

**“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 (r.1749-1795)**



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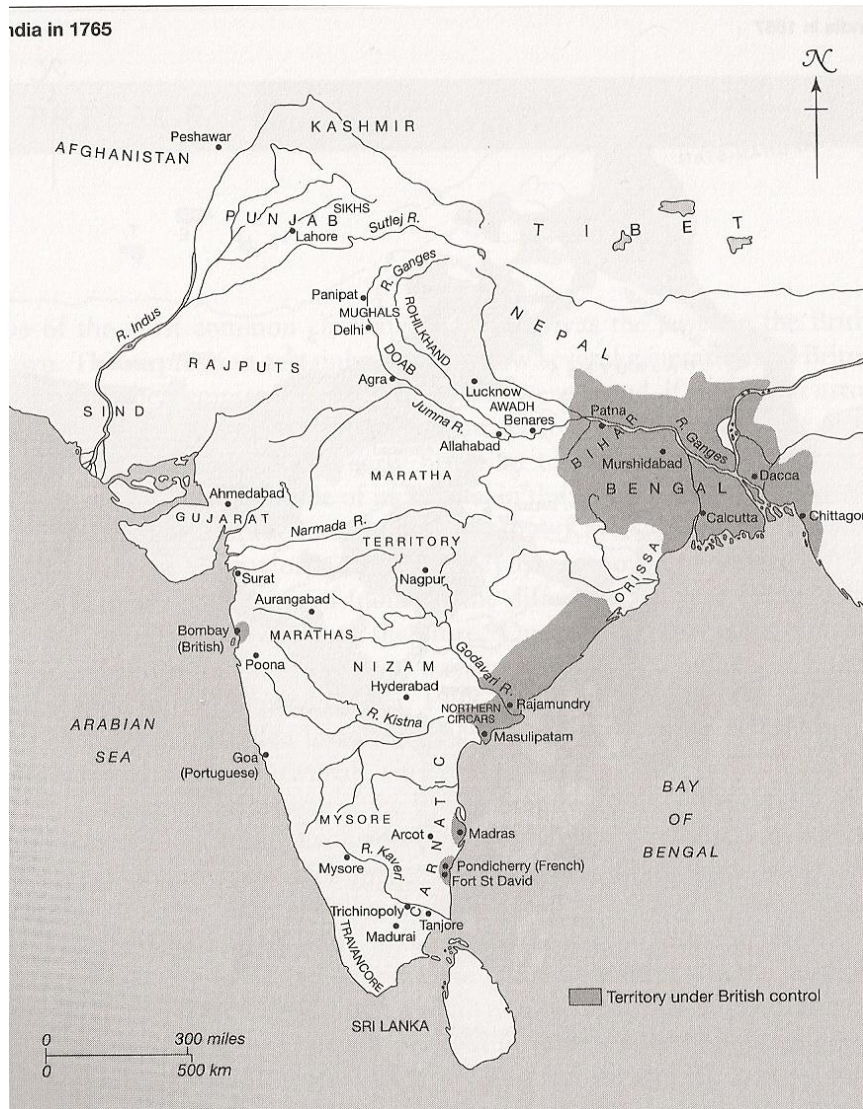
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## Introduction:

### Historiographical Review, Methodology, and Historical Sources



India in 1765<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Douglas M. Peers. *India under Colonial Rule 1700-1885* (Harlow : Pearson Longman, 2006), p. ix.

\*The picture on the cover of this thesis is George Willison's 1777 portrait of Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan Wallajah from: <http://www.internetstones.com/arcot-diamonds-famous-jewelry.html>

The kingdom of Arcot, also known as the kingdom of Carnatic, was the monarchy that ruled over the majority of the eastern part of the present day Tamil Nadu region throughout the eighteenth century. The kingdom was named after its capital, the city of Arcot, which is situated at the southern bank of the Palar River in the northeast of Tamil Nadu. Its position is very close to the famous city of Madras, the British presidency on the Coromandel Coast. The kingdom was ruled by two dynastic lines of Nawabs, the Nawayat (1710 - 1744) and the Wallajah (1744 - 1855).

Among the eighteenth-century South Indian power holders, the Nawabs of Arcot appeared to be one of the strongest, competing mainly with the rulers of Tanjore, Madurai, Mysore and some external power holders as the Marathas and the Nizams of Hyderabad. However, since the middle of the eighteenth century, the second Wallajah's Nawab Muhammad Ali successfully became the overlord of the whole Carnatic region with the support of its powerful ally, the English East India Company. During his reign the power of Arcot were expanding deeply into the Tamil heartland. By the 1770s, the Arcot-Carnatic, as a sovereign entity, consisted of the present day districts of Tinnevelley, Ramnad, Madurai, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, South Arcot, Chegleput and North Arcot in Tamil Nadu, and Chittoor and Nellore in Andhara Desa.<sup>2</sup>

Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah was born in 1717 and became the second Wallajah Nawab of Arcot from 1749 until his death in 1795. In my opinion, the political status and position of this Nawab was particularly interesting in many aspects. In the Islamic Mughal imperial world, the Carnatic was, though nominally, one of the Mughal provinces. The Nawab was thus the subordinate ruler who had to show loyalty to the Emperor at Delhi and the Deccan Nizam of Hyderabad in the rank of the subadar (*ṣūbadār*: the provincial governor) of Arcot. In the Tamil world, in the southernmost region that was least influenced by the central power of Mughal and Muslim rule in India, he was an overlord and competitor to many Hindu Nayaka-Poligar Rajas and millions of Hindu people with a rather pure Indic culture.

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<sup>2</sup> K. Rajayyan, *Administration and society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801* (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1966), p. 1-2; Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King: Muslims and Christian in South Indian Society 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.152.

In addition, Muhammad Ali's power not only advanced in the frontier zone between the Mughal/Islamic world<sup>3</sup> and the Tamil/Indic world, he also rose to the throne when the Carnatic and European world began to intertwine in the fifty years before the start of the British colonial era. Therefore the Nawab of Arcot, whose ambition was to expand his political power all along the Coromandel Coast of the Tamil region, also had to deal with many European nations who had established their trading factories along the Coast since the seventeenth century—the Dutch in Negapatnam, the French in Pondicherry, and for Arcot the most important nation, the English in Madras. The two latter groups of Europeans started to exercise more and more military power in South Asia in the eighteenth century, and increasingly interfered with the region's internal politics. It is interesting to see how the Nawab, as a local power, managed to deal with the changing circumstance in the region due to these formidable powers from the shore.

### **Problems in Historiography on the Carnatic**

Despite its seemingly interesting and important political power in the eighteenth century, the history of Arcot is akin to a black hole in Indian history. As a part of the Mughal/Islamic world, it has been ignored by previous Indian Mughal/Muslim specialists. As one of the biggest powers in the Tamil world, it is surprisingly neglected. In a study on the political development in the southern Tamil Maravar country (Sivagangai and Ramnad kingdoms), Pamela G. Price observes the two kingdoms from the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire in the late sixteenth-century to the rise of the British Colonial Empire in the mid-eighteenth century, yet she does not at all mention the power of the Muslim Nawabs of Arcot who claimed themselves to be the overlords in those two kingdoms as well.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> By using the word 'Islamicate' instead of 'Islamic' I would like to place emphasis on the fact that the regions, societies and people in the 'Islamicate world' I am referring to, (like the Mughal Empire) were heavily influenced by Islamic culture in terms of art, language, architecture, technology etc., but this influence was not necessarily intrinsically related to the Islamic faith. The term seems to be used for the first time in the 1970s by Marshall Hodgson. He reserves the adjective 'Islamic' to mean " 'of or pertaining to Islam' in the proper, the religious, sense;" then coins the term 'Islamicate' to refer more broadly to "the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims". The term 'Islamicate' now become popular and is widely used by scholars nowadays.

<sup>4</sup> Pamela G. Price. *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) , pp. 6, 11, 39.

In most previous studies, Arcot has only been mentioned as an object of chaotic power struggles among the many local rulers in an eighteenth-century fast declining South India, as an object of European rivalry, or as the main bridge to British colonization.<sup>5</sup>

In one of his classical works on India and the Carnatic in particular in 1976, *Rival Empires of trade in the orient: 1600-1800*, Holden Furber mentions that while the eastern seas of South India were free from tension among European powers during the first three decades of the eighteenth century, ‘the 1740s was the open of a duel for empire between the English and French culminating in the firm establishment of British power at the close of the century.’ Each of the European companies competing one another assumed political control over territories by various tactics, such as intervening in local dynastic succession struggles and infiltrating themselves in indigenous institutions.<sup>6</sup> In this work, the history of Arcot in the first half of the century is totally ignored. The succession war between the two dynasties, Nawayat - Wallajah in 1749-1752 was merely presented as ‘the Second Carnatic War’: the war between the English East India Company and the French East India Company. The successful control of Arcot and the ascension of Muhammad Ali Wallajah to the throne as the Nawab of the Carnatic were merely presented as the background of the heroic rise of one of the key figures in the foundation of the British India Empire, Colonel Robert Clive.<sup>7</sup> The political developments in the region under the reign of Muhammad Ali are purely presented from a Eurocentric point of view. Furber sees these developments as part of establishing British power in South India at the expense of the French Company and the Nawab of Arcot, whose debts with the British Company and its servants were growing.<sup>8</sup>

The primary aim of Furber, however, is to present the history of the competition between the European powers in India and the development of the British Empire. It was not his intention to focus on the history of the local people. So one should not blame him for placing the local ruler of the Carnatic in the shadow of the Europeans. Yet, it seems that two of the very few

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<sup>5</sup> Some examples are Holden Furber. *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800: Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1976); Sinnappah Arasaratnam. *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986); Catherine Ella Blanshard Asher, and Cynthia Talbot. *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Hermann Kulke and Dietmar Rothermund. *A history of India*. (London and New York: Routledge, 2010 [first addition 1986])

<sup>6</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, pp.125, 146-147.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.154-155.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.173 -175.

monographic studies on the history of Arcot, which provide an abundance of details on Arcot than any other work, also do not give us a different perspective. The first book I am referring to is *Administration and Society in the Carnatic* (1966) by K. Rajayyan, which aims present general information on administrative institutions, social structure and some cultural aspects of the Carnatic under the Nawabs of Arcot. The second study is *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs* (1984) by N.S. Ramaswami, a detailed monograph on the political and military developments under the Nawabs of Carnatic and the alliances between the kingdom of Arcot and its Hindu or Muslim neighbors and the European powers.

