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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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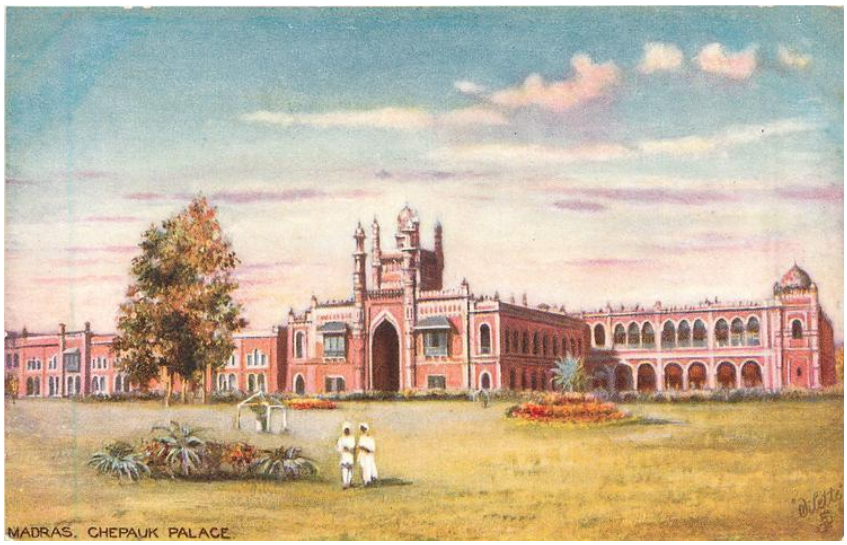
Chapter 8: Cultural Encounters

This chapter argues that, by embracing various European cultural elements in his micro-cosmos at Chepauk Palace, the Nawab was not only attempting to use them for practical purposes such as military support, political consultation, or facilitating trade; he also used them for ideological purposes, in his self-representation or self-reposition. The Nawab's main goals were to raise his honor and prestige in local society and to counter-balance the image of him as a British dependent. How and to what extent he was successful in these aims are the main questions to be explored in the following discussion. This chapter, which focuses on cultural encounters, has two main themes: his embrace of European material culture, and ritual and diplomatic exchanges. The discussion is divided into three sections. First, I will explore various aspects of European material culture that the Nawab adopted at his court—such as architecture, decorations, *objets d'art*, and customs and practices—and analyze their function from the Nawab's standpoint. Secondly, I will highlight the triangular relationship between the Nawab and the two rival British groups—the EIC and the representatives of the British king and government—who confronted one another at Chepauk Palace during the first half of the 1770s. These three parties were the main players whose interactions at the court during this time can provide us with vivid historical scenes of the "ritual battles" between East and West, or between South Asian elements and European ones. These tripartite ritual battles will be the main focus of the third section.

8.1 European Material Culture at the Nawab's Court

Chepauk Palace, the center of the Nawab's power in Madras, is a good starting point for our discussion. From the year 1758, the Nawab had repeatedly sent requests to the EIC to be allotted an area of Madras in or near Fort St. George where he could build his permanent residence, citing the convenience of conducting business with the EIC and his safety as the main reasons. Yet this was not accepted until the mid-1760s, because some of the EIC's officers initially objected to his wish, fearing that the Nawab, being so close, would have too much influence over the Madras Presidency. Eventually, however, the EIC's Directors granted approbation.[1] The Nawab then ordered a grand palace to be constructed right next to the EIC's headquarters. Chepauk Palace became the main residence of the Nawab and his descendants from 1767/1768 until 1855.

[1] IOR, E/4/861, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 5 Jul. 1758, 949; E/4/863, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 4 Mar. 1767, 511-513.



A painting of Chepauk Palace, printed on a postcard (1907)[2]

This royal court was a two-story building facing the Madras seashore, immediately to the south of the EIC's Fort St George. It was famous for its lime mortar, red-brick walls, wide arches, and intricate carvings, and has been widely viewed by scholars as the very first building constructed in the Indo-Saracenic style.[3] This artistic term represents a synthesis of Indic and Islamic (Saracenic) architectural features, symbols, and materials, and the Gothic and Neo-Classical arts favored in Victorian Britain, which integrate Greco-Roman features such as columns and triangular pediments, all of which were successfully combined using the advanced engineering of Western Europe. Indo-Saracenic architecture was mainly developed by British architects in India during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[4] From its completion until the late nineteenth century, Chepauk Palace must have been through several restorations and renovations and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, there is no evidence of what the palace originally looked like. However, it is believed that it was the earliest attempt by a British engineer and architect to integrate "the dome and arches, the inlay and fretwork of the Mughals, with the spaciousness and the decorativeness of the Indian" and, therefore, the palace has been recognized as the genesis of Indo-Saracenic art, and its design would go on to have a great influence on many famous British Raj architects.[5] The name of the British engineer is still debated, being either Thomas Call or Paul Benfield,

[2] Raphael Tuck, "Chepauk Palace," TuckDB Postcards, accessed 15 Jul. 2018: http://www.tuckdb.org/postcards/84466.
[3] M. Ramanathan, "The Majesty of Chepauk," *Madras Musings* 19, 24, accessed 16 July 2018: http://madrasmusings.com/Vol%2019%20No%2024/the-majesty-of-chepauk.html.
[4] Samita Gupta, *Architecture and the Raj: Western Deccan, 1700-1900* (Delhi: BRPubCorp, 1985), 18-29, 155-156.
[5] Subbiah Muthiah, *Tales of Old and New Madras: The Dalliance of Miss Mansell and 34 Other Stories of 350 Years* (New Delhi: Affiliated East-West Press, 1989), 72; Ramanathan, "The Majesty of Chepauk."

both of whom had been EIC servants.[6] If, in its original form, Chepauk Palace was indeed the first building in this new hybrid style when it was built—or at least one of its earliest examples, as is widely believed—a hundred years before the style actually became popular and widespread, this would reflect just how unique and innovative this palace must have been at its unveiling. Its ingenuity also reflects, I would argue, a crucial aspect of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's self-representation. Chepauk was to be a royal palace, a principal symbolic representation of the Nawab and his family. Instead of choosing to build in either the classical Indo-Islamic style to celebrate his Mughal imperial background or the traditional Indic arts of South India to reflect his current prestige among the Hindu rulers, the Nawab chose this new hybrid style, from both civilizations, to represent himself. Furthermore, while we are not sure how far the original Chepauk Palace represented a hybrid of Islamic and Indic styles, certain facts about its production mirror the Nawab's openness to European ideas and culture. Instead of employing indigenous servants—either Muslim or Hindu—the Nawab chose to entrust the design and construction of his new palace to a British engineer. Living in the heart of the European settlement and observing closely their formidable and expanding power in South Asia, something that was aided by their advanced technology, the Nawab incorporated European features into the building that was to represent the center of his power.

Inside the walls of Chepauk Palace, the enthusiasm of the Nawab for embracing European elements can be observed through many of his daily practices. As recorded by Paterson on first meeting the Nawab, the ruler had "a pretty good notion of English and spoke several words in that language very distinctly."[7] All of his sons, who spent most of their lives in Madras, knew the language better than their father. It was common to see the sons of the Nawab visiting, hanging out with, and having public and private conversations with European noblemen and officers.[8] It was a regular habit of the Nawab, as noted in Paterson's diary and the *Ruznama*, to follow and discuss news from Europe with his European secretaries and visitors regarding what was going on in Britain and other nations such as France, Turkey, and Russia. A favorite topic was his image and reputation in Britain.[9] It was also not rare to see the Nawab and his family learning and adopting some new European technology, manners, or lifestyle. Once, the Nawab used a telescope to view the ship he had sent to Mecca after it was

[6] Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 71.
[7] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/1, DGP, Jul. 1770, 293.
[8] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Jul. 1771, 299-300; E/379/8, DGP, Apr. 1774, 56-57.
[9] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 182; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 2, 13, 20-22 May, 7 Jun., 19 Jul. 1773, bundle 68, 14 Jan. 1775.

reported that it had returned to Madras.[10] On another occasion, the Nawab and his courtiers gathered to observe the Western clocks just arriving from London.[11] And, one morning, Paterson went to the court and found the Nawab in "the chateau at the corner of his gardens" having breakfast with his family "in quite the English manner" with "tea, cakes, and several sorts of salading on table, a cloth laid and all on chairs."[12]

Occasionally, Georgian-style parties were held in Chepauk Palace's garden, and such events provide us with interesting examples of how Western entertainment was integrated into the local court. It was a custom that, during British national events such as the king's or queen's birthday, the British noblemen in Madras would celebrate them with grand entertainments similar to those they would have put on in London, possibly wishing to display Georgian prestige and grandeur to the locals. On one such occasion, celebrating the birthday of Queen Charlotte in 1770, a magnificent European-style temporary building was erected near Fort St. George to use as a grand ballroom. It is said to have been an immense construction made of spars and bamboo and measuring 120 feet by 160 feet. The front and back were decorated with nine gothic arches, and a European atmosphere was produced via European music, marching beats, food, wine, and fireworks. Seeing the splendid European architecture, the Nawab conceived the idea that, for the upcoming weddings of his two eldest sons, he would organize a similar, European-style ball to host the whole British settlement. The same temporary building was borrowed and re-placed in the Nawab's garden, with a few small alterations. While, on one side, the initials G.R. referred to King George III, another side had the Nawab's name and titles placed in its center and, on the right-hand side, his eldest son's name and, on the left, his second son's name, all in Persian characters. Entertainment was provided in the evening and the event was put on as close as possible to the queen's birthday party, and the Nawab and all his family were at the ball.[13]

Chepauk Palace was filled with European furniture, portraits, miniatures, and "novelties" such as magic lanterns, telescopes, and clockwork toys, thanks to various European agents.[14] Such European adornments were not confined to Chepauk alone. When Paterson had the chance to visit another of the Nawab's palaces, in Trichinopoly, he also found some of the galleries there decorated with European paintings of French royals and nobles and various pieces of European furniture. The main hall, where usually the local court

[10] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 7 Jul. 1773.
[11] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 19 May 1774.
[12] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 57.
[13] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Jan. 1771, 161, Feb. 1771, 164-168.
[14] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 169.

would be held, was furnished with full-length portraits of the king and queen of France. All the European items in the Trichinopoly palace were said to have been part of the spoils taken following the capture of Pondicherry in 1761, and which the Nawab had purchased from the EIC.[15] The French were always considered by the Nawab as an enemy, as they had played a role in the murder of his father. Hence, his use of French royal portraits and furniture in the palace was certainly not out of admiration for the Bourbon dynasty or to indicate good diplomatic relations. This suggests that European collections, an orientation towards European artistic tastes by the Nawab, and the European manners he embraced were not simply to show his admiration for or friendship with a specific European nation. Yet what, then, were his motives in such representations? Some examples of the Nawab's production of portraits of himself may provide some clarification.

