



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

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

Wibulsilp, P.

Citation

Wibulsilp, P. (2019, April 9). *Nawabi Karnatak: Muhammad Ali Khan in the Making of a Mughal Successor State in Pre-colonial South India, 1749-1795*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/71028>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Leiden University Non-exclusive license](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/71028>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/71028> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Wibulsilp, P.

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

Issue Date: 2019-04-09

Chapter 3: Nawabi Dynasty

For a period of three years Ḥaẓrat-i-A'lā was busy fighting continuously many powerful enemies, patiently suffering all sorts of difficulties, and during this period both the brothers, in the pride of their independence, lost their regard for the labours of Ḥaẓrat-i-A'lā [...].¹

This chapter will explore the Nawab's relations with his immediate and extended family, who were related to him by kinship or marriage—his siblings, other blood relatives, spouses, children, and in-laws. As mentioned earlier, it will explore three main themes related to the exercise of dynastic power. The first of these is genealogy (nasab). It will ask how the Nawab reimagined his genealogy and his dynasty's profile when tracing the rise of his family from humble origins as an ordinary Indo-Muslim household to an illustrious royal line. The second is related to the succession system. What was the Nawab's strategy for managing the state he inherited from his father? What kind of dynastic system did he anticipate? How did the Nawab manage to control the rebellious members of his family and share political power with them? And how did he plan for the continuation of the state after his death? Finally, I will discuss the dynasty's networks. How did the Nawab create networks of support and loyalty through the marriages of family members?

3.1 Nasab

According to Susan Bayly, one important way a monarch could attempt to prove that his dynasty did not merely consist of upstarts or ambitious adventurers was by producing royal chronicles or dynastic histories.² The first move by Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan in this direction came in 1766/1767, when he commissioned the first court chronicle of the Walajah house, known as the *Anwarnama*, which recounted the reign of his father, Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan, in poetical form. It is said to have been modeled on the most celebrated classic Persian chronicle, Firdausi's *Shahnama*, and on the equally well-known sixteenth-century Mughal dynastic history, Abu al-Fazal's *Akbarnama*.³ In 1773, the Nawab went one step further by ordering one of his Hindu secretaries to record his actions and the main events that occurred at his durbar on a daily basis, which resulted in the text known to us as the *Ruznama*. In 1780, the first prose-style dynastic history, the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, based heavily on information from the poetic *Anwarnama*, was ordered to be composed. It is the latter in

¹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 151. Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan is referred to in the chronicle by the honorific “Ḥaẓrat-i-A'lā.”

² Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 153-154.

³ Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and Kings*, 153; Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 91, 176-178.

particular that provides us with vivid illustrations of how the Nawab reimagined his family's pedigree.

A significant theme in Walajah dynastic history was the patronage that Muhammad Ali Khan's forefathers had received from the Mughal emperors. In reality, however, compared to other contemporaneous Mughal noble families—and especially those who became rulers of the eighteenth-century Mughal successor states—the Walajahs were of humbler origins. One obvious comparative example is the Asafjahi dynasty of the Deccan, a main regional competitor of Karnatak. This family, led by Nizam al-Mulk, headed the Turani faction at the imperial court, and many of its members had held the position of imperial wazir. Furthermore, prior to entering Mughal service, Nizam al-Mulk's grandfather, Sadallah Khan, had been a qadi in Bukhara, a renowned Islamic center in Central Asia.⁴ Another example is Zulfiqar Khan, the first Mughal Nawab of Karnatak. He was not only the leader of the Irani faction at the imperial court but his family was also linked to the Mughal emperors by marriage. These nobles also held very high mansabdari positions. During the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, Zulfiqar Khan held the rank of 7,000, while Mir Muhammad Amin Nishapuri (aka Burhan al-Mulk), who founded the Nawabi state of Awadh in 1722, also held that rank.⁵ In contrast, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's father and grandfather had both held the rank of just 2,000.⁶ As such, their links to the Mughals may have been a fundamental and convenient source of legitimation for the Nawab, but they were not enough to lift his family to the same level of prestige that other ruling dynasties of the time enjoyed. As will be shown in the following section, the Nawab went to great lengths to find other ideological means (beyond forging the Mughal connection) to elevate his nasab, something that is clearly reflected in the court chronicles.

According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Nawab Muhammad Ali's grandfather—Muhammad Anwar—was once asked by Emperor Aurangzeb: “Have any of your ancestors ever served under a *Padshāh* [emperor] or is it only your good fortune that you have found service under this proud dignity?” To this, the Nawab's ancestor replied: “My ancestors had such a nice sense of honour that they did not have the mean aspiration that I have.”⁷ Surprised and very pleased by this forthright answer, the emperor bestowed on him the title of *Shaykh Aqdas*, meaning “holy master.” Through this seemingly fictional conversation between his

⁴ *Maathir al-Umara*, II: 409-410, 417-418; Faruqui, “At Empire's End,” 7.

⁵ *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 426.

⁶ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part I, 34, 36.

⁷ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part I, 11-12.

grandfather and the emperor, the Nawab justified his family's lack of lengthy service to the Mughals by declaring that, while his forefathers may not have served the Mughals for very long, they had led lives just as honorable as other Muslim elites. Furthermore, the Nawab claimed that his family was not simply an Indo-Muslim one that had but recently experienced the good fortune of entering Mughal service, but was instead an ancient Arab-Muslim family of "blue-blooded" lineage, since he was descended from the Kuraysh, the residents of Mecca prior to the institution of Islam. They also belonged to the same line as the Islamic prophet Hadrat Ibrahim Khalil Allah (i.e. Abraham). Muhammad Ali Khan's ancestor from the time of Prophet Muhammad (the last Prophet), 25 generations before, was the illustrious Umar b. Khattab, the second caliph of Islam (r. 634-644), as the claim goes.⁸ According to *the Tuzak-i Walajahi* and the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, after the death of this renowned ancestor, his family stayed in Medina for many generations before political instability forced a move to Bukhara, a famous center of Islamic learning in Turkistan, Central Asia. There, the family lived as virtuous and learned men, teaching Islamic law and tradition. After several generations, a Walajah notable named Shaykh Sulayman became a man of the sword, formed a warband, and marched to Kabul to wage *jihad*—religious war. He successfully established his banner in Kabul in 1009 (AH 400), where he was addressed as Sultan Sulayman. His offspring held the sultanate of Kabul for another two generations before the city was taken by the sultans of Ghazna. As a result, the Nawab's family came to hold less exalted positions. In the thirteenth century, the Mongol invasions forced the family to move out of Central Asia and head to northern India.⁹

By claiming to be part of an illustrious Arab tribe and a descendent of the second caliph and the sultans of Kabul, the Nawab sought to elevate his family to the highest echelons of Islamic society. To understand why the "Central Asian" connection was significant to the Nawab's family, we need to understand its special place in the context of the Mughal court. Central Asia was the ancestral home of the Mughals and the dynasty was Turani by ethnicity, while Bukhara was the city that the Turani Asafjahi family claimed as their ancestral home. In the genealogies of aristocratic Muslim families, claiming to belong to the same tribe or being from the same town as revered holy men, warriors, or, in this case, illustrious rulers was a standard tactic to elevate one's nasab. Using such methods, Mughal courtiers who had migrated from Central Asia had always had a collective sense of

⁸ For more details about the Kuraysh and the second caliph of Islam, see: Juan Eduardo Campo, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Facts On File, 2009), 685-686; W. Montgomery Watt, "Kuraysh", *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, ed. P. Bearman et al., accessed September 17, 2018: http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_4533.

⁹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 2-7; Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz, Part II*, 53-58.

superiority over their rivals and proudly regarded themselves as a distinct social class. The family of Nizam al-Mulk is the best example of self-association with the Turani elite at the Mughal court during the eighteenth century.¹⁰ The Central Asian link was used by practically all members of the Nizam's entourage to claim a special bond with their leader and special status within the group; they claimed that they moved to the Deccan with the Nizam "influenced by the feeling of their common birth-place."¹¹ The Nawab, too, claimed a Central Asian past, allowing his ancestors to be able to share the same exalted status as the "Turani" group in Mughal society as well as bolstering his connections with his former master, Nizam al-Mulk.

As well as forging genealogical links with Arabia and Central Asia, the dynasty had another claim to aristocratic connections, through the marriage of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan himself. At the age of fourteen, the Nawab had married Khadija Begam, a woman from a prominent Deccan family that, on her mother's side, claimed to be descended from the Safavid dynasty of Iran. The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* states that one of her ancestors, Mir Nizam al-Din Ahmad, was a nephew of Shah Tahmasp Safavi al-Musawi, the Safavid emperor who reigned between 1524 and 1576. One modern Indian scholar, Muhammad Y. Kokan, has a slightly different view of Khadija Begam's Safavid ancestry, suggesting that she was a descendent of the famous Irani scholar Ustad al-Bashar Sayyid Masum Washtagi, who was himself the brother-in-law of Shah Abbas (r. 1588-1629). It is claimed that she was also related to the Qutbshahi sultans of Golconda. As the author of the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* writes: "by his marriage with the princess of Şafawiyya sultans of Irān, a paradise on earth" the Nawab "became the son-in-law of a glorious and noble family [the Safavids]."¹² A poetic phrase that praises the Nawabi-Safavid link is quoted in Kokan's work, one that presumably came from another historical source, and which says: "Persian blood ran in the veins of the five sons [of the Nawab]" and his sons were regarded by the emperor of India as "the pearls of the ocean of Safavid family and the candles of the Musawi Sadats."¹³

As suggested by Duindam, unlike in many other pre-modern polities, such as imperial China or the Ottoman Empire, female lineage played a significant role ideologically in Mughal India. For example, the Mughal emperors made significant use of their claimed

¹⁰ Richards, *Mughal Empire*, 273; Faruqi, "At Empire's End," 22.