In Rajayyan's introduction, the Nawayat period is briefly described as the period in which the Nawabs struggled to establish their autonomous power and fought for state formation in their kingdom, under the umbrella of a declining Mughal Empire. The dynasty ended abruptly with the internal succession wars and the usurpation of the new dynastic line, the Wallajah. However, the beginning of the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah is simply depicted as the period of the British ascendancy. According to him, the political and historical developments in the second half of the eighteenth century were mainly driven by the British actors who systematically planned to undermine the power of their ally, Nawab Muhammad Ali, and conquer the region. As Rajayyan says:

‘Entering into an alliance with Mohammad Ali during the Wallajah-Navaiyat struggle, the Company exploited the situations, created by a quick procession of conflict, for a three-fold purpose, - to gain material compensation from the nawab, to advance political interest and to liquidate the influence of their enemies. ... The subsequent wars against the French, the Nizam, Hyder Ali and the poligars, fought apparently for the protection of nawab's interests but really for the advancement of the British, liquidate his debt, shot up Mohammad Ali's financial obligations. The English accumulated for themselves all territorial and political gains, wrested from the hostile powers with the nawab's military as well as financial support.’<sup>9</sup>

Ramaswami, in his work, only mentions the wars between the Nawayat Nawabs of Arcot and other indigenous lords who were struggling to expand their power over the South Indian territories in the first half of the eighteenth century. Also his work turned out to be more a history of European expansion, than a history of the Nawabs of the Carnatic. Yet Ramaswami, more

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<sup>9</sup> Rajayyan, *Administration and society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801*. pp.11 -12.

than any other scholar, does place the role of Nawab Muhammad Ali in a historical setting. He interestingly points out that Muhammad Ali was a ruler with high diplomatic and state craft skills. He was not a totally passive ruler and attempted to fight the English inch by inch.<sup>10</sup> However, when dealing with the period in which the Nawab began his reign, he attributes more importance to the Europeans, at the expense of the Nawab. The history of his reign is told through the lens of the Madras council and its officers, not from the local ruler's point of view. Muhammad Ali became increasingly dependent on the British, both financially and military.<sup>11</sup>

According to Ramaswami, the Nawab was only able to delay British plans of taking his power away, when mistakes were made by the British, such as the corruption of the servants and the ignorance of British governments.<sup>12</sup> His skills and various ingenious tactics against the English presenting in the work are thus viewed as trivial and fruitless rebellious acts of the local ruler towards the irresistible power of the British Company. As Ramaswami says:

‘[since around 1750s]...the two foreign companies could feel free to try to dispose of the highest officers in the Carnatic and in the Deccan as suited their interests. Dupleix [French East India Governor] even thought that he could make himself Nawab. As for the British protégé [meaning the Nawab], he was, with every day and with every battle they fought for him, *becoming their creature*.’<sup>13</sup> [Stressing by me]

‘The decline was inevitable. In a murderous century like the eighteenth in India the big stick always triumphed. The British wielded it with vigor. Once they had disposed of the French, they had little cause to fear. The rampant corruption among the employees of the Company only delayed and complicated their assumption of power.’<sup>14</sup> ; ‘The Nawabs of the Carnatic played a large, if unwitting, part in the development of British power in south India in the eighteenth century.’<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> N.S. Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 327-329.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.327.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. vii.



### The ‘traditional’ viewpoints on eighteenth-century India

The view on the history of Arcot and its rulers as illustrated above is mainly influenced by the trend of the whole South Asian historiography in the earlier period. Before the late 1970s, or even mid-1980s, most scholars, among them even nationalist historians, viewed eighteenth-century South Asia as anything but decadence and stagnancy, and titled the period the so-called ‘Dark Ages’.<sup>16</sup> It was represented as a period of political anarchy and serious and widespread economic disruption, between the collapse of the Mughal, and the establishment of Pax Britannica.<sup>17</sup> This traditional viewpoint was constructed by imperialist scholars and later supporters who attempted to explain and justify the establishment of the British imperial empire as the only way to curb all anarchies throughout the Indian subcontinent.<sup>18</sup>

After the Mughal expansion in the 1680s the future of South India was depicted as gloomy. However, in the relatively nuanced picture offered by the late S. Arasaratnam, the decline started only as late as 1740. No matter in which year the decline had begun, readers are still left with a view of eighteenth century South India which considers ‘the breakdown of hinterland administration, the consequent disruption of communication between port and hinterland, and the impoverishment of merchant groups.’<sup>19</sup> The path was thus cleared for the English East India Company, which, in order to protect its commercial interests, increasingly interfered with local affairs. The Indian rulers followed similar practices: a steady income or a large loan was worth the bothersome responsibility for bits and pieces of peripheral territory. Little by little, the power of local rulers became increasingly hollow while the British power expanded dramatically. Other European players just like the Portuguese, Dutch, and French eventually were no match for the good fortune and tactics of the British.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Nicolas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 54; Seema Alavi, *The Eighteenth Century in India*. (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp.37-38.

<sup>17</sup> Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions: Making Politics in Early Modern South India* (Delhi/Ann Arbor: Oxford University Press/University of Michigan Press, 2001), p.8.

<sup>18</sup> Burton Stein, *A History of India* (Oxford University Press, 2001 [first addition 1998]) p. 196; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*. p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*, p. 14; Arasaratnam, *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740*, pp. 168, 354-355.

<sup>20</sup> Kate Brittlebank, *Tall tales and true: India, historiography and British imperial imaginings* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2008), p.1; Stein, *A History of India*, p. 201.

### **The history of Arcot in a ‘traditional’ framework**

The first dynasty of Arcot started in the very beginning of the eighteenth century with a number of struggles against rulers who sought to establish independent states after the fall Vijayanagara in the south and Mughal in the north. Thus, it serves very well as a background scene for declining South India. In the mid-century, Muhammad Ali Wallajah rose to the throne with the aid of the English Company, which helped defeat a Nawayat prince who was backed by the French Company. It is also well known that his power was quite precarious, and throughout his reign he relied a lot on the English armies and loans from the British in his local affairs. Later, he built up massive debts with the Company and many British individuals, and many times he was forced to handover revenue collected from his territories to the Company to pay off the debts. In 1801, during the reign of his grandson who had succeeded him after he died, the whole Carnatic was annexed by the English and put under direct British administration. The developments in Muhammad Ali’s reign from 1749 – 1795 therefore could fit very well in the picture of the British’s vigorous rise to power in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The history of Arcot was used by the nineteenth century British colonial government to construct an imperial narrative. For many years it served as an authority for readers of British imperial history. At the same time, the grand narrative had provided a convenient plot for the construction of the history of Arcot. Thus for a long period of time, the history of the Carnatic was frozen in this Eurocentric framework. Within this framework, Arcot was moving towards chaos and decline. Muhammad Ali was only a ‘hollow crown’ and any prosperity during his reign, only happened because he was in the shadow of the British. As time went by, the British Company which systematically planned to conquer the Carnatic, grew stronger and stronger, whereas the Nawab grew weaker and weaker until his death. The events related to the establishment of British’s power became the most important part of the history of the Carnatic, while India or the Indians only played a role in the background.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*. p. vii ; Brittlebank, *Tall tales and true*, p.1-2; Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*, p. 9.

### The 'revisionist' viewpoints on eighteenth-century India

The revisionist viewpoints on eighteenth-century Indian history gradually emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Against the traditional assumption of a whole declining South Asia, some scholars found out that various Indian regions seemed to move towards regional consolidation after the death of the Emperor Aurangzeb. The political economic systems were more stable and in order than previously assumed, and some areas could even be considered prosperous until very late in the eighteenth century. The development was henceforth hardly conformed to the rhythms of central Mughal politics and economy.<sup>22</sup>

The work of Muzaffar Alam (1986) on the eighteenth-century Awadh and Punjab subas (ṣūba: province) of the late Mughal Empire is one of the most pioneering studies that highlight the regional-level changes. It inspires a methodological shift from the monolithic/macro-perspective towards micro-trajectories in Indian historiography, resulting in the boom of studies on various specific regional polities in the period. Awadh, Bengal, and Hyderabad were intensively studied as the so-called Mughal successor states; Mughal provincial officials directed these states to autonomy. Sikhs, Marathas, and Satnamis were researched as anti-Mughal; the latter powers were established by 'rebel' peasant leaders who went against the Mughal rule. Explanations are also offered for the emergence of the Rohinkhand and Farrukhabad Nawabis, as well as for the crystallization of the south Indian polities of Tipu Sultan and those on the south-west coast of Malabar. The evidence from most of these regions indicates economic realignments that ensured the dissociation of the regions from imperial control. These studies thus considerably alter the notion of the eighteenth century as a 'Dark Age'.<sup>23</sup> One late revisionist, Burton Stein even says that the economic growth and political development was more characteristic of the post-Mughal eighteenth century than the decline.<sup>24</sup>

Another interesting development in South Indian historiography in this period was the revival of studies on the Tamil world during the post-Vijayanagara period. After the fall of the Vijayanagara Empire in 1565, the most southern part of India was disintegrated into thousands of big and small autonomous polities ruled by local Hindu lords, collectively known as the Nayaka-Poligar states. Many of these polities played important roles in both local and interregional

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<sup>22</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral Visions*, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> Alavi, *The Eighteenth Century in India*, p. 9-11.

<sup>24</sup> Stein, *A History of India*, p. 197

politics. Yet, while some parts of India under the sway of the Mughal Empire or Deccan sultanates have received attention from previous early-modern historians, most parts of the far-flung Tamil world in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, before the rise of the British Empire, have been neglected. However, with the new trends in regional studies, various revisionist scholars started to pay more attention on this Tamil world as well. Many prominent Nayaka-Poligar states became the subjects of studies in various aspects and perspectives. Some points of focus are its own political-economic nature; as the successors of the Vijayanagara Empire and Hindu culture; the influence of Mughal and Islamic power on them; or its relations with European powers.<sup>25</sup>

Besides the shift from a macro-perspective towards micro-trajectories, the historical approaches of revisionists also significantly changed. Rejecting the Eurocentric viewpoint, these scholars try to approach the local history in its own context, bringing the indigenous people to the center of the story or seeing the history through the lens of the Indians. According to these scholars, this new approach can reveal the history of many parts and figures of South Asia in a whole different light. A strikingly different view of Indian society began to take shape; one which emphasizes its resilience, its capacity to innovate, and the transformations that were already under way prior to the consolidation of British rule. Evidence was collected to show that the British were not acting alone, and that in fact the history of British India was a history of complex interactions.<sup>26</sup> In the meantime, their studies reflect how the Eurocentric point of view in the past could distort history and prevent us from seeing many interesting dynamics and aspects which are significant to our understanding of the past. The works of these revisionists have gradually rescued the study of South India in this period from the narrow gaze characteristic to previous studies that merely focused on the two imperial structures in this region (The English and the Mughal Empire). These new studies open the way to examine the eighteenth century politics on its own terms.<sup>27</sup> The following revisionist works are good examples.

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<sup>25</sup> Some examples of these works are *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian kingdom* (Poligar kingdom of Padukkottai) by Nicholas B. Dirks' in 1987; *symbols of Substance* the study on the nature of Nayaka courts by Velcheru Rao, David Shulman and Sanjay Subrahmanyam in 1992; and Markus P.M. Vink. Unpublished dissertation, University of Minnesota in 1998, titled "Encounters on the Opposite Coast: Cross-Cultural Contacts between the Dutch East India Company and the Nayaka State of Madurai"

<sup>26</sup> Peers, *India under Colonial Rule 1700-1885*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>27</sup> Alavi, *The Eighteenth Century in India*, p. 37-39.