During the Nawab's reign, many British painters traveled in or were dispatched by the EIC to Karnatak. At least two of them, Tilly Kettle (1768-1771) and George Willison (1774-1780), were hired by the Nawab at extraordinarily handsome rates to produce portraits of himself and his sons in the European style. These paintings were for both his private collections and as presents to the British king and noblemen.[16] His portraits, just like his palace, are said to be pioneering examples of Western art adopted and applied in South Asian courts.[17] One of the portraits—of him and his five sons—given as a present to the Madras Governor Charles Bourchier and exhibited in London in 1771, is believed to be the first portrait of South Asian monarchs to have appeared in Britain.[18] Some of these paintings have survived to the present day in the British Library, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the National Gallery of Scotland. One of them, the portrait by Willison that was sent by the EIC's Court of Directors to the Society of Artists' exhibition in 1777, is shown below as picture (1). This painting represents a full-length, larger than life-size Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan standing in a grand neoclassical durbar hall which is supposed to be in Chepauk Palace. The hall was decorated with a classical column and a baroque curtain. Wearing a ceremonial dagger and scimitar and flourishing a scarlet-sheathed sword, it seems to project the Nawab's majestic style and military prowess. In the background, local servants are giving him the

[15] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/8, DGP, Jun. 1774, 207-208; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 272.
[16] Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 73, 77, 91.
[17] See a summary depiction of the portrait of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan by Tilly Kettle in: Victoria and Albert Museum's Collections, "Muhammad Ali Khan, Nawab of Arcot," Victoria and Albert Museum, last accessed 16 July 2018: http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O136746/muhammad-ali-khan-Nawab-of-painting-kettle-tilly/
[18] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 347.

salaam, while further outside the hall stands a regiment of sepoys, indicating the military cooperation between the Nawab and the EIC.[19]

According to Natasha Eaton, the Nawab's portraits by various European painters all have these same facets, which reflects the fact that the Nawab had little interest in the individual originality of these European artists. Instead, he wished the repetition of this image of him within these portraits to transform him into "an icon." This iconography was clearly borrowed from contemporaneous European monarchs, as can be perceived by comparing painting (1) with (2)-(4). [20] As Eaton goes on to argue, the likeness with the European counterparts

[19] Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 73.

[20] (1) Nawab Muḥammad Ali Khan by George Willison (1777). Current place of conservation: National Galleries of Scotland, digital file from: "Mohamed Ali Khan Walejah (1717-1795) Nawab of the Karnatak by George Willison," National Galleries of Scotland, last accessed 16 Jul. 2018: https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/38236/mohamed-ali-khan-walejah-1717-1795-Nawab-Karnatak.
(2) Louis XV (r. 1715-1774) by Louis-Michel Van Loo (1707-1711). Current place of conservation: Bibliothèque Municipale de Versailles, digital file from: "Portrait en Pied de Louis XV," L'Histoire Par L'Image, last accessed 16 Jul. 2018: https://www.histoire-image.org/fr/etudes/portrait-pied-louis-xv.

mirrors the desire of the Nawab to demonstrate his importance by presenting himself as a world player on a par with European monarchs. Many of these portraits reflect the way he wanted to be seen by prominent Europeans, and by incorporating the European style—which was faultless in its production—the Nawab could be certain that the recipients would receive the political messages they carried correctly and easily.[21] As Susan Bayly also suggests, such displays of extravagant spending in artistic patronage were indispensable displays of power and kingship in pre-modern societies. In this light, paying twice the usual rate was not a sign of the Nawab's ignorance or unawareness; rather, it was a deliberate sign of his generosity and high artistic taste. Moreover, the European painters who profited from the lavish distribution of the ruler's patronage could be seen as his retainers.[22] I fully agree with these historians' proposals and suggest, further, that the Nawab's hidden political agenda—to show that he could be compared to other European kings through paintings and the patronage of artists—can help explain his enthusiastic embrace of other aspects of European culture. His palace was situated in a town governed by the British, he received many European visitors, and he made sure that he could not be viewed as inferior to his European counterparts in cultural refinement by both the European and South Asian populations of the town. Other Europeans—artists, architects, and engineers—who were hired by the Nawab for other projects may also be seen in this light, as his servants or protégés. Their presence at his court enhanced the Nawab's standing as a patron and, as Eaton points out, it became a trend in Europe during the latter half of the eighteenth century for royals and nobles to embrace artistic elements of the Oriental World—Indian, Chinese, Turkish, Iranian, etc.—in their residences as a way of asserting and demonstrating their self-empowerment. The patronage of "exotic" arts became a vital manifestation of power, of multifaceted kingship, and of their immodest engagement with the world.[23] I argue that the Nawab was pursuing similar goals in his adoption of Occidental culture.

8.2 Triangle: Nawab, Company, and King

Whatever his critics—whether his contemporaries or later scholars—may have said regarding the Nawab's policies in tightly linking his fate to that of the British people, the Nawab

(3) George III by Allan Ramsay (c. 1765). Current place of conservation: Art Gallery of South Australia, digital file from: "King George III in Coronation Robes by Allan Ramsay," Google Cultural Institute, last accessed 16 Jul. 2018: https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/king-george-iii-in-coronation-robes/vgGv1tsB1URdhg.
(4) Catherine the Great of Russia by Alexander Roslin (c. 1777). Current place of conservation: The State Hermitage Museum, St Petersburg, digital file from: "Portrait of Catherine II by Alexander Roslin," The State Hermitage Museum, last accessed 16 Jul. 2018: http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/01.+paintings/38686.

[21] Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 73.
[22] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 170-171.
[23] Eaton, "The Art of Colonial Despotism," 67.

himself, as reflected in his chronicle *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, chose to justify his actions as "far-sightedness" and "rich and powerful commonsense." The goodness of the British is described in the following example:

> [the British] were celebrated for their virtue and fidelity, well-known for sincerity and friendship, famous for their qualities of justice and equity, firm in the organization of war and battle, bold in the field of battle and fighting, the pearl of wisdom and sagacity, faithful in their friendship […], bound to and united with the people of Islam […].[24]

However, notably, the court chronicler also put a great deal of effort into implanting in the mind of his audience—the chronicle's readers—that it was more the Nawab who was the benefactor of the British than the other way around. As it suggests, the main reason the British Company continually supported him was its extreme gratitude for his benevolence towards it and, therefore, considered it a duty to return the favor. There are at least four occasions in the chronicle where it describes how, in the mid-1740s, the Walajah family helped save the EIC's headquarters and the lives of its officers from a French siege and, after that, the Nawab consistently gave patronage to the British nation, helping it to become the most glorious power in South Asia, at the expense of the French.[25]

It is noteworthy that, although the Nawab praised the friendship of the British highly, his attempts to underline the distinction between the EIC and the British king should not be ignored, this clearly reflects how this local ruler positioned himself in their relationship. The chronicle accurately explains, in good detail, what the British East India Company was, how this economic institution had been formed, and how it rose from being a group of merchants to holding the exalted rank of ruler in South Asia, something that owed much to the kindness and energy of his family.[26] While presenting the EIC's men as being of inferior social rank (as merchants) and the (former) dependents of his family, the Nawab also emphasized the close friendship between him and the British kings George II (r. 1727-1760) and George III (r. 1760-1820). At several points, the chronicle emphasizes the strength of the friendship and love between the Nawab and the British monarchs. The Nawab called one British king, supposedly George III, "our [the Nawab's] brother dear as life" and mentioned that "the bond

[24] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 104.
[25] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 104-106, 115-124; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 51.
[26] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 104; see also 97-106.

of union between them reached such a limit that the result was a brotherly treaty."[27] It was also claimed that the British king gave his word that: "As long as our authority over England and the administration of Ḥaḍrat-i-A'lā [the Nawab] in the Carnatic continues generation after generation, the friendship and union between the two powers will be permanent and firm."[28] According to Francis Buckler, in the context of Islamic courts, calling someone a brother often meant that brother was inferior or subordinate.[29] However, it may be going too far to claim that the Nawab viewed the British king as his inferior. On the contrary, the chronicle referred to the British king by the Persian term padshah, which the populations and subordinate rulers of South Asia used for the Mughals. In this light, it indicates that the Nawab saw the British king as one such superior a suzerain. Receiving brotherly love and protection from a greater power could certainly elevate the Nawab's status on the inter-regional stage, in the same way that the honors and acknowledgements from the Mughal emperors and Ottoman sultans he received also did. His relationship with and the acknowledgement from the British monarch would also have been increasingly relevant within local South Asian contexts in the second half of eighteenth century, at the expense of Mughal prestige.

The above is an idealized depiction of the triangular relationship between the Nawab, the EIC, and the British king that the local ruler wanted the world to see. It can be viewed as his primary means of dealing with the representatives of these two institutions at his court. We will see how each of the two parties was used by the Nawab in order to achieve his purposes. Prior to that, some background on British politics and the beginnings of the relationship triangle between the Nawab, the EIC, and the British king, will be provided.

In the late 1760s, the issue of "nabobs" became a hot topic, one that was extremely important within British politics. "Nabob" was a corruption of the word "Nawab," a Mughal title for a regional ruler. But it was used in Britain at that time in another way, to describe some of their own countrymen, mostly EIC employees, who had returned from South Asia with extraordinary fortunes. In the motherland, Indian wealth helped these *noveaux-riches* to enter elite society and national politics. The numbers and influence of the nabob MPs rose rapidly in Britain in the 1760s, causing widespread envy and disgust among the old nobility on the national political stage, and turning many of them into fierce opponents of the EIC.

[27] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, part II*, 170; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, part I*, 106.
[28] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, part I*, 124.
[29] Francis W. Buckler, "The Oriental Despot," in *Legitimacy and Symbols: The South Asian Writings of F.W. Buckler*, ed. Michael N. Pearson (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1985), 183.