¹¹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 84.

¹² Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 6.

¹³ Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 90; "Musawi" is the surname used by members of the Safavid dynasty and people who claimed to be their descendants. They are also usually given the honorific Saiyid before their names.

matrilineal descent from Chinggis Khan to underscore their pedigree.¹⁴ The Walajah family echoed this practice. We should also investigate the role of the Safavid dynasty and its general context in order to comprehend fully the Nawab's efforts. The Safavid house was known in early modern times as one of the three main imperial polities of the Islamic world, along with the Ottomans and the Mughals.¹⁵ Furthermore, its name was held in high esteem in early modern Indo-Muslim societies, for several reasons. First, as was widely known, when the second Mughal emperor, Humayun, was expelled from Hindustan in 1540 by the Afghan Suri rulers, it was the Safavid court that provided him with shelter and assisted him in regaining the Mughal throne fifteen years later.¹⁶ The Mughals were thus known to be indebted to the Safavids. The Indo-Muslim scholar, Shah Nawaz Khan, recalled the gratitude and respect that Emperor Akbar had for the Safavid house when he wrote his history, the *Maathir al-Umara*, in the eighteenth century. When Abd Allah Khan Uzbek (1533-1598), the ruler of Turan, invited the emperor to join an expedition against Iran, he replied that the old associations between his family and the Safavids prevented him from such an act.¹⁷ Further south, in the Deccan, due to the intense political and commercial contacts and the shared faith of Shiism that both the Qutbshahi dynasty of Golconda and the Adilshahi of Bijapur had had with Safavid Iran prior to the Mughal conquests of the 1630s, both of them formally recognized the Safavid emperors as their overlords and had the Friday prayer recited in their name.¹⁸ Therefore, the Nawab's attempts to highlight his family's links with the Safavids in his chronicle were not only done to strengthen his links with the Indo-Irani noble family of his wife but were also the result of the past glory and high reputation of the Safavid dynasty in the subcontinent. One further thing to note here is that Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan was not the only member of the Indian elites to stress his links with the Safavids. As Shah Nawaz Khan wrote in the eighteenth century, there were many Indo-Muslim nobles who, "by giving them [the former Safavid nobles who had migrated to South Asia] their daughters in marriage[,] established a connection with that august family, and gave themselves out as *Khalīfa Sultānīs*" [i.e. successor of sultans].¹⁹

As well as these Central Asian and Safavid links, the Walajah chronicles also explicitly emphasize the association of the Nawab's family with various noble Indo-Muslim

¹⁴ Duindam, *Dynasties*, 137.

¹⁵ For a good comparative study on the three empires, see: Dale, *The Muslim Empires*.

¹⁶ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 24.

¹⁷ *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 565.

¹⁸ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi'ism*, 22-23; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Iranians Abroad: Intra-Asian Elite Migration and Early Modern State Formation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 51, 2 (1992): 342-344.

¹⁹ *Maathir al-Umara*, II: 139-140.

clans, predominantly Saiyids, in both North India and the Deccan. For instance, the great-grandfather of the Nawab, Muhammad Munawwar, and his son, Muhammad Anwar, were said to have married two women from the family of Muhammad Saiyid, a qadi who was a descendant of “the Sayyids of the pure lineage of Kirmān and the most distinguished residents of *Khayrābād* [a town in Awadh].”²⁰ One of the two ladies was the great-grandmother of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan.²¹ The mother of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan also belonged to an elite Indo-Irani family, one from Hyderabad, and one of her grandmothers was also a Saiyida. Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, therefore, had “Saiyid blood” on both paternal and maternal sides.²²

According to nineteenth-century scholars of South Asia, the status of South Asian Muslims was based on various claims of foreign pedigree that determined their rank in the Indo-Islamic hierarchy. While local converts (*ajlafs*) generally occupied the lower rungs of the hierarchical ladder, among the “foreigners” (*ashrafs*) the Saiyids (descendants of the Prophet, who could be of Irani or Arab origin) were the most respected, followed by Shaykhs (religious scholars of Irani or Arab origin), Mughals (Turks/Turanis from Central Asia), and then Afghans (from North India or Afghanistan).²³ This nineteenth-century scholarly perspective is seemingly equally applicable to the case of the eighteenth-century Karnatak ruler. As previously discussed, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan not only highlighted his family’s foreign origins but also claimed to have links to Saiyids of the highest social standing and to a glorious Islamic dynasty of Iran. In so doing, he created a genealogy that decreed that he had the high birth required of Islamic rulers. In so doing, he followed the approach of all other political aspirants of his age. Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah of the Deccan glorified his Central Asian origins. Mir Muhammad Amin Nishapuri (aka Burhan al-Mulk), the founder of the Nishapuri Nawabi state of Awadh, claimed that he was one of a group of migrant Iranian nobles who were the heirs of Safavid glory and tradition because of their patronage of Shia Islam, rather than through the bloodline.²⁴ The family of Alivardi Khan, the Nawab of Bengal in the period 1740-1757, claimed to have Khurasan as its hometown and Arab and Afshar Turkish ancestors.²⁵

²⁰ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part I*, 20-21. Kirman can be a town in Iran, a place in Bangash country between Kabul and Bannu, or a region west of Sind.

²¹ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz, Part II*, 59.

²² Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 6; Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz, Part II*, 60-63.

²³ Janet E. Benson, “Politics and Muslim Ethnicity in South India,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 39, 1 (1983): 46; Jean B. P. More, *The Political Evolution of Muslims in Tamilnadu and Madras, 1930-1947* (Orient Blackswan, 1997), 24; Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi’ism*, 72-84.

²⁴ Cole, *Roots of North Indian Shi’ism*, 175.

²⁵ Subrahmanyam, “Iranians Abroad,” 348.

3.2 Succession

The Brotherhood and the Practice of the State's Division

During the early period of the Walajah dynasty, Nawabi Karnatak power was heavily reliant on kinship. One principal indication of this trend was the practice, common during the reign of the old Nawab (Anwar al-Din Khan), of dividing the state up between the most important male royal family members and giving them *de facto* autonomous or semi-autonomous power in their domain, and right to possess their own military household. These provincial heads were, in turn, obliged to contribute part of their revenue as *peshkash*, or tribute, to Arcot, and to send military support when being summoned.²⁶ It was this custom that caused fundamental problems between Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan (the new Nawab) and his siblings in the period after the old Nawab's death, and we will now discuss this challenge that came from within his own family.

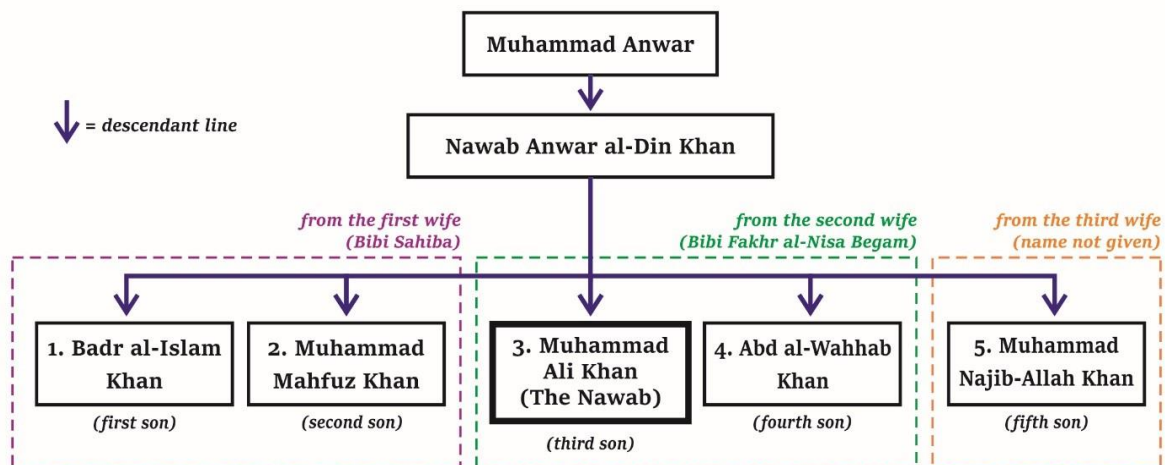


Diagram displaying Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and his other four male siblings from three different mothers

According to the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan had three wives. All of them were likely to have been *nikah* or wives by legal marriage (men were allowed four legally-recognized wives and an unrestricted number of concubines in Islamic law).²⁷ From his three wives were born five sons (and several daughters). Two sons and four daughters were born to his first wife, Bibi Sahiba. The eldest son was Badr al-Islam Khan Bahadur,

²⁶ Such conditions related to the kinship-based form of state during the reign of the old Nawab can be observed through references of Ananda Ranga Pillai to the Walajahs, see: *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, III: 35, 112, 155-156, 177, 333-334, 337, 373.