Nicholas B. Dirks's *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian kingdom* in 1987 is a research on the South Indian little kingdoms and kings ('Poligars'). According to him, the situation of these Poligar states are quite similar to the case of Arcot; in spite of the obvious importance of the Poligars, (they represent the last and most vigorous survival of older social and political forms and because of their importance in the study of early British colonialism) they have been neglected by most historians. The history of these little kings in previous works are substantially based on the writings of colonial administrators, in which the Indian states were deconstructed and the nature of Indian society misconstrued. The little kings were rebels at worst and landlords at best.<sup>28</sup>

As Dirks mentions, 'By freezing the wolf in sheep's clothing, it changed things fundamentally.'<sup>29</sup> Using the small southern Indian kingdom of Padukkottai as his case study, thereby approaching history from the indigenous perspective and in the context of the Indian society, Dirks mainly argues that the growing position of the Poligars was neither a symptom nor a cause of decadence. Their localistic, collegial, and redistributive polities continued to constitute an important part of the old regime right up until the end of the eighteenth century. They were finally defeated only by the extraordinary efforts and resources of British conquest. Until the emergence of British colonial rule in southern India, the crown was not hollow as it has generally been made out to be. Kings were not inferior to Brahmans. The political domain was not encompassed by a religious domain as some works of nineteenth century British colonial government had depicted.<sup>30</sup>

In her work *Tall tales and true: India, historiography and British imperial imaginings* (2008), Kate Brittlebank reexamines the history of Tipu Sultan of Mysore (r 1782-1799). She observes that the previous studies have used the famous historical source on Tipu Sultan—the Sultan's dreams—from a Eurocentric point of view. Thus the dreams of Tipu Sultan were interpreted in such a way that they were only related to the containment and defeat of his enemies (the English and their local allies). But by approaching his dreams from a local context, i.e. using the sultan's own point of view, his history is told from a different angle. During his reign Tipu's main focus was his kingdom and power. His concerns were of course aimed at the

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<sup>28</sup> Dirks, *The Hollow Crown*. p. 8, 9, 28.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 54.

defeat of his enemies. However, issues such as these only formed one aspect of his life. Equally (if not more) essential for Tipu ‘in a world where kingship was conditional and thus subject to challenge’, was the legitimacy of his rule among both Muslim and Hindu populations.<sup>31</sup>

### **The revisionist viewpoint on the history of Arcot**

There are a few works on the revisionists’ point of view, which directly relate to the history of Arcot. In a work by Catherine Manning (1996), the historian of French trade in the Indian Ocean, the period of the first dynasty of Arcot is re-examined. She points out that the politics and economics of Arcot around the 1710s-1730s did not seem to be in a state of decline, thereby going against Arasaratnam’s argument on the declining Coromandel Coast and its hinterland. The Nawab Saadatullah Khan (r.1710-1732) was portrayed as a ruler who efficiently centralized and organized his administration’, controlled all the key strategic nodes in his domain, and campaigned energetically to raise resources so that he could ‘maintain his army and bureaucracy and pay the necessary tribute to Hyderabad’.<sup>32</sup> In 2001, Subrahmanyam devoted one chapter in his work to the profound study of political and economic situations in early eighteenth century Arcot, and he also agrees with the conclusion drawn by Manning; Arcot was an expanding state and not in decline.<sup>33</sup>

The works of Manning and Subrahmanyam shed new light on the history of Arcot in the first half of the eighteenth century. However, in Subrahmanyam’s point of view, the early 1740s mark a turning point; the political climate in the region was completely transformed with the ascension of the Wallajah dynasty under English patronage. He writes: ‘it is now the balance between the nizamat and European (English and French) political power turns unfavorable to the former, eventually leading to the widespread fiscal crisis that gripped states in Tamilnadu in the latter half of the eighteenth century.’<sup>34</sup> Thus, the two works just shortened the period of decline. But they by no means removed the picture of Arcot as a declining state which only mattered with regard to the expansion of English power in the second half of the century. On the contrary, these

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<sup>31</sup> Brittlebank, *Tall tales and true*, p.40.

<sup>32</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, p. 141.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96,133.

works only helped strengthen this picture. The history of Arcot during the second dynasty is still approached from the persisting traditional point of view.

*Saints, Goddesses, and kings: Muslims and Christians in South Indian society 1700-1900*, written in 1989 by Susan Bayly, is another research related to Arcot's history which should be mentioned here. Different from the aforementioned works, Bayly does not aim to present the history of Arcot or its Nawabs, but to study the development of Islam in the Tamil country. She focuses on questions, like what type of Muslim society emerged in the region and why Islam did not become fully established as a majority religion in the south. She thus views the kingdom of Arcot as the first permanent Muslim-ruled state and its Nawabs as the first Muslim rulers in the Hindu Tamilnad region.<sup>35</sup>

Although this work is mainly a study on the Tamil's religions, in my opinion it can be seen as the most interesting work on the history of Arcot, especially the political aspects, seen from a revisionist point of view. It is the first time that the history of Arcot and its rulers is viewed and presented in its local context. It reveals a lot of new aspects of the indigenous people and the political and social situations we have not yet seen before: how the Nawabs as the new power holders from the north attempted to establish their power in the south; how the Nawabs as Muslim rulers attempted to build their legitimacy among the indigenous Muslim and Hindu population.

There is also an article written by J.D. Gurney, titled '*Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot*'. Since the 1970s, there are revisionists who attempt to let 'Indians speak'. In their works they describe how these indigenous rulers thought, what they looked like, how their private lives were, their hopes and fears, and their joys and sorrows.

Following this trend, Gurney picked Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah as his object of research, consulted various European and Persian sources, and tried reflecting the image of this Nawab as clear as possible: his physical description, his palace, his character and personality, his fears, his demands, his feelings, his inner life, his policies etc. Though very interesting, his article is rather small and preliminary.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 151.

<sup>36</sup> J.D. Gurney. 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot' in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century*

As reflected from the works of Bayly and Gudney, the political developments in Arcot, especially during the reign of Muhammad Ali were full of changes and dynamics. This is more than other scholar has ever expected. The establishment of British rule was just one aspect of the Nawab's actions towards his people and his kingdom. The Nawab's reign did not necessary revolve around the setting up of British rule.

### **Research questions and approaches**

As mentioned in the beginning, the political development of Arcot during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah arouses my curiosity, especially when considering his political status while standing between three different worlds. Furthermore, after a preliminary survey of the literatures mentioned above, as well as some other primary sources, I see many good reasons to question whether in reality the complexity of Arcot's political developments far exceeded the outcome of previous studies on the subject. Many English documents show that the Nawab was not the passive victim of the Company. On the contrary, the English, both as a collective group and as individuals, actually had been ruthlessly exploited by him. Some Dutch VOC documents demonstrate how since the 1770s this Nawab had been claimed himself to be the great overlord of vast territories of the Tamil region, reaching as far as the most southern tip of the subcontinent, and even the kingdom of Candy in Ceylon. He had also thwarted the Dutch Company's interests along the Pearl Fishery Coast at Tuticorin. One may interpret this as merely a bold attempt to hide his real weakness. However, if he had not had any political or economic power, he would not have caused the Dutch so many problems when they dealt with him. Moreover, as some English sources point out, the British individuals who were doing business with the Nawab even in the mid-1770s, did not seem to consider him as a bankrupted monarch, but as their golden goose.

Inspired by the historical methods of many revisionists and the information from the primary sources, this research proposes to reconstruct the political history of Arcot in the second half of the eighteenth century by approaching it through the eyes of Nawab Muhammad Ali, and



by exploring with the help of two main non-Eurocentric contexts: ‘the Islamicate cosmopolis’ and ‘the Indic cosmopolis’.<sup>37</sup> The central questions asked in this thesis are: how did Nawab Muhammad Ali see and manage to deal with the difficult situations in the Carnatic and India as a whole in his time? Did he struggle actively or passively with the changing circumstances of the eighteenth century? What were the political ambitions or goals of this ruler? How did he build up his political legitimacy among the groups of people dealing with him? What were the sources of that legitimacy? How did he integrate European power, on which he heavily relied on, into these two indigenous worlds? How would he like the history of himself and his kingdom to be represented?

The research is divided into three main parts. In chapter one, attention will be given to the historical background of the kingdom and its rulers. I will focus on the main events during Nawab Muhammad Ali’s reign, and the key figures in his life. In chapter two, I will explore the Nawab’s life in relation to his Islamicate cosmopolis. As a ‘Mughal official’, as a Muslim ruler, and as the usurper who seized power from the older Islamic dynastic line, it will be interesting to see how this ruler managed to deal with his Muslim audience. I am using the word ‘audience’ to refer to all the people in the wide Muslim world the Nawab was dealing with. In his mind those people were the audience of his messages, which he conveyed through his court chronicle. This chronicle was written in Persian language and he expected that he not only could communicate

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<sup>37</sup> The term ‘cosmopolis’ I am using here refers to a trans-regional far-flung realm which encompasses people from different countries or ethnicities with various local cultures, languages etc.. However they share one main central component, which connects these people to a singular ‘world’, at least in a specific period of time. The concept of cosmopolis in this sense has been introduced by Sheldon Pollock in 1996 with his work on ‘Sanskrit cosmopolis’ – a world of transcultural contacts that stretched from northwest India to mainland and insular Southeast Asia from 300-1500 which had the Sanskrit language as the central component connecting them together.<sup>37</sup> Inspired by Pollock, many scholars have also elaborated on other cosmopoleis, such as the Arabic cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia by Ronit Ricci, in which Arabic linguistics and literary components held a central position. It encompassed many Muslim speakers of other vernacular languages like Malay, Tamil, and Javanese. Another one is the Buddhist cosmopolis studied by Anne Monius, which centered around the Buddhism. See Ronit Ricci. *Islam translated : literature, conversion, and the Arabic cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp.15, 245, 267-268.

The term ‘Islamic cosmopolis’ I am using here thus refers to an imagined far-flung realm which shared one main central component , i.e. the Islamicate culture. The ‘Indic cosmopolis’ had Indic culture as its central component. Yet, one should not ignore that they were by no means pure Islamicate or pure Indic; they indeed encompassed people from different countries, multi ethnics with various local cultures and languages. To use the word ‘cosmopolis’ instead of ‘world’ here is to emphasize that one should not forget the inseparable multi-cultural aspects of these early modern realms.

via this medium with his subjects in the Carnatic or Islamicate people in the Mughal Empire, but to all the Persian literati in the wider Islamicate lands as far as Persia and Arabia. Chapter three will focus on the relation between the Nawab and the Indic cosmopolis, especially in the Carnatic region in the south. As a relatively newcomer in the South, and as a Muslim sultan among Hindu kings, I will try to reveal how this Nawab presented himself vis-à-vis his Hindu audience who were completely different in terms of ethnicity, religion, culture, and the concept of kingship. These three chapters are followed by a conclusion.

### **Historical Sources**

In this research I have relied on various secondary literatures and primary sources from divergent contemporary viewpoints. To illustrate this, I will briefly discuss on four main primary sources which I have consulted.

#### **1. The Persian Chronicle: *The Tuzak-i- Wallajahi***

The first important primary source I have used is the Persian court chronicle, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, composed by Munshi Burhan Khan ibn Said Hasan, a servant of Nawab Muhammad Ali and originally from Deccan. The work was written in the years 1781-1786, under the order of the Nawab.<sup>38</sup> The version available for me in doing this research is the English translation by S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, published by the University of Madras into two volumes in 1934 and 1939.