Many old elite groups or classes then attempted to control the Company and gain a share of the South Asian wealth. As a result of their efforts, several special committees were established to investigate how the British nabobs had made their fortunes in South Asia and revealed them to the public. Whatever the reality was, in the early 1770s, the British public was presented with various allegations of South Asians being tortured to open their treasure and local rulers dethroned and murdered by EIC servants. Soon, the EIC and its officers became a type of monster in British public opinion, and sympathy was with the local rulers who were believed to have been deceived by the Company in the name of the British nation. This was followed by a public outcry for the king and government to intervene in order to stop such acts of despotism by the Company's servants in South Asia. However, there was a wide range of ideas regarding how this should be done. For example, the two main political parties in Britain, Tory and Whig, proposed different degrees of government intervention. The more moderate Tories wanted to give the British Parliament more control over the Company through the imposition of new laws and regulations. On the other hand, Whig supporters sought a complete end to the Company's role in South Asia and the transfer of all its business and possessions to the government. Yet, behind this conflict were larger ideological clashes. The EIC had been a national symbol of how British private property was protected by law. Hence, any infringement of its rights could risk the British government and the king being accused of stepping on private rights by the Company's supporters and other private sector groups, leading to a constitutional crisis. The British governments who were elected during this period thus needed to step very cautiously.[30]

One concrete outcome to the enquiry, the clamors in the press, the ministerial conspiracies, and the responses from the Company's members and supporters, was the Regulating Act of 1773, passed by the Tory government under Lord Frederick North. It was a first step, albeit not an extreme one, by the British government in controlling the EIC. Previously, the EIC in South Asia had been administered by three independent "Presidencies"—Bengal, Madras, and Bombay—each of which had its own governor and council, all equally under the supervision of the Court of Directors in London. By the Act of 1773, the Presidency of Bengal was elevated to the position of Supreme Council of the EIC administration in South Asia, superior to Madras and Bombay. The Governor of Bengal thus became the EIC Governor-General of India. However, three of the five members of the Supreme Council, who were to vote on every decision, would be appointed by the British

[30] James, *Raj*, 45-51.

government. Furthermore, although the Court of Directors maintained the right to issue the Company's directives, all such instructions had to be submitted for governmental approval. One crucial compromise that the government gave the EIC and its supporters was that it allowed Warren Hastings, a long-standing and prominent Company servant, to be the first Governor-General. The appointment of Hastings sought to prevent the fierce protests which could have erupted by members of the EIC if the government had appointed one of its own people or an outsider to such a crucial position.[31]

The intervention of the British government in Indian affairs, which began with the Regulating Act of 1773, would eventually lead to the dissolution of the EIC and the establishment of the British Raj in the following century. One point I would like to make here is that Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan played a significant role in allowing this intervention by the British government. However, it is not my aim to simply restate the assumptions of other historians, such as Rajayyan and Gurney, who have interpreted the Nawab as having unwisely facilitated the process of British imperial expansion. Instead, I argue, the Nawab had no intention of assisting the British crown to expand its power over the Company. Neither he nor British contemporaries could have foreseen at the time that their actions would be part of the larger subsequent process of British imperialism. Within their own time and context, the Nawab and the various British factions who were involved each had their own immediate aims. For the Nawab, his main wish was to make direct diplomatic contact with the British king and government, bypassing the EIC. Prior to this, contact between the British state and the South Asian polities had generally been monopolized by the EIC, with the exception of some British private traders and adventurers. Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan was, in fact, the first South Asian ruler to successfully break the hold that the EIC had. Ever since 1765, or even earlier, the Nawab had been trying to get direct access to the British king, as can be seen from a complaint by the EIC's Directors over this issue:

> It is extremely improper for the Nabob to convey any letters to the King through other channel than our Governor and Council. […] This observation arises upon his addressing His Majesty Colonel Monson a copy of which letter have sent us by the Deptford. […] We shall depend upon your taking the proper care to prevent a repetition of it in future.[32]

[31] Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 71-72.
[32] IOR, E/4/863, DM, Courts of Directors to Madras, 4 Jul. 1765, 65-66.

Evidently, though, despite receiving direct orders from its superiors, the Madras Presidency failed to stop the Nawab. In March 1767, a Scotsman and adventurer named John Macpherson sailed for South Asia as a purser on a ship to South Asia. Landing in Madras, like many other Europeans seeking their fortune in South Asia, Macpherson found his way into the service of the local ruler of Karnatak.[33] The meeting between the Nawab and the Scot was private and nobody in the EIC knew it had taken place until its consequences bore fruit a few years later. Nothing is known of the conversation between the two of them nor of what specific results the Nawab was expecting from this private deal. However, the next part of the story, which occured in November 1768, is well known. When Macpherson returned to Britain, he claimed he was an agent of the Karnatak Nawab, and approached the Prime Minister of England, the Duke of Grafton, with messages regarding the ill-treatment of the Nawab of Karnatak by the EIC's servants. He alleged that the EIC's officers in Madras used various tactics to extort money from the Nawab. Macpherson's arrival came at exactly the same time that the British government's jealousies over the Company's "nabobs" were at their peak and it was keenly looking for legitimate reasons to intervene in the EIC's affairs. Therefore, the Nawab of Karnatak had given them the perfect excuse. Having been provided with words from the Nawab's "secret" envoy, Macpherson, the British government immediately dispatched the Royal Navy commodore Sir John Lindsay to South Asia to act as the "British king's minister"—the king's representative extraordinary with plenipotentiary power—offering the Karnatak Nawab the British crown's friendship and protection and investigating corruption in the EIC in Madras.[34] The unexpected arrival of Sir John with his commission in late 1770 aroused strong protests from EIC members. In Madras, the Company's officers and the king's staff were in conflict from the very beginning. As a result, in 1771, Sir John was called back to Britain and replaced by the Royal Navy admiral Sir Robert Hartland, the second British king's minister, who had higher prestige and better-defined authority. He stayed in Madras until 1774. Through the king's representatives and other private adventurers, from the beginning of the 1770s the Nawab had regular and direct contact, and made friends, with many prominent British statesmen, outside the EIC's control. In 1774, Paterson mentioned some letters that the Nawab had prepared to send on a ship to Britain. Among the recipients were King George III and Queen Charlotte of Britain, Lord Frederick North (the British Prime Minister, 1770-1782), Lord Rockford (the Secretary of the State, 1770-1775), the Duke of Grafton (the British Prime Minister, 1768-1770), and Sir John

[33] Turnbull, *Warren Hastings*, 181.
[34] Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India*, 99-100.

Lindsay (of the Royal Navy, the first king's minister to India). He also sent letters to various senior EIC officers, most of whom had once been in Madras, such as Robert Clive, General Eyre Coote, George Pigot, Laurence Sulivan, Colonel Donald Campbell, and Charles Campbell, etc. Clive, Pigot, and Coote had returned from South Asia and at the time sat in the House of Commons as MPs. Sulivan had been an MP and was, at the time, on the EIC's Court of Directors and one of the most influential figures in the Company. The Campbells, meanwhile, were important EIC military commanders.[35]

8.3 Tripartite Ritual Battles

It is not clear whether and to what extent the Nawab knew of the conflict that was brewing between the Company and the British government before he invited the latter onto the platform of Madras-Karnatak politics; it is possible that he only learned of it upon seeing the situation following the arrival of the king's ministers in Madras. Whatever the case, the Nawab had achieved a significant coup by escalating the level of his diplomatic relations with the British to the highest rank, i.e. between the two heads of state. This was not the first time that royal ambassadors from the British kings had been sent to South Asia, but, in the past, the British royal ambassadors had only been sent to the imperial court; for instance, Thomas Roe had been sent to Emperor Jahangir (1615-1619) and William Norris to Aurangzeb (1699-1702). On the other hand, regional courts had usually only received officers of the Company (who were basically merchants) or even South Asian brokers. Moreover, the previous royal ambassadors' visits had been organized by the Company, so they had essentially been sent by it, not directly on behalf of the British king.[36] So the Nawab's success was unprecedented and superior to anything achieved by other regional rulers of his rank. I would also argue that the Nawab was not only able to bring the British king and government into his micro-cosmos, but throughout the first half of the 1770s the Nawab sought to achieve the greatest possible advantage for himself from the presence and rivalry of the two British groups. Proof will be further provided by examining various diplomatic ceremonies and related entertainments that occurred at Chepauk Palace during that period, in which these three parties—the Nawab's court, the EIC's officers, and the king's ministers—were the main players.

[35] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/9, DGP, Oct. 1774, 186.
[36] Van Meersbergen, "Ethnography and Encounter," 143, 146.

Khilat, Nadhr, and Durbar in the Reception of the British King's Letters

Before discussing East-West cultural encounters in the diplomatic ceremonies and entertainments at Chepauk Palace, I would like to introduce three principal rituals or practices that were usually included in any ceremony at a Perso-Islamic court, and which will play significant roles in our debate. First is the granting of khilat or the ceremonial "robe of honor" from a superior to his servants as a symbolic expression of rewards, compliments, appointments, and promotions. Through this, physical contact was established through clothing; the grantor was including the receiver within his own person through the medium of his cloth; it was the public establishment or confirmation of a patron-client relationship. In other words, the acceptance of the robe was an act of homage and an acknowledgement of the superiority or suzerainty of the donor, and the refusal to receive such a gift was a declaration of independence or treason vis-à-vis the master. But, at the same time, the reception of the robe also distinguished the receiver from the common people and enhanced his status among his noble peers. As well as valuable clothing, the gift could also be other body decorations, such as a necklace or dagger, and to receive something that the ruler actually used, perhaps from his own wardrobe, would be the highest honor for the receiver.

Second was the offer of nadhr. Nadhr literally means a vow or dedication (giving something to the receiver), and it was expressed symbolically through various kinds of gifts, such as small gold or silver coins, a small amount of soil, or even a daughter in marriage. The ritual of nadhr was the counterpoint of khilat, as the giver who presented nadhr was displaying his acknowledgement of the recipient as "the source of all his wealth and being";[37] in other words, nadhr was presented from an inferior to a superior or when the giver wished to show deference to the receiver. Both the granting of khilat and the offering of nadhr were customary at all levels of the Mughal imperial hierarchy, meaning that every royal and office-holder participated in the rituals of giving to his masters and receiving from his subordinates at various times.