²⁷ Duindam, *Dynasties*, 102; Joseph Schacht, "Nikāh," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. M. Th. Houtsma et al., accessed August 6, 2018, http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/2214-871X_ei1_SIM_3485.

who lived and died (in 1762) in North India; he did not play any significant role in the history of Karnatak.²⁸ His second son was Muhammad Mahfuz Khan Bahadur, the eldest male of all the siblings and half-siblings who stayed with his father in the South; he was the half-brother of the new Nawab. The third son, Muhammad Ali Khan Bahadur, was the new Nawab, while the fourth son, Abd al-Wahhab Khan Bahadur (the Nawab's full brother), and his two daughters, Amira Begam and Choti Begam (his full sisters), were born to Anwar al-Din Khan's second wife, Bibi Fakhr al-Nisa Begam. With his third wife, who is left unnamed in the chronicles, he had another son, Muhammad Najib Allah Khan Bahadur (the fifth male heir and the new Nawab's half-brother).²⁹ There are several reasons for assuming that the three wives of the old Nawab and their sons enjoyed equal rights and status. First, during the short reign of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan as Nawab of Karnatak (r. 1744-1749), he sent his four sons, from all three wives, to govern different principal districts of the state without discriminating between them, although on grounds of seniority the older sons were allotted the more important provinces. Muhammad Mahfuz Khan was assigned to the suba of Trichinopoly and the taluqs of Madurai and Tirunelveli, while Muhammad Ali Khan was assigned the taluq of Kanchipuram and its surrounding areas in the central Karnatak. The younger sons, Abd al-Wahhab Khan and Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, were assigned the taluqs of Nellore and South Arcot, respectively. Secondly, after the death of their father, all four sons had ambitions for autonomous domains and saw themselves as the rightful heir to their father's throne. Furthermore, there is evidence that, during the old Nawab's reign, conflict broke out between two other relatives of the Nawab over control of a taluq. This suggests that other leading male relatives, in addition to the old Nawab's sons, also had claims to his lands.³⁰

The partition of a state between a ruler's male relatives (both brothers and sons)—either during his lifetime or after his death—was one of the Central Asian legacies followed by the Mughals and their nobles, especially those who traced their lineage back to Central Asia. Two prominent features of Mughal rule were derived from Central Asia and made it different from other, past South Asian dynasties (e.g. the Rajputs); these were the open system of succession and the appanage model of empire division. Both practices were based on the idea that a ruler is “first among equals” and that sovereignty can be shared.³¹

²⁸ Gurney, “The Debts of the Nawab of Arcot,” 5.

²⁹ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 61.

³⁰ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part I, 127-129.

³¹ Munis D. Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire, 1504-1719* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 253, 265; Dale, *The Muslim Empires*, 76, 97; *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 754.

Throughout its history, the Mughal state acknowledged almost no law of succession, and so it was not only the eldest son of the deceased sovereign who sought to be the next ruler. Instead, all other sons, grandsons, and even sons-in-law could lay claim to the throne. For example, Emperor Jahangir ascended the throne after eliminating his own eldest son, Prince Khusrau, who had been the favorite grandson and prospective heir of Emperor Akbar. Emperor Shah Jahan's successor was not his eldest son, Dara Shukoh, but his fourth son, Aurangzeb, who murdered his older brother. The will or the nomination of a favorite son to ascend the throne by reigning monarch had little effect both before and after his death. Neither was the empire considered an indivisible entity. Emperor Babur's domain was inherited by both Kamran and Humayun. Emperor Humayun divided his empire between Akbar and Mirza Hakim. Emperor Aurangzeb initially intended a four-fold division of his empire. The Mughals' rivals, the Ottomans and the Safavids, had also followed these Central Asian models during their early periods. However, during the seventeenth century, their rulers made great efforts to abandon such practices. When not using the approach of murdering rivals from their childhood, they developed a system of bringing up children in the harem; their young princes were confined to the harem instead of being appointed to provincial governorships under a regent or guardian.³² According to Faruqi, the Mughal emperors, especially in their early stages, generally avoided killing rival princes (and their supporters) once a succession struggle had ended, something he terms "the Mughal custom of forgiveness." The link between forgiveness and imperial greatness is repeatedly asserted in imperially-sponsored chronicles.³³ In fact, as Faruqi suggests, from the early seventeenth century, the Mughal emperors also increasingly showed less averseness to kill their princely rivals, leaving the defeated claimants no second chance to attempt to gain part of the empire. This attitude was manifested at the same time as the increasing belief in the indivisibility of the empire. The Mughals also increasingly saw emperorship "no longer a first-among-equals but rather the sole fount of all authority."³⁴ However, as Dale rightly points out, the Mughal rulers never developed a harem system for male children, nor did they use to kill the young and harmless princes.³⁵

In the first half of the eighteenth century, such Central Asian legacies in the Mughal successor states, such as the Deccan and Karnatak, are widely evident.³⁶ In the Nizamate of

³² Dale, *The Muslim Empires*, 188, 199-200, 250; Duindam, *Dynasties*, 135-136.

³³ Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 255-259.

³⁴ Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 253; see also 250-252.

³⁵ Dale, *The Muslim Empires*, 199-200.

³⁶ See also a Rajput case, in: Sharma, *Mughal Government and Administration*, 225.

the Deccan, Prince Nasir Jang, the second son of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah, wanted to seize his father's territory while the latter was still alive. After Nizam al-Mulk's death, all of his sons and a grandson took part in the war of succession; some of them sought the throne itself, while others expected an independent domain as part of the customary inheritance.³⁷ In Karnatak during Nawayat rule, when Nawab Sa'adat Allah Khan had gained control of the province he appointed his brother, Murtaza Ali, to rule the district of Vellore. That region and its governorship was later inherited by the latter's son, Murtaza Ali Khan. An attempt to reclaim it from Murtaza Ali Khan by the next Karnatak Nawab, Nawab Safdar Ali Khan (1740-1742), resulted in the Nawab's own death at the hands of his enraged cousin, who saw Vellore as his hereditary possession. During the reign of Nawab Dost Ali Khan (1732-1740), Chanda Sahib, one of his son-in-laws, dared to declare himself the Nawab of Trichinopoly, and as part of his efforts he strengthened the fortifications and administered southern Karnatak as an autonomous ruler. Furthermore, Chanda Sahib also divided the two southernmost districts of his own domain between his two brothers.³⁸ In brief, up to the eighteenth century, the Mughals and their successors generally based the rules for establishing domains on military superiority and the ability to create their own network of supporters, i.e. the system of fitna.³⁹

With few rules of succession in place in Karnatak, any male relative of the Nawab could become his successor. This meant that Muhammad Ali Khan, as the third son of the Nawab, had a rightful claim to the throne. These claims were strengthened by the absence of his elder half-brothers, Badr al-Islam Khan Bahadur—who was living in North India—and Muhammad Mahfuz Khan—who had left for Hyderabad during the war against Chanda Sahib. However, this flexibility in inheriting offices also meant that any and all of the Nawab's brothers could return to the region at any time to claim the throne. Unfortunately for the new Nawab, this is precisely what happened. The *Tuzak-i Walajahi* presents Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan as having been an extremely generous brother. After he defeated Chanda Sahib and regained possession of Karnatak, he is said to have conveyed the good news to his siblings in Hyderabad, inviting them to return to his country.⁴⁰ This gracious

³⁷ *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 279-280, 592-593; II: 398-408, 420-424, 437-439, 872.

³⁸ Fox, *North Arcot*, 50; Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic*, 50, 64-65.

³⁹ For details and a good discussion of the Mughal succession system and events, see: Munis D. Faruqui, "The Forgotten Prince: Mirza Hakim and the Formation of the Mughal Empire in India," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 48, 4 (2005): 487-523; Faruqui, *Princes of the Mughal Empire*, especially Chapter 6, "Wars of Succession," 235-273.

⁴⁰ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, II, 58-59, 150-151, 174.

gesture returned to haunt the Nawab, because it soon became evident that his brothers nursed ambitions of establishing their own independent states.⁴¹

The greatest threats were the Nawab's two half-brothers, Muhammad Najib Allah Khan and Muhammad Mahfuz Khan. Soon after the former returned to Karnatak in 1753, he was given an army and ordered by Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan to put down a rebellion in the district of Nellore. But instead of administering the suba as the Nawab's representative, the prince declared his independence after he had captured the fort, claiming it as an inheritance that his father willed to him "without the partnership of anyone."⁴² The Nawab then wrote letters and sent several of his father's servants to negotiate with Najib Allah Khan in an effort to convince his brother to submit to his authority, but in vain. During the Third Carnatic War (1758-1763), Muhammad Najib Allah Khan even allied himself with the French in the hope of winning the throne of Arcot, considering it "the paternal heritage" that he had full right to claim.⁴³ Although he later withdrew from this alliance, he still refused to pledge obedience to the Nawab. Instead, he sent his envoy to the Madras Presidency, offering his submission to the EIC and requesting their protection on condition that it recognized his control over the districts of Nellore and Saraoily [Sarvepalli?]. The EIC, despite having supported Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, cared less for his sovereignty and prestige than it did for recovering the money it had spent in the wars. It confirmed Najib Allah Khan as the ruler of the districts for one year (1759-1760) on condition that he pay the Company a sum of 30,000 pagodas to cover part of Karnatak's debts.⁴⁴

The Nawab's elder half-brother, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, put up a similar show of resistance to him. He returned to Karnatak around the mid-1750s and, on his arrival, informed Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan of his desire to occupy Madurai and Tirunelveli. According to the *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, out of generosity and respect for his elder brother, the Nawab agreed. However, only a few years later, in 1758, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan—together with Pulitevar, a powerful local Poligar, and other petty chieftains in the southern regions—prepared to wage war against the Nawab to gain more autonomy. The elder brother

⁴¹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, II, 151; IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 311.

⁴² Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi Part, II*, 177.

⁴³ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 174-178, 188, 202.

