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

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INTRODUCTION: The Nawab's Perspective

Arcot is recorded in modern literature as having been the site of Mughal army's campsite in the late 1680s, during the campaign to conquer parts of southern India. By the end of the seventeenth century, it was the capital of a new Mughal province (*suba*)—known as the suba of Arcot or the suba of Karnatak (aka the Carnatic)[1]—that was ruled by a Mughal governor (*subadar*) who had the title of *Nawab*. Not unlike the other Mughal provinces of Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad, the suba of Karnatak gradually became a *de facto* independent state in the eighteenth century and remained so until it accepted British authority in 1801 (the state was formally absorbed into the Madras Presidency only in 1855). Throughout its existence as a self-governing polity, it was ruled by two dynasties: the Nawayats (1710-1744) and the Walajahs (1744-1801). One particularly fascinating period in the history of Karnatak is the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, the second Walajah ruler, whose rule covered almost the whole of the second half of the eighteenth century, from 1749 to 1795.

Muhammad Ali Khan, began his reign in desperate conditions. Although he proclaimed himself the new Nawab of Karnatak after his father was killed in battle, gaining control over the whole province was a daunting task. He had not received acknowledgement of his position as the legitimate ruler from either his overlord—the Mughal emperor—or his subjects—various groups of Karnatak's population. Moreover, he was surrounded by many stronger regional power-holders who wanted to expand into Karnatak; these were, particularly, the Deccan Nizams, the rulers of Mysore, the Marathas, and the two European East India companies, those of the British and the French. As a result of these precarious circumstances, Muhammad Ali Khan almost lost his position as Nawab of Karnatak. At the beginning of the 1750s, he lost his capital, Arcot, to Chanda Sahib, and only the fort of Trichinopoly remained in his possession. However, not only did he manage to regain the throne and re-establish his sovereignty, he also led Karnatak to its zenith as an independent state. By the 1770s, he had expanded his territory to cover the present-day districts of Nellore and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh, Chingleput, North Arcot, South Arcot, Trichinopoly (Tiruchirappalli), Tanjore (Tanjavur), Pudukkottai, Madurai, Ramnad (Ramanathapuram), and Tirunelveli in the state of Tamilnadu.[2] At this time, the Karnatak state was also faced with expanding British imperial power, as many other South Asian states—such as Bengal, Hyderabad, Awadh, Mysore—also were. In this, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and his state

[1] The term "the Carnatic" refers to English usage. Like the Nawab himself, I will use the Persian "Karnatak (کرناٹک)." in this study, both for the region and the Nawabi state (hence Nawabi Karnatak). For further details on the origins and meanings of the term, see Chapter One.
[2] Kunjukrishnan Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1966), 1-2.

forged relations with the British that were far stronger than those of any of his contemporaries.

The 46-year reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan saw the rapid transition of Karnatak from a province at the edge of the Mughal Empire to an independent state and then a territory under the British's supremacy. Considering such rapidly-changing circumstances, it makes an excellent case study for at least two reasons. First, as a region, the formation of Nawabi Karnatak occurred in a frontier zone that was spatially and temporally bounded by three different politico-cultural worlds: the Perso-Islamic Mughal, the Western European, and the local South Indian. The area had become home to and was the battleground of various groups of people from different religions and ethnicities, such as local Tamils, migrants from the Deccan, North India, Arabia, and Persia, and Europeans. Many important questions can be asked regarding Karnatak's development as a polity. How did the process of state-formation work on the ground? What strategies did the Nawab employ to consolidate and maintain his hold on power in the face of various external forces and internal divisions? How did elements from the three different political and cultural worlds (or systems) interact with one another, and to what extent did they play a role in and shape the characteristics of this Nawabi state? Were there any unique policies that resulted from this unusual situation? How was Nawabi Karnatak of the late eighteenth century similar to or different from other contemporaneous states? All these questions lead to the second main aspect that this study will investigate: the agency of the local Nawab, who was at the center of and played one of the most critical roles in this process. In his unique position as ruler of this frontier polity, the Nawab seems to have played at least three overlapping political roles: Mughal officer; principle ally of the rising power in the area, the British; and local South Indian ruler. It is interesting to see how he managed to maintain these three different positions. Did these roles conflict with or help one another? The Nawab's case can also provide us with a good illustration of how individual South Asian actors perceived both themselves and this period of dynamic transition, and how they attempted to shape their own destiny. As John Gurney remarked in 1973, "Only occasionally do we hear Indians speak, know what they think, […] their private lives, their hopes and fears, joys and privations, we are usually ignorant. This is regrettable when we seek the real response of Indians to Europeans, still more so in

understanding the relationships of Indians with each other."[3] This statement refers to the case of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, and the problem described persists in historical research.

Despite its potential as a major case-study, the history of the Karnatak state under this Nawab has either not received the attention it deserves or, in some cases, has been variously misinterpreted. Before discussing the aims of this study, let us examine the modern historiography of eighteenth-century South Asia and explore the place of Karnatak in recent historical debates in order to indicate some problems to which this study may contribute the solutions.

The Historiography of Eighteenth-century South Asia

As mentioned previously, I view Nawabi Karnatak as the meeting point—spatially and temporally—of three different worlds: Mughal, European, and South Indian. This study will combine all three perspectives. As such, it is necessary to engage with three interconnected fields of eighteenth-century historiography in this introduction: (a) the collapse of the Mughal Empire and the formation of post-Mughal states; (b) the transformation of South Asia to a region dominated by the British; and (c) local developments in eighteenth-century South India.

a. The Mughal Empire and Post-Mughal States

With regard to the development of indigenous polities, the collapse of the Mughal Empire is one of the most dramatic events that historians have examined. From the nineteenth century at least to the 1970s, two historiographical approaches dominated. The first saw the personality, ability, and specific policies of rulers as being the chief determinants of the empire's fate.[4] The second approach, influenced by Marxism, has dominated the debate since the 1950s, as Marxist-oriented scholars and historians of the later-modern period began to posit new explanations for Mughal decline in more functionalist or structural terms rather than simply focusing on individuals. Moreover, their orientation shifted from politico-cultural

[3] John D. Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History Presented to Dame Lucy Sutherland*, ed. Anne Whiteman, J. S. Bromley, and P. Dickson (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1973), 220.

[4] In this framework, the Mughal downfall was mainly the consequence of the deterioration in character of the Mughal ruling elites from the late seventeenth century. Some scholars suggest that Emperor Aurangzeb's program of promoting orthodox Sunni Islam while suppressing other sects and religions led to the alienation of numerous groups of imperial nobles and triggered peasant uprisings in many parts of the empire. As a result, the empire's unity was rapidly destroyed. Other scholars emphasize Aurangzeb's exorbitant Deccan campaigns, which, they argue, drained the country and people of wealth and energy, and thus accelerated the empire's downfall. See, for example: Jadunath Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzib, 1618-1707* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1930), 1-5, 460-465; Sri R. Sharma, *The Religious Policies of the Mughal Emperors* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 168-170; Sri R. Sharma, *Mughal Government and Administration* (Bombay: Hind Kitabs Limited, 1951), 194-196; Ishwari Prasad, *The Mughal Empire* (Allahabad: Chugh Publications, 1974), 584-608, 629-637.

to politico-economic aspects. For them, problems generated by the main imperial administrative systems or institutions—such as *mansabdari*, *zamindari*, and *jagirdari*—led to tensions between various groups of people.[5] For example, Irfan Habib has suggested that the Mughal mechanism of revenue collection was innately flawed. Since *jagir* assignments were transferred frequently, Mughal nobles had no reason to invest in agricultural improvements and focused instead on simply overtaxing the people to squeeze the maximum possible profit out of the land. This oppressive system led to widespread rural exploitation, which in turn provoked peasant migration and rebellions led by local zamindars.[6] Satish Chandra proposes the term "the crisis of jagirdari system" for this situation. Central to the growth of this crisis, he argues, was the increasing inability of the Mughal fiscal and administrative institutions to collect and distribute revenue and maintain law and order in large parts of the empire. This was the result of a combination of factors, including excessive demands for revenue, the short-sighted policies of the Mughal nobles, court factionalism, and the assertiveness of the zamindars.[7] Offering a different perspective, Saiyid Narul Hasan has highlighted increased clashes of interest between different groups of people—such as the Mughal government and the zamindars or different groups of zamindars—as being the main cause of the jagirdari crisis and the fall of the empire. Such tensions dated back to the empire's heyday, but, both during and after Aurangzeb's reign, the conflict intensified and central government became too weak to prevent the empire from breaking up.[8] To sum up, before the 1970s historians mainly viewed eighteenth-century South Asia through the unifying framework of the Mughal Empire; in their view, with the downfall of the imperial center, India, inevitably, entered a period of political chaos and economic crisis traditionally characterized as the "Dark Age."[9]

However, from the 1970s, scholarly interest gradually shifted from the Mughal imperial center to various regional polities as a result of the assumption that regional-level changes could have been among the factors that fueled imperial decline. This also marked a methodological shift from the monolithic/macro-perspective (the empire) towards a more micro-focus (region), which in turn resulted in an explosion of studies on state-formation

[5] The mansabdari was the Mughal system of rank-holding, and it was used to entice prominent military and civil officers to serve the Mughal emperors as nobles and officers. A *mansabdar* or rank-holder was allowed to share the imperial prestige and wealth in the form of royal titles, hierarchical ranks (*mansab*), and assignments of land revenue (jagir). *Zamindars* were local gentry, chieftains, or landlords, many of whom were considered *mirza*s (princes) in their home areas. They were integrated into the Mughal administration and usually functioned as intermediaries in administration and revenue collection between the imperial government and various layers of the local population. The jagirdari denoted granting individual mansabdars the right to collect land revenue from lesser land-holders and cultivators in the areas assigned to them (i.e. the jagir lands).

[6] Irfan Habib, *The Agrarian System of Mughal India, 1556-1707* (London: Asia Publishing House, 1963), 319-333.

[7] Satish Chandra, *Parties and Politics at the Mughal Court, 1707-1740* (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1972), xlv-li.