Thirdly, the *durbar* (or *darbar*) refers to the presence or attendance of servants at the durbar—the court of a ruler—and it was a duty of a vassal to show himself whenever he was summoned so as to prove his loyalty to the ruler. On the other hand, it was a quality that a

[37] Buckler, "The Oriental Despot," 181.

ruler required to be able to summon his servants to his durbar. The sharing of a meal with the ruler was also part of this practice.[38]

As is clear from various documents, the Nawab was always extremely pleased to receive signs of friendship and favor from the monarchs of Britain. He loved to publicly discuss the contents of the letters that they wrote to him with his nobles and foreign visitors, and made sure that they were written in the court's diary and chronicle as permanent testimony to his dignity and to reach as broad an audience as possible.[39] The events surrounding the delivery of these letters received the Nawab's attention no less than did the contents themselves. Many details of the special events that occurred during the years 1770-1773 were recorded in Paterson's diary, as he had the chance to participate in and eventually took a central role in organizing them. The *Ruznama* also occasionally provides some depictions of these events. In what follows, I summarize the details of several of such ceremonies and the evening entertainment: deliveries of the king of Britain's letters by the two king's ministers (August 1770, September 1771, March 1772, April 1773) and the granting of the Order of Bath to Sir John Lindsay, the first king's minister (February 1771). Through these events, the reader will gain a general idea of what happened in Madras and Chepauk Palace in those days.

One indispensable part of the ceremony was a display of military might and military cooperation between the Nawab and the British. A large military force was summoned to take part in processions. It was made up of the Nawab's cavalry, the battalions of the Nawab-EIC joint force, the marines of the British royal squadron under the king's ministers, and the Company's ships. The ships were anchored opposite the broad walk that led from Chepauk Palace to the sea, and the Nawab's flags, which were on the king's minister's ship, were to be hoisted on the mizzen topmast as a compliment to the local ruler. In the morning, the "four khans"—which seems to refer to the four highest ministers of the Karnatak court—would be sent to the residence of the king's minister with palanquins to conduct him and his escort to the palace. Royal letters were placed on a cushion which was richly laced and fringed, and carried by the secretary of the king's minister. The Nawab's diwan was at the head of this deputation, leading the group to meet the grand procession that was waiting at the gate of Fort St. George. Here, the Nawab's elephants, richly dressed, waited to carry the presents from the king of Britain. The procession was surrounded by military forces. There were

[38] Buckler, "The Oriental Despot," 178-182; Van Meersbergen, "Ethnography and Encounter," 174-177.
[39] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 30 Apr. and 1 May 1773; bundle 67, 15 Jul. 1774; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 250-252.

hundreds of dancing girls and musicians, some on foot and some on bullocks, playing various instruments including tom-toms, kettle drums, horns, trumpets, flutes, clarinets, and cymbals. As the parade proceeded, it was met by one of the Karnatak royal family, who was waiting on horseback. This prince dismounted, and the king's minister came out of his palanquin, whereupon they embraced each other. The procession then resumed, and the prince rode by the side of the king's minister's palanquin. The whole road, from the Madras Governor's Garden House to Chepauk Palace, was lined with sepoys, drawn up on both sides and forming a lane through which the procession passed. At one point, the parade would halt in order to receive salutes from the military officers, and the drums beat a march in the European military style. At another place, the procession stopped again, where more members of the Nawab's party, of higher rank than the previous ones (either the Nawab's brothers or eldest sons), were waiting. Then, the princes of the state directed the king's minister to the palace, where the Nawab was waiting for him at the bottom of the stairs to lead him into the court hall.

The Nawab was very richly dressed on these occasions. He had jewels on his head that were bound to a turban, from which a fine feather sprung up on one side. His body was also decorated with jewels and several strings of very fine pearls, along with a necklace with a large square diamond pendant. The court hall was covered with handsome carpets, in the middle of which was the *musnud*, a royal seat in the Indo-Persian style. However, the Nawab did not sit on the musnud on such a day but stood before it all through the ceremony, after which he would sit on a chair in the European manner, in the same way as did his guests. The Karnatak court hall was filled with an immense number of people. Every royal family member and officer was summoned to the durbar to bear testimony to the significance of the event. In the presence of all the indigenous and European noblemen, who were standing round in a circle, the king's minister pulled off his hat to deliver letters from the king and queen of Britain to the Nawab, and words of friendship were passed between the two of them. The Nawab received the letters with a great show of respect before the indispensable step of opening and reading them aloud publicly. The secretary of the king's minister read the English version, after which a local official read the translation in Persian to a very crowded durbar. Another essential part of the ceremony was the royal salute, which followed the European military custom. After the letters were read out, the Nawab's gun would fire the royal salute for the British king. This would be followed by a 21-gun salute—the number of shots representing the sovereign or head of state—from the king of Britain's ship for the

Nawab of Karnatak, followed by more salutes from other ships and Fort St. George. During the gun salutes, the local custom of offering nadhr to the Nawab would be performed by everyone assembled, except for the king's minister, who represented the king of Britain. After the ceremony in the hall was finished, the Nawab's regiment of horses assembled in the middle of the garden to perform an exercise of evolutions and firing, reflecting once again that the Nawab paid particular attention to exhibiting his military prowess to the world on such occasions. Thereafter, a luxury European-style lunch was prepared at the court. All throughout, the highest praise, along with gun-salutes, was exchanged between the king and queen of Britain—through their representative—and each of the Nawab's family members. On one such occasion, the Nawab insisted he wanted to toast the king's minister and ordered nineteen guns to fire from his own field-pieces to honor the royal envoy, something the latter was not expecting. Such an occurrence demonstrates that the Nawab knew European manners extremely well and was accustomed to using them to please his honored guests. The lunch ceremony ended with a local custom whereby the Nawab presented everyone with a garland of flowers, putting them around the neck of those sitting close to him himself and, at the same time, giving everyone betel and rose-water. In the evening, Chepauk Palace and its garden were brightly lit for a European-style dinner, supper, ball, and entertainments, such as traditional dancing and fireworks. All the English noblemen, including the king's minster's attendants and the Company's high-ranking officers, were invited to celebrate the special occasion, and the party again became a means by which everyone involved could exchange compliments and give each other dignity and honors.[40]

As well as the reception of the king's letters, in the period 1770-1773 there was another important ritual relating to the British royal house that took place in Chepauk Palace whose details are worth discussing here: the granting of the Order of Bath. In February 1771, a ship from Britain arrived in Madras with a decree from King George III to promote Sir John Lindsay, the first king's minister to India, to the fourth most senior order of British chivalry—known as "the Most Honorable Order of Bath"—and also to grant some royal ensigns to General Eyre Coote, a high-ranking British soldier in the EIC's army. This filled the Nawab with excitement because he was informed that he had been chosen by the king of Britain to invest the two British servants with these honors. He was "very inquisitive" to know how the right that had been conferred on him by King George III would do honor to himself, and whether this showed he was particularly distinguished in the eyes of the British

[40] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 17-29; E/379/3, Sep. 1771, 3-4, Mar. 1772, 166-167; E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 107-108.

king. As Paterson explained to the Nawab, when the British monarch chose to confer such an honor on any of his officials resident at a foreign court, it was customary for the sovereign prince at whose court that official lived to be the representative of the king. As such, the local ruler—in this case the Nawab—represented the king of Britain himself, the sovereign of the Order of Bath. Sir John Lindsay was appointed as the king's minister to all the princes of South Asia. But Paterson went further, intending to please the Nawab, by saying: "His Majesty the King of Great Britain has made choice of your Highness in preference to them all on this occasion to represent his person" and "to perform a ceremony which is done by His Majesty alone in his own dominions," and as the Nawab of Karnatak he was particularly chosen; "had it so happened that Sir John had been at Shah Allum's Durbar at that time; even the Emperor of Hindustan could not have performed the ceremony."[41]

After learning all the details of the ritual and being assured that this mission from the king of Britain would increase his dignity and fame, the British-Christian ceremony of knighthood was held at Chepauk Palace, following the rules set down by the British government in London. However, some additions were proffered by the Nawab; he wished to present Sir John with a dress (a suit of cloth in the European fashion) and some indigenous honors and titles on this occasion "as it was the custom of the country."[42] Evidently, this referred to the ceremonial granting of khilat in the Indo-Persian tradition, from a ruler to his subject. Sir John approved the Nawab's offer with pleasure, as he probably saw that such honors from the local ruler would increase his own standing. On the other hand, the Nawab's intention seems not only to have been to please the king's minister, since, with these offers, he was able to make the honorable king of Britain's minister make a significant symbolic gesture of submission towards him. All the hidden meanings in the khilat ritual could easily be understood by the locals.The case of Sir John was not unique as regards how the British were used in this way at the Nawab's court. The *Tuzak-i Walajah* and the *Ruznama*, which were aimed directly at local audiences, emphasize that the Nawab frequently bestowed presents of khilat, horses, and swords on senior EIC officers, such as Stringer Lawrence (the first Commander-in-Chief of the EIC in India), George Pigot (the Madras Governor, 1755-1763), and General Joseph Smith (Madras Commander-in-Chief) as reward for their service in wars. Pigot, for example, was also bestowed a mansab of 7,000, a *nawbat* (drum), and a palanquin, all of which were the dignitaries received by a mansabdar in the Mughal

[41] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 183-184.
[42] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 185, Mar. 1771, 210-212.

tradition.[43] From the South Asian standpoint, in receiving them, these senior British officers were showing their submission to the Nawab's authority and becoming integrated into his micro-cosmos as retainers.

During the preparations for the Order of Bath ritual, the Nawab also earnestly investigated the British royal ensigns from King George that were to be granted to Sir John Lindsay and General Eyre Coote. The ensigns of Sir John—collar, ribband, and star—to be used in the ceremony were shown to him, and it was recorded that the Nawab was extremely pleased with them and tried them all on, before then hinting to the secretary of the king's minister that he would not mind if the king of Britain also sent him some of these ensigns. He requested that the ensigns of Coote be brought to him, too, saying: "If the king has ordered me to invest him, he should receive them from my hands alone," and "it will be a great honour to me and will look well amongst the people here."[44]

The above accounts reveal some significant aspects of East-West cultural encounters at the Nawab's court. First, they reveal how the local and European codes of honor, rituals, customs, and ideologies could be mixed in this South Asian court as long as they were considered by both parties as amplifying both the ceremony and their own prestige. During one such event, the streets of Madras and the "durbar" were full of both local and European nobles, while the Indo-Islamic elements of nadhr, khilat, betal, rose-water, richly-dressed elephants, and local Indic music were mixed with Christian rituals of knighthood, Western-style royal salutes, toasting, music, balls, etc. Next, the evidence suggests that the Nawab was not only quick to understand and grasp the western codes of honor, he was also often able to use them smoothly and fluently as diplomatic tools with which to please his foreign guests and serve his own interests in the local context by adding some commensurable indigenous codes. One thing that should also be noted here is that what was always of ultimate concern to the Nawab in these diplomatic exchanges and his embrace of various European elements into his micro-cosmos was not how to please the British but how to "look well amongst the people here."[45]

[43] Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 105; Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 173, 248; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 15 Nov. 1773.
[44] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 183, 186.
[45] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 183, 186.