⁴⁴ IOR, P/240/17, MPP, Madras Consultation, 8 May 1759, 114.

also sent servants to the neighboring courts of Mysore and Hyderabad in an attempt to enlist their support.⁴⁵

Fortunately for the Nawab, the relationship between him and his full brother, Abd al-Wahhab Khan, was cordial compared to that with his two half-brothers. Although he had been temporarily absent from Karnatak, Abd al-Wahhab Khan returned there and became Muhammad Ali Khan's staunch ally in his efforts to regain the Karnatak throne. He is praised in the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* as "[the Nawab's] brother dear to him as life," "his boon companion and friend," and "the courageous and strong Bahādur."⁴⁶ He was entrusted with various important tasks by the Nawab. For example, in 1755, while the Nawab was engaged in attempting to subjugate local zamindars, Abd al-Wahhab Khan was briefly made the governor of Arcot district.⁴⁷ As the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* and the EIC's records both note, some of his actions met with the Nawab's disapproval, such as his delay in submitting revenues to the center during troubled times and his attitude towards autonomous rule. Once, like Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, he, too, entered into direct negotiations with the EIC, requesting that it protect him from the Nawab and confirm him as the ruler of Chittoor and Chandagiri. Nevertheless, Abd al-Wahhab Khan never seriously took up arms against the Nawab as did his half-brothers, and the pair were able to resolve their disputes quickly.⁴⁸ It appears that this brother, Abd al-Wahhab Khan, was one of very few royal family members in whom Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan placed his trust. During the Third Carnatic War, for instance, when the Nawab's life was at risk, he ordered Abd al-Wahhab Khan to be the na'ib (here meaning regent) for his eldest son until the latter came of age.⁴⁹ It is likely that having the same mother played a crucial role in the formation of this relationship, and the significance of the maternal link will be discussed further in later sections.

Another royal relative who played a vital role in the Nawab's court was Muhammad Khayr al-Din Khan Bahadur, a brother-in-law of the Nawab. Khayr al-Din Khan was a relative who shared a great-grandfather, Shaykh Muhammad Munawwar, with the Nawab, and was also married to one of the Nawab's full sisters, Choti Begam.⁵⁰ While Abd al-Wahhab Khan was entrusted by the Nawab with taking care of Arcot and the north during the

⁴⁵ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 245, 264; *The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai*, IX: 29, 59-60; Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic*, 8-9.

⁴⁶ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 22, 84, 174.

⁴⁷ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 82, 173.

⁴⁸ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 151; IOR, P/240/9, MPP, Madras Consultation, 20 Aug. 1753, 162; P/D/41, MP, MMSC, 28 Feb. 1759, 21; P/D/43, MP, MMSC, 26 May 1760, 499; Fox, *North Arcot*, 72-73.

⁴⁹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 213.

⁵⁰ See the diagram on relations between the Nawab, and Choti Begam and Khayr al-Din Khan on page 115.

wars with the Nawayats, the French, and Mysoreans, Khayr al-Din Khan was appointed the Nawab's representative to protect Trichinopoly and other southern regions.⁵¹ This suggests the significant level of trust that the Nawab must have had in this cousin. Yet even Khayr al-Din Khan was also capable of turning against the Nawab. For example, the *Tuzak-i Walajahi* suggests that he had once attempted to assassinate the Nawab and, after being arrested, the EIC proposed that he be hanged, according to British law. However, the Nawab pardoned him out of regard for his own sister. This brother-in-law died around 1760, as a source refers to his wife being a widow at the time. Despite his treason, his family did not fall out of favor. Khayr al-Din Khan's sons were raised by the Nawab, married to his daughters, and continued to play significant roles at the court.⁵²

The Subjugation of the Nawab's Brothers

His brothers' rebellious acts—especially when they sought the protection of the EIC—severely jeopardized Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's position as ruler of Karnatak. Shortly before these events in that region, the young Nawab of Bengal, Siraj al-Daula, had been overthrown by a conspiracy between alienated local Bengali factions and the EIC in Calcutta, which resulted in the 1757 Battle of Plassey. The rival factions in the court of the next Nawab, Mir Jafar, were also played off by the EIC to check the Nawab's power.⁵³ As a result of these developments in Bengal, diplomatic contacts between the British and his brothers must have made Muhammad Ali Khan apprehensive about his future. Another cause for concern were the financial problems that arose in the wake of the familial dissent with which the Nawab was faced. When his two half-brothers laid claim to two vital parts of Karnatak—Nellore in the north and Madurai and Tirunelveli in the south—the Nawab was deprived of significant revenue at a time when he most needed the money in order to conclude his wars with the French and repay his enormous debt to the EIC. According to EIC estimates from 1760, Nellore was a district worth at least 350,000 rupees (100,000 pagodas) annually, while the combined revenues of Madurai and Tirunelveli amounted to 700,000 rupees (200,000 pagodas).⁵⁴

⁵¹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 168.

⁵² Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 166-168; Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 59, 61, 184; IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, p. 321; PC, V, Nawab to Governor-General, 10 Sep. 1776, 37-39.

⁵³ Bayly, *Indian Society*, 50; Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead*, 75-82.

⁵⁴ IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 313-314. The transfer from rupees to pagoda here is my estimate, calculating from the exchange rate of Arcot rupees to Star pagodas, which, between 1770-1780, varied from 335 to 374 rupees per 100 pagodas. See: P/240/51, MPP, Madras Consultation, 5 Dec. 1780, 1067.

Throughout the 1750s, the Nawab was confronted with wars against neighboring states and the rebellions of various zamindars. As such, he had little time and few resources to manage his family's affairs effectively. Yet because the Nawab's patience with his troublesome siblings was wearing thin, his financial situation was reaching crisis, and his war with the French was drawing to a close, the subjugation of his half-brothers became his priority in the 1760s. The first significant step that the Nawab took to crush his siblings' rebellion was to sever their relations with the EIC. In 1760, the Nawab declared that he wished to conclude an official treaty with it. The most important aspect of the treaty was that, from that day forward, the management of all the Karnatak districts—except the lands that he had granted to the Company as jagirs (known as the Jagirs)—was to be transferred entirely into his own hands.⁵⁵ The EIC was asked to render all necessary assistance to the Nawab, whenever it was required, to achieve this.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the Nawab specifically requested that the Company not grant protection to any of his brothers, or local subjects, if it was contrary to the interests of his court. The EIC was also required to send official letters to all his brothers and all local zamindars informing them of the Nawab's monopoly of friendship with the British so that “they may not think of oppressing [sic] anywhere else but regard only their obedience to the *circar* [the Nawab's court/government].”⁵⁷ The EIC consented to almost all articles proposed by the Nawab as long as the ruler paid his debts to the Company—which at that time were around 5,000,000 rupees—according to the schedule that he set out in the treaty.⁵⁸ Thus, the very first official treaty between the Nawab of Karnatak and the EIC was signed.

⁵⁵ See the discussion about the EIC's jagir in Chapter Seven (7.3).

⁵⁶ IOR, P/D/43, MP, MMSC, 14 Jun. 1760, 554; P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 316-318, 323-328.

⁵⁷ IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 317-318, 326.

⁵⁸ Fox, *North Arcot*, 74.

Table showing the values of jagirs the Nawab granted to his family members according to his estimation in 1760:

| Grantee | Value (rupees) |
|--|--|
| The mother of the Nawab | 40,000 |
| His sister (Muhammad Khayr al-Din Khan's widow and her children) | 15,000 |
| Abd al-Wahhab Khan (his younger full brother) | 60,000 (from Chittoor and Chandagiri) |
| Muhammad Mahfuz Khan (his elder half-brother)* | 100,000 (from Tirunelveli) |
| Muhammad Najib Allah Khan (his younger half-brother)* | 50,000 (or a country worth the same amount to rent). |
| Umdat al-Umara (his eldest son) | 15,000 |
| Modar al-Mulk (his second son) | 18,000 |
| His third son** | 20,000 |
| His fourth son** | 20,000 |

** For Muhammad Mahfuz Khan and Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, the Nawab promised to grant them the jagirs after the two brothers were defeated and subjected to his rule.*

*** These were the Nawab's future designs for his two young sons.⁵⁹*

The above table formed part of the financial plan that the Nawab presented to his debtor, the EIC, in their treaty negotiations. Most of the jagirs were to be distributed between his four brothers on condition that they submitted to his authority. His elder brother, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, was to be given the biggest jagir, worth 100,000 rupees, while Muhammad Najib Allah Khan and Abd al-Wahhab Khan were to receive around 50,000 rupees each. Nevertheless, the promised lands and sums of money evidently did not match the expectations of his half-brothers. This was because Madurai and Tirunelveli, which, at the time, were under the control of Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, produced as much as 500,000-700,000 rupees, and Nellore, which had, for over half a decade, been under the control of Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, produced around 350,000 rupees per annum. Moreover, the share given to each brother seemed very small compared to the total revenue of Karnatak that

⁵⁹ IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 320-322.

the Nawab would enjoy. This was estimated to be 4,300,000 rupees a year (31 from the Arcot countries, five from Srirangam and Trichinopoly, and seven from Tirunelveli and Madurai).⁶⁰ If the Nawab's plan were indeed successful, his brothers would all be denied access to the wealth necessary to wield political and military influence.