[8] Saiyid Nurul Hasan, "Zamindars under the Mughals," in *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 297-298.

[9] Seema Alavi, "Introduction," in *The Eighteenth Century in India*, ed. Seema Alavi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

within various regional polities. The most important areas studied so far are: Bengal, Awadh, and the Deccan (Hyderabad)—the so-called Mughal "successor states," because the governors of these former Mughal provinces led them to independence—and the Punjab (the Sikhs), Maharashtra (the Marathas), Rajasthan (the Rajputs), and Rohilkhand (the Rohilla Indo-Afghans)—the post-Mughal "warrior states," based on local ethnic or sectarian groups and led by prominent local rulers who sought to establish independence in various regions formerly under Mughal sovereignty. Studies have also been produced on the emergence of the states of Mysore and Travancore in South India, which had indirect or virtually no links to the Mughal Empire.[10] Some examples of this trend are discussed here.

In Muzaffar Alam's study of zamindar-led peasant rebellions in Awadh and the Punjab in the first half of the eighteenth century, it is argued that these movements were not caused by agrarian crises and oppression by the elites. On the contrary, they were the consequences of economic growth, which were themselves the outcome of increasing commercialization and monetization in those regions in the period following the heyday of the Mughals. The local zamindars had become wealthier and more powerful, and thus could refuse to comply with Mughal commands. In Awadh, the Mughal provincial governor was able to turn the local zamindars into collaborators who helped him establish an independent domain, the Nawabi state of Awadh. However, in the Punjab, a similar attempt failed and led to chaos.[11] Two other scholars, Richard Barnett and Karen Leonard, have emphasized the importance of the transfer of resources from the center to various regional domains. According to Barnett, because the imperial center weakened in the late seventeenth century, more revenue, wealth, and groups of service-people escaped the Mughal's control, moving to various regional political centers and benefiting local social groups who then quickly emerged as powerful forces.[12] Leonard highlights in particular the role of indigenous banking firms, which had been the indispensable allies of the Mughal court. In the period 1650-1750, these banks began to reorient their economic and political support towards the emerging regional rulers. This, she argues, led to Mughal bankruptcy.[13] Another prominent scholar, Christopher A. Bayly, works on central and eastern North India (Awadh, Benares, Bihar, and

[10] For a good introduction to the historiographical debates surrounding the post-Mughal states, see: Alavi, "Introduction," 1-56; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Introduction," in *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 1-71.
[11] Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India: Awadh and the Punjab, 1707-1748* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 310-318.
[12] Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals, and the British, 1720-1801* (Berkeley-London: University of California Press, 1980), 5-9.
[13] Karen Leonard, "The 'Great Firm' Theory of the Decline of the Mughal Empire," in *The Mughal State, 1526-1750*, ed. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 408-413.

Bengal) from the late seventeenth to the early nineteenth century. According to him, this period was characterized by the growing prosperity of a cross-caste "intermediary class"—consisting of service gentries, merchants, and scribes—and its involvement in regional state-formation.[14] Other scholars, such as Burton Stein, André Wink, and Dilip Menon, have proposed various models outside the traditional framework of the Mughal agrarian structure with which to examine the development of eighteenth-century polities. Stein, focusing on the Mysore Sultanate, emphasizes the concept of "central military fiscalism," which meant that troops were paid by the central government instead of by the zamindars and jagirdars, and the centralizing trend in eighteenth-century polities as opposed to the previous "segmentary state" model of polities that held sway in medieval South India.[15] Wink proposes using the concept of *fitna*, which has been used to understand Mughal rulership, to explain the rise of the Marathas.[16] Lastly, Menon, who has studied the Travancore state, suggests that profits from trade rather than revenues from the agrarian sector fueled the process of state formation in that region. Therefore, unlike other post-Mughal states, Travancore did not experience state centralization and did not possess intricate revenue-collecting systems.[17]

With the growth of regional studies, many new political and economic frameworks or concepts have been invented and utilized to analyze the developments of eighteenth-century South Asian polities. Knowledge of each of the regions has been gradually acquired through discussions of their forms of government, administrative apparatus, revenue system, military management, mercantile and social conditions, etc. Influenced by the rise of Marxism in the 1950s and subaltern perspectives in the 1980s, scholars have also brought to the historiography of regional Indian state-formation many formerly-neglected non-political elite classes in society, such as merchants, bankers, scribes, petty land-holders, and craftsmen as agents of political and social change.[18] Scholars have realized that the Mughal Empire's

[14] Christopher A. Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion 1770-1870* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014), 577-595.
[15] The "segmentary state" is a model that Stein borrowed from an Africanist, Aiden Southall, and applied to many medieval South Indian states. According to him, such polities existed as a state only because the hundreds of petty local chiefs within its domain ritually acknowledged the overlordship of a ruler. However, each local chief maintained complete autonomous power in his territory. See: Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India* (Oxford University Press, 1980), 21-23, 272-275; Burton Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered: Part One," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, 3 (1985): 387-388, 400-403.
[16] André Wink, *Land and Sovereignty in India: Agrarian Society and Politics under the Eighteenth-Century Maratha Svarajya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 21-35. The concept of fitna will be discussed further in Chapter Two.
[17] Dilip Menon, "Houses by the Sea: State Experimentation in Malabar, 1760-1800," in *Mapping History: Essays Presented to Ravonder Kumar*, ed. Neera Chandoke (Delhi, 2000), 162-163, 166. For more examples of prominent regional studies developed within the "revisionist framework," see also: Philip B. Calkins, "The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group in Bengal, 1700-1740," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 29, 4 (1970): 799-806; John F. Richards, *Mughal Administration in Golconda* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); Stewart Gordon, "The Slow Conquest: Administrative Integration of Malwa into the Maratha Empire, 1720-1760," *Modern Asian Studies* 11, 1 (1977): 1-40; Frank Perlin, "State Formation Reconsidered: Part Two," *Modern Asian Studies* 19, 3 (1985): 415-480; Chetan Singh, *Region and Empire: Punjab in the Seventeenth Century* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1991); Jos J. L. Gommans, *The Rise of the Indo-Afghan Empire, c. 1710-1780* (Leiden: Brill, 1995).
[18] The pioneer of subaltern studies or "history from below," which was established in the early 1980s, was the Bengali scholar Ranajit Guha. He and his followers examined colonialism from "subaltern" viewpoints. The subalternists first drew inspiration from Marxism, but later

eventual fate may cause the complexities and varied historical experiences of each state or region to be overlooked. From one area to another, local resources, trajectories, processes, and outcomes—all elements that could shape their nature—varied. Words like variety, dynamism, mobility, and realignment are now used to describe this century, one which was previously referred to as the "Dark Age." Substantially revising long-held assumptions of and approaches to eighteenth-century Indian history, recent studies are, therefore, collectively referred to as "revisionist" writings.

With regard to Karnatak, there exists currently no systematic and comprehensive study of it as a post-Mughal successor state. Most of the new analytical tools, concepts, and frameworks from the recent trend of revisionist writings have not yet been utilized in research into the region. It is thus a goal of this study to construct a history of Karnatak state-formation that will interact with these revisionist questions, concepts, and approaches, where applicable. I will trace how Karnatak emerged as a Mughal province and under what circumstances it became an independent state with dynastic rule. This will include an examination of: how the Nawabi dynasty was organized; what was the main state apparatus created or maintained by the Nawab and its main features; who were the state's allies and enemies; and how the ruler coped with the fact that there were many new groups of people ascending the social, political, and economic ladder, as well as the changing political-economic circumstances of the late eighteenth century. Furthermore, I will try to highlight some of the main characteristics of Nawabi Karnatak by making comparisons with other states and rulers of the time. In so doing, I will not only reveal new information and perspectives on the history of Karnatak but also position it within wider debates related to post-Mughal states.

b. British Colonial Expansion in South Asia

Two of the main questions that historians have debated regarding the British colonial expansion in South Asia have been: What were the reasons for the East India Company's transition to a colonial power? And: What factors lay behind or contributed to their success? Older accounts concentrate on Western elements—institutions and individual actors—as being active in this process while presenting South Asian ones as their inferior or foolish partners or enemies. The eighteenth century, especially the latter half, is often depicted as

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gradually shifted their focus to incorporate more cultural aspects. One of Guha's most significant and pioneering monographs is: Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983). See also an introductory discussion to subaltern studies in Kate Brittlebank, "Introduction," in *Tall Tales and True: India, Historiography and British Imperial Imaginings* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), 2-3.

having seen a duel for empire between the British and the French, with the French threat to its trading interests being regarded as a central reason why the EIC started to transform itself into a territorial power. Others attribute the move towards colonization to an increase in production and trade in European markets, which in turn led to high demand for Indian goods and a drain of bullion from Europe; access to Indian revenue through political interference thus became an indispensable means by which the British could resolve this fiscal imbalance. Yet more studies have emphasized the role of British private traders in undermining the stability of the South Asian states and indirectly stimulating the Company's expansion.[19] The revisionist trend of regional studies and the growth of subaltern perspectives from the 1970s have also had a significant influence on this area of historiography. Broadly speaking, scholars with such views argue that it was not simply a one-sided and predetermined endeavor on the part of the Europeans to gain their benefits that resulted in their colonial expansion. In their establishment of colonial control, the British certainly could not act alone, and the role of local participants should be highlighted in order to present a more balanced historical picture. In Peter Marshall's words, for much of the eighteenth century, "it would be more appropriate to discuss the impact of Bengal on the British [than the British's impact on indigenous societies]."[20]

Christopher Bayly, whose work was referred to earlier, is one historian who follows this approach. He suggests that, while the British were capable of making conquests on their own, they could only maintain their position by aligning themselves with parts of local society. Their success was down to their ability to accommodate the new rising "intermediary class" in many Indian regional centers. Owing to their common political and economic interests, these local agents in northern India became British collaborators, financed their military conquests, and filled their administrative positions.[21] Sanjay Subrahmanyam, in an article co-authored with Bayly, suggests that a similar phenomenon also occurred in South India, especially along the Coromandel Coast.[22] Prasannan Parthasarathi, also focusing on South India, agrees with Bayly that the British could only establish their power because certain South Asian social groups supported them, but he proposes a different explanation for