Theatres of Honor: Conflict and Competition for "The First Place"

As is shown in the records, all the ceremonies and entertainments that were related to the British were of great importance to the Nawab. He paid attention to every minute detail, including the furniture, food, and decorations in the palace, the way his servants should behave, and even the dress of the attendants. Wine was purchased from European ships for the drinks of European officers. Every possible enquiry was made regarding what had been customary on previous occasions to make sure that no mistake was made by doing either too much or too little.[46] Any deviation from the usual customs had to be discussed and consent given by both the Nawab and the British groups concerned. As discussed earlier, the Nawab was keen to add new features if it was considered that they would improve the sanctity of the ritual and his dignity. One more example can be given. For the reception of the king's letter in March 1772, it was agreed that a pair of state British Jacks from the Madras Governor, as well as a fringed parasol given to the Nawab by the Mughal emperor as a mark of high rank "which had never attended on any such occasion before," should be included in the morning procession.[47] However, any proposed reduction in the number of important elements was usually rejected, even when there were practical reasons for so doing. For example, in April 1773, after many such ceremonies related to the delivery of the king's letters, the British proposed shortening the procession route and cutting out the country music "to give less trouble and to make it less tiresome."[48] The Nawab, however, insisted on continuing as usual.

The Nawab's and his retainers' desire to increase his prestige by integrating various Eastern codes of honor were not always permitted by his European counterparts. Sometimes, such issues led to serious conflict. One such example occurred between the Nawab and the second king's minister, Sir Robert Hartland, over the offering of nadhr. As mentioned earlier, the offering of nadhr was usually part of the delivery of the king of Britain's letters to the Karnatak court. However, there had been an agreement between the Nawab and the party of Sir Robert that every participant, both European and local, would offer nadhr to the Nawab except the king's minister himself, who was at that moment representing the king of Britain and, therefore, could not pay homage to others. However, this exception must have proved unpopular with the Nawab's faction since, during one such event in April 1773, the princes Modal al-Mulk and Seif al-Mulk, the second and third sons of the Nawab, tried to challenge the custom. Using their familiarity with the king's minister, they took hold of Sir Robert's

[46] TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 65, *Ruznama*, 1 May and 3 Jun. 1773; IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 19-20.
[47] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Mar. 1772, 166-167.
[48] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 105.

hands and urged him: "you present nazir [i.e.nadhr], you present nazir," at the same time putting a few rupees in a handkerchief and forcing it into his hands.[49] Paterson, at that time secretary to both the king's minister and the Nawab, tried to stop Sir Robert from such action, but the situation forced the latter to go along with it and the Nawab thus received his nadhr. The two young princes probably wanted to enhance their father's honor and did not expect it to cause a significant reaction from the British. Yet the issue was more serious than they seem to have presumed, and the dispute continued for days after.

Prince Modal al-Mulk justified his actions and convinced Sir Robert to follow this local custom in future by arguing that previous high-ranking British officers, including the first king's minister, Sir John, all used to give nadhr to the Nawab. Paterson responded that these other officers were not the representative of His Majesty, the king of Britain, who should not pay such a compliment to anyone on earth. Regarding Sir John, he had given nadhr on only one exceptional occasion, when he was invested with the Order of Bath by the Nawab, at which time the Nawab was representing the British king. In support of the local princes'action, Venkatachalam, the Nawab's Brahmin counselor, proposed that Sir Robert have a double identity on this one occasion. As the Brahmin suggested, as soon as Sir Robert had delivered the royal letter, he could cease to be the king's minister and give nadhr simply as a British admiral. This proposal, and the local politics behind it, left Paterson bewildered. The Nawab tried to explain to Paterson that the nadhr implied no inferiority because one king could give it to another. However, Paterson was not convinced by this as he had researched the practice from other sources and found a reference in a record of the French Company that implied that nadhr was tribute offered by those subordinate to the prince: "Le Nazi reste un homage, qu'on accompagne d'un tribute de roupies d'or. Les Indiens offrent ce tribute a leurs Princes dans des jours de fêtes et de cérémonies!"[50] Eventually, Paterson, seeking a compromise, said to the Nawab that, if he believed it essential to his honor, he would ask the king's minister to write to the British government to ask permission to do so in the future. However, such debates caused the Nawab great unease. He was afraid that Paterson and the king's minister, the principal channels through which he could send messages to the British government, would harbor resentment towards him that would have negative consequences for his reputation in Britain. Eventually, the Nawab decided to attempt a conciliation, concluding that he would, from then on, leave it to Paterson to ensure that neither the honor

[49] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 107.
[50] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 113.

of the Nawab of Karnatak nor that of the king of Britain would suffer. However, he insisted that the episode be entirely forgotten and not mentioned in any letter or report.[51]

The Brahmin Venkatachalam's suggestion to the British king's minister, that he consider having a double identity, at one point being the royal representative and another himself—a British admiral—is worth paying particular attention to here. This may help in the ongoing debate within the recent work of Van Meersbergen regarding how one should interpret or perceive the meaning of receiving khilat, as well as other symbolic gifts, in early modern diplomatic exchanges. According to Van Meersbergen, the normative meaning of receiving khilat, first given by Buckler—which is solely about the recipient's acknowledgement of the supreme authority of the donor and the recipient's becoming a servant of the donor through this ritual—could not have been the case in the context of royal representatives of another king. Van Meersbergen thus does not fully agree with Pete Emme and Jos Gommans, who to some extent have followed Buckler, stating that during diplomatic exchanges between VOC envoys and the Persian court, "[b]y wearing such a robe of honour […] without [the Dutch] noticing the VOC had thus become a subject of the Persian Shah!"[52] In other words, the receiving of a robe by a "foreign" officer or envoy could be interpreted in ways other than simply the submission of one sovereign to another. One historian who has tried to solve this problem, Stewart Gordon, suggests that multiplicity of meanings of the practice and the variety of contexts in which it occurred should be considered; thus, in a reciprocal exchange between two sovereigns, strict meaning of incorporation should not be applied.[53] However, Van Meersbergen also does not agree with Gordon's interpretation, and continues to incline towards Buckler's, Emme's, and Gommans's view of incorporation, albeit with some convincing modifications. First of all, when a royal ambassador or Company agents accepted the khilat, it was not "without noticing." Second, it was not "the VOC" as a whole (or their kings, in other cases) who became "a subject of Persian Shah." The seventeenth-century foreign envoys in Van Meersbergen's studies were fully aware of the significance of their acts and the meaning of the practices. They accepted being symbolically incorporated into the ruler's patronage network, which in practice implied they would receive his protection for the duration of their stay in his domain and formally pledged to remain the ruler's faithful servants in exchange for achieving what they had set out to in their missions: cultivating their relationship with the ruler, personal advancement, or trading privileges.

[51] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Apr. 1773, 107-114.
[52] Van Meersbergen, "Ethnography and Encounter," 178.
[53] Van Meersbergen, "Ethnography and Encounter," 178-179. See also: Stewart Gordon, *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2, 9-10, 21-22.

More importantly, this ritual rarely led to problems for them, mainly because they understood fully that the ceremony signified the establishment of "personal allegiance" and not a claim of sovereignty over the Company or the king they served. In other words, it was a personal relationship, one that did not compromise their overlord's authority.[54] The viewpoint of South Asians, such as Venkatachalam, regarding nadhr offerings, described above, confirms and supplements the perspectives of the European agents towards the gift-giving rituals as presented by Van Meersbergen. What the Karnatak elites expected from the European participants in such rituals was an expression of "personal allegiance." The Nawab's aim was not to jeopardize the dignity of the British king or incorporate the latter into his suzerainty, but his target was the person of Sir Robert. If that British who was both the Royal ambassador and Royal Navy accepted his suzerainty, then other British agents in Madras, especially those of the EIC, who were merely merchants, had no right to deny the Nawab's overlordship; the Nawab would thus be perceived, throughout society, as the overlord of all the British in Madras.

There were other issues, similar to the incident above, that could not be seen as "unintentional" mistakes resulting from different cultural ideas or traditions, and which frequently occurred during these ceremonies and entertainments at Chepauk Palace. These could be caused by the British faction just as easily as by the Nawab. I would suggest that these cultural "clashes" were often deliberately concocted by one group as tools to insult and lessen the greatness of their "rivals." The ceremonial events could be seen, metaphorically, as theatres or battlefields in the competition for honor, prestige, and dignity. A prime example occurred during the reception of the first British king's letter from Sir John Lindsay. As mentioned earlier, the arrival of the first king's minister in August 1770 was a shock, and his authority was unacceptable to the Company's people. To protest against both the king's minister and the Nawab, who had played a crucial role in his posting there, the Madras Governor declared that the EIC would not participate in this ceremonial event. Such a rejection by the Company's people would, naturally, risk bringing dishonor on both the king's minister and the Nawab in the eyes of the public. In order to not lose face, the king's minister and secretary offered the Nawab a simple solution: the royal letter could simply be delivered to him in private. This clearly demonstrates that the king's minister's party was too new to understand the mind of the Nawab and the real function of both the British royal's friendship and the various related ceremonies within the local context. However, they soon

[54] Van Meersbergen, "Ethnography and Encounter," 179, 181.

learned. In many subtle ways, the Nawab made the king's people understand clearly that he would in no way be happy with a private ritual. He wanted to be presented with the royal letters in a public ceremony because he knew full well that accounts of those letters "would be written everywhere and talked of all over the country; and the more show and parade made about this business, it would make the greater noise and would be the more for his honor."[55] Despite his declaration to the British minister that his wish was, as far as possible, to show respect to the British king, the Nawab's real concern was always the local audience.

Determined not to be defeated by the Madras government, the Nawab and the king's minister's party prepared the public ceremony themselves, in the most splendid way possible. It was essential that the ceremony should not look or be inferior to any previous occasion, i.e. any of those that had been organized by the Company's people, and, in the end, the ceremony and the evening's entertainment were a success. During the banquet, the Nawab was richly dressed, with a sword at his side in the European manner, a sword that he had received from the king of Britain only that morning.[56] Through this simple act of gratitude and by displaying his friendship towards the British crown, it seems that the Nawab was declaring in front of everyone his victory over the EIC's officers. By accepting a piece of royal clothing (the sword), the Nawab was incorporated into the royal person and the patronage network of the British king. Being the friend of and receiving protection from their overlord, the Nawab thus became the master of these British agents in South Asia.