After the Nawab had received official assurance from the EIC to never support his brothers, he demanded the Company's military assistance to subjugate them, claiming that the EIC's consent to the treaty meant that it had to furnish him with the support necessary to consolidate his state. Furthermore, he convinced the British that he could repay his debts only if he were in complete control of all his provinces and the revenue that they generated (as shown in the financial plan highlighted above). At the time, the British had no desire to become involved in the internal politics of Karnatak any further, but regaining their money was a matter of utmost urgency and so the Company dispatched their sepoys to root out all opposition to the Nawab's rule. In July 1760, the elder brother, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, was imprisoned, and Muhammad Najib Allah Khan was defeated a few years later. After defeating the French and putting down a rebellion in Vellore in 1761, the Nawab stormed the Nellore fort and captured his younger sibling—in 1762.⁶¹

The sources report that two half-brothers were set free shortly afterwards and treated with honor by the Nawab; it seems that the aforementioned Mughal custom of forgiveness, with its link to the ruler's greatness, was still in use in this successor state. Muhammad Najib Allah Khan never again raised the banner of revolt, although the elder half-brother, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan, tried several more times to carve out his own state. In 1766, the prince went to Hyderabad with a large army and many weapons and entered the service of the Nizam of the Deccan, who at the time was allied with Hyder Ali Khan of Mysore and planning to wage war against Karnatak (The First Anglo-Mysore War). As part of the alliance, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan fought several battles against his own brother. He was captured in 1768, placed in detention for a number of years, and released again in 1773/1774.⁶² Thereafter, although Muhammad Mahfuz Khan was no longer a regional governor, he continued to be treated with high regard at the court until his death in 1778.⁶³ Muhammad Najib Allah Khan, on the other hand, briefly held the position of taluqdar in

⁶⁰ IOR, P/240/18, MPP, Madras Consultation, 13 Jun. 1760, 322.

⁶¹ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 274-275, 282.

⁶² IOR, Mss Eur. E/379/3, DGP, Sep. 1772, 255-256; E/379/8, Mar. 1774, 29; P/251/56, MP, MMS, 3 Jul. 1760, 410, 412.

⁶³ TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 25 Mar. and 4 Apr. 1774.

Arni, a district of relative insignificance both politically and strategically.⁶⁴ As the chronicles make no further mention of the political contributions of these two half-siblings, it is likely that they thereafter led the lives of pensioners, receiving allowances from jagir lands that were so modest they could not wield any influence. As for the large and strategic provinces—Arcot, Vellore, Nellore, Trichinopoly, Madurai, and Tirunelveli—from the early 1760s the Nawab recovered them from his rivals one by one, and he kept hold of them using a different method from that employed by the Nawabs who had ruled Karnatak in the early eighteenth century. From the mid-1760s, instead of allowing these important provinces and districts to be divided and distributed among the high-ranking royals under the system of appanage, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan assigned them to his most trustworthy servants, those he knew to be both loyal to him and efficient in collecting and paying revenues to his treasury. For these servants, who were not part of the royal family, I will elaborate further in the next two chapters.

However, there were a few exceptions. One royal who continued to be assigned political roles was the Nawab's full brother Abd al-Wahhab Khan, who had proved himself trustworthy. As a reward, he was appointed first to the governorship of Chittoor, and was subsequently made chief administrator of the more important province of Nellore.⁶⁵ The Nawab also occasionally entrusted the administration of some provinces to his children. In the late 1750s, when he was still at war, he appointed his two eldest sons—Ghulam Husain (sometimes called Umdat al-Umara) and Modar al-Mulk (otherwise known as Muhammad Munawwar and Amir al-Umara)—governors of the two most important provinces in Karnatak: the eldest one in Arcot and the second in Trichinopoly. At first glance, it may seem that the Nawab was following the age-old practice of dividing the state among his offspring. However, I would argue that the Nawab made such a decision in order to be able to protect these two provinces from coming under the control of other influential male siblings and relatives. Both his sons were, at the time, minors, and thus possessed no real authority. These districts were, in practice, administered by the Nawab's oldest and most trustworthy servants, who were appointed as deputies for the young princes. Although both sons were regarded as the Nawab's heirs—the elder son as “the young Nawab [of Karnatak],” and the younger son as “the Nawab of Trichinopoly”—both princes, as well as all the Nawab's other sons, were kept permanently at the court in Madras by their father, having a harem upbringing. They

⁶⁴ TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 20 Jun. 1774.

⁶⁵ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 174; IOR, Mss Eur E/379/7, DGP, Dec. 1773, 139; P/240/37, MPP, Madras Consultation, 3 Jun. 1774, 361.

possessed no private warband as Muhammad Ali Khan and his siblings had owned during the reign of the former Nawab, Anwar al-Din. They were only sent to the provinces on temporary missions and, as a result, they had neither the experience nor the opportunity to govern independently.⁶⁶ Another exception here is the case of Abd al-Hadi Khayr al-Din Khan Sam Sam al-Dowlah Bahadur. This prince was the eldest son of Choti Begam—the full sister of the Nawab—and his close relative Muhammad Khayr al-Din Khan, mentioned earlier,⁶⁷ and was also married to the Nawab's daughter, Sultan al-Nisa Begam (aka Burhi Begam).⁶⁸ As his close nephew and son-in-law, Abd al-Hadi Khayr al-Din Khan was, for a period around 1774, entrusted with the governorship of Ramnad and was the revenue contractor of Sivaganga. However, his regional power was short-lived. In 1776, the Nawab removed him from office due to financial irregularities and, after that, no other royal family member was appointed to such a position.⁶⁹ In sum, apart from Abd al-Wahhab Khan Bahadur, from 1776 no member of the royal house was allowed to govern at the regional level and thereby accumulate power locally. In later periods, some of the most prominent royal princes continued to seek British assistance to establish their authority, but all such efforts were in vain as a result of the increasing influence of the Nawab over the EIC. In 1777, in a statement by the Nawab intended to prevent the EIC's Madras Presidency from assisting any of his relatives, he wryly argued:

Beside my brothers & sons there are more than 30 of my relations here [in Karnatak] & if each of these like Khir ul Deen Khan should be misguided by my enemies & run away & like him make such requests, before he will return, in what manner, will my government be supported, & how is it possible that the country of the Carnatic should be sufficient to answer their requests.⁷⁰

In conclusion, the subjugation of his brothers and the conscious distancing of prominent royal members from political resources from the early 1760s reflect Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's efforts to break away from the customary practice of dividing the state and instead to centralize political power into his own hands. This is because, otherwise, the Nawab's male relatives would have been more likely to become independent rulers given that traditional ideas of shared sovereignty legitimated their attempted usurpations. Moreover, appointing

⁶⁶ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi, Part II*, 281; IOR, Mss Eur E/379/4, DGP, Jan. 1773, 119; NA, VOC 3292, Mission to Arcot by Pieter Sluijsken, Sep.-Dec. 1770, 730r.

⁶⁷ See the diagram displaying the relationship between the Nawab and Choti Begam's family on page 115.

⁶⁸ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz, Part II*, 65.

⁶⁹ TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 24 Jul. and 14 Aug. 1774; PC, V, Nawab to Governor-General, 10 Sep. 1776, 37-39.

⁷⁰ IOR, P/251/83, MP, Nawab to Governor of Madras, 8 Feb. 1777 (enclosed in MMSC, 10 Feb. 1777), 242.

bureaucrats presented less complications for the Nawab when the need arose to transfer or remove them from office. This new practice also made both royal family members and court servants more reliant on the Nawab's favor.

Another important point to note here is the role of the EIC in this period. The Nawab's 1760 proposal of an official treaty with the Company was unprecedented, and all the articles proposed to the British reflect the fact that, after more than a decade in which the two parties had assisted one another in preserving their positions in the region, the Nawab began to sense the threat that the Company might pose to his sovereignty. The EIC, while being an indispensable source of military and financial support for the preservation of his rule, could also threaten the Nawab's efforts to control his subjects and consolidate his power. As a result of this dilemma, the Nawab attempted to re-orient his relationship with the British by resorting to the Western practice of concluding a treaty, one obliging the EIC to conform to his desires. The Nawab's main goals were to limit the EIC's influence over Nawabi Karnatak and ensure that full sovereignty lay in his hands. As such, being bound by the treaty of 1760 and the Nawab's debts to the Company meant that the British reluctantly became the Nawab's stooge in fulfilling his schemes for internal consolidation. As a consequence of the Nawab's calculated plan, they assisted him in quashing his brothers' resistance, capturing the Vellore Fort from the Nawayat prince, Murtaza Ali Khan, in 1761 and the Madurai Fort from the EIC's native military leader Muhammad Yusuf Khan in 1763, wresting the Ongole and Palnaud districts from its rajas in 1765, and subduing the Poligars of Madurai and Tirunelveli in 1767.⁷¹ All areas of strategic importance in Karnatak, with the exception of the Maratha state of Tanjore, were in the Nawab's hands by the end of 1760s. I label the EIC "the Nawab's stooge" because although the British also gained a great deal, both financially and politically, from the sale of their military services to this local ally, the EIC's documents reveal that, at least in this decade, it, and especially its Directors in London, were unhappy with being forced into more direct involvement in local politics in order to satisfy the wishes of the Nawab. The Directors strongly reproached the Madras Presidency in 1769, stating: "conquests and plunder are not the objects of our pursuit but that we mean to confine ourselves to the [b]ranches of our commercial interest, and the benefit of such revenues [from the Jagirs] as have been granted to us by Mahomed Ali."⁷² I am not arguing here that the EIC agents should be viewed merely as the merchants that they attempted to

⁷¹ IOR, P/D/45, MP, MMSC, 8 Oct., 15 Oct., 20 Nov., 26 Dec. 1761, no page; P/251/49, MP, MMSC, 1 Aug. 1763, 103; P/251/52, MP, MMSC, 20 May 1765, 456; P/251/58, MP, MMSC, 25 Mar. 1767, 258-259.

