century. He began to be associated with some of the Nawab's businesses from the mid-1760s, and by the 1770s-1780s he was one of the Nawab's largest European creditors.

I would like to give two examples of the tensions that arose between some of the Nawab's British political advisers, and between them and the Nawab. The accounts reveal some important aspects of court politics and of the Nawab's policies towards European agents.

1) Alexander Boswall versus George Paterson:

Alexander Boswall entered the Nawab's service as a doctor in 1762 or earlier, and later became one of his political advisers. For many years, at least until the early 1770s, he was considered by the people at court as having the Nawab's total trust. As Paterson narrates,

[78] Henry D. Love, *Vestiges of Old Madras, 1640-1800: Traced from the East India Company's Records Preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office and from Other Sources*, vol. III (New York: AMS Press, 1968), 55, 139; Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 229.
[79] Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 59, 61.

although the Nawab had many doctors, only Boswall could give him medicine, and he was able to speak to the Nawab in a way no-one else dared to by "storming at him like an emperor" or pursuing him to the harem quarter in anger.[80] However, soon after the Nawab recruited Paterson into his service, the latter rose to become the most prominent of all the British advisers; Boswall was still at court and was well treated by the Nawab, but his position as a political adviser had been eclipsed by Paterson. The change of the Nawab's favor from Boswall to Paterson can be explained by various factors. First, Boswall was primarily a medical doctor and he had lived in Madras for more than a decade. As such, he would not have had up-to-date knowledge of British politics and political networks. The Nawab's dealings with the EIC and the British government became increasingly complicated in the 1770s, and so the ruler naturally needed a more informed adviser, like Paterson, who had just left the motherland. Paterson's political sophistication, experience, and networks seem to be confirmed by the fact that he had been chosen as the private secretary of Sir John Lindsay, the first British king's representative to the Indian courts. Furthermore, Boswall had been an officer of the EIC and had close links to the Madras Presidency and the Company's men. Such links must have benefited the Nawab greatly in the preceding decade, when he needed to establish good relations with the EIC. But in the early 1770s, the EIC-Nawab relationship turned sour and increasingly difficult, and as a result the Nawab attempted to draw in the British government to help balance the Company's power.[81] At this time, the Nawab thus needed "the king's people" more than "the Company's people" as his consultants. Presumably, the Nawab's trust in Boswall was diminished because of his close links with the EIC. As Paterson wrote in his diary sometime after he began to serve the Nawab, he felt the jealousy of Boswall towards him, commenting that: "he [Boswall] seems exceedingly hurt, that he finds the Nabob neither consults him nor follows his Council, and supposes everything must go wrong about the Durbar [the court] in which he is not consulted."[82] In fact, Boswall, who wanted to leave India for Britain soon after, had been planning to develop a long-term network in the Karnatak by schooling Robert Storey, another of the Nawab's surgeons and Boswall's friend, to succeed him as the Nawab's close adviser.[83] Storey was indeed made a surgeon and secretary at the court, but it was Paterson whom the Nawab raised as his new favorite. This was another disappointment for Boswall.

[80] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, Apr. 1774, 50; Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 228-229.
[81] I will discuss how the Nawab-EIC relationship turned sour further in Part III.
[82] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 104-105; E/379/5, Mar. 1773, 61.
[83] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 171.

2) George Paterson versus John Macpherson and Lauchlin Macleane:

After around four years in the Nawab's service, during which time he had consistently received great honor from the Nawab, Paterson found himself in a similar situation to that of Boswall. In 1774, Paterson sensed that the Nawab's trust in him was diminishing following the arrival of a new group of advisers at the court, led by John Macpherson and Lauchlin Macleane. They were private Scottish and Irish adventurers, and John Macpherson had been the first political agent of the Nawab to be sent to the British government in London—in 1768—which led to the visits of two British "king's ministers" to his court. Returning to Madras in 1774, Macpherson and his friend suggested various ideas and schemes to the Nawab in private meetings;[84] Paterson, who had had the Nawab's full trust for years, found himself prevented from knowing what had passed between the Nawab and these adventurers, and felt extremely irritated. As he wrote: "[A]nd after all I had done for four years in the Nabob's service, without my having given the least course, he had openly in the face of all those people withdrawn his confidence and had transacted this business by other means. This was not using me well and had hurt me, […]."[85]Although the Nawab still treated him very well and with all courtesy, Paterson felt that his advice was no longer sought on most issues. Feeling his usefulness coming to an end, Paterson began to stay away from the durbar, made a trip through Karnatak, and then returned to Britain.