After some time had passed, the situation between the British king's minister and the Company's people "improved." The Company's troops and officers were allowed by the Madras Governor to participate in subsequent ceremonial events, for the general benefit of the British nation. However, during the years 1770-1773, the Governor himself continued to insist that he was unable to take part in any official ritual whose leading role was assigned to the king's ministers. Governor Josias Du Pré made a stand that, as the chief of Madras, he could not give up "first place to anyone" in official rituals.[57] The term "first place" used by Du Pré seems to refer to the position of the most honorable or the most important individual on whom the spotlight should primarily be in a ceremony, event, or place. In the reception events for the British king's letter, the Nawab (as the host) and every participant should customarily give "first place" to the British king's minister, and, if the Madras Governor was there, he would be placed only in the second rank. Yet, as supreme leader of the British

[55] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/1, DGP, Jul. 1770, 297.
[56] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 9-10, 17, 27-28.
[57] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Apr. 1771, 247.

settlement in Madras, the Governor did not want that. Eventually, Du Pré made a compromise with the Nawab and the British king's faction: he could join any "unofficial" party and entertainment in the evening, either to celebrate the delivery of the king's letters or any other event hosted by the Nawab for the British people. This compromise by the Governor was likely due to the fact that, if he refused to take part in any event, it could either have been interpreted as rudeness and disrespect to the Nawab or people may have started to think that the Madras Governor was not as important as the king's minister so the Nawab did not invite him. In such circumstances, the Madras Governor would also have lost "first place" in the even wider context of being the premier British gentleman in Madras. I find the term "first place" crucial for understanding the competition between the Nawab and the British factions. As is seen frequently in the sources, whenever all the honorable people of Madras—both Indian and British—gathered together, there were always attempts to gain "first place."

The scene from one evening in March 1771, when the Nawab invited all the British gentlemen to congratulate his eldest son on his upcoming wedding, is a good illustration. According to local custom, the bridegroom had to sit in the musnud in the center of the *pandal*—a temporary pavilion erected for public meetings or rituals—for many nights to receive the respect and blessing of all the important people in the kingdom. Traditionally, the musnud consisted of rich carpets that were placed on the floor and surrounded by luxury cushions. But, on this specific night, when the European guests came, the musnud for the Nawab's son was specially designed; it was raised to the height of the chairs as a reflection of European manners of sitting, since it would be a disgrace for the prince "to sit lower than any person in the presence."[58] It is likely that this was because the Nawab was concerned that his son's "first place" would be taken by the Europeans. Among the British, there was also competition for "first place" at the same event, and, by a cunning trick, the Madras Governor Du Pré managed to make himself the first British gentleman to walk up to the musnud to congratulate the bridegroom, and thereby relegated the king's minister Sir John Lindsay to second place, before other Europeans of lower rank were allowed to follow. The king's minister immediately perceived the trick and was greatly annoyed with how he had lost first place.[59] The following month, such an event was held once more so that the British could celebrate the wedding of the Nawab's second son. The Madras Governor, probably afraid of some sort of retaliation, declared from the very start that he would only accept the invitation if both he and the king's minister were not "in competition;" while Sir John was with the

[58] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 215.
[59] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 214.

Nawab, he would stand with the bridegroom, and when Sir John chose to be with the bridegroom, he would attend to the Nawab.[60]

Another important example that clearly reflects the fact that the Nawab had good understanding of the "first place" concept and the competition between the two British factions occured in March 1771, when he hosted two consecutive evenings of European entertainment at Chepauk Palace. The first night was a celebration for Sir John on the occasion of his receiving the Order of Bath; according to Paterson, the Nawab was determined to give the king's minister "the first place" in that event, considering it "his night" and paying him the greatest attention. This was the case from the outset, as, when the Madras Governor arrived and Prince Abd al-Wahab Khan, the Nawab's brother, started to walk up to welcome him, the Nawab suddenly took hold of his brother and ushered him in the direction of Sir John first. Paterson immediately noticed the king's minister's satisfaction at this, while the Madras Governor felt the polar opposite. This was probably why the second night of entertainment—claimed to be a party to celebrate the upcoming weddings of his two sons—was organized very shortly after the first. On this occasion, the Nawab dedicated the party to the Company's people and the first honor was paid to the Madras Governor.[61] Paterson also remarked that the Nawab was very cautious regarding how he preserved his own "first place" when with the British nobles during such events. The Nawab made the polite excuse that he did not know the European custom of the right and left hand; all he wanted was to have his two best friends near him. But Paterson noticed that, at several times during the first night—that in honor of the king's minister—when the Nawab received the Madras Governor he always placed himself to the Governor's right; afterwards, he would call the king's minister to sit by him to his right. In this manner, the Nawab, as host, would be in the middle, gracefully supported on his right side by the British king's minister and on his left side by the EIC's Governor of Madras. This situation was acceptable for the king's minister because the most significant guest was the person sat to the right of the Nawab. But the Madras Governor, who was placed on the left, was certainly not pleased with the arrangement.[62]

The crucial point I would like to underline from these accounts is that the Nawab clearly understood this British rivalry. He recognized that, during these entertainments, his behavior—as well as that of other Karnatak notables—towards the competing British parties was seen by all participants as a significant indicator of loss or gain in their standing. He

[60] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Apr. 1771, 247.
[61] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 212-213.
[62] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Apr. 1771, 247.

knew perfectly well how to play the game, how to control the situation, and when to play one off against another to his own advantage. Above all, in all these ceremonies and entertainment events, the Nawab knew very well how to keep "first place" himself. Seeing this through the lens of South Asian sensibilities, the Europeans who were invited to his entertainments were turned into part of his durbar, i.e. attendance at the ruler's court by his subjects when summoned to come into his presence and share his food.

"Arddasht": Titles and Honors, "Governor" or "King"

One consequence of the visit and temporary stay in Madras of the king's ministers that is clearly reflected in the sources was the Nawab's changed attitude and approach towards the Madras Presidency. In the words of Paterson, who witnessed this development closely, "[…] lest anything which he [the Nawab] did, should even in the eyes of his own people, make him appear greater than the Governor [of Madras]."[63] One illustration of the Nawab's display of his own superiority over the Company's agents came when he wanted them to resume the custom of a gun-salute upon the arrival and departure of both him and his family at the Company's fort. This practice seems to have been followed previously, but in the recent past at least had not received much attention from either the Nawab or the Madras Presidency, probably due to their visits being fairly frequent.[64] The Nawab's seriousness in wanting to resume this custom was seen in June 1773; upon the departure of his second son to war, the Madras Governor said that there was no gun available at that moment, implying that the custom could be skipped. However, the Nawab would not accept this and did not let his son leave without first receiving the salute from the Company.[65] On another occasion, when the Nawab sent his ambassador to negotiate some business with the Dutch VOC in Negapatnam, he asked the Madras Governor for a salute for his representative to ensure an honorable departure. This was unprecedented, as the EIC claimed that it never saluted anyone but the Nawab's family, and the Madras Governor naturally refused. This idea of the Nawab had been put to him by Paterson, his British secretary, with the agreement and support of the British king's minister. As the king's faction argued, it was widely known that the Madras Presidency saluted representatives from every Indian power that arrived, even from petty Poligars. Therefore, it was necessary for them to pay this proper compliment to the Nawab's ambassadors. Furthermore, the king's minister had already given the order to salute the Nawab's envoy with thirteen guns, so the Company had no right to refuse a compliment that

[63] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Aug. 1772, 252.
[64] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/3, DGP, Aug. 1772, 233.
[65] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Jul. 1773, 232.

the representative of the British king was willing to make. Eventually, the Madras Governor was obliged to salute the Nawab's envoy.[66] These examples show that the Nawab attempted to position himself above the EIC in the pecking order, making use of the king's ministers as his assistants or supporters in order to do so.

Two other particularly important disputes between the Nawab and the EIC took place while the king's ministers were present, and I will discuss them in detail in this and the subsequent section. The first was a dispute over the terms "Highness" and "arddasht," while the second was related to extraterritorial jurisdiction. Before the mid-1770s, it had been customary of the EIC to address or refer to the Nawab using the term "Excellency" in its daily English-language correspondence and this had solicited no protest from the ruler. However, in August 1770, the Nawab for the first time objected to this to the Madras Presidency, expressing that he did not feel it appropriate that he be referred to by such a low title. Astonished at first, the Presidency soon learned that this idea had come to the Nawab, albeit unintentionally, through the first king's minister, who had just arrived in Madras. The king's people were unsure as to how they should address the Nawab in their interactions. Regarding himself in the honorable rank of the British king's ambassador, Sir John wanted the local ruler to address him publicly by the title of "Excellency." In that case, the Nawab, as the indigenous sovereign, should be called by a higher title than that. After consulting with his secretary Paterson, they resolved to proclaim that the king's people would address the Nawab in the style usually given to princes in Europe, namely "Highness." His decision pleased the Nawab exceedingly, but immediately provoked gripes from the Madras Presidency.

The king's minister must never have imagined that this trifling act, which sought to aggrandize his own honor and, at the same time, flatter the local prince, would spark off a battle for honor between the Nawab and the Madras Presidency that would last for more than two years, from August 1770 to December 1772. During this time, the Nawab insisted that the Company's people change their way of addressing him, while, for a year and a half, the Madras Presidency under Governor Du Pré claimed ignorance of the Nawab's desire and repeatedly demanded that the king's minister stop calling the Nawab "Highness," arguing that the Nawab of Karnatak was only a fawjdar—the Mughal term for petty provincial governor—and was never "sovereign" or "independent."[67] From August 1772, a time when

[66] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/6, DGP, Jul. 1773, 15, 21.
[67] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Sep. 1770, 69.

the first request regarding the use of the term "Highness" had not yet been accepted, the Nawab put a further condition on the Company, one which was even harsher. The Nawab claimed that, since he did not understand English, the Company's letters must be translated for him into Persian. In those letters, the Company must refer to the text as "arddasht," rather than the term "*niaznama*," which had been used thus far. This was because arddasht was the proper Persian term for writings sent to sovereigns, comparable to the rank of Highness in English. But, to everybody's astonishment, despite this request being more demanding, the Nawab was successful and, in so doing, able to change Governor Du Pré, who just the previous year had called him a fawjdar and been his strongest opponent, into a supporter. In the last three months of 1772, Du Pré himself brought this issue to the Madras Council and consented to the Nawab's wishes, not only with regard to the title of Highness in English but also arddasht in Persian. The problematic demands of the Nawab and the perplexing behavior of Du Pré generated "a most violent dispute" and split both the Madras Council and public opinion in Madras into two rival factions.