[19] See, for example: Lucy S. Sutherland, *The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), 365-414; Pamela Nightingale, *Trade and Empire in Western India, 1784-1806* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 236-244; Holden Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 146-184; 264-297, 330-339; Rudrangshu Mukherjee, "Trade and Empire in Awadh 1765-1804," *Past & Present*, 94 (1982): 85-102.
[20] Peter J. Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes: The British in Bengal in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 261, see also 262-271.
[21] Bayly, *Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars*, 276-317; Christopher A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the Making of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 47-68.
[22] Sanjay Subrahmanyam and Christopher A. Bayly, "Portfolio Capitalists and the Political Economy of Early Modern India," *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 25, 4 (1988): 409-413.

why Indian merchants in the eighteenth century became British collaborators. According to him, not all merchants were experiencing political and economic prosperity. Some had been badly affected, and even excluded, from economic and political power by the new regional states and their practice of trade monopolies (of which Mysore and Travancore were prime examples). The only way that these merchants could regain their clout was by allying themselves with the European powers. As Parthasarathi highlights, it was not blind or unwise collaboration on the part of the local merchants; rather, they had their own specific reasons, ones generated by changing local circumstances. In other words, British colonization was, to a large extent, determined by conflicts between local, South Asian actors.[23]

Other revisionist scholars—such as Burton Stein and Pradeep Barua—have underscored the agency of the indigenous people as it related to early British colonial rule. Stein has pointed out the active role a South Asian ruler could have not only in state formation but also in shaping British India after his death. His study on Mysore suggests that the early nineteenth-century colonial officers followed many of the late Tipu Sultan's policies when establishing British power in South India, such as eradicating zamindari dominance and following Tipu's model of expanding the state monopolies.[24] Barua, who has studied military developments in the Mysore, Maratha, and Punjab states between 1750 and 1850, argues that local elements played a larger role in determining the nature of conflict with the British than has been previously assumed and that the final British victory over those regional powers was mainly down to their ability to adapt South Asian tactics to their own advantage and to exploit local politics.[25] In sum, revisionist scholars have promoted the idea that the establishment of British India was the outcome of complex interactions between European and local elements and that South Asians played active and critical roles in shaping historical developments during the early colonial period, either through collaborating or being agents of resistance. They have also stressed that the local contexts were crucial in determining South Asian-British relationships.

Almost all existing literatures relating to Karnatak under Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan have been under this historiography of British colonial expansion. The earliest "historical" writings containing references to late-eighteenth-century Karnatak were regional gazetteers and political narratives or biographies of some of the British protagonists who

[23] Prasannan Parthasarathi, *The Transition to a Colonial Economy: Weavers, Merchants, and Kings in South India, 1720-1800* (Cambridge-New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 132-140.
[24] Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered," 412-413.
[25] Pradeep Barua, "Military Developments in India, 1750-1850," *The Journal of Military History* 58, 4 (1994): 613.

played crucial roles in strengthening the British presence in the region. These works were produced between the late eighteenth and the mid-twentieth century by EIC servants, British colonial officers, and "traditional" orientalist British scholars whose chief purpose in composing their works was to justify British colonial expansion in South India. Referring to Nawabi rule as "Mohammadan Government," these British historians generally portrayed the period as a "dark age" when the Hindu majority of Karnatak was severely oppressed by the Muslim rulers, and presented Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan as a ruler who failed to manage his own government properly. As such, the British expansion and administration helped improve the lives and welfare of the local populations. The Eurocentric bias can be clearly seen here.[26]

Since the 1960s, the Karnatak state has received more attention from scholars. With particular reference to historical studies on the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, up to now, two monographs, two doctoral dissertations, and a few articles have been produced. The first monograph, by Kunjukrishnan Rajayyan (1966), deals with the basic structure and aspects of Nawabi Karnatak in the period 1701 to 1800. It gives wide-ranging but rather superficial information about the state's geography, machinery of central administration, provincial management, and system of revenue, and offers a glimpse of its economy, society, and religious life. In this work, the author repeats the British orientalists' depictions of Muslim rule as, essentially, "evil."[27] However, for Rajayyan, the British were just as bad. From the 1750s, a colonial mindset is said to have governed their actions. Under the pretense of protecting the Nawab's interests, they ruthlessly exploited the situation, causing the Nawab to take on huge debts and thus become bankrupt. According to Rajayyan, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan had neither the ability nor the imagination to adopt European technology to fight the British encroachment.[28] In sum, his principal aim was to portray two villains of the period. This is a good example of a recent phenomenon: the study of eighteenth-century South Asia from a (post-) colonial perspective, to which is added that of Hindu Nationalists.

John Gurney's 1968 Ph.D. dissertation was the first study to focus specifically on the reign of the Nawab, and its specific subject of interest was the Nawab's debts and their effect on his relationship with British institutions (the EIC and the British government) and various individuals in the years 1763-1776. He provided much new information regarding the Nawab and his court by utilizing various eighteenth-century British archives that had but rarely been

[26] See, for example: Arthur F. Fox, *North Arcot*, ed. rev. by Harold A. Stuart (Madras: Superintendent Government Press, 1894), 90.
[27] Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic*, 19, 30-31, 37, 39, 41-45, 112.
[28] Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic*, 11-12, 25, 30, 83.

used before. Nevertheless, his work is strongly Eurocentric in its approach to and interpretation of this period. First, Gurney chose the Nawab's debts as his main focus, considering them to be "the central feature of this period." Second, Gurney suggests that the main causes of the Nawab's debts were his unnecessarily extravagant court, his "misplaced generosity" in bribing both Indians and Europeans, and the military expenses he incurred while attempting to fulfil his imprudent political ambitions. All of these contributed to his debts "without any definite benefits" for himself, eventually leading him to lose power.[29] Reflecting on these two points, Gurney replicates the views and judgments of many eighteenth-century British (such as George Paterson) regarding the Nawab's actions and makes little attempt to understand the ruler's approach from a local perspective. It is correct that the issue of debt was at the center of the activities of almost all British institutions and individuals who dealt with the Nawab at that time because, for the British, getting the Nawab to repay his debts was their chief concern, one which dominated minds and shaped policies in both London and India. As such, the expenses incurred by the Nawab in other areas were considered to be harmful to British interests and, therefore, unnecessary and unreasonable. Yet, arguably, for the Nawab as an eighteenth-century South Asian ruler, the opulence of his court, financial patronage of his followers, and military expansion together formed the basis of his rule; repaying his debts to the British was far from his main concern. The history of Karnatak in Gurney's thesis is, therefore, another history of British expansion, crowded with British actors who were the drivers of developments. The Nawab continues to play the role of subordinate victim. Though Gurney sometimes describes how the Nawab used his debts to cause difficulties for the British to his own advantage, the author views them as mostly unimportant and as resulting in only short-term gain. He stresses that the Nawab, though cunning, had no foresight to reorganize his country, thus allowing himself to be manipulated by groups of British political and economic adventurers.[30] To be fair to Gurney, in 1973 he published another article that did indeed focus on Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan.[31] Innovative for the time, his intention in writing was "to let Indians speak." He tried to bring us close to the person of the Nawab and his courtly milieu by tracing specific accounts in both the diary of George Paterson and the *Ruznama* that reveal aspects of the Nawab's personality, such as his warmth, sense of humor, flaws, fears, and anger.[32] This article, more than any previous works, reveals the Nawab as a real person, with his own voice and thoughts. However,

[29] John D. Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot, 1763-1776" (Doctoral Dissertation; Oxford University, The United Kingdom, 1968), 10, 37-38, 76, 321.
[30] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," 16, 18, 211-213, 237, 266, 283.
[31] Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 222-241.
[32] Both these primary sources will be discussed in a subsequent section.

probably due to the limited space of his article, Gurney fails to provide enough historical context that would have helped convey the Nawab's worldview and policies, as Gurney had intended. In his work, the Nawab comes across simply as a sensitive human being with diverse temperament.

In the decade after Gurney's work, during the boom of revisionism in eighteenth-century South Asian regional studies, appeared the works of James Phillips and Nallathagudi Ramaswami. Phillips' Ph.D. thesis, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," investigates the relationship between the British and the Karnatak Nawab in the years 1775-1785. Referred to by the author himself as a study of "indirect British imperialism," Phillips' chief objective was to examine the factors that led the EIC to gain political control over South India. Therefore, like Gurney's thesis a decade earlier, in Phillips' work the British are still the main protagonists. Furthermore, the Nawab's debts to the British remain at the center of the discussion.[33] However, Phillips seems to have been influenced by the "revisionist trend" in eighteenth-century South Asian research that was developed during the 1980s and which emphasized the role(s) of local agency in British expansion; his work gives the Nawab a far more important role in influencing British individuals and British policies towards South India than had previous studies.[34] Phillips' article "A Successor to the Moguls," published two years later, is another important contribution, as the author paid attention to Karnatak in its local, South Asian context. In this article, Karnatak is viewed as a Mughal successor state and the Nawab is presented not merely as a passive ally of the EIC but also as a local ruler who attempted to establish his own powerbase and solve various internal problems. However, as in his thesis, Phillips' article's general idea is that, in the 1770s and 1780s, there was a rapid reduction in the Nawab's authority. The author cannot, therefore, avoid downplaying the Nawab's success—including his contribution to various schemes of state-formation—and underlining his failures.[35]

Ramaswami's work, published in 1984, is a narrative history of the political events of eighteenth-century Karnatak. As may be expected, the long reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan receives the most attention, though as descriptive history it has little contextual analysis or critical discussion. Furthermore, since the author relied heavily on various eighteenth-century European sources and later colonial writings to forge his narrative, his work is

[33] James Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India: The Nawab of Arcot, the East India Company, and the British Government, 1775-1785" (Doctoral Dissertation; Dalhousie University, Canada, 1983), 21-31.
[34] I will discuss the "revisionist trend" further in the following sections.
[35] James Phillips, "A Successor to the Moguls: The Nawab of the Carnatic and the East India Company, 1763-1785," *The International History Review* 7, 3 (1985): 364-389.

dominated by British protagonists and their actions and contains much of the Eurocentric bias of earlier colonial writers. However, this work also contains new information about the Nawab's life besides the issue of his debts, especially his wars against other powers, both inside and outside his territory. His study also provides a long-term perspective, because it covers the whole period of the Nawab's reign, as well as those of his predecessors and successors. Furthermore, much more explicitly than did earlier scholars, the author presents the Nawab as having made the best possible use of all opportunities generated by the "corruptions" of British individuals in order to fight, inch-by-inch, European encroachment. Ramaswami also proposed a new and very important perspective on the debt issue. He pointed out that, cleverly, from around the mid-1760s, the Nawab ended his practice of borrowing money from Indian bankers and instead sought loans mainly from EIC officers and private British merchants in Madras. The Nawab was also willing to pay the Britons' extraordinary interest rates and frequently acknowledged debts without receiving any real money. In so doing, he sought to bind these influential Britons to his financial and social networks. Although Gurney and Phillips also referred to this, Ramaswami was the first to clearly stress the fact that the Nawab deliberately utilized debt as one of his main weapons.[36] In sum, while many Eurocentric views have been put forward, Ramaswami (like his contemporary Phillips) attempted to underline the Nawab's agency in his efforts to resist the expansion of British power.