*Tuzak-i Wallajahi* extended and elaborated on an earlier text by the malik al-shura of the Arcot court, Mir Ismail Khan Abjadi, who had written a masnawi (*maṣnawī*: Rhyme; poetry) on the exploits of the first Wallajah ruler, Anwar al-Din Khan, entitled *Anwar Nama*, in 1760-1761. *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* provides a chronological history of the kingdom of Arcot starting from its foundation in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, and ending in the capture of French Pondicherry in 1761, and the defeat of the rebellion in Madurai and Tirunelveli by Muhammad Yusuf Khan in 1763 -

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<sup>38</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, p.102.

1764.<sup>39</sup> The chronicle narrates the origin of the kingdom, the genealogy and rise of the two dynastic lines of rulers, its relations with various neighboring powers and Europeans, and various developments happening in the country. The details provided in the chronicle will be discussed further in chapter two of this study.

This court chronicle is a standard record which historians have intensively used for the historical study of Arcot. However, it was mainly used as a source for various historical facts. I am using this chronicle to put emphasis on perspective. According to the author, ‘it was custom to read the book out to Hazrat-i-A‘la [another name of Nawab Muhammad Ali]’ when it was compiled.<sup>40</sup> It means that this chronicle must have been under very close control of the Nawab.

Thus through this book the Nawab was able to make his voice heard; the book conveyed what he wished to say or which images he wanted to present to the audience of this chronicle – mainly people in the Islamicate cosmopolis, Persian literati in- and outside the kingdom of Carnatic. It is also interesting to compare this chronicle with European sources to reflect on a comprehensive political reality of the Carnatic.

## **2. The English East India Company’s records: *Vestiges of old Madras***

Situated in its southern headquarters in Madras, the English East India Company maintained the most intensive relations with the kingdom of Arcot of all European powers in the region. *Vestiges of old Madras 1640-1800* is a four-volume publication of some English East India Company records produced in or sent to the Fort St. George in Madras. The records were selected and compiled as a history of Madras by the late Lieut.-Colonel Henry Davison Love and first published in 1913. The primary records in the series are of various forms: mainly official reports, orders, as well as personal letters. They provide a variety of information related to the internal and external affairs of the English Company in Madras. They provide this research with numerous information and thoughts on the circumstances in the Carnatic and the relations between the English Company in Madras and its neighboring local powers, including Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah of Arcot, through the eyes of various English East India Company

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p.199.

<sup>40</sup> Burhan Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*. Vol. II, S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar, trans. (Madras: University of Madras, 1939), p.51.

servants. The sources represent the point of view of the English India Company and the various individuals with regard to the situation in the Carnatic.

More interestingly, one can also find many copies of letters written by Nawab Muhammad Ali to the English East India Company and its servants. They provide us with the direct voice of the Nawab which is rarely found elsewhere: the story from his side, his worldview, his desire and ambitions and his attitude towards the English and other Europeans.

### **3. The English private records: *The diaries of George Paterson***

The third source I would like to discuss here, *The diaries of George Paterson (Vol. 1-9)*, is still a product of the English nation.

George Paterson was the secretary of the ‘King’s Ministers’, the representatives of the British Government sent to investigate the corrupt practices of the East India Company servants in Madras in 1769.<sup>41</sup> In a short time, Paterson was able to win the confidence of the Nawab. When the second representative departed for England in late 1772 the Nawab requested Paterson to remain at his court to pass on communications between him and the British government. A few months later the Nawab hired him as his personal advisor at the court, to help him dealing with the English nation. For the next few years until the end of 1774 Paterson became the chief advisor of the Nawab. He saw the Nawab almost daily and the Nawab consulted him for every important matter. He also mediated in complex negotiations between the Nawab and the English, and even intervened in delicate rivalries between the court and the Nawab’s family.<sup>42</sup>

Playing a major role in Arcot’s politics between 1770-1774, Paterson closely observed the developments in the Carnatic and reported them in details. Thus, this document is one of the most valuable sources that reveals a great deal of Nawab Muhammad Ali’s life. According to Gurney, a historian who used parts of this primary source to approach the history of Arcot, the diaries are quite accurate since the author had no pretensions; Paterson considered his work ‘in

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<sup>41</sup> Pamela Nightingale. *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1744* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p.48.

<sup>42</sup> Gurney, ‘Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot’, p.222; Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 118.

any other light but a private diary of my own and which I never mean should see the public eye'.<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless I do not consider the source as unbiased or objective. Yet I expect this source to represent information and subjective opinions from another perspective, possibly different and even in contrast to the English Company's men. George Paterson was a man of the British government, and he can be seen as a rival and competitor of the English East India Company in the late eighteenth century Indian politics.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4. The Dutch East India Company archives

The last main primary source is the records from another group of Europeans in Coromandel in the eighteenth century. Just like other European companies, the Dutch East India Company first established their trade factory on Coromandel at Pulicat in 1609 which soon became its headquarters in India. In 1690, the Dutch moved their capital southward from Pulicat to Negapatnam in Tanjore district which would be under the control of the Nawab of Arcot in the eighteenth century. The Dutch stayed there until 1781 when the region was conquered by the English East India Company.<sup>45</sup> Whereas the English and the French actively interfered in local Indian politics, the Dutch, by contrast, still continued themselves to mercantile activities and remained politically neutral in the eighteenth century. Their relations with the kingdom of Arcot were therefore not as intensive and prominent compared to the other Europeans. Nevertheless, there were frequent contacts between the Dutch and Arcot during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali over the pearl fishery at Tuticorin on the gulf of Manaar (from 1750s- 1780s). The archives of the Dutch East India Company thus provide lots of information on the Nawab, his kingdom and circumstances in Carnatic. The records may also give new perspectives since the Dutch were 'third-person' observers in the Carnatic, different from Arcot or the English. Moreover, just like in the English archive, the Dutch archive harbors many translations of letters written by Nawab Muhammad Ali to the Dutch. These letters represent the voice of the Nawab and are thus very valuable.

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<sup>43</sup> Gurney. 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot' p.223.

<sup>44</sup> However, the manuscripts of George Paterson's diaries are not available for me at the moment as they are preserved in the British Library, in London. Therefore, I have used this source via secondary literature such as *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1774* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), by Pamela Nightingale who refers to and quotes a lot of information directly from the diaries for her research on the morality of the English gentlemen in India in the eighteenth century.

<sup>45</sup> Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions*, p. 111.

However, up until now the Dutch documents have rarely been used in previous historical studies on Arcot. This research thus tries to make a primarily survey on the records and integrate them into the study. The documents used in this research are in various forms, such as a report from the Dutch envoys to Arcot (1770), a final report of a Dutch governor or *Memorie van Overgave* (1771), letters from the Dutch Company's servants to the Nawab and letters of the Nawab to the Dutch from 1766-1768.

## Chapter One:

### Chronological Background of the Kingdom of Arcot

#### Introduction to southern India: the Tamil world

While some parts of today's Republic of India had experienced the rule of various Muslim powers for a long time—North India since the eleventh century and Central India or the Deccan plateau since the thirteenth century—the southernmost part of the subcontinent under the Krishna River, had been with only a very few exceptions the safe home of the Tamil people, ruled by various Hindu Rajas since at least 500 BCE until the late seventeenth century.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1340s a series of attempts by the southern powers to ward off Islamic invasions in North and Central India triggered the establishment of the celebrated Hindu Vijayanagara Empire in the Deccan by Telugu-speaking warriors from Andhra. By 1370 this Hindu dynasty eventually expanded southwards and annexed the entire Tamil world under its control for two centuries. In the beginning, it carried over the Tamil world through the Emperor's officers, but in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century some structural changes were implemented to this direct administration. Various Telugu warrior lords from the Deccan, the so-called 'Nayakas' were assigned to certain territories to exercise their own control in various localities of the Tamil country. Under the Nayakas there were also numerous smaller warrior chieftains appointed by the Nayakas to govern the localities under their indirect control, the so-called Palaiyakkara or Poligar warriors or chieftains.<sup>47</sup> The whole southern peninsula was under the so-called Vijayanagara period until 1565, when the Vijayanagara rulers faced a major military defeat by the united army of Deccan sultanates, which led to the dramatic decline of the empire.

After the 1560s, although continuing to pay homage to the Vijayanagara throne, the Nayaka warrior lords as well as Poligar chieftains of many localities in the far south, started to assert their independence or semi-autonomous rule and declared themselves as a sovereign dynasty.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> In the medieval period, a short-lived, small independent Muslim kingdom came into existence in the Tamil world, called the Madurai sultanate. Its base was in the city of Madurai. This kingdom lasted for around three to four decades from 1335 into the 1370s. It came into existence following the decline of the Second Hindu Pandyan Empire and was destroyed by the rise of the Hindu Vijayanagar Empire.

<sup>47</sup> Catherine B. Asher, and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 54, 57, 177; Velcheru Rao, David Shulman, Sanjay Subrahmanyam. *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka period Tamilnadu* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 30, 98-99.

<sup>48</sup> Asher, and Talbot, *India before Europe*, p. 176.

The Vijayanagara Empire was thus gradually disintegrated into various successor Nayaka-Poligar states; the most outstanding ones were for example the Nayaka kingdoms of Madurai, Gingee and Tanjore, and the Poligar chiefdoms of Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, Maravar Setupati.<sup>49</sup> In the sixteenth to seventeenth century after the disintegration of Vijayanagara Empire, the South Indian region was therefore sometimes called the Nayaka-Poligar period.

### **The late 17th century: The penetration of the Muslims into the Tamil world**

The Tamil world experienced a substantial expansion of Muslim ruling power for the first time in the early 1650s, when the Deccan Muslim sultanates of Golconda and Bijapur expanded their power southwards and gained control over some port-cities on the Coromandel Coast which had belonged to various Nayaka kingdoms.<sup>50</sup>

The Muslim power was more visible in the late 1680s when the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb from North India annexed Golconda and Bijapur and also expanded his military campaigns deeply into the South. In 1692, the eastern Tamil countries (the 'Payenghat' or the land below the Ghat, from Nellore to Kanniyakumuri) was annexed and declared a province of the Mughal Empire, known as 'Carnatic-Payenghat' or 'Arcot Subadari', following the name of the city of Arcot which became the centre of its administration. An imperial governor was appointed under the title 'Nawab', the subadar or chief military and revenue officer.<sup>51</sup> In theory, under the Mughal administrative line the Nawab of Arcot was in the third rank, subject to the Mughal Emperor at Delhi and the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Mughal southern head-governor situated in the Deccan.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>50</sup> See more details in: Arasaratnam, S., *Merchants, Companies and Commerce on the Coromandel Coast 1650-1740* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1986), p.41; Asher, and Talbot, *India before Europe*, p.183; Rao, Shulman, and Subrahmanyam, *Symbols of Substance*, p. 38.

<sup>51</sup> K. Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801*. (Tirupati: Sri Venkateswara University, 1966), p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King: Muslims and Christian in South Indian Society 1700-1900*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 151.