Some of the details of the arguments that both parties used in their dispute are worth discussing here, as they reflect clearly the complicated context in which both the Nawab and the British were operating. The first argument that opponents of the Nawab used related to the theoretical status of the Nawab within the Mughal imperial structure. From their perspective, a Nawab of Karnatak was only a fawjdar, not a sovereign prince, since he received his authority from his imperial masters. Although, by the treaty of 1768, the Nawab had become independent from the Deccan state (as discussed in Chapter Two), he was still under the authority of the imperial court. As was widely known, the Nawab always acknowledged the superiority of the Mughal emperors. The Nawab, exceedingly angry over being called a fawjdar, declared that that was a position very much below his current dignity judging by all the *de facto* rights and authority he had over his own country.[68] The Nawab and his supporters, both Indians and Europeans, put forth various pieces of practical evidence and ideological arguments to back up his claims. First, the imperial farmans, the sanads from the Deccan Nizams, the letters from the Maratha leaders, and letters from previous EIC Governors that were written to him were presented to the king's ministers and the Madras Presidency. According to the Nawab's interpretation, the honors, titles, and other marks of distinction given to him by all significant power holders in South Asia and high-ranking Company servants, as reflected in those documents, were almost the highest possible. They

[68] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 31-32, 35-36, Sep. 1770, 69, Mar. 1771, 231.

were testimony to how other rulers at the time viewed him as an independent sovereign.[69] A number of previous Company servants had even addressed him in the highest terms, as "His Majesty" and "Royal."[70] Prince Modar al-Mulk used the roles of the ancient rajas and sultans of South Asia to support the position of his father. He explained that, in the past, the whole empire of Hindustan had been divided and ruled by many rulers in their respective countries; they truly had royal power and royal titles. It was not until "the great Timur" [Emperor Babur?] overran the whole country that all those rulers were displaced and Nawabs named as provincial governors, under the one emperor. In the words of the prince, "my father is an independent as any of those kings were."[71]

Not only were the customs and practices of the South Asian context used, but European traditions were also frequently employed in the disputes, too. Some of the British declared that the status of the Nawab was certainly equal in rank to a viceroy, thus having the same position as the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, who was addressed by the British using the term "Excellency."[72] Paterson, supporting the Nawab, argued against this, and stated that the Nawab was more like a "prince," such as their Highnesses Prince Lewis and Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. The Nawab's rivals claimed that he could be demoted by the Mughal ruler whenever he pleased, to which Paterson responded that such could only happen if the emperor had enough force to execute the command, similar to the case of imperial Germany (i.e. the Holy Roman Empire).[73] Charles Smith, one of the Madras Council members who agreed with using the terms Highness and arddasht, used the position of the British king in his justification; he argued that the Nawab was an ally of the king of Britain, and the latter could not have an alliance with a subject, only with other sovereigns.[74]

One point worth highlighting is that, by late 1772, the way in which the Nawab was addressed in English was of no concern anymore. With the powerful influence of Governor Du Pré, who had given his support to the Nawab, the Madras Council eventually "agreed" to a concession regarding the term Highness.[75] But, for many of the British, what could not be accepted was the use of the term arddasht in the Persian letters, as they were convinced that it would jeopardize the Company's prestige locally. These British men had carried out significant research into the local culture and thereby learned that the term arddasht was used

[69] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 35-36, Sep. 1770, 52.
[70] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1770, 20; E/379/3, Aug 1772, 252.
[71] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 34-35.
[72] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 231.
[73] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 15.
[74] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 53.
[75] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 54-55.

only by an inferior to a superior, implying a slavish submission to a master. As they argued, it was a rule in the empire that a Nawab of the provinces could not receive the title of arddasht even from those who were imperial diwans.[76] The EIC's officers raised this argument because, from 1765, the Company was appointed the imperial diwan of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa by a farman of the Mughal emperor.[77] As the EIC went on to claim, at that time the Company was the only noteworthy European power in India, possessing full sovereignty over large areas and immense revenues, and it frequently received titles from the emperor. In its conclusion it stated: "[f]rom the dignities given them by the Mogul," it had a right to deal with and act towards the Nawab "on an equal footing."[78] However, the Nawab absolutely denied the Company's equality regarding the Mughal rank. As he firmly argued, "the Company were not subadar of Bengal, [but] only dewans [of Bengal]."[79] In addition, even though it was evident that the EIC was the *de facto* supreme ruler of Bengal, the Nawab still insisted on its inferiority to him in Karnatak, stating "[…] they are not sovereigns in this country [Karnatak]. That is true, neither is the Nabob of Arcot sovereign in Bengal."[80]

Before we examine how this incident came to a close, one important question should be explored: Why was the issue of the words "His Highness" and "arddasht" so important for the Nawab and the British officers that they devoted significant time and energy to it? A reported conversation between the Nawab's Brahmin, Venkatachalam, and Paterson may help us better understand the wishes and concerns of these eighteenth-century elites:

[76] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 17, 28, 51-52.
[77] Metcalf and Metcalf, *A Concise History of Modern India*, 53.
[78] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 15, 18-19.
[79] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, Nov. 1772, 44.
[80] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 21.

Paterson:	I supposed they [the EIC] never would call their letters Arzdasht [i.e. arddasht] for the reasons that occurred to me about Bengal […]
Venkatachalam:	why did they give it to the Nizam [of Deccan] then?
Paterson:	I did not think they did.
Venkatachalam:	Yes they do. If they did not he would not receive their letters.
Paterson:	perhaps that might be formerly but could not be so now.
Venkatachalam:	if they do not give it to him [the Nizam], I am sure the Nabob will never ask it. [81]

The Nawab's people claimed that there was evidence of the Company addressing Nizam Ali Khan (recently, in 1768), whom the Nawab perceived as his equal, not his superior, with the title of Highness and that of arddasht in its Persian-language correspondence. Furthermore, all the rajas of the small ancient kingdoms that formed part of the Karnatak state, such as the Tanjore raja, had also been called kings and addressed in the royal style by the EIC, and the remnants of their royal houses still had those appellations at the time. The Nawab viewed himself as both superior to and the inheritor of all the authority and honor of those Hindu rajas and, therefore, he had the right to the royal titles.[82] Yet the Nawab's opponents argued that, while such had been true in the past, it was primarily due to the limited economic and political power of the British in South Asia, as well as their lack of knowledge in local languages and customs, and everything was different now. Recently, the Company had been accustomed to writing to all significant rulers in the same manner, using the word niaznama, which put themselves almost equal to the receiver. It was also concerned that, if it compromised with Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan on this matter, other rulers would probably demand the same, something that would severely compromise the Company's dignity.[83]

The dispute had started two years earlier, when the Nawab became angry after hearing that Governor Du Pré had called him a fawjdar. But, as I argue, the true motivation of the Nawab in all this was not as superficial as simply teaching the company's officers to learn how to respect him. As reflected in the conversation above and various other conversations between Paterson and the Nawab and his people, the principal reason was more related to

[81] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 20.
[82] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Mar. 1771, 232; E/379/3, DGP, Aug. 1772, 252; E/379/4, Nov. 1772, 26-27, 42-44; E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Nizam Ali Khan, 12 Jan. 1768, 37; Court of Directors to Nawab, 12 Jan. 1768, 41.
[83] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 51-52.

jealousy and the competition between himself and other local power holders. How the Company referred to him would be used by the Nawab to advance his status and dignity in the local, South Asian context. The Nawab and his Brahmin also told Paterson directly that the Persian title would do him great honor and was significant in the eyes of all his servants.[84] Paterson believed that, when the Nawab received the British company's letter with the term arddasht, he would immediately "acquaint all the courts of India with it."[85] The same was true for his opponents. What the rivals of the Nawab worried about most was, similarly, the potential impact of the Company's status and prestige on the indigenous people's views.

Eventually, after intense debate, the dispute ended with the Nawab's victory over his rivals after he secured the use of the word arddasht as a result of the influence of Governor Du Pré, securing a majority of votes in the Madras Council by five to four, and the constant support of the king's ministers.[86] After this incident, the British, his powerful allies, continued to be used by the Nawab as a tool in order to achieve similar results whenever the Nawab felt himself deserving of higher standing and wished to refashion himself in the eyes of the public. For example, near the end of 1773, when the Nawab had just received the latest farman from Emperor Shah Alam, he immediately sent an English translation of it to the Madras Governor, explaining that he had received the new titles "Asaf al-Dowlah," "Zafar Jang," and "Sipah Sarlar." His purpose in so doing was to ensure the Company added all of these new titles to his name in its future letters to him. Furthermore, the Nawab also told his secretary, Paterson, to pass this information on to the British government via the king's minister, and expressed his great desire that, in future, the king of Britain would address him by the term "Prince of the Carnatick" instead of "Nabob" saying it would be more suitable for the new Mughal titles to which he had just been promoted.[87] No doubt, if and when he received such letters, they would have been circulated to the public as widely as possible.

Regarding this episode, Governor Du Pré's behavior in turning from the Nawab's sternest opponent into his most powerful supporter is important. His case is a good illustration of how the Nawab managed to make "friends" with individual British. Stunned at the beginning, Paterson soon began to understand why Du Pré had changed his mind. This was mainly related to the end of his term as Madras Governor, which was fast approaching, in late 1772. As had many of his predecessors, Du Pré wanted to leave his position with

[84] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 44.
[85] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 27.
[86] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 39.
[87] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 150, Feb. 1774, 217.

generous gifts and promises from the Nawab. He also needed positive recommendation letters from the Nawab to present to his masters in Britain. In this light, the Nawab's attitude towards him—friendly or hostile—was significant for his future career and fortune. The two parties, therefore, proceeded with their "secret" compromises.[88]

Conflict over Extraterritorial Jurisdiction

The dispute over extraterritorial jurisdiction was not directly related to cultural encounters. Yet it is worth discussing here as one more example of the Nawab's attempts to place himself above the EIC's Madras Presidency from the early 1770s. One factor that meant the fate and business of the Nawab and the EIC were complicatedly entangled was the Madras Presidency's possession of a vast region within Karnatak's heartland (i.e. the Jagirs). Before the early 1770s, there seems to have been an agreement between the Nawab and the EIC that legal jurisdiction over the people living within the Jagirs was the Company's alone. This meant that both the Europeans and the indigenous people living in the Company's domain were subject to British law. In addition, the EIC also had extraterritorial jurisdiction, meaning that, within his territory, the Nawab only had full jurisdiction over the native population, not over British people and some indigenous servants who were registered as subjects of the EIC.[89] When the Nawab had consented to this, he may have been extremely grateful to and trusting of the EIC as a result of its past military efforts, or he may have considered that it would not be wise to resist the Company's wishes. But the situation must have been more complicated in practice, particularly after 1767 when the Nawab moved to Madras along with a large number of his family and servants, who in theory came under British law. It must have been a great embarrassment for the Nawab, as ruler of Karnatak, to allow himself and his people to be subject to foreign rules. When his attitude and self-regard began to change, especially after the arrival of the British king's ministers, the Nawab attempted to renegotiate with the Company, just as he had with the issue of his title. In 1771, the Nawab requested that the Madras Presidency give him certain privileges over legal jurisdiction in Madras so that the matter would not affect his dignity. However, there was no breakthrough for a year. However, in December 1772, there was a clash over juridical rights that was extremely irritating for the Nawab but which also allowed him to bring the issue to the negotiating table once more, something he did through a series of increasingly aggressive gestures. One Abu Mahomed, a kotwal of Arcot, was arrested by the British Mayor's Court, while entering

[88] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Nov. 1772, 24-26, 48, 54.
[89] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/2, DGP, Feb. 1771, 169; E/379/5, Mar. 1773, 22.