Gurney, Phillips, and Ramaswami's efforts to incorporate the Nawab's agency into their works seem to have led to changes in the modern understandings of his state and its ruler within the broader historiography of British colonial expansion. One example of this change is Peter Marshall's article in 2000 on the creation of the British Empire, in which the author shows that, in states such as Karnatak and Awadh, Indian rulers were able to manipulate British power. As Marshall writes, Muhammad Ali Khan, usually assumed to have been an unfortunate puppet at the mercy of the EIC in Madras, was in fact able to use the British alliance to expand his territory and develop an authentically Islamic court.[37] Another illustration is David Washbrook's article in 2004 which suggests that nearly all the late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century South Indian states were not powerless but attempted to combat British expansion through military, diplomatic, or cultural means, and that the extensive technological and cultural borrowings from the Europeans by these polities were

[36] Nallathagudi S. Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs* (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), 237, 327-329.
[37] Peter J. Marshall, "Presidential Address: Britain and the World in the Eighteenth Century: III, Britain and India," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 10 (2000): 2-3, 8.

carried out to serve local rather than European-related purposes. Washbrook has included Arcot (Karnatak) as one of his examples, along with Mysore, Hyderabad, Baroda, Travancore, and Tanjore.[38] Unfortunately, Marshall's and Washbrook's standpoints are more the exceptions than the rule in the recent trend of revisiting the history of eighteenth-century polities and rulers. In other revisionist works, although the history of Karnatak and the Nawab have sometimes been drawn into discussions as examples and comparative cases as they relate to other post-Mughal states, such references are usually brief and the related viewpoints derived from the old, conventional colonial paradigm. For instance, in Barua's aforementioned work on military evolution, while the author argues that local powers—the Marathas, the Mysoreans, and the Sikhs—played a greater role in determining the nature of the conflict with the British than previously believed, he simply assumes that the Karnatak Nawab "after the Carnatic Wars [1740s-1760s] had become a virtual puppet of the British."[39] John Keay, in *India: A History*, similarly refers to the Nawab of Arcot as a British "puppet."[40] Another illustration of this aberrant characterization is to be found in the work of Mandar Oak and Anand Swamy, who have investigated why, on various occasions in the late eighteenth century, many southern Indian regimes chose to help the EIC in Madras against their Indian neighbors. They concluded that many local players were "self-interested," "strategic," and "rational" within the complex political context of the period. As such, the authors have rescued the Indian states that were Karnatak's neighbors—Mysore, the Maratha state, and Hyderabad—from previously-held assumptions of myopia. However, by no means do they consider Karnatak as an active player. They write: "in the 1740s rivals contending to be the Nawab of the Carnatic sought the support of the French and the British. The [EIC] Company's candidate [Muhammad Ali] eventually became the Nawab and, in a pattern that was to be repeated time and again, ceded territory to the Company in exchange for military support."[41] Evidently, the two authors view the Nawab as having been completely under the control of the EIC in Madras from the very beginning of his rule, and Karnatak features only as the strategic starting point for British colonial expansion.[42] Such recent writings reflect clearly that attempts to restore the Nawab's voice and agency in the Karnatak-British

[38] David Washbrook, "South India 1770-1840: The Colonial Transition," *Modern Asian Studies* 38, 3 (2004): 491-495.
[39] Barua, "Military Developments in India," 600, 613.
[40] John Keay, *India: A History* (New York: Grove Press, 2000), 396.
[41] Mandar Oak and Anand V. Swamy, "Myopia or Strategic Behavior? Indian Regimes and the East India Company in Late Eighteenth Century India," *Explorations in Economic History* 49, 3 (2012): 355.
[42] See also: Patrick Turnbull, *Warren Hastings* (London: New English Library, 1975), 52; Michael H. Fisher, *The Politics of the British Annexation of India, 1757-1857* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1993), 94, 100; Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient*, 146-157; Arvind Sinha, *The Politics of Trade: Anglo-French Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1763-1793* (New Delhi: Manohar, 2002), 28, 30. There are a number of other recent works that discuss and compare developments in various eighteenth-century South Asian states but almost or completely omit Karnatak. See, for example: Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Kulke Hermann and Dietmar Rothermund, *A History of India* (London-New York: Routledge, 2016).

relationship, initiated by earlier scholars, need to be continued in order to fully bring Karnatak's history out of its conventional framework. It is not only necessary to re-investigate some old issues, such as the Nawab's financial and military dependence on the British, but also to examine new facets of their relationship, such as diplomatic exchanges and cultural encounters.

c. The Local Development in South India

In the above, I mentioned various studies that have been written about South India and the states therein (such as Mysore, Travancore, and the Coromandel Coast). But, compared to North India and the Deccan, the quantity and variety of historical scholarship on the South is more limited, not only for the eighteenth century but the entire early modern period. No different from the North, the South in the eighteenth century has been seen as being in a Dark Age between two imperial eras, but in this case these were the Vijayanagara period and that of British rule.[43] Yet the 1970s-1980s revisionist movement in North Indian and Deccan historiography has brought increased attention to the South.

Scholars who have worked on filling gaps in South Indian historiography include: Sinnappah Arasaratnam and the aforementioned Prasannan Parthasarathi, who focus on the mercantile world of the Coromandel Coast; Nicholas Dirks, who proposes using the concept of "ethnohistory" as a model with which to study the political culture of the small kingdoms of South India; Susan Bayly, whose studies of Muslim and Christian communities provide in-depth analysis of South Indian society from the early modern to the early colonial periods; Markus Vink and Lennart Bes, who have attempted to reconstruct the histories of important Nayaka and Poligar (Palaiyakkarar) kingdoms; and the aforementioned Burton Stein and Kate Brittlebank, who study state-formation and the political ideology of the Mysore sultans. Three other influential scholars are Velcheru Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, who, since the early 1990s, have produced collaborative works that shed light on various aspects of pre-colonial South Indian history by exploiting vernacular South Indian sources—written in Telugu, Tamil, and Marathi, among others—that used to be seen as literary texts rather than historical narratives.[44] The picture that emerges from these

[43] Good introductions to developments in South Indian historiography include: Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions: Making Polities in Early Modern South India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001), 1-21; Velcheru Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time: Writing History in South India, 1600-1800* (New York: Other Press, 2003), 1-23; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), 354-355; Brittlebank, "Introduction," 1-6.

[44] Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce*; Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "Trade and Political Dominion in South India, 1750-1790: Changing British-Indian Relationships," *Modern Asian Studies* 13, 1 (1979): 19-40; Parthasarathi, *The Transition to a Colonial* Economy; Nicholas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Susan Bayly,

revisionist histories is that some areas of South India, at least, also experienced imperial decentralization and South Indian state-formation as a result of economic and cultural prosperity.

Despite this recent historiographical trend, which has intentionally brought to light the previously-neglected southern regions, Karnatak has not received the attention it deserves, especially for the second half of the eighteenth century. For example, Pamela Price has written about the two southern Tamil Maravar kingdoms of Ramnad and Sivaganga from the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire to the rise of the British colonial one. But she makes no mention whatsoever of the Muslim Nawabs who, for more than half a century, claimed that they were the overlords of these two regions. The works of Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, as well as those of Alam—in which many South Indian courts and polities are investigated—often refer to Nawabi Karnatak of the early eighteenth-century (from its time as a Mughal province to its rule by the Nawayat dynasty) when discussing economics and cultural resilience. Nevertheless, these finish in the mid-1740s and hence do not engage with Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, who ruled from 1749-1795. Similarly, the works of Arasaratnam and Parthasarathi on the mercantile world of the eighteenth-century Coromandel Coast significantly underestimate the role of this local Nawab.[45]

However, Susan Bayly's study of the development of Islam and Christianity as a source of change in southern India is an exception here, as it has contributed greatly to our understanding of Karnatak. Although Karnatak is not its central focus, the kingdom is extensively explored in several chapters in its role as the first permanent Muslim-ruled polity in the southern Indian heartland. With regard to the Walajah dynasty, she discusses how, in order to establish their rule, these recent Muslim migrants from North India proceeded to strategically integrate themselves into local society by developing links with various ideological resources of power, both within and without their own religious community. During this process, the Walajah rulers contributed greatly to shaping local society, while

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Saints, Goddesses and King: Muslims and Christians in South Indian Society, 1700-1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Markus P. M. Vink, "Encounters on the Opposite Coast: Cross-Cultural Contacts between the Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai" (Doctoral Dissertation; University of Minnesota, The United States, 1998); Lennart Bes, "The Heirs of Vijayanagara: Court Politics in Early-Modern South India" (Doctoral Dissertation; Radboud University, The Netherlands, 2018); Stein, "State Formation and Economy Reconsidered"; Kate Brittlebank, "Piety and Power: A Preliminary Analysis of Tipu Sultan's Dreams," in *Tall Tales and True: India, Historiography and British Imperial Imaginings*, ed. Kate Brittlebank (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), 31-41; Kate Brittlebank, "Assertion," in *The Eighteenth Century in Indian History*, ed. Peter J. Marshall (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), 268-292; Velcheru Rao, David Shulman, and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nayaka Period Tamilnadu* (Delhi-New York: Oxford University Press, 1992); Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*.