⁷² IOR, E/4/864, DM, Court of Directors to Madras, 17 Mar. 1769, 603.

present themselves as being, especially after what had occurred in Bengal following the Battle of Plassey.⁷³ But, evidently, the EIC did not see their military service to the Nawab as profitable enough to sacrifice the revenues from their lucrative trade and from the Jagir lands, both of which would be significantly reduced if war broke out.

The Nawab's Sons

This section will explore the topic of succession in the context of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan's own reign. With regard to putting into practice the customary laws of succession, the Nawab seems to have followed a different path from that of his father. Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan had treated his three wives and their sons equally. Nawab Muhammad Ali and his successors, on the other hand, placed their wives into a hierarchy. Nawab Muhammad Ali's first wife, Khadija Begam, was referred to and regarded as *Khass-Mahall* (chief consort) throughout the Nawab's reign, even though she died as early as 1767. Second in the hierarchy were the Nawab's three other *nikah* (legally-married) wives, none of whom was elevated to replace the queen consort.⁷⁴ The Nawab's mistresses occupied the bottom rung of the hierarchy. The Nawab had 18 sons and 21 daughters from these relationships.⁷⁵ However, the Nawab only considered the five sons born to his chief consort, Khadija Begam (and his grandchildren from these), as first-rank royals who had the birthright to succeed him. Of these five, only the eldest two, Ghulam Husain and Modar al-Mulk, appear to have been in competition to be the heir-apparent.

When his children were still young, his first son, Ghulam Husain (1747-1801), was regarded by both the Nawab and every relevant party in Karnatak as his heir-apparent. The prince was referred to as the "young Nawab" and often appointed by his father to carry out important tasks. He was the nominal ruler of Karnatak during his father's absence, and even represented his father when conducting affairs with the EIC. When the EIC helped the Nawab negotiate with the Mughal court to get the imperial farman that confirmed his independent status in 1765, and to gain similar recognition by the Deccan Nizam in 1768, the Nawab chose to also put the name of Ghulam Husain in both documents so the latter would be confirmed as his successor to the Karnatak throne after his death. With regard to the second prince, the Nawab appointed him the Nawab of Trichinopoly, seemingly expecting him to rule the area as a future tributary to Arcot. While it was widely known that the Nawab's two

⁷³ Marshall, *Bengal: The British Bridgehead*, 78-79.

⁷⁴ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 86-90.

⁷⁵ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 7.

eldest sons were sworn enemies,⁷⁶ no succession dispute arose until the early 1770s, when the Nawab wanted to alter the previous arrangement.

In 1771 and then 1773, the Nawab attempted to conquer Tanjore, the last significant semi-autonomous state in the Karnatak region. His eldest son, Ghulam Husain, was appointed leader of the first attempt, with the support of the EIC. The outcome was disappointing. The Karnatak-EIC force ended the struggle and concluded peace with the raja of Tanjore, against the will of the Nawab. The Nawab then sent a second campaign against Tanjore in 1773, appointing Modar al-Mulk as its leader, and this time Tanjore was conquered. These two events significantly altered the position of the two princes at court. After the first, failed attempt, the eldest son fell from grace and was ordered to leave Madras, to live first in Trichinopoly and later in Arcot. On the other hand, the second son, after his triumph over Tanjore, became his father's favorite and was subsequently seen by contemporaries as the most influential person at court.⁷⁷

After 1771, the Nawab publicly and continuously held his eldest son responsible for many treacherous acts committed during the first Tanjore expedition in order to discourage any show of support for Ghulam Husain at court. According to the Nawab, his eldest son, together with General Joseph Smith—the EIC's Commander-in-Chief in Madras—had received a bribe from Tanjore to stop the attempted conquest.⁷⁸ The Nawab brought his eldest son into further disgrace through charges of misconduct, both at court and in his personal life, the gravest of which was that he had attempted regicide.⁷⁹ Yet another charge, one which seems to have most invited the Nawab's fury, was that he had attempted to clandestinely build good relations with many EIC servants. He supposedly bribed the British and placed the interests of Karnatak in peril by discussing private matters of state with them.⁸⁰ Amidst these conflicts, the Nawab explained to Paterson why he preferred his second son over his eldest: "one [Ghulam Husain] has been consistently seeking after the friendship of Europeans, who have spoiled him with the hopes of the succession, and the other [Modar-al Mulk] has paid his principal attentions to his father."⁸¹ Although there is no real evidence to suggest that many of the charges levied against Ghulam Husain were true, it is certainly correct that he was in correspondence with British officials. As soon as he was exiled from the court,

⁷⁶ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1771, 139.

⁷⁷ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 61-63; E/379/9, DGP, Aug. 1774, 91.

⁷⁸ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/3, DGP, Nov. 1771, 54-55; E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 101-102; E/379/9, Aug. 1773, 59-60.

⁷⁹ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 72-73; E/379/5, DGP, Mar. 1773, 62-65.

⁸⁰ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Jul. 1773, 53; E/379/4, DGP, Jan. 1773, 133.

⁸¹ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Jul. 1773, 54-55.

Ghulam Husain wrote letters to many EIC officers, the British secretaries at the Nawab's court, and the Nawab's private British creditors, begging "his friends" to use their influence and friendship with his father to heal the breach in their relationship. He also planned to send letters to Britain to garner support from his friends there. Interestingly, these British men, believing the accusations to be nefarious attempts by Prince Modar al-Mulk to tarnish the reputation of Ghulam Husain, were sympathetic to the latter's demands and attempted to convince the Nawab to reconcile with his son.⁸² However, this British interference in the Nawab's personal affairs only worsened the situation, as it merely served to increase his support for his younger son.⁸³

In contrast to Ghulam Husain, the second prince, Modar al-Mulk, wasn't particularly liked by the British and received little support from them; he may have irritated them in some way when he was younger. However, it is significant that Modar al-Mulk did not himself dislike the proximity of the British to the Karnatak state. After his eldest brother's fall from grace in 1771, Modar al-Mulk tried hard to improve his relationship with them, and during the second Tanjore campaign he successfully changed the opinions of many EIC officers about him. In their reports and correspondence, these British soldiers recognized his military ability and praised his conduct in the army. They also reported to their friends that Modar al-Mulk had paid them special attention on the battlefield and that he had written positively about them to the Nawab.⁸⁴ He also tried to ingratiate himself with the Governor of Madras. There were reports that he was eager to join an EIC party to have a chance to speak with the Governor in private, and that he had, on one occasion, given the Governor a ring worth 5,000 pagodas as a present.⁸⁵ Modar al-Mulk was, quite clearly, trying to rally the support of those British who had previously backed the succession of Ghulam Husain. Furthermore, according to Paterson, Modar al-Mulk sought to curry favor in Britain, too. When two ministers of the British king visited the Karnatak court in the period 1770 to 1774, Modar al-Mulk paid special attention to these royal representatives, more so than did the Nawab's other sons.⁸⁶

Modar al-Mulk was certainly able to turn the tide of opinion in his favor.⁸⁷ But most EIC officers were still apprehensive about the Nawab's decision to name Modar al-Mulk as his successor. There was virtually a consensus among them that the elder prince, Ghulam

⁸² IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 150; E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 110-112.

⁸³ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 61-63; E/379/9, DGP, Aug. 1774, 91.

⁸⁴ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 86-88, 106.

⁸⁵ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/4, DGP, Jan. 1773, 114, 117, 133.

⁸⁶ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1771, 300, 303.

⁸⁷ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 77, 106, DGP, Oct. 1774, 191.

Husain, was good-natured, frank, sweet, and tender-hearted, while the second, Modar al-Mulk, was capable but cunning, arrogant, and untrustworthy. They also saw him as a highly ambitious and strong-willed individual.⁸⁸ As such, it is imaginable why the British, and especially the EIC, wanted Ghulam Husain to succeed to the Karnatak throne; they must have thought a crafty ruler like Modar al-Mulk would be more difficult to control. And this is likely the key reason why the Nawab, in contrast, wanted Modar al-Mulk to be the future ruler. However, during this period the Nawab also became suspicious about Modar al-Mulk's loyalty because he, too, had begun to negotiate with the British, just as Ghulam Husain had.⁸⁹

And so the tables were soon turned. In 1774, at a time when Modar al-Mulk was almost certain of succeeding his father to the throne, the Nawab pardoned Ghulam Husain, invited him back to the palace, and granted him all the state honors that he had previously been deprived of.⁹⁰ However, by reinstating Ghulam Husain into the royal favor, the issue of succession was now unresolved. The Nawab made the situation even more ambiguous when he declared: "I am by no means pleased with the conduct of any of my three eldest sons, and it is not my intention that either of them should succeed me. But I am not old as yet, I may live 20 or 30 years please God and I may have more children [...]."⁹¹ On another occasion, the Nawab also told Paterson that he was attempting "to bring his sons to themselves, that is, to make them sensible of their dependence on him."⁹²

To sum up, after less than a decade in which the Nawab had tested the system of fixed succession based on primogeniture by publicly presenting his eldest son as his successor, he found this new practice troublesome and so sought to return to the old custom of his forefathers and of the Mughals by which the issue of succession was left relatively open and competitive again. In such a way, his sons could be trained and tested while the Nawab regained the right and ability to decide their futures. By making their prospects uncertain and making them paranoid and fearful, the Nawab expected them to compete with one another to gain his favor and thereby to become more dependent on him.

This practice of competing for the succession has been viewed negatively by many early modern eyewitnesses (e.g. François Bernier and Alexander Dow), colonial historians

⁸⁸ For the British opinion of Ghulam Husain, see: IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/4, DGP, Dec. 1772, 73; IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 84. For their opinion of Modar al-Mulk, see: IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/2, DGP, Aug. 1771, 300; E/379/5, DGP, Jun. 1773, 195, Jul. 1773, 232; E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 92.