As was revealed later, Macleane and Macpherson were both friends of Warren Hastings, who had recently—in 1773—been appointed the first Governor-General of India. And, according to Ramaswami, Macleane had been first introduced to the Nawab by Hastings.[86] An idea that Macpherson and Macleane suggested to the Nawab in the mid-1770s was to make one of the latter's sons the ruler of Bengal, which had, from the mid-1760s, been under the *de facto* control of the EIC. Macleane and Macpherson claimed that they could use their connections with Warren Hastings and various other influential people—in both the Company and Britain—to achieve this. We cannot know whether the Nawab really believed that these political adventurers could bring his plans for Bengal to fruition, as he would have known that it would not be easy. Furthermore, it could easily have produced increased conflict between him and his opponents in the EIC. However, building a stronger relationship with Warren Hastings—the first Governor-General and the head of the Bengal Presidency—seems to have been important enough for the Nawab to do business with these people. After

[84] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 259, 266.
[85] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 96. See also Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 241.
[86] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 249.

the visits of two of the British king's representatives to his court, where they stayed for several years in the period 1770-1774, the Nawab seems to have realized that the British government could not improve his bargaining position with the EIC or solve his conflicts with the Madras Presidency. As such, his contacts with the British government seem to have become less and less important to the Nawab, and so the Governor-General of Bengal (and his supporters in the EIC) became potential new allies for the Nawab. This may explain the declining role of George Paterson and the rise of Macleane and Macpherson as the Nawab's preferred British advisers.

We will discuss the visit of the British king's representatives to the Nawab's court and the Nawab-Hastings relationship in more detail in Part III. Here, I would like to stress that the rise and fall of various British advisers at the Nawab's court was linked to the Nawab's scheme to build up political alliances with different British factions at different points in time. I argue against the assumption that has prevailed in the historiography of Karnatak up to now, such as in the work of Gurney, which depicts the Nawab's actions merely as unwitting shifts of reliance from one European adviser to another. In Gurney's opinion, "it was plain that he [the Nawab] was only escaping from one set of masters to submit to the influence of another."[87] In his view, the Nawab was far too keen to listen to the advice of political adventurers who tried to use his money and his causes to advance their own fortunes in British politics, and the Nawab was long manipulated by opposing groups of advisers.[88] It is true that the Nawab often changed his British advisers, from one person or group to another, and when one of them rose to prominence they gained large favors and many benefits from the Nawab, so much so that observers considered them as being trusted more than anyone else and as extremely influential over both the Nawab and his court. But, as the cases above suggest, no individual or group of British advisers could have exerted control over the Nawab or dictated their fate at his court. The Nawab used different groups of them for different purposes, and when circumstances changed or his designs altered he would turn to new ones who were better able to serve his requirements. Those Europeans who lost the Nawab's favor and their former privileges, or those who opposed the Nawab's new advisers, certainly criticized the Nawab for foolishly trusting the wrong people. As such, modern historians should be careful about accepting such biased opinions (especially if they are lacking sufficient contextualization) when judging the Nawab's actions. At a time when he was flourishing at court, Paterson advised the Nawab to make Paul Benfield the sole manager of

[87] Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 229.
[88] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 237.

all his revenues. Paterson worked hard to make the Nawab and Benfield agree to this, as he sincerely believed that it would be the best solution to clear the Nawab's debts in only a few years.[89] The Nawab acknowledged Paterson's sincerity but eventually declined. As the Nawab commented to Paterson about Benfield: "He is my friend today and may not be my friend tomorrow."[90] This message suggests that the Nawab probably understood the politics of the time much better than some contemporaneous Europeans might have believed him capable of.

[89] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 219-226, 232, 254, 257.
[90] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/9, DGP, Oct. 1774, 182.