Madras to meet the Nawab, the result of a debt he owed to a Frenchman. The Nawab immediately protested to the Madras Governor, asking what right the British had in exercising their jurisdiction over the people of Arcot. To this the Governor replied that, although Abu Mahomed was a kotwal of Arcot, he was within the jurisdiction of the British Mayor's Court at the time he was arrested.[90]

> The Nawab: I gave you a Jaghire that you might enjoy the revenue of it; but I did not give you the sovereignty over my subjects: and you never can expect then that I shall ever consent to give you a jurisdiction over my family. […] but if you claim any superiority, in your country [the Company's possessions] over my people, I must do the same over your people in mine.
>
> The Governor: No our laws must follow our arms.
>
> The Nawab: So must my laws follow my arms.[91]

As can be seen from this conversation, the Nawab offered the Madras Presidency two choices. The first was focused on people: the Nawab agreed to let the British do whatever they pleased with their own subjects (British men and indigenous servants) anywhere, but he must also have the same exclusive jurisdiction over all natives, wherever they were, including in the Company's territory. The second option was spatially oriented. If the Nawab's subjects were under British laws in Madras and the EIC's Jagirs, then British subjects must be under the Nawab's authority in any part of Karnatak outside the Company's territory. The Nawab not only sent his appeals on this matter to the EIC but also to the king's minister in an attempt to make sure that the issue reached the British government in London.

As a result of Abu Mahomed's case, a previously-hidden fact was revealed to the public: that, at the request of the Nawab in 1771, the EIC's Court of Directors had already produced a compromise for the Nawab and sent it to the Madras in March 1772.[92] This EIC compromise owed much to the political atmosphere and public opinion in Britain—which wanted the Company to be more respectful of the rights of local rulers—and also to the pressure from the king's minister in Madras. The Directors had decided to grant the privilege to the Nawab that, from that point on, his family, servants, and dependents would all be free from arrest in civil cases within the Company's dominion. But in order for the Company to

[90] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 86-88.
[91] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 87-88.
[92] IOR, E/4/865, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 25 Mar. 1772, 681-682.

have a clear definition of who were the "people of the Nawab" covered by this new privilege, the Nawab was asked to send a list of all such names to the Madras Presidency. However, after the new regulation arrived in Madras, the Presidency there delayed sending it to the Nawab and the Mayor's Court for further enforcement. This may have simply been due to ignorance on the part of the Madras officers, but more likely it was out of concern that this privilege would further aggrandize the Nawab's ambitions at their own expense, especially coming at a time when the Nawab was intent on increasing his standing and, as a consequence, placing many demands on them.

To make the situation even more complicated, as in other Presidencies, judicial rights in Madras were not within the remit of the Company. Andrew Ross and George Smith, the two judges of the Mayor's Court of Madras at the time of the conflict, explained that their institution had been created by acts of the British Parliament and received their judicial authority directly from the British king to whom everyone, even the Governor of Madras, was subject. The two judges were likely referring to the charter of 1726 that had been issued by King George II, which demanded the establishment of the Mayor's Court at the three Company towns—Madras, Bombay, and Calcutta—to enforce British laws uniformly. This meant that, from then on, the British judges in those courts derived their authority not from the Company but from the British king, and their decisions had to be based on the laws of Britain and acts of that country's Parliament alone. Therefore, as Ross and Smith said, they were not bound by the aforementioned instructions by the Company's Directors to grant such a privilege to the Nawab's people. As such, the judicial rights issue was not like other conflicts between the Nawab and the EIC, which could be "easily" solved through bargaining and negotiations; in this case, the standing of the Mayor's Court—or, to put it another way, the prestige of the British king and government—was directly involved.[93] The case of Abu Mahomed was very problematic and the British were at a loss to know what to do, since it happened when the new regulation from the Company had not yet been relayed to the Mayor's Court, not to mention the fact that the Court had not approved of it. Furthermore, even if the court were to approve the regulation, there was still no list of the "people of the Nawab" who were to be accorded the privilege that could have prevented Abu Mohamed from being arrested. Therefore, the British officers had no justification for releasing Abu Mohamed, as the Nawab desired, without losing face and tarnishing the dignity of their nation. On the other hand, the Nawab could not risk such an affront to his character and

[93] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 88-89.

standing at such a time, when he was working hard to improve his status. He had put significant pressure on the newly-appointed Madras Governor, Alexander Wynch, and the party of the king's minister to make all efforts and use all possible influence to resolve this issue, and to his own advantage. Eventually, the Nawab received a promise from Wynch that he would do his best to help, and requested that the Nawab use the influence of his many powerful friends in Britain to support him. The two judges of the Mayor's Court also gave their word that they would do everything in their power to help the Nawab.[94]

The matter of Abu Mohamed was resolved in March 1773. Every party—the Nawab, the Madras Presidency, and the Mayor's Court—agreed to lobby the Frenchman who was the litigant in the case to withdraw his suit from the British court and instead appeal to the Nawab for justice. Then, later, the Nawab closed the case by paying the debt owed to the Frenchman himself. The judge, Ross, gave the justification for the Mayor's Court's decision in favor of the Nawab as follows. First, the king of Britain had been pleased to constitute the court and appoint the king's minister to the South Asian princes for their own protection, of which the Nawab of Karnatak was considered one. Secondly, it was advantageous for the Company's honor, and necessary for business, to have the Nawab's residence so near Madras, and if indulgences were not granted to him then that ruler might go to his own country. And thirdly, "it is natural right" of the Nawab "to know how far his servants may be entitled to protection from warrants of arrest."[95] This last statement means that Abu Mohamed was automatically included in the list of protected people in the Nawab's judgment. Again, the situation bears testimony to the extraordinary influence and friendship networks that the Nawab had with various British agents in both Madras and London.

What the Nawab regained in 1773 was special protection for his followers in civil judicial conflicts that took place within the Company's territory. This was a huge step, yet it was not the ultimate aim of the Nawab, which was extraterritorial jurisdiction over all his subjects in any criminal matter; this would, essentially, equal the rights of British people in his lands. In other words, he would appeal to the British government for justice against any subjects of Britain, and similarly he wanted them to appeal to him for justice against any of his subjects who might give cause for complaint. Immediately after the case of Abu Mohamed had ended, the Nawab pursued this aim, repeating his previous proposals to the

[94] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 88-89.
[95] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Mar. 1773, 246-247; E/379/5, DGP, Mar. 1773, 62; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 66, *Ruznama*, 27 Aug. 1773.

Court of Directors and planning to appeal to the British Parliament.[96] At around this time, in London, the Regulating Act was launched by the British government; this was the first step in taking control of the EIC's enterprise in South Asia. This was passed at the same time as the Judicature Act of 1773, which resulted in the establishment of a Supreme Court in Calcutta, whose judges were British—directly appointed from London—and from which appeals could be made to the Privy Council in London. This Act was passed to show the British government's deep concern regarding the legal rights and fair treatment of South Asian peoples.[97] It is very likely that the legal conflict involving the Nawab of Karnatak in the previous few years had been a significant factor in generating, or at least shaping, the action of the British government on this issue.

The competition and conflicts between the Nawab (and his supporters) and his opponents in the early 1770s reflect that indigenous and European politico-cultural worlds were complicatedly interwoven and that the ideas, ideologies, customs, and political practices of both sides could be easily transferred from one to the other in order to serve practical purposes in encounters between those involved. Such conflicts usually broke out when one side deliberately used these political and cultural elements as tools to insult, challenge, or lessen the prestige of their opponents, such as when the Madras Presidency refused to give the Nawab the gun salute he demanded or when the Nawab wanted the EIC to address him using the terms "Highness" and "arddasht." Disputes also broke out when one side realized it had been deliberately used or tricked by their opponents, such as happened during the nadhr-offering disagreement between the Nawab and Sir Robert Hartland and the competition over "first place" between the Madras Governor and the king's minister. During these conflicts, one side often attempted to trick their opponent by incorrectly telling them the meaning of certain cultural markers—wishing to make use of foreigners' ignorance—but they were usually unsuccessful because their opponents understood the meanings of the customs only too well. Examples of this can be seen in the disputes over the meanings of "Excellency" and "Highness," "niaznama" and "arddasht," and the nadhr offering, among others.

It is even more important to note that the Nawab and his opponents not only tried to learn foreign elements in order to impress their foreign guests or prevent themselves from being abused, but they were even able to use foreign systems to support their own interests. Their position in the Mughal hierarchy, for example, was used by both the Nawab and the

[96] IOR, Mss Eur E/379/5, DGP, Mar. 1773, 22.
[97] James, *Raj*, 51.

EIC to understand their place within the local societal context. Also, the status of European princes in the Holy Roman Empire was used to support the Nawab's claim to the title of "His Highness." In summary, all the evidence indicates that the Nawab, his local servants, and all European parties involved had the ability and the means to learn and understand such foreign politico-cultural symbols and practices almost perfectly. The conflicts that occurred between them were by no means based on mutual incomprehensibility, but were, instead, deliberate expressions of challenges and dissatisfaction from one side or from both. They could happen when a position of mutual benefit could not be reached or when one side wanted to re-negotiate an issue. Using Subrahmanyam's expression, these were "a very particular form of communication, a sort of unilateral redefinition of the rules of the game."[98]

[98] Subrahmanyam, *Courtly Encounters*, 16.