### **1710: The establishment of the kingdom of Arcot**

After having been a Mughal province for two decades, the history of the Tamil world came to another watershed in 1707, upon the death of Emperor Aurangzeb. The Mughal power had sharply declined, while various strongmen throughout the vast Mughal territories, such as the rulers of Bengal, Awadh, Travancore, Mysore, and Hyderabad, sought to make the leap from provincial office-holders to independent dynastic rulers. The Nawab of Arcot as well as many other smaller Hindu Rajas in the South conformed to this pattern too. In 1710, Nawab Saadatullah Khan of Arcot, declared his independence and transformed the Mughal Carnatic into the first permanent and independent Muslim sovereign state among various Nayaka-Poligar kingdoms in the Tamil world.<sup>53</sup> For almost a century (1710-1801), the Arcot kingdom was ruled by two Muslim dynasties, namely the Nawayat (1710-1742) and the Wallajah (1744 – 1801), before it officially became a part of the British colony.

### **1710-1744: The Nawayat, the first dynasty of Arcot**

The Nawayat family was known as an elite group of Deccani trading and service people. The most powerful members of this group were those who had held high posts under the sultans of Bijapur and other Deccani Muslim sultanates. When these domains came under Mughal rule at the end of the seventeenth century, many leading Deccanis were able to seek advancement within the imperial system. In 1710, the post of the Nawab went to a Nawayat military man named Saadatullah Khan (r. 1710-1732) who, seeing the decline of the central power, soon took his chance of becoming a sovereign ruler.<sup>54</sup> After having built up his kingdom for two decades, Nawab Saadatullah Khan passed away in 1732 without having a son as an heir. As a result, Dost Ali Khan, his nephew succeeded his uncle as the new Nawab. Heading his family in the 1730s, Nawab Dost Ali was determined to expand the power of his dynasty throughout the Tamil world with the aid of his son Safdar Ali and his military talent son-in-law Chanda Sahib. They waged war and subjugated many southern Nayaka-Poligar principalities such as Trichinopoly, Madurai, and even the much stronger Hindu kingdom of Tanjore, at that time ruled by a Maratha dynasty. Chanda Sahib proclaimed himself successor to all the Hindu Nayaka regimes and began to carve

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., pp. 151-152.

out his independent domain in the Southern world.<sup>55</sup> However, this step of him finally brought ruin upon the Nawayat house. The conquest of Tanjore gave a pretext for the Marathas from Maharashtra to invade the Carnatic to help their cousins. The Maratha invasion was also supported by many Hindu rajahs, who wished to free themselves from the power of the Nawab of Arcot. Eventually, Dost Ali Khan was killed in a battle; Chanda Sahib was captured at his stronghold in Trichinopoly and sent to the north for imprisonment at Satara.<sup>56</sup>

Safdar Ali Khan (r.1740-1742), the son of Dost Ali Khan and the new Nawab of Arcot was forced to abandon the capital of Arcot and took refuge in Vellore. There, in 1742 he was murdered by Murtaza Ali, his cousin who then seized the throne and declared himself as the new Nawab. To this point many other Nawayat princes also joined the battle for the throne of Arcot. The instability of the Carnatic from the Maratha intrusion and the internal struggle gave an excellent pretext to Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I of Hyderabad to intervene in the political affairs of the Carnatic and reassert the overlordship of Hyderabad over the Carnatic.

In 1743 Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I marched into Arcot with an armed force of 280,000 men to oust the Marathas and subside the Nawayat. The Nizam passed the throne of Carnatic to Muhammad Said, the son of the murdered Nawab Safdar Ali who was still a minor at that time. By appointing one of his men as the regent who was assigned to take care the young ‘nominee’ Nawab, he seized the opportunity to secure his permanent influence in the Carnatic. The name of this regent was Anwar al-Din Khan Wallajah.<sup>57</sup>

#### **1744: The foundation of Wallajah, the second dynasty of Arcot**

The Wallajah had a relatively brief history in India. Their ancestors were foreigners who recently had migrated from Turan to Hindustan in the reign of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb (r. 1658-1707). Khwajas of Turan, the father of Anwar al-Din Khan, the first Nawab of Arcot, was the first Wallajah to hold an office of importance in India—a qadi (a religious teacher) at Aurangzeb’s court. His son Anwar al-Din, who had followed his father to North India was

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 156-157.

<sup>56</sup> Holden Furber., *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800: Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion*. (Minneapolis, MN: 1976). p. 149.

<sup>57</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 154, Burhan Ibn Hasan. *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. I, S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar. transl. (Madras: Madras University, 1934), pp. 82-83, Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, p. 149.

recruited to be a soldier of Mir Qamar al-Din Khan Siddiqi, a prominent Mughal general of Emperor Aurangzeb who was also of Turani origin (this person was the future Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I of Hyderabad, mentioned above). In 1712, after the death of Emperor Aurangzeb, Mir Qamar al-Din Khan was appointed by the new Emperor Farrukhsiyar to be the viceroy of Deccan, with the title of Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I. He was assigned to take care of the Mughal domains in the South. Anwar al-Din who became Asaf Jah's right hand also left Hindustan and accompanied him to Deccan.

In 1720, just like many other strong rulers of that time, Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah raised himself to be a sovereign ruler (r. 1720 - 1748). He founded the Asaf Jahi dynasty and established Hyderabad as an autonomous realm. He was under the Mughal only in name. From that moment on Anwar al-Din Khan Wallajah was conferred on several provincial governors by the Nizam. The last one was the regent of the Carnatic, who took care of the minor Nawayat Nawab Muhammad Said in 1743.<sup>58</sup>

Only one year later the young Nawayat Nawab was murdered in mysterious circumstance. Some suspected that the murder was committed by Mortis Ali, another Nawayat prince who ambitiously wanted the Carnatic throne, while others suspected Anwar al-Din Khan. Whoever the assassin was, eventually Anwar al-Din Khan was appointed by Nizam Asaf Jah I as the new Nawab of Arcot in 1744 (r. 1744-1749). Ever since then, the second dynasty of Arcot, the Wallajah, was founded. The rising of the Wallajah dynasty was viewed by the Nawayat as usurpation and deemed unacceptable. However none of them was strong enough at that time to resist the power of Anwar al-Din Khan and Nizam Asaf Jah I.

### **1744-1748: The First Carnatic War - the beginning of the alliance between Wallajah Nawabs and the English East India Company**

The rise of Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan to the throne of Carnatic in 1744 coincided with the outbreak of the first hostility between the English and the French East India Companies in the subcontinent, known as the Anglo-French War or the First Carnatic War 1745-1748.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> J.D. Gurney. 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot' in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) pp.220-241, p. 232; Hasan, B. K. B., *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. I, pp. 84-85.

<sup>59</sup> Furber, *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800*, p. 149; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 156.

In 1745 the Nawab was informed about the outbreak of the war between the English and French in Europe and their preparations to commit hostilities against each other in all their settlements on the Indian coasts, including their headquarters in Madras and Pondicherry. The two latter port towns were under the jurisdiction of the Carnatic. He therefore wrote letters to the English and French Companies as the representative of the Mughal Emperor and the Nizam of Hyderabad, warning them not to raise any disturbance on the Coromandel shore.<sup>60</sup>

The English respectfully replied Anwar al-Din Khan that they would not be the first ones to disobey the Nawab's commands.<sup>61</sup> But the French showed more aggression by continuing to attack the English settlements against the Nawab's order. The French under the leadership of Governor Dupleix tried to compromise with the Nawab by promising that after the fall of Madras (after having defeated the English), they would hand over the place to the Nawab. However, the French eventually did not keep their word.<sup>62</sup> The events must have caused a very hostile attitude toward the French in the mind of the Nawab, because he soon decided to ally himself with the English.

In 1746, the English fort of Madras was seized by the French and the English turned to the Nizam Asaf Jah I of Hyderabad. The English got a positive response from Prince Nasir Jang, the son of the Nizam. The Prince said that he would ask his friend Anwar al-Din Khan, the Nawab of the Carnatic 'who is worthy and trusty among the Servants' to ensure that 'the lawful proprietors' would be righted, and 'the usurpers' dispossessed.<sup>63</sup> In October 1746, after the Nawab received the official order from Hyderabad, he sent an army, led by his two sons, Mahfuz Khan (the second son but the eldest one alive) and Muhammad Ali (the third son and the future Nawab) to Madras demanding the French to return it to the English. Their mission was unsuccessful since the Arcot troop was defeated by French soldiers at St. Thomé. However, the two princes still proceeded to Fort St. David to assist the British men there, and kept their army in the vicinity of the fort for three months.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Henry Davison Love, *Vestiges of old Madras: 1640-1800: traced from the East India Company's records preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office and from other sources*. Vol. II, (New York: AMS Press, 1968), p.342.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p.365.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p.384. (F.St. D. Cons, vol. xv., 31<sup>st</sup> Aug., 1747)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 372,374,383.

### **1748-1752: The double wars of succession - the throne of Deccan and Carnatic**

In mid-April 1748, the peace between the French and English was signed at Aix-la-Chapelle in Europe.<sup>65</sup> But it seemed that their rivalry in India had just begun. At this moment, the kind of alliance between the Wallajah of Arcot, the prince Nazir Jang of Hyderabad and the English in Madras became visible. The hostile attitude of the two local rulers towards the French was also palpable. In the time of the Nawayat, the French were in a favorable position as appose to the other Europeans. But with the Wallajah in power, their relationship turned sour because of the Anglo-French war, while the English became good friends of the new dynasty. These circumstances pushed the French into a risky position and it would be very disadvantageous for them if power over Deccan and Carnatic would fall in the hands of Prince Nasir Jang and the Wallajah.

The opportunity for the French to undermine the power of Nasir Jang and the Wallajah came in June 1748 when the Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I of Hyderabad passed away. His son Nazir Jang was automatically proclaimed the new Nizam. But a grandson, named Muzaffar Jang, also claimed leadership. The French then jumped into this conflict of succession by supporting Muzaffar Jang in his fight against his uncle Nasir Jang to seize the throne of Hyderabad. Moreover, the French also paid the ransom and secured the release of Chanda Sahib, the great military prince of the Nawayat dynasty who had been a prisoner of the Marathas at Satara for almost a decade. This prince joined hands with Muzaffar Jang, and assisted by the French. He returned south with a 40,000-man army, determined to defeat Anwar al-Din Khan and assume power back to the former dynasty.<sup>66</sup> These circumstances helped prompt the English to join the two wars of succession in order to sabotage the plans of the French.

From a European perspective, this period has often been referred to by historians as the Second Carnatic War 1748-1754. The Wallajah, Nizam Nasir Jang and the English in Madras were on one side, while the Nawayat, Muzaffar Jang and the French in Pondicherry were on the other. The outcome of the wars became crucial for the many power holders and meant a watershed in South Indian politics. However, one important difference between the two groups was visible: while Muzaffar Jang, Chanda Sahib and the French worked closely with one

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 388.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

another, Nasir Jang and the Wallajah received feeble and irregular aid from the English. Disputes between them arose with regard to the payment of the troops, which sometimes led to the withdrawal of the British support.<sup>67</sup>

Chanda Sahib and his partisans made a rapid headway while the Wallajah and Nasir Jang were in a disadvantage position. Nawab Anwar al-Din was killed by the enemies' army in August 1749 and the city of Arcot was taken by Chanda Sahib. His eldest son, Mahfuz Khan, was taken prisoner, while the second son, Muhammad Ali, escaped to Trichinopoly, where he established his resisting army and declared himself as the new nawab of Carnatic. Meanwhile Muzaffar Jang had also appointed Chanda Sahib as the nawab.<sup>68</sup> Thus there were two men claiming themselves to be the nawab of Carnatic; one in Arcot and one in Trichinopoly. The one in Arcot was appointed by Muzaffar Jang and recognized by the French. The one in Trichinopoly was acknowledged by Nasir Jang and the British.