[45] Pamela G. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*, 94-102; Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 140-183; Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Writing the Mughal World: Studies on Culture and Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 339-395. The works and ideas of Arasaratnam and Parthasarathi will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

their own characters were simultaneously molded by various internal and external forces.[46] Bayly's work highlights that the perspective of local South Indian society is just as crucial for comprehending the Karnatak state and the Nawab's actions as those of the Perso-Islamic Mughal and European worlds. Her work is also ground-breaking in terms of methodology, as it was the first serious attempt to set Nawabi Karnatak in its local context—outside the Eurocentric framework—and to focus on local actors. Bayly claims that her work is part of a wider "revisionist" movement fighting the assumption that local people were passive entities of the colonial experience. Scholars belonging to this school have discussed how groups of non-European subjects—often elites—in various regions that experienced European expansion were able to create "strategies of resistance" that allowed them to transcend or incorporate for their own purposes the intrusive impact of the Europeans. European and Western knowledge and technology were frequently used to enhance native forms of social organization and royal power. From the local perspective, Europeans were the junior or subordinate partners in these encounters or relationships.[47] Despite focusing on the agency of "elites" rather than people "from below," the works of Bayly and her colleagues share a similar outlook to those of subaltern scholars, which have tried to understand responses to colonialism from the perspective of the colonized people. It is through taking a similar approach to that of Susan Bayly that I will investigate Karnatak's history.

Another methodological aspect that is particularly important in Susan Bayly's work, as well as in other studies in this area, is that it is not as focused on politico-economic studies, fiscal-centered questions, or the material basis of state-building as some studies of former Mughal domains in North India and the Deccan. They have reminded us that the cultural and ideological spheres are also important facets of a state and studying these can contribute greatly to our comprehension of a region or regions.

Approaches, Perspectives, and Questions

The literature review has demonstrated that modern studies of late-eighteenth-century Karnatak and the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, though having made some good progress, are far from comprehensive. The themes of historical research are still very limited, mainly to those which most concerned Europeans. Other local-elements—such as court life and society, the Nawab's religious activities, and cultural aspects—are sometimes included but only marginally. In my opinion, this is mainly because previous scholars (except Susan

[46] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*; see especially Chapters Four to Six.
[47] Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 3-4, 9.

Bayly) are plagued by the problems of perspective; they have been "trapped" by the knowledge that, almost immediately after the Nawab's death, the region was annexed by the British, something that has prevented them from seeing Karnatak during the Nawab's rule from a perspective other than that of British colonial expansion. It has also prevented fresh empirical analysis and downplayed the efforts and achievements of local agents that may have delayed but could not prevent the inevitable.

As discussed, with its aim to fill gaps in previous research, this study seeks to explore the Karnatak state's formation by combining and balancing the three perspectives of the Perso-Islamic Mughal, European, and South Indian worlds. Inspired by the revisionist and subaltern trends of historiography, the restoration of local voices and agency is also a main goal. However, a significant difference between this study and previous revisionist works—which have long been dominated by institutions or classes of people—is its attempt to combine the history of state formation with a biographical approach. I focus on the voice and perspectives of an individual—Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan—as the main point of departure in approaching Karnatak's history. One of the main questions, explored throughout this investigation, is how the Nawab wanted himself and his state to be seen. As such, I have been inspired by a recently-developed biographical trend that falls under the rubric of "new" microhistory.[48]

Biography, in its simplest sense, refers to writing that places the life and the perspectives of an individual at the center. For centuries, biography had faced skepticism from professional historians, and the status of the subject as a historical methodology reached its nadir during "the age of modernity," because, from the nineteenth century, historians were led by the belief that they could create objectivity in history by means of science-based, empirical, and rational methodologies. Under this modernity paradigm, biography, which was considered subjective, moral, and related more to literature, was rejected. The history of the masses or the classes generally replaced that of individuals.[49] Historians were also occupied by a desire to write macro-histories (e.g. of continents, empires, oceans, or even the world), using various structural, functional, quantitative, and statistical models to explain people and

[48] It was Matti Peltonen who termed this trend "new" microhistory in order to distinguish between manifestations of microhistory from the 1970s and some older ideas of, for instance, local history as microhistory. However, most scholars just call this trend "microhistory," without the adjective "new." See Matti Peltonen, "What Is Micro in Microhistory?," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 105.

[49] For a good theoretical and methodological discussion of how the border between biography and history has been contested in the past, see: Sabina Loriga, "The Role of the Individual in History: Biographical and Historical Writing in the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 75-76, 80-88.

societies on a large scale. Politico-economic studies dominated historiography while examinations of culture and beliefs were excluded; many of the eighteenth-century South Asian regional studies mentioned in the preceding sections are good examples of the latter approach. However, from the late 1970s, a group of historians began to view the focus on functional and structural methodologies as representing a "crisis" and proposed an alternative paradigm and practice, one known as microhistory.[50] Collectively, the advocates of this new trend choose to focus on smaller-scale research and the restoration of people, events, and phenomena that had been neglected in the previously dominant macro-historical approach. They were also determined to bring the human dimension back into history in order to create a greater balance between individual destinies and social structures. The object of such an inquiry may be a small village or town, or groups of marginalized people. However, the most popular subjects are individuals, and this has led to the intersection of and close association between microhistory and biography in recent decades. Biographical approaches have returned to the academic fore as a historical tool, one that is part and parcel of microhistory; they have frequently been discussed together and have become what Hans Render terms two fraternal methods in historical study.[51]

On the theoretical level, advocates of "new" microhistory and biography have made great efforts to distinguish their approaches from earlier local histories, communal histories, and traditional biographies, which they consider as rarely posing new questions or bringing original interpretations to bear on historiography more widely.[52] Limitations of space do not allow me to go into such theoretical discussions in any great detail, yet I would like to highlight some of the strengths and advantages of the new microhistorical and biographical approaches that have been highlighted by their practitioners, and which I view as promising tools to help guide my study. Sabina Loriga, a scholar who tries to link microhistory and biography to macro-history, argues that an individual cannot explain a group, a community, or an institution and, vice-versa. Instead, macrohistory and microhistory complement each other; to understand the whole (macro-history), one has to understand the parts (micro-/individual history), but to understand these, one has to understand the whole. Loriga also

[50] The pioneers of this trend were Italian scholars such as Carlo Ginzburg and Giovanni Levi. On microhistory as a response to the crisis of the Marxism and functionalist-structuralist methodologies see: Giovanni Levi, "On Microhistory," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 93-113.

[51] Hans Renders, "The Limits of Representativeness: Biography, Life Writing, and Microhistory," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 128.

[52] For further discussions and examples, see: Giovanni Levi, "The Uses of Biography," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 69, 72-73; Loriga, "The Role of the Individual in History," 89-90; Peltonen, "What Is Micro in Microhistory?," 105-107, 110; and Richards Brown, "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 126-127.

suggests viewing each and every individual as a hybrid or a piece where webs of relationships intersect, as well as emphasizing the multiple and overlapping roles one individual may hold simultaneously.[53] John P. Ghobrial is another scholar who suggests how the studies of an individual's life (especially his/her self-representations), local history, and global history should be interconnected and support the understanding of one another.[54] Loriga and Ghobrial's ideas are adapted in my research. I investigate the Nawab's thoughts, actions, and representations, with the aim of shedding new light on and complementing the wider picture of the Karnatak state, while at the same time learning the history of Karnatak in order to understand the life of one eighteenth-century South Asian. I also view the Nawab, the head of the state, as a central point through whom webs of people and institutions involved in the development of Karnatak at that time met and were connected. Going through him in this way will allow me to trace these central elements.

I am also interested in microhistory's promise of "corrective tools," as outlined by a number of its advocates. Hans Renders and Binne de Haan suggest that biographical research, combined with detailed historical contextualization, can be a powerful interpretative tool to correct or alter dominant grand narratives, frameworks, or (too-rigid) pillarization.[55] Richard Brown suggests that micro-studies allow researchers to explore a finite subject more exhaustively and to have better command of the evidence; as such, they can even be more authoritative and trustworthy than macro-scale studies for producing broader interpretive statements and revealing wider phenomena. This may also help solve problems of oversimplification that often occur in macro-research and structural methodologies.[56] Francesca Trivellato has also highlighted how a single case, analyzed in depth, can foster fresh and illuminating bases for extensive comparative work.[57] Thus, I expect that by employing a biographical approach, I will be able to reveal new aspects of the Karnatak state and its ruler and use them to make fresh comparisons with their contemporaries in various ways. These will not only open up a new place for the region in existing discussions of the early modern period but they may also help shape or alter previous grand narratives related to eighteenth-century South Asian states and of British colonial expansion.

[53] Loriga, "The Role of the Individual in History," 91-93;
[54] John P. Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory," *Past & Present* 222, 1 (2014): 57-59.
[55] Hans Renders and Binne De Haan, "Introduction," in *Theoretical Discussions of Biography: Approaches from History, Microhistory and Life Writing*, ed. Hans Renders and Binne De Haan (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 7; Renders, "The Limits of Representativeness," 129-138.
[56] Brown, "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge," 125-128.
[57] Francesca Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," *California Italian Studies* 2, 1 (2011): 1-2, 4, 17.