⁸⁹ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/4, DGP, Jan. 1773, 114, 117, Feb. 1773, 160.

⁹⁰ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/8, DGP, Mar. 1774, 31-32; TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 67, *Ruznama*, 26 Mar. and 17 Apr. 1774.

⁹¹ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 55.

⁹² IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 139.

(e.g. James Mill and Hugh Murray), and modern scholars (e.g. John Keay and Peter Robb), since it has been seen as promoting factionalism, uncertainty, and chaos, wasting resources, and unnecessarily destabilizing states. Recently, Faruqi has argued against this, suggesting that the open-ended system of succession led to determined efforts by the princes to build robust networks of friends and allies. It afforded the opportunity to forge a fresh political consensus and also led to the integration of new groups of talented people into the polity; in the long run, therefore, the system gave more strength than weakness to the state or empire.⁹³ The specific circumstances of Karnatak seem to give another potential explanation for the advantages of open-ended succession, especially from the standpoint of the ruler who applied it. The evidence suggests that, for immediate practical purposes, the Karnatak Nawab saw it as a tool for maintaining harmony within his family, ensuring his own security, and increasing his own control over the royal family members rather than securing the future strength and stability of the state.

The aims of the EIC regarding the question of succession and Nawab's attempts to counter them are also worth discussing here.⁹⁴ Although the Nawab did not officially declare his heir-apparent, it was generally believed in the 1770s and 1780s that Modar al-Mulk was his father's choice because he was extremely influential at court. Yet most of Madras was apprehensive about the prospect. It was impressed upon the Nawab that the Mughal farman of 1765 and the 1768 treaty with the Deccan, the two main sources of the Nawab's legitimacy, only recognized and endorsed the succession of his eldest son. The EIC also stressed that it themselves would only acknowledge the first prince, who had been confirmed as heir-apparent by those treaties.⁹⁵ As Duindam suggests, the European colonial administrators of the nineteenth century were generally hostile to the system of contested succession as they viewed it as a source of disturbance. As such, they tried to impose and generalize the fixed pattern of father-to-eldest-son succession worldwide while attempting to outlaw other local customs.⁹⁶ Karnatak in the late eighteenth century was one of their earliest attempts, and it allows us to see the response of the local ruler on whom the Europeans had tried to impose their will. Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan, evidently unhappy with the British stance, sought to fight their decision using every possible means.⁹⁷ Over the next half-decade, he sent letters and representatives to Bengal and London, to the Company's Directors, the

⁹³ Faruqi, *The Princes of the Mughal Empire*, 236-238.

⁹⁴ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/7, DGP, Jan. 1774, 190; E/379/8, May 1774, 92.

⁹⁵ IOR, H/286, HOME, Madras to Court of Directors, 15 Feb. 1775, 23-30; Court of Directors to Madras, 25 Nov. 1775, 33-38.

⁹⁶ Duindam, *Dynasties*, 130.

⁹⁷ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/6, DGP, Aug. 1773, 48-49; Mss Eur, E/379/8, DGP, May 1774, 104-106.

Governor-General of India, the British government, and even the British king to secure their promise and assurance that his choice of successor would be honored by the Company. To support his decision, the Nawab claimed that, according to both Muslim law and the customs of southern India, succession was determined by the will of the ruler. He argued that, if the ruler so wished, any of his male relatives could ascend the throne.⁹⁸ On the other hand, his British opponents tried to convince the Company, their government, and their king not to support the Nawab on this matter because it threatened the interests of the British in Karnatak.

The Nawab then devised an innovative solution to the problem. In 1777, he drafted a will and dispatched it to King George III of Great Britain, requesting and obliging him to be the guarantor of it and with clear instructions that it should only be opened and read after his death.⁹⁹ His message to the king read:

Your Majesty will no doubt order all your subjects, who are concerned, to be informed that your Majesty is the keeper and executer of my will and Testament, and that no other person interfere therein, I do not know of any other method, by which I can more fully prove my entire dependence on your Majesty, [...] Your Majesty has firmly established my rights, on the foundation of the treaty of Paris [1763]. [...] I rely that you will add further security to my rights.¹⁰⁰

Two copies of his will were produced, one of which was sent to Warren Hastings, the British Governor-General in Bengal, and the other to the EIC's Directors in London, giving them similar obligations in implementing the Nawab's demands in relation to the succession. It is important to note that, in the 1770s, the EIC, on the one hand, and the British king and government on the other, did not see eye-to-eye regarding affairs in South Asia. And within the EIC itself, there were many rival factions with different interests, and that led by Warren Hastings was particularly powerful. The details of these rivalries and factions in contemporaneous British politics and how they involved the Karnatak court will be further elaborated in Part III. But the point I would like to make here is that the Nawab took advantage of these rivalries, playing one off against the other, in order to achieve his goal.

⁹⁸ IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/3, DGP, Aug. 1772, 251.

⁹⁹ Phillips, "The Development of British Authority in Southern India," 153-155; IOR, Mss Eur, E/379/7, DGP, Jan. 1774, 181; one original copy of the Nawab's will is kept in IOR, BL (see further in footnote 76 of the Introduction chapter); see also IOR, H/286, HOME, Summary of the Succession of the Nabob of the Carnatic, 5-295. The latter archive contains numerous pieces of correspondence between many individuals in the Karnatak court and various European parties (the EIC, the British king, etc.) regarding the succession issue, dated from 1763 to 1784.

¹⁰⁰ IOR, H/286, HOME, Nawab to the King of Britain, 24 Jul. 1777, 142.

In short, with regard to the issue of the succession, the Nawab not only had the ambitions of his two sons to deal with; the fact that the EIC played such a significant role in the affairs of Karnatak also made the question of succession an important matter for the British and warranted their interference. However, after wrestling with the issue for a long time, the Nawab more or less managed to resolve the situation on his own. By not revealing his choice of heir through playing his cards close to his chest, the Nawab managed to keep both princes in line. One of them was appointed to the court council while the other administered the affairs of the state. Although tensions between his two sons continued, no trouble broke out. The EIC always assumed that the Nawab's will had named Modar al-Mulk as his successor (which was indeed the case). However, as it could not prove it, and because their king and the Directors of the Company were honorably obliged to be the guarantors of the Nawab's will, it could not dispute the issue, at least not during the Nawab's reign. However, to the relief of the British, his second son died suddenly from an illness in 1789. Subsequently, the Nawab requested the return of his secret will from the British and acknowledged his first son, Ghulam Husain, as his successor.

3.3 Affiliations

Marriages, especially within royal or elite circles, could be driven by political just as much as—or even more than—private romantic motives. Marriage could be a tool for dynasties to unify political and economic resources, gain political allies, and expand their territory.¹⁰¹ It could also alter the dynastic profile of a royal family. To understand the political considerations behind the marital arrangements of the Walajah family we must first reflect on the Nawab's background and his position at the time.

As briefly noted earlier, the first two wives of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan were from different backgrounds. The first, Bibi Sahiba, was related to her husband on the paternal side and was the granddaughter of a “shaykh” named Abd al-Qadir who hailed from a noble family in Gopamau. One of Anwar al-Din Khan's sisters was also married to a grandson of that shaykh in order to further strengthen relations between the two families. His second wife, Bibi Fakhr al-Nisa Begam Sahiba (the mother of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and Abd al-Wahhab Khan) was, on the other hand, not from northern India. She was the daughter of a “Saiyida” from an Indo-Irani noble family of Hyderabad.¹⁰² Viewing the two marriages of the Nawab's father from a political standpoint, the first was an attempt by the family to maintain

¹⁰¹ Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, 213; Duindam, *Dynasties*, 101-104.

¹⁰² Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 60.

their traditional links with their hometown of Gopamau; such marriages between close relatives or “noble families” in Gopamau and the surrounding areas was a usual practice, and there were plenty of other cases among the Nawab’s extended family. The second marriage, on the other hand, was part of the family’s efforts to forge relations with the elite Muslim communities of the Deccan. It presumably took place in the 1710s, after Anwar al-Din Khan had been involved in the imperial campaigns in that area, which suggests that the Nawab’s father, like many other northern Mughal warriors, entered into the union with the intention of developing his career and establishing his family in South India.

As was customary, both Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and his brother, Abd al-Wahhab Khan, whose mother belonged to the Deccani nobility, were, in their teenage years, also married to girls from distinguished Indo-Irani families of the Deccan. Abd al-Wahhab Khan was married to Saiyida Lar Begam while Muhammad Ali Khan was married to Khadija Begam Safawi al-Musawi.¹⁰³ It has already been noted in a previous section that the latter was related to both the Qutbshahi dynasty of Golconda and the Safavids of Iran on her mother’s side. On her father’s side, she was related to the Nawab’s father, Anwar al-Din Khan. Her paternal grandmother was a member of the Haqqani clan, residents of Sandila (in Uttar Pradesh) whose family claimed to be widely known among the Indian nobility.¹⁰⁴ Her family, like the Nawab’s, was an example of the close marital relations between elite families of northern India and the Deccan.

The nature of the relations that Anwar al-Din Khan and Muhammad Ali Khan sought to foster through such marriages reflects the interests of the Walajahs in establishing their family networks. While they sought to maintain links with their northern hometown, they were also determined to establish relations with the Deccan nobility in order to protect and promote their own political careers. Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan in particular wanted to put down roots among the Indo-Muslim community of the Deccan. Irrespective of whether this was the original intention of the old Nawab or not, it seems that the person who benefited most from this policy was Prince Muhammad Ali Khan. His mother, wife, and younger brother’s consort were all from the Deccan, and this allowed him to enjoy the support and networks of various Indo-Muslim families in that region. In Chapter Four, I will give further illustrations of how these connections were a crucial resource in Muhammad Ali Khan’s bid for the throne.