The situation got more intense in the late 1750 when in Deccan Nasir Jang was treacherously murdered by one of his own vassals, who conspired with Chanda Sahib against him. Muzaffar Jang though had no competitor as a Nizam, but he was killed in a battle shortly after in 1751. The French then pushed Salabat Jang, brother of Nasir Jang, as the successor of the Hyderabad throne. He would rule the Nizam's throne from 1751-1762.<sup>69</sup> In Carnatic, Muhammad Ali was also besieged in Trichinopoly by Chanda Sahib's army. Seeing that the allies of the French were able to take the throne in Deccan, the English began to fear that it would be their turn to be in a serious trouble if also the Wallajah would be defeated in Carnatic. Therefore they decided to change their policy and give the Wallajah their full cooperation. Robert Clive was appointed in March 1751 to command the battle in Carnatic. Moreover, after successful diplomatic negotiations, Nawab Muhammad Ali also got the help from the local Raja Nandi of Mysore and Pratap Singh of Tanjore. With the help of all these allies, the Wallajah troops took firm steps to regain the city of Arcot and Trichinopoly, at the expense of Chanda Sahib and the French. Eventually in 1752 Chanda Sahib surrendered to Muhammad Ali's new-found ally, the Raja of Tanjore, by whom he was beheaded.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., p. 389.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 427.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 429.

### **The 1750s-1760s: the first consolidation of Muhammad Ali's power and the last struggle with the French**

Although in 1752 Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah was able to eliminate his competitor Chanda Sahib and he became the only Nawab of Carnatic, the chaotic situation in his kingdom had by no means reached its end. Throughout the 1750s - 1760s Muhammad Ali, in cooperation with the English Company's armed forces, had to fight against many Hindu Nayaka-Poligar Rajas, some remaining Nawayat princes, as well as some of his ambitious brothers and cousins. Many of his enemies were supported by the French. In addition, in this period of time the Nawab also faced a problem with regard to his political legitimacy according to Mughal custom. Since the Nizam of Hyderabad was Salabat Jung, the ally of the French who did not officially accept the claim of Muhammad Ali, he was an illegal ruler in the eyes of some contemporaries.

In 1753, immediately after the death of Chanda Sahib, Muhammad Ali began a conflict with Nandi Raja of Mysore about Trichinopoly. The Mysore ruler claimed that the Nawab had promised to give him the territory in exchange for his help to fight against Chanda Sahib. Yet the Nawab refused to give this important city of the Tamil world to him. It was the city which he used as his capital since 1749. The Nawab could eventually defeat Mysore when the French withdrew from the Mysore army in the end of 1754, after a cease fire concluded in Europe between the French and English in December, aimed at ending the Second Carnatic War.

Muhammad Ali used this relatively peaceful period to move from the south, after which he made his first formal entry into his capital of Arcot as the Nawab of Carnatic.<sup>71</sup> The pacifistic condition of his kingdom was terminated two years later when a new conflict flared up between the French and British forces in India, the so-called Third Carnatic War 1757-1763, which resulted from the outbreak of the Seven Years War in Europe.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 475.

In the early stages of the war, the French successfully seized the fort of Madras and in order to seize Arcot, they again forged an alliance with another Nawayat prince, Khan Sahib, the son of Chanda Sahib. Nawab Muhammad Ali had to escape to Trichinopoly, thereby leaving his army led by General Yusuf Khan, to join the English forces in reconquering the Carnatic. The war lasted until 1763 when eventually the combined forces of the Nawab and the English Company were able to launch a vigorous campaign against the local rebels and storm the French Pondicherry. After this campaign, a negotiation between the French and English took place in Europe, which resulted in the Treaty of Paris. According to the treaty, the French possessions in India would be restored to them as trading factories in India. But they were forbidden to exercise any kind of administrative power. Moreover, the French had to recognize Muhammad Ali as the lawful Nawab of Carnatic.<sup>72</sup> These agreements permanently ended the French ambitions of an Indian empire and made the British the only dominant foreign power there.

The situation in Hyderabad also turned in favor of Nawab Muhammad Ali. In 1762, a son of Nizam Asaf Jah I, Prince Ali Khan of Hyderabad, seized power from Nizam Salabat Jung, the French ally, and proclaimed himself the new ruler of Hyderabad. He was titled Nizam Ali Khan Asaf Jah II. This action of Nizam Ali Khan was approved by the new Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II (r.1759-1762), who issued a firman (king's order) terminating Salabat Jung and appointing the prince as his successor titled Nizam Ali Khan Asaf Jah II (r. 1762-1803). After that, Nawab Muhammad Ali also received official confirmation from both the new Emperor and the new Nizam approving his status as the lawful Nawab of Arcot.

After the many problems mentioned above were solved, it seemed that from the mid-1760s on, Nawab Muhammad Ali's power was fairly stable and he had more time to manage his internal affairs, such as building up his palace, organizing his court and subjugating smaller tributary Najaka-Poligar states within his realm.

An interesting move of Muhammad Ali in this period of time was his decision to move from his capital city of Arcot to live in the newly built palace at Chepak, inside the English fort of Madras in 1766. This action has generally been viewed by previous historians as another step of the English to extend their control over the Nawab. But various primary English records

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<sup>72</sup> Henry Davison Love, *Vestiges of old Madras: 1640-1800: traced from the East India Company's records preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office and from other sources*. Vol. III, (New York : AMS Press, 1968), pp. 315-316.



interestingly reveal the opposite; it was the Nawab who wished to bind himself more tightly to the English Company. He pushed the Company very hard to grant him the land, after which he built the palace at his own expense. He also attempted to buy as much land and houses as possible in the English fort town of Madras.<sup>73</sup> All of this alarmed the men of the English Company, who became afraid of the increasing interference of the Nawab in the company's affairs.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, the Nawab also tangled himself with the English over the huge debts he made with the Company, the individual Company's servants and the many private traders. The money he borrowed since the 1750s was used for defending and expanding wars, maintaining the troops of English Company (sepoys) and his own, giving cash advances to the inhabitants for cultivation, and even for the expenses of his splendid court. His debts increased dramatically as time went by and he was often forced by the Company to cede his territories and revenues to pay off his debt. The debts of Nawab Muhammad Ali are notorious and seen in previous literatures as the main cause of the Nawab's bankruptcy and his complete dependence on the English, which ultimately cleared the path for the British to colonize his country.

However, some historians quite rightly claim that the debts of the Nawab should not be simply seen as evidence that the Nawab was financially weak and heavily dependent on the English. On the contrary, this could have been a genius strategy of the Nawab to draw the English into his circle of interest, and use them as tools in his local political games.<sup>75</sup> According to their observations, the Nawab used to borrow money from Indian money-lenders. But from the early 1760s on, the Nawab increasingly turned to borrow money from the Company servants.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, the Nawab did not hesitate to offer an extraordinary interest rate of 20 per cent or more to induce his creditors. It was said that by 1766 almost every European in Madras was in some way involved in his debts, either directly as creditors, or as attorneys or executors on behalf

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<sup>73</sup> As reflected by an EIC record, the land of Madras was fully under the jurisdiction of the English. Even the nawab needed their permission to pursue any acts in this fort town. The following is mentioned in a record: 'The lands which compose the settlement of Madras are not held under the grants of any Nabob. They are conveyed to the Company in absolute sovereignty by the Mogul's Phirmaund (The Farman granted by the Emperor Farrukhsiyar in 1717), and the rights which formerly belonged to the country government are transferred by that Phirmaund to the Company. 'They had the same right of collecting Taxes that the Nabobs had under the Mogul Government.' (See Minute by the President in *Ibid.*, pp. 297-298.)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81, p. 55 (25<sup>th</sup> Mar. 1771).

<sup>75</sup> The historians claiming this are for example Love, Ramaswami and Nightingale. See Love, *Vestiges of old Madras*, Vol. III, p. 189; N.S Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*. (New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1984), pp. 238-239.

<sup>76</sup> N.S. Ramaswami, *Political History of Carnatic under the Nawabs*. p. 238.

of the borrowers/loaners. By that time the debt of the Nawab with the Company was up to 26 lakhs.<sup>77</sup> Through the 1760s-1770s, he continuously went into new debts.<sup>78</sup>

As rightly observed by Love, the great debts of the Nawab had to a great extent put him in a favorable position. All the English creditors, either Company servants or private traders were waiting for the repayment with a very high interest rate; and they all knew well that every outbreak of war offered the hope of reimbursement through the possible conquest of new territories. This left the English no other choice but to aid Muhammad Ali financially and military in subjugating his subjects to get tributaries and conquering fresh territories.<sup>79</sup>

### **The 1770s-1785: The Nawab's expansion of power**

This period of time could be seen as one of the most dynamic periods during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah. In most of the literature, by the 1770s historians have ignored the distinction between the Nawab and the English; the Nawab stood completely in the British Company's shadow, and the expansion of Carnatic's territory were seen as part of the process of British colonial's expansion.<sup>80</sup> But the primary sources, especially the EIC records, clearly reveal a different picture. For the contemporary English, it was a period of great difficulty as the Nawab had gained so much influence to the extent that 'he flattered himself with the idea of entire independency.'<sup>81</sup>

The early beginning of the decade started with many wars of defending and expanding the kingdom, and relating to the two neighboring powers. It is generally known that in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Carnatic, the Marathas and the Mysore were the three main groups of indigenous powers fighting against each other to come out the superior in South India in terms of territorial power, political power, wealth and fame. The Marathas and Mysore were famous for their formidable military skills while Muhammad Ali's Carnatic was knowingly inferior in this aspect. From the late 1760s the Carnatic thus frequently became the target of

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<sup>77</sup> Pamela Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1744*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985). p. 30; Love, *Vestiges of old Madras*, Vol. p.188.

<sup>78</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras*, Vol. III, p. 188.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 189.

<sup>80</sup> See more details in Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801*, p. 11-15.

<sup>81</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 114. (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 91).

plundering. For its own survival, the English Company, being the only ally of the Nawab, helped Muhammad Ali to defend his kingdom from intrusions by the other two powers. Yet the English tried hard to keep peace with the Marathas and Mysore as much as they could; it is clear that the policy of the English was to keep balance of power between these three indigenous power-holders. However, in spite of his weakness, it seems that the Nawab's policy towards the two powers was always aimed at attacking his rivals. He always had a strong desire to eliminate either Marathas or Mysore by using the English as his main instrument. From around 1770-1773 several attempts were made by the Nawab to persuade the English to wage wars with Mysore and Marathas. Moreover, in the same period, the Nawab also pushed his policy of conquering the kingdom of Tanjore, the last remaining Nayaka successor state of the Vijayanagara Empire. This led to the so-called two Tanjore Wars in 1771 and 1773 by the English East India Company's troops in the name of Nawab Muhammad Ali.<sup>82</sup> The Nawab's policies towards the Marathas, Mysore and Tanjore will be further discussed in more details in chapter three.