In addition, as is widely claimed by its supporters, the biographical approach is a promising method to help return cultural dimensions to historiography, thereby lessening the dominance of political and economic institutions. A number of microhistorical studies written by Carlo Ginzburg, Giovanni Levi, and Natalie Zemon Davis are good illustrations of how an examination of various worldviews, beliefs, and mentalities from an individual's life may benefit wider historical discussions.[58] Trivellato points out that individuals whose lives traversed multiple linguistic, political, and religious boundaries are among the most popular subjects of microhistory, and this demonstrates that the biographical approach can best highlight the contacts and clashes between people from different societies.[59] The Nawab did not literally travel through multiple boundaries, but he was at the point where at least three different politico-cultural worlds intersected. The theme of cross-cultural encounters will not be neglected in this study, and the biographical approach—to explore these scenes through the Nawab's own experiences—is an essential part of that.

My Masters' thesis, completed in 2012, was an initial experiment that explored Karnatak's history by applying such a biographical approach. Using the Nawab's voice, actions, and worldview as the main window through which to examine Karnatak's history allowed me to move the Europeans to one side, downplay their agency, and bring elements and perspectives from the Mughal and local South Indian worlds to the fore. In so doing, various aspects and themes of Karnatak's history that had previously been ignored were explored. I showed that the world of the Nawab was much greater than just the struggles between the Nawab's court and Fort St George in Madras and far wider than simply being part of the duel for empire between the British and the French. Although his kingdom was in the far south of the subcontinent, the borders of his world extended far beyond imperial Mughal India, reaching Persia, the Ottoman Empire, Arabia, and Britain.[60] This Ph.D. dissertation continues my Masters' project in order to produce a more systematic and comprehensive history of the Karnatak state under the Nawab by combining the various facets of state-formation research with a biographical approach.

This dissertation is divided into three main sections. Part I, "Aurangzeb's Legacy" (Chapters One and Two), provides the historical background and context for the study. I explore how the Walajah family went from being Mughal servants to setting up a ruling

[58] Peltonen, "What Is Micro in Microhistory?," 113, 115; Brown, "Microhistory and the Post-Modern Challenge," 126.
[59] Trivellato, "Is There a Future for Italian Microhistory in the Age of Global History?," 1, 14-16; see also Ghobrial, "The Secret Life of Elias of Babylon and the Uses of Global Microhistory," 51-93.
[60] Pimmanus Wibulsilp, "'I Am Nawab of Arcot': Reconsidering the Political History of the Late Eighteenth Century Kingdom of Arcot through the Eye of Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah, 1749-1795" (M.A. Dissertation; Leiden University, The Netherlands, 2012).

dynasty and what condition Karnatak was in when Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan ascended the throne. I also investigate how the relationship between the Nawab and the British began. The concepts of "zamindarization" and "fitna" will be brought into the discussion here. Part II, "The Making of the Karnatak State" (Chapters Three to Six), discusses the Nawab's efforts to consolidate and maintain independent power through four pillars of pre-colonial state-formation—dynasty, sword, pen, and religion. Various debates surrounding pre-colonial South Asia—such as Turko-Mughal legacies, the influence of the Perso-Islamic and Indic worlds, military revolution(s), religious tolerance, the rise of various intermediary groups, and so on—will be explored. In Part III, "Embracing the Europeans" (Chapters Seven to Nine), the relationship between the Nawab and the British (which is also partly discussed in Parts I and II) will be further elaborated through three main aspects of their encounters: the economy, culture, and the military. It cannot be denied that the British were one of the main actors in the development of Karnatak during this period, a group without reference to whom any history of the region would not be comprehensive. But, as I suggest, we need a new version of this relationship, one based on both collaboration and competition, in which the voices and active roles of the local rulers are heard and observed, in order to balance the previous Eurocentric narratives. My main aim in this part will be to trace the functions of the various European elements (e.g. institutions, personnel, material culture, artistic styles, technology, customs, etc.) that were attached to or embraced by the Karnatak court, from the Nawab's point of view. In other words, what were the Nawab's motivations or strategies in embracing them? Wider early modern debates on rulers and the mercantile world, portfolio capitalists, cross-cultural encounters, and military revolutions will be related to the answers. In each of these three parts, a detailed introduction and conclusion will be provided. In the overall conclusion to the study, I will also show the contribution my approach and discussion make to our comprehension of the Nawab's Karnatak.

Historical Sources

The sources that can be used to explore Karnatak's history during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan are written in a wide variety of languages—primarily Persian, English, Dutch, French, Danish, Tamil, and Marathi—and kept in various archives and libraries, mainly in Britain, India, and the Netherlands. The most important sources—in terms of volume, detail, and proximity to Nawabi Karnatak and its ruler—are the Persian and English sources, while the others are more marginal. Therefore, these are the two I have used most, with a few Dutch and English-translated Tamil texts also incorporated. However, due to the

scope of my research questions, limited time, and my limited language skills (knowing only English and with limited ability in Persian and Dutch), even within the two main groups of Persian and English sources I have chosen to consult some collections and ignore many others. In the following sections, I will give a brief overview of the available sources—particularly the English and Persian—and explain my approach to and the limitations in choosing and utilizing them. Two important factors that have shaped my choice of sources are worth stating preliminarily here. First, as I would like to focus on restoring the Nawab's agency and perspective, the documents that were produced during his lifetime and sought to reflect his ideas—i.e. those produced under the supervision of the ruler or produced by people in close contact with him—are central. Secondly, due to my language limitation, in cases of non-English sources, those which have English translations are my preferred choice.

Persian Sources

a. Dynastic Histories/Chronicles

This type of source covers those pieces of court literature that were compiled under the direct oversight or patronage of one of the Karnatak Nawabs as an official history of their own reign or the reigns of their forefathers. Three Persian texts fall into this category and are related to Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, namely the *Anwarnama* (compiled 1766-1771), the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* (1781-1786), and the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* (the mid-1830s). The first two books were compiled by two Walajah court scholars—Mir Ismail Khan Abjadi and Munshi Burhan Khan ibn Hasan—under the patronage of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan himself. The *Anwarnama*, written in a poetic form, is a history of his father, Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan, while the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* is a prose version and extension of the *Anwarnama* that reports the events of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's own reign. The *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* was written by one of Nawab Muhammad Ali's grandsons, named Muhammad Ghulam Karim, on the orders of Nawab Azim Jah Bahadur, a Walajah prince and the regent of the fifth Walajah Nawab. It is an account of the life of Nawab Umdat al-Umara Bahadur Walajah II (r. 1795-1801), the eldest son and immediate successor of Muhammad Ali Khan. All three have been published, although only the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* have been translated into English; as such, they will be the two main court chronicles used in this study. My non-use of the *Anwarnama* is based on two factors. One is my limited ability in Persian, the other is the seemingly extensive overlap of information between this source and the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*. This is because the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* is a prose version and extension of

the *Anwarnama* and so, in the words of Muhammad Husain Nainar—the translator of the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*—the latter work "covers pretty nearly the same ground as the famous *Anwarnama*."[61] The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* begins with the genealogy of the Walajah family from the beginnings of Islam up to the eighteenth century. It then recounts the history of Karnatak from the late seventeenth century to the rise of the Walajahs as its rulers. It has stories dating to the early years of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's life and ends with his success in taking Pondicherry from the French in 1761. Unfortunately for us, for reasons unknown the author did not continue his account up to the 1780s as he had initially planned. However, valuable information on the Nawab's ancestors, family, court, and relations with various groups of people can be gleaned from it.[62] Although the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* was produced in the decades following the Nawab's reign, it provides detailed information on the Walajah family during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan. It also reports some interesting events and ceremonies that took place at the court in the final years of the Nawab's reign in which the author, as the Nawab's grandson, was a participant and eyewitness.[63]

The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and, to a lesser extent, the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz* are the standard sources that scholars use to study Karnatak under the Walajahs. However, how they use these texts has been limited, employing them simply as a means of writing about the family's background, how its members entered Mughal service, and how they became the Karnatak Nawabs. Many other aspects have been ignored or criticized, such as the genealogy linking them to Arabia, Central Asia, and Persia; the military role of the Nawab in fighting alongside his British ally during the early years of his reign; and the Nawab's portrayal of his relationship with the Europeans. This is mainly because such accounts have been considered by modern historians as the mythical or boastful claims of a petty ruler rather than the articulation of facts. For example, Ramaswami has written, "Persian sources like *Tuzak-i Walajahi* are valuable to some extent, but they defeat their purpose as works of history by their obsequiousness."[64] This reflects a long-held, conventional perspective held by many historians towards indigenous sources, one that has recently been systematically contested by three of the aforementioned South Indian historians—Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam. As they argue, indigenous texts that are usually seen as myths, legends, or literary works can be very useful historical sources once scholars move beyond the conventional perspective of

[61] Muhammad H. Nainar, trans., *Tuzak-i Walajahi of Burhan Ibn Hasan, Part I: From the Early Days to the Battle of Ambur (1162 A.H.)* (Madras: University of Madras, 1934), ix.
[62] See further details in: Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, ix-xiii.
[63] See further details in: Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, xiii-xvii; Muhammad H. Nainar, trans., *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz of Muhammad Karim, Part I* (Madras: University of Madras, 1940), v-xiii.
[64] Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 329.