¹⁰³ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 91.

¹⁰⁴ Nainar, *Tuzak-i Walajahi*, Part II, 6-7; Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 63; Kokan, *Arabic and Persian in Carnatic*, 90.

Regarding his own family, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan had five sons and five daughters from his main queen, Khadija Begam. He married off his two eldest sons, the potential successors to the throne—Ghulam Husain and Modar al-Mulk—to the two eldest daughters of Abd al-Wahhab Khan (the Nawab's full brother) from the latter's queen consort Lar Begam. Muhammad Ali Khan's third son was married to yet another daughter of that family. The Nawab's fourth and fifth sons were married to two daughters of Hamid Ali Khan of Gopamau. His two eldest daughters died at a young age, and the remaining three girls were married to the three eldest sons of Choti Begam (the Nawab's full-sister).¹⁰⁵

Four observations may be made regarding the Nawab's marital arrangements for his ten principal children. First, the Nawab married all of them to the offspring of only three of his closest blood relatives, namely Abd al-Wahhab Khan, Choti Begam (who married Khayr al-Din Khan), and Hamid Ali Khan. The former two were his full siblings, sharing with him the same mother. Again, we can observe here that the maternal link played a crucial role in the formation of alliances in this family. Khayr al-Din Khan, Choti Begam's husband, was also the cousin of the Nawab on his father's side; as mentioned previously, he had proved his allegiance to the Nawab during the difficult times when the latter was fighting for the Karnatak throne. Hamid Ali Khan belonged to one of Gopamau's noble families, and I presume that he was also one of the Nawab's closest relatives. This policy of strengthening his core family through a small circle of his nearest relatives may reflect the fact that the Nawab regarded his extended family as a threat to both him and his children; it was thus hard for him to find many trustworthy relatives or high-ranking officials with whom he could risk sharing political power. On the other hand, it may have been the result of the Nawab's determination to centralize power in his own hands, as a result of which all the other lineages—including his half-brothers and prominent male relatives in his extended family—were deprived of any right to the throne. This situation also reduced the chances of his own children being used against him.

Secondly, at first glance, it may seem that the Nawab's choice of consorts for his children was based exclusively on grounds of security. But if we consider this more carefully, they can also be seen as part of the Nawab's efforts to build family networks in the same manner as did his forefathers, i.e. to create familial bonds with both Gopamau families and Indo-Persian elites in South India. The marriages with the family of Khayr al-Din Khan

¹⁰⁵ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 63-66. In the *Ruznama* of 1774, there is a mention of Saiyid Hamid as one of the Nawab's military commanders; it is very possible that he was this Hamid Ali Khan. See: TA, Catalogue of Persian Records, bundle 68, *Ruznama*, 31 Oct. 1774.

helped maintain the link between the two lineages of his great grandfather, Shaykh Muhammad Munawwar, in Gopamau. By marrying his two youngest sons to the daughters of Hamid Ali Khan, the Nawab was preserving his network(s) with other noble families in his northern hometown. As well as, perhaps, being the result of nostalgic feelings for the family's past, the links with northern Gopamau served the Nawab's rule in South India, and helped it profit; this will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

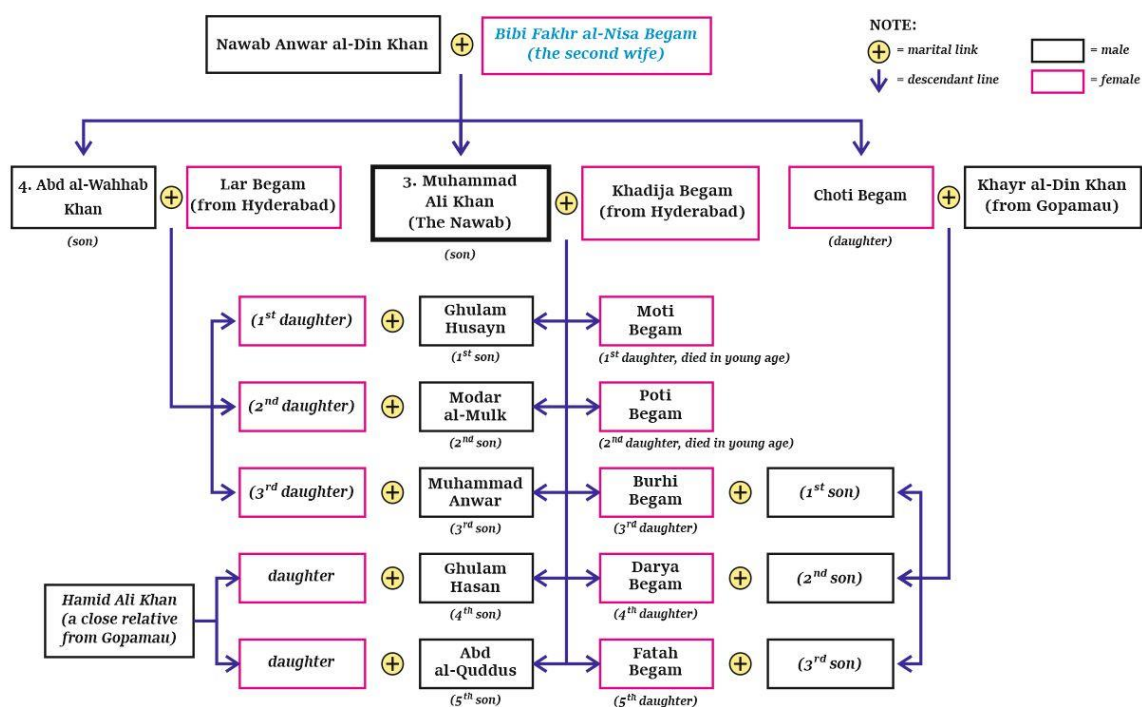


Diagram displaying the marital links between the children of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan and the children of his full brother, Abd al-Wahhab Khan, and of his full-sister, Choti Begam

The third point is the fact that the Nawab married his two eldest sons—those who had the greatest chance of succeeding him as Nawab of Karnatak—to the daughters of Abd al Wahhab Khan and Lar Begam. The simplest explanation for this would be that his full-brother, Abd al-Wahhab Khan, was the royal whom the Nawab trusted the most. However, the profile of the latter’s consort should not be neglected either. Lar Begam was said to have been the daughter of one Mir Adil Khan Sahib. I have been unable to find more information regarding this person, but, considering the honorable prefix and suffix of “Mir” and “Khan Sahib,” he may have been a high-ranking and respectable noble from the region. Lar Begam herself claimed to be a Saiyida, which further underscores her high status. By establishing

relations with such a distinguished family, the Nawab secured support for his sons from another source of power within the Muslim community of the Deccan in addition to that which they possessed from their own maternal Indo-Persian Safawi al-Musawi family. Here, I would like to once again stress the Nawab's efforts to link his family with "Saiyid," "Shaykh," "Mir," and other "foreign elements"—categories of people widely believed to have held the highest status among South Asian Muslims.

The last important point to be made about the marriage arrangements of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan are their links to the Nawayat community. As mentioned in the *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, the three nikah wives of the Nawab who were ranked just below the Khass-Mahall were all Nawayats, the community of the preceding dynasty.¹⁰⁶ Although the family that ruled Karnatak previously had been deprived of its political prestige in the late 1740s, the Nawayat elites were still living in the region and, as will be highlighted in the next two chapters, many of them were, with varying degrees of success, integrated into the Walajah court. The Nawab's marriages to Nawayat women are good evidence of his determination to create harmonious relations with the old regime. However, it should also be noted that it was only the women of the Nawayats that were married into the Walajah house, not the men. This was different from the other marriages involving the Walajahs, where both male and female members of the Nawab's family were married to members of other clans. The offer of a daughter in marriage by one ruler to another was a well-known custom symbolizing submission in pre-modern South Asian states, one which made the former a subordinate ally of the latter.¹⁰⁷ Famous examples include Raja Bihara Mal, the first Rajput, who allowed his daughter to enter Emperor Akbar's harem, and Rai Bhoj, who offered his grand-daughter to Jahangir, both of which were signs of family submission and integration into the Mughal Empire.¹⁰⁸ But no Mughal princesses were married to Rajput princes in return. This is yet another unique characteristic of Mughal rule, as in both the Ottoman and Safavid empires the rulers usually wedded their princesses "downward," to the upper ranks of office-holders.¹⁰⁹ As such, and particularly in the South Asian context, the marriage unions with the Nawayats signalled the submission of the former dynasty to the Walajahs and also gave the Walajahs more rights and prestige in their claims to be the legitimate inheritors of the Karnatak throne.

¹⁰⁶ Nainar, *Sawanihat-i Mumtaz*, Part II, 86.

¹⁰⁷ Douglas E. Streusand, "The Process of Expansion," in *Warfare and Weaponry in South Asia, 1000-1800*, ed. Jos J.L. Gommans and Dirk H.A. Kolff (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003), 357.

¹⁰⁸ *Maathir al-Umara*, I: 409-410; Duindam, *Dynasties*, 114. According to Duindam, Akbar's harem included as many as eleven women given in marriage by Rajput princes to underpin their alliance.

¹⁰⁹ Duindam, *Dynasties*, 101-105.