After the successful conquest of the Tanjore Nayaka in 1773, the Nawab continued to subjugate many small Poligar rulers with the aid from the English Company troops and loans, and expanded his power deep into the Tamil world more than ever. By the mid-1770s, the kingdom of Carnatic encompassed the present day districts of Tinnevelley, Ramnad, Madurai, Trichinopoly, Tanjore, South Arcot, Chegleput, North Arcot, Chittoor, and Nellore.<sup>83</sup>

Another interesting political development in the early 1770s was the beginning of the involvement of a new group of English—the British government—in the English Company's affairs and in Indian politics, which eventually led to the takeover of the Company and the beginning of the colonial empire in the early nineteenth century.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, the enormous fortunes of many Company servants coming home from Madras and the vast territories gained by the Company had aroused jealousy among many government ministers in London. This jealousy went so far that they were waiting for a chance to exercise some control over the Company and share the interests.<sup>84</sup> Yet, the British

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., pp. 82-83.

<sup>83</sup> Rajayyan, *Administration and Society in the Carnatic, 1701-1801*. p. 1-2; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p.152.

<sup>84</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, pp. 103, 67 (Paterson, Vol. II, p. 167) 167, 113 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 224).

government needed an excuse to interfere with the Company's affairs. In 1768, John Macpherson, a Scotsman, gave the perfect opportunity to the British government.<sup>85</sup>

Macpherson had traveled to India several years ago in the hope of making a big fortune. After his return to England, he claimed himself to be an agent of the Nawab of Arcot, approached the prime minister of England, and appealed about the ill-treatment of the Nawab by the Company's servants. With his high diplomatic skills, he gave the English government and English public opinion the impression that the Nawab of Arcot was shamefully abused and exploited by the corrupt and treacherous Company officials. He even accused them of starting wars in Carnatic as a tactic of extorting money from the Nawab.<sup>86</sup> Having these pretexts to interfere with the Company's affairs, Lord Weymouth, a prominent British minister at that time, immediately sent Sir John Lindsay and Sir Robert Harland to Madras in 1769 and 1771 as the 'King's Ministers' with plenipotentiary power; they were independent from the Company and had full rights to inquire into the affairs of the Carnatic and prevent the Nawab from being abused.<sup>87</sup>

Like many previous historians, Gudney used to analyze the significance of the arrival of the King's Ministers to help 'encourage the Nawab to take a more independent attitude towards the Company.' Yet, 'it was plain that he was only escaping from one set of masters to submit to the influence of another.'<sup>88</sup> In this way, the image of the Nawab in Gudney's interpretation was still very passive, victimized, and overall unclear. However, in my opinion, previous historians did ignore one interesting fact: the person whose strong intention was to the new group of English into the political game of the Carnatic was none other than Nawab Muhammad Ali; his role in reality seemed to be much more complicated.

As the King's Ministers would gradually realize, the Nawab was not the victim, desperately waiting to reveal every corruption of the Company's men to the Crown. That image seemed to be only one of his political tools to drag the British government into his political world. What the Nawab actually wanted, apart from the honor and reputation of having direct

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p.31.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p.28.

<sup>87</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III*, pp.47, 48

<sup>88</sup> Gurney. 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot', p.229.

contact with the king of England, was a new group of English to balance power with the Company servants and support his policies when the Company rejected them.

As they battled for power, as well as for benefits from the Nawab, the Company and the King's men ran into serious conflicts right from the onset. The Nawab might have foreseen this conflict before he dragged the British government into the game but it is also possible that he just learned from the situation after the arrival of the latter in India. Whichever the case, throughout the first decades of the 1770s, the Nawab did very well in playing the two English parties against each other and taking advantage of this; the two English groups became his political tools and helped him reach his ambitious goals in local politics. This will be shown further in this research.

Starting from around 1772, many English officials complained heavily to their directors and friends about the changing behavior of the Nawab. In the beginning they thought that the Nawab wanted to free himself from dependence on the Company, and align himself with the Crown.<sup>89</sup> But later they realized that the real purpose of the Nawab 'is making towards rendering himself independent of the English nation, if not to reduce the Company to a dependence upon him, render it incumbent upon us to enter fully into the subject.'<sup>90</sup> According to them, especially after 1775, the Nawab whose 'every accession of power has added to his vanity and ambition', now looked down upon the Company and manifested a stronger desire of independence than ever before. Furthermore he wanted to suppress the Company, 'who have so long so generously supported him', and downgrade its position to that of his servant.<sup>91</sup>

From the mid-1770s to the 1780s, the Nawab and the English Company got into various conflicts over the Nawab's policies, which were seen by the English as threats for its power in India. One problematic issue, for example, was the expeditions of Tanjore. After the successful conquest of Tanjore in 1773, the Nawab and the English had been fighting for several years over the power and the benefits over the Tanjore. The English Company and individual creditors who invested a lot of financial and military resources to help the Nawab conquer the Nayaka state naturally wished to get their reimbursement from this new territory, either in the form of land grants, port towns, or revenue farming. The Company hoped that at least it could leave its garrisons there to prevent the Nawab or one of his sons from having full control over the country

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<sup>89</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III*, p.73.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.68-69. (Fort St. George to the Company, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1775)

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

and cutting the British out of all the benefits. From the Nawabs's point of view, he really feared that the Company would keep Tanjore for itself and thus he protested against the English armies staying in Tanjore with every measure available.<sup>92</sup>

The second conflict began when the Nawab favored the second prince Amir al-Umara over the eldest prince Umdat al-Umara as his successor. The prince Umdat al-Umara was generally favored by the Europeans. He was also known as a very good friend of the English and with the prince as the next Nawab of Arcot, they could foresee their bright future for England in South India. According to an English record, 'He has the justest sense of the connection between the Carnatic and the Company, and that the lord of this country ought, in a certain degree, to depend upon the British nation for the support and protection of the country.'<sup>93</sup> The second prince was described by all the English parties in India as a rival. According to them, he was cunning, industrious and had a strong ambition for autonomous rule. More importantly he showed a very hostile attitude towards the English and often had conflicts with them. Many English believed that this prince was behind or at least highly influential in his father's plans of gaining independence from their nation, including the Tanjore issue. They thus felt really worried about their fate if the second prince would succeed his father.<sup>94</sup> Since around 1774 Amir al-Umara became the favorite and 'extraordinary confidant' of his father at the expense of the eldest son and there were signs that the Nawab wished to give his throne to him.<sup>95</sup> Therefore, many English men did several attempts to go against the Nawab's idea of changing the successor.<sup>96</sup> In the meantime, the Nawab's dissatisfaction towards those people meddling in his family affairs was increasing.<sup>97</sup>

There were also several other conflicts throughout this decade. For example, in 1778, the Company Directors in London were very discontent when they heard that the Nawab was planning to strengthen his military forces and start a war. Not only did he attempt to conceal this from 'his best friends and allies', but he also turned to the Danes for arms.<sup>98</sup> Another clash

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<sup>92</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 73 ,206.

<sup>93</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III*, pp. 68-69. (Fort St. George to the Company, 4<sup>th</sup> July 1775)

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

<sup>95</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 199.

<sup>96</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III*. p. 68-69.

<sup>97</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 173. (Paterson, Vol. VI, p. 48-49, 63).

<sup>98</sup> Love, *Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III*. p.189.

happened in 1779, when the Nawab fought with the Madras government over the court jurisdiction over his native people in Madras, the land of the English.<sup>99</sup>

### **1785-1790s: The English Company's tighter control over the Nawab**

As reflected from English records, the relationship between the Nawab and the English was based on mutual distrust and the desire to exploit one another; as a result they always tried to suppress or impose some control over one another. Yet, the Nawab had to compromise and stay modest as he still had to rely a lot on the English's military to keep maintain his power. For the English, even though they had enough superior power to impose more control on the Nawab, the enormous personal benefits each individual could get from the Nawab always got the upper hand. Public interests either for their company or for their nation often came second. Therefore the relation between the Nawab and the English up until the mid-1780s was still mainly based on equality and negotiations; none of the parties was obviously successful to overcome the other.

However, it seemed that since the mid-1780s on, the corruptions of the company's men and the gigantic debts of the Nawab were far beyond for the directors and senior company servants in the motherland to accept anymore. Two other wars in this decade, the Second Mysore War (1780-1784) and the Third Mysore War (1789-1792), contributed a lot to the deteriorated circumstances.

The English started to interfere more and more with the Nawab's power. In the beginning, they sent new servants from London with strict orders to conclude an agreement with the Nawab to pay off the outstanding debt, which in 1787 amounted to about seventy-five lakhs of pagodas. They forced the Nawab to transfer the collection of the Carnatic revenues to the Company servants.<sup>100</sup> But when they found out that the old terms in 1787 were too onerous, in May 1792 a new more efficient financial agreement was concluded. The settlement stipulated that in time of war the Carnatic revenues should be received and administered by the Company, but in time of peace the management of the revenues would rest with the Nawab, provided that

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 321.

he would pay nine lakhs of pagodas annually to the company for military services and six lakhs to his creditors.<sup>101</sup>

In the late 1780s-1790s, the Carnatic kingdom's natural resources, military and economic strength was seriously weakened by incessant wars. The Nawab had already been in failing health with his age over seventy. Moreover, Prince Amir al-Umara, the second son of the Nawab who carried out a strong policy against the English influence had already passed away since 1788. The circumstances thus allowed the British to gain more and more power without the strong resistance from the Nawab anymore. In June 1795, the English Company, under the command of Lord Hobart made an important step that showed that the local ruler had lost almost all of his power to the English; he proposed that from now on no money should be legalized in the Carnatic but only by the Company, though under the Nawab's name.<sup>102</sup>

### **1795: the death of Nawab Muhammad Ali**

Nawab Muhammad Ali passed away on October 13<sup>th</sup>, 1795, at the age of seventy-eight, after a reign of forty-six years. He was buried at San Thome, but three years later his remains were transferred to Trichinopoly. Muhammad Ali hoped to secure his succession by nominating his second and favorite son, Amir al-Umara, but the prince died seven years before his father. Thus he was succeeded by his eldest son, Prince Umdat al-Umara without question.<sup>103</sup>

The heavy debts were transferred from Wallajah to his son. The English moved more determined towards the Carnatic; Lord Hobart immediately pressed the new Nawab to consent to a modification of the financial agreement of 1792, which stated that the Company shall collect all the revenue appropriated to the maintenance of the army. The new Nawab, trying to avoid or escape from this unpalatable demand, replied that the funeral ceremony would absorb all of his time and he would not be able to attend to business for the time being.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 404.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., p. 424-425.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 526-528.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., p. 528.



The fight between the new Nawab and the English Company continued until 1799 when the English found a way to curb the power of Nawab Umdat al-Umara. During the war with Mysore at Seringapatam in 1799, the British claimed that they had found papers which could prove a treasonable conspiracy between the Nawab, the alliance of the British and Tipu Sultan of Mysore. The English Governor-General, with the approval of the Directors, decided that the administration of the Carnatic should be assumed by the Company. The execution of his order was postponed for a few years due to Nawab Umdat al-Umara's illness. But when the Nawab died at the age of fifty-three in 1801, British troops were ordered to occupy his palace.<sup>105</sup> The English also moved to overturn the line of Nawabi succession by rejecting the claims of Umdat al-Umara's eldest son Taj al-Umara, and appointed the Nawab's nephew Azim al-Dawla (r. 1801-1819) to the throne, who was considered more cooperative to British interests in the Carnatic.<sup>106</sup> Since then all the Carnatic administration was under the direct control of the English Company.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., p. 530.