European historicism that strictly distinguishes fact from fiction. They emphasize that a piece of writing is intentionally created by its author to represent, fashion, or refashion something—himself, others, ideologies, and so on—that they want their audience to recognize or memorize. Scholars need to approach these texts with this attitude and a greater degree of sensitivity, reading them more *with the grain*, listening closely to their conversations, carefully observing all kinds of subtle shifts in idiom, and understanding the text in its own context through the standpoint of its authors and potential contemporaneous audiences. In this way, multiple historical messages can be observed and, in the words of the three scholars, "neither the notion of factuality, nor that of fiction, needs to be dissolved."[65] While I still think that the fictional and the factual parts need to be clearly indicated, I agree with the three historians that the conventional approach of diligently distinguishing fact from fiction in the narratives has caused us to unnecessarily lose sight of many remarkable concepts of the past that genealogies,[66] for example, present. Instead, as I will show in this study, all written sources can be seen as representations or conceptions of the self by their producers. By asking relevant questions and carefully contextualizing our findings, all narratives can be used to uncover how authors and patrons imagined themselves and thereby provide us with fresh perspectives on the past. In the case of the two chronicles in question, they are among the most crucial resources through which the standpoint of the Nawab and the perspective of the Perso-Islamic world can be seen. In my opinion, the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* is the best resource for tracing the Nawab's own voice. This is because, as well as funding its production, there is a strong hint that the Nawab himself probably closely supervised and may even have selected its contents. As recorded by its author, Burhan Khan, "During the progress of the compilation of this book, when the narrative had proceeded thus far, *the author according to custom read it out to Ḥaẓrat-i A'la* [i.e. the Nawab], [the stories] recalled to his mind the anxiety, and [the Nawab] shed tears" (my italics).[67]

In using the two Persian chronicles through their English versions, I admit there is the risk of something being lost in translation. However, this can be partly relieved by the fact that the translation and publication of these two sources was done by professional scholars with the clear academic purpose of making the sources more accessible for historical

[65] Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Textures of Time*, 1-4, 13; Another prominent scholar who promotes and discusses the methodology of reading the archival sources *with the grain* is Ann Stoler, although she mainly applies it to the use of colonial archives for studying local history. See, Ann Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009), 50-53.
[66] See an example of how genealogies can be used in the study of history in: Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), xxiii-xxv, 97-191.
[67] Muhammad H. Nainar, trans., *Tuzak-i Walajahi of Burhan Ibn Hasan, Part II: From the Battle of Ambur 1162 A.H. to the Capture of Pondicherry, 1174 A.H.* (Madras: University of Madras, 1939), 50-51.

research. The translator of both chronicles, Muhammad Husain Nainar, was the head of the Department of Arabic, Persian, and Urdu at the University of Madras.[68] He cooperated with C.S. Srinivarachari, a professor of history at Annamalai University, who provided very detailed historical notes to the English versions of the two sources. Explanations for numerous technical terms, place-names, prominent protagonists, and important ceremonies or events are given. There is also much cross-checking with and many references to various other primary sources and historical works from later periods, both in Persian and English. The notes provided clearly reflect that both scholars involved in the translation not only had good command of both languages but also exhaustive historical knowledge of Karnatak, the Mughal, Persian and Islamic worlds, and British colonial expansion. However, for this study, when it is necessary to get the exact meaning or sense from the original words or phrases, I checked the Persian versions and sometimes provide the Persian terms.

b. Collections of Court Letters and Records

This second group covers the records, administrative documents, and correspondence produced or collected by the Walajah court. Large numbers of these can be found in the collection of Persian manuscripts kept in the Tamilnadu Archives (TA) in Chennai. They are bound together, largely un-chronologically, into more than a hundred bundles. An unpublished English catalogue, giving a brief introduction to each of them, has been produced.[69] Their types and themes are diverse. For example, there is correspondence between the Nawab and various individuals and institutions (local, West Asian, and European); receipts; lists and service records of his servants with their salaries; court financial accounts; and evidence of business transactions between the Nawab and other individuals.[70] Among these, bundles 65 to 68 are particularly important and have been consulted for this thesis. They constitute a set of daily court records, around 700 letters (thus covering around 700 days) in total, bound together chronologically, and they have been labelled by some previous historians the *Ruznama*. The author of these letters was a Hindu scribe named Munshi Kishna Chand, and he received direct orders from Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan to write down "all the important events of the court."[71] These records were

[68] After working on these two chronicles, Nainar translated the *Bahar-i Azam Jahi*, another historical source for Karnatak that relates the life of Nawwab Azamjah Bahadu Walajah IV.
[69] In this English-language inventory, the date of each letter, the writer and recipient, the topics, and sometimes a brief summary of the most important aspects are given.
[70] See, for example: TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 4, 5, 90-95A, 102-104, 109-111.
[71] The main contents of these letters include the Nawab's granting of audiences to various courtiers and guests (local, West Asian, and European), details of their conversations, the Nawab's orders on various matters, and special events or ceremonies that took place at the court.

produced regularly from April 1773 to early 1775. It is not known if the Nawab halted the practice after that or if the records thereafter are no longer extant. They have never been translated or published, so they have been under-utilized by scholars. One exception is Gurney, who, in his short article, used some of the information therein to examine the Nawab's personality and reconstruct his court's milieu.[72] The *Ruznama* is just as valuable as are the chronicles for reflecting the Nawab's voice and worldview, and what is recorded—the Nawab's actions, orders, names of people, and ceremonial events—was noted because the munshi thought that it was significant in his master's eyes; this was anything that the Nawab wanted potential readers to know about him or his court. While I was not able to make full use of this source in Persian, the English summary of each record in the catalogue has been extremely useful.[73]

c. Other Persian Writings Produced during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

The studies of Gurney and various modern bibliographers—including Charles Ambrose Storey, Dara Marshall, Nabi Hadi, and Shaikh Allauddin—have highlighted that there is a large number of unpublished and untranslated Persian "historical" texts that were written about or contain information relating to the Walajah dynasty and the reign of the Nawab. Some of these were produced by the Nawab's second son or a few other Walajah princes or courtiers during or just after the Nawab's reign. They are very important, eye-witness accounts of the Nawab's life and his court. Various others were "histories" produced in the latter part of the nineteenth century by local scholars or courtiers. These are all contained in rare manuscripts that remain unpublished and are kept in public and private libraries in Chennai and Hyderabad.[74] There are no English translations yet and very few English introductions or overviews are available. As such, I must leave these texts for future research. However, there is a list of these in the Appendix.

This study also owes a great deal to the *Maathir al-Umara*, an eighteenth-century (Persian) biographical survey of Mughal notables from the period 1556-1780 that was written by Shah Nawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, and a modern (English) bibliographical survey of

[72] Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 222.
[73] The *Ruqaat-i Walajahi*, published in 1958, is another such Persian source. I must omit this collection now because there is no English translation, but it seems to be one of most interesting sources for Karnatak's internal affairs. Further details are provided in the Appendix.
[74] See the lists of these Persian manuscripts in the Appendix. For bibliographical surveys of Persian sources on Karnatak, see: Charles Ambrose Storey, *Persian Literature: A Bio-Bibliographical Survey*, vol. I (London: Luzac and Co., 1927), 777-780; Dara N. Marshall, *Mughals in India: A Bibliographical Survey*, vol. I (London: Asia Publishing House, 1967), 360; Nabi Hadi, *Dictionary of Indo-Persian Literature* (New Delhi: Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, 1995), 214, 333; 589; Shaikh Allauddin, "Libraries and Librarianship during Muslim Rule in India: An Analytical Study" (Doctoral Dissertation; Sambalpur, Sambalpur University, India, 1992), 348-354; H. Munavarjan and T. Shafeeque Ahmed, "Sources For the Study of Nawab Muhammad Ali Walajahi," *International Journal of Research in Applied, Natural and Social Sciences* 4, 7 (2016): 27-30.

Arabic and Persian literature from Karnatak by Muhammad Yousuf Kokan, who also provides biographical information for many eighteenth-century scholars. Both works provide introductions to various prominent South Asian figures who were related to the Nawab and/or his court during his lifetime. The latter scholar also provided much interesting information related to the Nawab from Persian and Arabic sources produced during the Nawabi period, which due to my limited language ability, I could not access directly. They have allowed me to reconstruct the Nawab's social and cultural networks to a greater extent than was possible from his court production alone.[75]

British Sources

a. The British East India Company's Records

The EIC records consist of the documents produced and collected by the Company's servants as part of their duties. These take various forms, such as reports, minutes of consultations, correspondence between different company offices, and "country correspondence" (the letters exchanged between the EIC and local rulers). Due to the intense and almost daily contacts between the Nawab and the EIC across his entire reign, the EIC archives are undeniably the most voluminous, detailed, and long-running resource. The collections in which the majority of the information on Karnatak can be found are those produced by, sent out from, or received in the Madras Presidency (Fort St George), the EIC's headquarters in Karnatak next to which the Nawab's palace was built around 1767. These documents are kept in two main places: 1) the Indian Office Record (IOR), British Library, London; and 2) the Madras Office Record, Tamilnadu Archives, Chennai. In IOR, there are at least four main collections containing documents related to the Madras Presidency: (1) the Madras Public Proceedings (MPP); (2) the Madras Military and Secret Consultations (MMSC); (3) the Despatches to Madras (DM); and (4) the Home Miscellaneous Series of Indian Records (HOME). These four collections (from between the late 1740s and 1795) constitute the main EIC records that were consulted and used for this study.[76] Previous historians of Karnatak, especially Gurney

[75] Sam Sam al-Daulah Shah Nawaz Khan and Abdul Hayy, *The Maathir al-Umara, Being Biographies of the Muhammadan and Hindu Officers of the Timurid Sovereigns of India from 1500 to about 1780 A.D*., ed. Baini Prashad, trans. H. Beveridge, 2 vols. (Patna: Janaki Prakash, 1979); Muhammad Y. Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic, 1710-1960* (Madras: Muhammad Yusuf Kokan, 1974).

[76] The MPP and MMSC mainly contain minutes of consultations, copies of letters and orders received and sent out, and country correspondence both produced and collected by the Madras Council. The DM carries correspondence between Madras and the Court of Directors in London. The HOME comprises a variety of documents, largely grouped thematically, and some of its volumes relate to Karnatak. Among the EIC records in IOR, there are also a few original Persian letters from the Karnatak Nawabs, sent to the Company, that were kept separately in the catalogue "IO Islamic." While only two of them were produced by Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, their significance is worth noting. The first letter is his original will, written with his own hand in 1777 and sent to the EIC's Court of Directors. The second is a letter of 1795, written to cancel that will. The cause of the production and cancellation of the will of the Nawab shall be discussed elsewhere in this study. See further: M.Z.A. Shakeb, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Persian Letters from Arcot and Baroda* (London: India Office Library and Records, 1982), 1-2. The references for the two Persian letters are IO Islamic 4364 and 4248.

and Phillips, also relied heavily on them for their research, but they limited their questions mainly to the Nawab's debts and British agency; other aspects—described in detail in the sources—were barely touched upon.

As for the Madras Record Office in Chennai, the English records that cover the reign of the Nawab are in four catalogues, namely: (the records of the) Public Department; Military Department; Revenue Department (from 1774); and Mayor's Court (1689-1798).[77] Due to time restrictions and my assumption that there is probably significant overlap in the information between the collections in Chennai and London, I have chosen to leave those in Chennai for future investigation. Although not regularly, the Nawab also had contacts with the Presidency of Bengal, especially in the 1770s and the early 1780s, when Warren Hastings was Governor-General of India. The collection of the Bengal Presidency is, therefore, another source for Karnatak's history. At this stage, I have started to research its contents via various publications. The 11-volume *Calendar of Persian Correspondence* (CPC), which has a detailed summary of each of the Persian "letters" that passed between some of the EIC's servants and South Asian notables, and which were kept by the Bengal Presidency, is extremely useful. The letters exchanged between the Nawab and Warren Hastings are the particular focus of my attention.[78]

In using the EIC's records, it is important to underline that, within that institution, a united point of view should not be presumed. For example, the Directors in London, the Governor-General in Bengal, and the Madras Presidency frequently had differing opinions on events in Karnatak. For example, while the Directors issued orders based on the Company's laws, their agents in Madras frequently chose to act more pragmatically in order to solve immediate problems. Moreover, different interest groups had different views regarding the Karnatak court. Even within each of these EIC "sub-divisions," the backgrounds of individual British officers and their relationships with the Nawab differed. Some were the Nawab's friends, some his business partners, many others his bitter enemies, and these relationships changed constantly. Such should be taken into consideration when interpreting the records, and this approach also needs to be applied to sources related to all other British protagonists, such as the king's servants or private traders. Without very careful contextualization of each

[77] In these catalogues are documents, in various forms, comparable to those kept in IOR, such as consultations, despatches to and from Britain, letters from and to factories, and country correspondence. For a preliminary survey of EIC documents in the Madras Office Record (Tamilnadu Archives), see: Sailen Ghose, *Archives in India: History and Assets* (Calcutta: Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyay, 1963), 167-173, 311-314.

[78] *Calendar of Persian Correspondence: Being Letters, Referring mainly to Affairs in Bengal, which Passed Between Some of the Company's Servants and Indian Rulers and Notables, 1759-1795*, 11 vols. (Calcutta/New Delhi: Superintendent Government Printing/The National Archives of India, 1911-1969). Abbreviation *CPC* will be used henceforth.

piece of evidence, the use of British sources could easily lead to misinterpretation. I expect two main things from my use of the EIC's records and other British sources. The first is to gain perspectives from the European world that will help interpret the Karnatak state and its ruler. The second is to employ these sources in order to help trace the Nawab's voice and agency as, within these texts, there are a number of letters and messages—written either by the Nawab himself or under his orders—to various British institutions and individuals. Also, there are conversations and discussions between the Nawab and British people that appear to have been recorded verbatim. Moreover, I argue that the Nawab's actions and views, as reported by the British eyewitnesses, and the responses, opinions, critiques, compliments, and complaints of those Europeans towards the Nawab, can all be read *against the grain* to reveal the Nawab's desires, thoughts, and strategies. This approach of reading European sources "from the bottom up" or "upside down" to restore the agency of South Asians is based on Ranajit Guha's subaltern study.[79]

b. Private Manuscripts of British Individuals

This type refers to private (non-institutional) records produced by many of the British individuals who had contacts or business dealings with or related to the Nawab, and who referred to him or his state in their writings. These documents exist in various forms, such as private correspondence with friends and acquaintances, personal diaries, memoirs, and collections of historical documents (e.g Robert Orme's manuscripts). Many of these are kept in IOR, while others are scattered across various libraries in Britain and India.[80] Despite using both types of British records (EIC records and private manuscripts), scholars like Gurney, Phillips, and Ramaswami have tended to rely more on the private manuscripts of British protagonists for their studies than on the Company's records. They seem to believe that, as Gurney suggests, private letters and accounts reveal details of the debt transactions and court politics better than do Company records. Because many Company servants had large sums tied up in the Nawab's own debts, they were naturally cautious about mentioning their financial concerns too freely.[81] But my opinion vis-à-vis the two types of documents is different. In private documents, the authors report events from their own limited viewpoints and often with strong prejudices. On the other hand, the EIC's records carry "factual"

[79] Ranajit Guha, "The Prose of Counter-Insurgency," in *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian History and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 2-4. See also, Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 47, 50.
[80] The authors of these sources included numerous Company servants and ex-servants (who produced the writings in a private capacity and for personal reasons), military officers and civil servants of the British government sent to South Asia, private merchants, political adventurers, travelers, and some politicians in Britain. See the examples of these private European manuscripts in the Appendix.
[81] Gurney, "The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot," abstract.

commentaries on events and provide various opinions or ideas held by the Company's servants related to these episodes. In the Company's records, one can thus see factual information and various perspectives on a single issue all at once. Also, due to their almost daily contacts with the Nawab throughout his reign, the EIC's sources allow for long-term observations about his state and engage with a greater variety of themes related to local society. As such, in this study, I choose to focus on the EIC's records while using the information in and perspectives of private documents almost exclusively via secondary literature. To this, the diary of George Paterson and the report of James Buchanan are notable exceptions.[82] Because of the extensive use of the former source in this study, its background must be detailed.

Paterson's diary is extensive: nine volumes, each comprising 250-300 pages. He first arrived in India in late 1770 as the secretary of Sir John Lindsay, who was the first British "king's minister" sent to the Karnatak court, whose mission will be described in Part III. In only a short time, Paterson won the Nawab's favor. A year later, when Sir John departed, Paterson was asked by the Nawab to stay, nominally as the secretary of the second representative of the British king in Arcot, Sir Robert Hartland, but really as secretary to the Nawab. During his four-year stay in Karnatak (1770-1774), Paterson saw the Nawab almost daily and was consulted on practically all important matters. Hence, he was in a very privileged position to observe the court from close quarters. Crucially for us, Paterson enthusiastically set himself the task of recording what he saw and experienced in vivid detail. His account reveals a great deal about the Nawab, his courtiers, court ceremonial, court politics, and the relationships between the Nawab and those people with whom he interacted. Frequently, the conversations between the Nawab and Paterson or others are recorded in a verbatim style. Two historians who have used Paterson's records substantially are Gurney (on the Nawab's debt and personality) and Pamela Nightingale (on the moral attitudes of British individuals in eighteenth-century India). Both of them regard this source highly for its factual accuracy and absence of prejudice on the part of the writer.[83] All of these factors make Paterson's diary a very valuable source for this study, for tracing both the Europeans' perspectives and the Nawab's voice. However, Paterson also had his own biases and judged

[82] Another private European manuscript used in this study is the report of James Buchanan, a trading agent for the Nawab whose account reveals crucial aspects of the Nawab's mercantile activities; see: Chapter Seven.

[83] Gurney notes that, unlike many of the British, Paterson "came to India with an open mind, prepared to judge Indians dispassionately but with sympathy" and was genuinely working for the Nawab's best interests. Nightingale notes that Paterson's records "all show the degree of detachment of the trained observer and analyst who feels compelled to record accurately even his own faults and failures." See Gurney, "Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot," 222, and Pamela Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1774* (Delhi-New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), viii.

individuals and events based on his own experience. His opinions regarding the Nawab and his court should not, therefore, be taken literally, or at least not without careful analysis.

Dutch Sources

The archive of the Dutch East India Company (VOC), kept in the Dutch National Archives (NA) in The Hague and in the Tamilnadu Archives, is another source-collection containing information related to Karnatak and the Nawab. While researching for this study I explored part of it, beginning with the collection of "Letters and Papers Received from Asia by the 'Seventeen Gentlemen'" (*overgekomen brieven en papieren*—OBP), kept in the NA. The OBP from the Dutch factories in Coromandel (aka Negapatnam) and Ceylon (Sri Lanka) between the 1750s and the 1790s—including the final reports of their chiefs (*memories van* overgave), proceedings, correspondence with local rulers, and reports of missions to the court of Karnatak—have been skimmed through. The main topic, which frequently appears, relates to a long-running conflict between the Nawab and the VOC over pearl-fishing at the southern tip of the Coromandel Coast (details of which will be discussed in Chapter Seven). There is also scattered information related to various other disputes between the two parties (such as over territory or trade), some diplomatic exchanges (in Madras and Ramnad), and Dutch perspectives on the Nawab-British relationship. For this study, due to limits of space and research scope, only a small amount of information from the VOC can be incorporated. The rest must wait for future research, which will allow more space to explore various aspects of the Dutch-Karnatak relationship. However, for the benefit of other researchers, a list of prominents VOC collections that relate to Karnatak and the Nawab are provided in the Appendix.

The Dutch sources in the Tamilnadu Archives are not explored in this thesis, nor are various manuscripts in Danish, French, Portuguese, and vernacular languages like Tamil and Marathi.[84] The vernacular sources, in particular, would no doubt be useful for understanding the view of Karnatak from South India, which is one of the three main perspectives of my study. For this current stage, the reconstruction of South Indian perspectives and their role in shaping Karnatak's history has been based on various pieces of secondary literature related to

[84] Ghose, *Archives in India*, 168, 312-313.

pre-colonial South India and some relevant primary sources that have been translated into English, such as the well-known Tamil diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai.[85]

As well as the sources—published and unpublished—outlined above, this thesis is also greatly indebted to previous works on Karnatak, the Mughal Empire, other regions of South Asia in the eighteenth century, pre-modern Islamic and Indic political ideologies, early British colonial expansion in South Asia, and eighteenth-century British politics, all of which cannot be listed here.

[85] Ananda Ranga Pillai was a *dubash* (secretary-*cum*-interpreter) for the French in Pondicherry. He kept a private diary from 1736 to 1761, providing a day-to-day account of the events and social life of the period. He also provided details of wars in Karnatak from the mid-1740s to the 1760s, in which the role of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan may be observed. See: Ananda Ranga Pillai, *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai (1736-1761)*, ed. Frederick J. Price, K. Rangachari, and Henry Dodwell, 12 vols. (Madras: Superintendent, Government Press, 1904-1928).