<sup>106</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 222.

## Chapter Two:

### The Nawab and the Islamic Cosmopolis

*'...the King of kings, the glorious and the Most High Lord had granted me this kingdom as a hereditary right; the Padshah of Hind was pleased to select me for the administration of the important affairs of this kingdom...'*<sup>107</sup>

'Nabab Muhammad Ali since three years ago (in 1767) was elevated to Souba by the Nizam (of Hyderabad) in the name of the Mughal, that is to say he became the deputy king of Carnatic. This means that he is no longer subordinate to Golconda ('s Nizam), to whom the Nababs of Carnatic previously had to please according to the require of the Mughal Emperor,'<sup>108</sup> 'Therefore his lands were from then on directly under the Mughal court.'<sup>109</sup>

The fragment above, which proclaims the changed political position of Nawab Muhammad Ali, was announced by the Nawab himself to the public. This change in political status was the main background information, which a Dutch governor mentioned to his superior when introducing this ruler of the kingdom of Carnatic.

In many EIC records, English officials often complained that this Nawab had given orders to erect particular houses for taking care of the sick, wounded, lame, poor and women, and send out a ship for the annual hajj pilgrimage against considerably high costs. These expenses conflicted with his financial situation as he had huge debts with the English.<sup>110</sup> Paterson, the English consultant of the Nawab, once described with astonishment the patient and

<sup>107</sup> Burhan Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*. Vol. II, S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar. transl. (Madras 1939), pp.75-76.

<sup>108</sup> VOC 3312, *Memories van overgave* (final reports) from Governor Pieter Haksteen to Reynier van Vlissingen, September 1771, Fol. 2092v.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, Fol. 2039r

<sup>110</sup> Pamela Nightingale. *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1744*. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985) pp. 120-121, (Cited from George Paterson, *George Paterson's diaries*, Vol. IV. p.56; vol. VII, p.118).

As already mentioned in the Introduction, I have used the information from nine volumes of diaries of George Paterson via the secondary work of Pamela Nightingale. However, I will always cite the volume and page number of the original diaries for the convenient in further research. After this, the citing of George Paterson's diaries will be in the abbreviation form in a parentheses, for example: (Paterson, Vol. IV, p. 56).

earnest Nawab sitting on a step at the edge of the choultry (the resting-place for travellers), spending hours hand pilgrims money one by one for their journey to Mecca.’<sup>111</sup>

People may have seen Nawab Muhammad Ali Wallajah as dependent, as a puppet of the English East India Company, contributing to the European expansion, but in the eyes of the Nawab and even in the eyes of contemporary Europeans, he did not really belong to this ‘world of European expansion. By calling himself the Nawab of Arcot, a representative or a governor, and by publicly declaring he received his legitimacy from the Mughal Emperors, Muhammad Ali chose to politically identify himself as a subordinate ruler of the Mughal Empire. With regard to the cultural aspect, he represented his court in the splendid Persianized Islamicate tradition and used Persian as an official language. In terms of religion, he represented himself as a pious Muslim. Just like his Mughal overlords and other early modern Muslim rulers, he attempted to find his place in the wide contemporary Islamicate cosmopolis by displaying the patronage of Islamicate tradition and going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Evidently, this was the main ideological world the Nawab wished to live in.

This chapter aims to explore the relations between Nawab Muhammad Ali and his contemporary Islamicate cosmopolis, encompassing Mughal India, Persia, Turkey, and Arabia. How did he integrate himself into this world? How did he position himself? How did he represent himself to his Muslim audiences: family, entourage, subjects and outsiders? How did he built up his political legitimacy and maintain this power? How did he integrate the European world, in which he was so much involved, into his Muslim world? How does this information eventually help us to have better understanding about the Nawab’s life and the political developments in Arcot from the European perspective?

*Tuzak-i Wallajahi* , the official chronicle written in the Persian language on the orders of the Nawab and under his close supervision will be used as the main window to get a peek into his mind. This source is supplemented with other primary sources from the English and Dutch and a variety of secondary literatures. In *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* , Nawab Muhammad Ali is depicted as a great and moral person who had perfectly fulfilled his duties both as a ruler and as a Muslim. Various dramatic events are illustrated to show his good character which was in accordance with

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<sup>111</sup> .J.D.Gurney. ‘Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot’ in *Statesmen, Scholars and Merchants: Essays in Eighteenth-Century History*. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1973) pp.220-241., p. 241 (Paterson, Vol. VII, p.118)

traditional Muslim values: his bravery, generosity, modesty, mercy and kindness, his sense of justice, intelligence, devotion for his father and etc. His religious acts as a pious Muslim are especially highlighted. According to the chronicle he opened inns, built mosques, founded hospitals for the poor, built bridges, dug wells, constructed gardens and improved river structures, all ‘in the way of Allah.’<sup>112</sup> These images are not unexpected; just like other official court chronicles, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* aimed explicitly at praising its contributor.

However, beyond the flattering words and beyond the record of the chronological history of Carnatic, this chronicle also reflects on the worldview, imagination, ambition, hopes and fears of the Nawab. Moreover, explanations to his Muslim audiences, justifications and excuses for his actions are also provided by the chronicle. These will be revealed in the following parts.

### **The integration into the Islamicate cosmopolis**

Once in his conversation with the Dutch envoy Pieter Sluysken, who complained about the tardiness of the negotiations, the Nawab explained to him that the business must be done in a delicate way to protect his reputation. This is because ‘The whole country knows, yes even in Delhi [Door het heheele land jaselfs tot Dielie], that such a great lord [the Dutch envoy] has arrived here to deal business with me.’<sup>113</sup>

In his court chronicle, the trans-regional merits of the Nawab are described, ‘...From the Carnatic to Gopamaw<sup>114</sup>, the native home of his ancestors, the Nawab spread a common table with dainties for the enjoyment of his relations and all travellers.’<sup>115</sup> He also sent stone implements like mill-stones, mortars, pestles, etc. from his country to Arabia, which were said to be rare in that country. Consequently, the chronicle claims that he conferred favors on the people of Arabia and as a token of appreciation these people embroidered their head-dresses with the exalted name of ‘Wallajah Sultanu’l’ and named him ‘Sulanu’l Hind.’ In the course of sermons

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<sup>112</sup> Burhan Hasan. *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* . Vol. I, Nainar. S. M. H. transl. (Madras 1934), p. 12.

<sup>113</sup> VOC 3292, The Mission to Arcot in September 1770 by Pieter Sluysken, Fol.721v.

<sup>114</sup> Gopamau is a town and a nagar panchayat in Hardoi district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh in North India.

<sup>115</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* , Vol. I, p. 12.

of their mosques, they mentioned his name next to that of the sultan of Rum (Ottoman).<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, the Nawab was said to have been accepted by the latter as his servant after receiving from him the hereditary rights to sweep and light the holy places in Mecca and Madina.<sup>117</sup> These deceptively humble actions in the great holy places by a servant of a great ruler were cherished marks of rank and honor in the Muslim world.<sup>118</sup>

Apart from religiously connected to the Ottoman ruler and Arabian lands, he was also genealogically linked to the great Safawi dynasty. According to the chronicle, his wife Khadija Begum was a Safawi princess. She was the descendant of a nephew of Persian Shah Tahmasp, who migrated to Deccan. Through this marriage he became the son in-law of a glorious and noble family of the Shah of Iran, ‘the paradise on earth’<sup>119</sup>

As referred to in the court chronicle as well as in the Dutch documents, the kingdom under the Nawab’s jurisdiction was the Carnatic, but in his mind the borders of the world he was living and concerning for maintaining his status and reputation, did not end there. The borders went beyond the Mughal Empire, which was centered in Delhi. The Indian Mughal, the Persian Safawi and the Turkish Ottoman are known as the three great empires and main corridors to the so-called early modern Muslim world (which I call the Islamicate cosmopolis). The best way to obtain political legitimacy for a small Muslim ruler was to have close connections with or receive acknowledgement from the Padshah (Emperors) of one of these empires. Muhammad Ali even claimed himself to be linked with all of them and even their populations. He did not only wish to create a suitable status in the geo-body of this world, but he also presented himself as a glorious ruler who was accepted by the whole world.

For the further integration of his kingdom into the contemporary Islamicate cosmopolis, the Nawab, more than any other of his Muslim predecessors in Carnatic, tried to build up a Muslim center within this Tamil Hindu heartland and to put his Tamil region on the Muslim geo-political map.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p.13.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>118</sup> Susan Bayly. *Saints, Goddesses and King: Muslims and Christian in South Indian Society 1700-1900*. (Cambridge 1989), p. 172.

<sup>119</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II, pp. 6-7.

The nawab recruited Sufis, scholars, military men and government officials from North India and the Muslim heartlands, Persia and Arabia, to serve in his kingdom.<sup>120</sup> He changed the name of the capital city to ‘Muhammadpur’ (City of Muhammad), or at least he called it ‘Muhammadpur’ before his Muslim audience.<sup>121</sup> He also named Trichinopoly—or Trichy, the second important city of Carnatic, the old capital of Nayaka of Madurai, and one of the most famous southern Tamil Nadu towns—‘Natharnagar’, after the name of Said Hazrat Nathar Wali. This person was one of the great Sufi grand warrior-saints of India, who came to Trichy in the tenth century and was believed to be the first Sufi to bring Islam to South India and Srilanka. Nawab Muhammad Ali also renovated the tomb of Nathar Wali and built an illuminating dome ‘which is so high as to surpass the sky and brings under the shade of its protection the (Trichinopoly) fort which is within an arrow shot.’<sup>122</sup> The tributes to past Muslim warrior-saints who had lived and died were also done in other key towns of South India; the Nawab also paid tribute to Hazrat Makan in Vellore and Shah al-Hamid in Nagore.<sup>123</sup> The Nawab thus actively revived the histories and legends of these Muslim saints in both the northern and southern Tamil region.

Muhammad Ali was also known as a mosque-builder, and also as a benefactor of various sacred Muslim places in the South which were built by many groups of local Muslim and non-Muslim benefactors in different periods of time. Among the finest Islamicate structures erected by Nawab Muhammad Ali are the great beautiful mosque known as Masjid-I Muhammadi in Trichy; the grateful masjid Ma’mur in Angappa Nayaka street in Madras; and the great Wallajah mosque in Triplicane, an imposing sandstone masjid with an adjoining cluster of gunbads – domed tombs of the Wallajah family and their retainers, together with the shrine of the Lucknavi Sufi master Maulana Abd al-Bahr al-Ulum.<sup>124</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p.155.

<sup>121</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II, p. 150.

<sup>122</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. I, p. 132.

<sup>123</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, pp. 216-218.

According to Susan Bayly, the Nagore dargah of Shahul Hamid belonged to the established tradition of Sufi cult shrines. It received strong support from the elite Maraikkar Muslims of Tamil Nadu as well as Muslim trading people operating in southeast Asia and Malabar coast. At the same time the dargah was an important touchstone in the competitive acts of state-building pursued by professing Hindu and Muslim rulers. The Rajas of Tanjore were known as benefactors of this shrine, and in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, when the conflicts between the European powers, the Nawab, the Maratha Rajas, and the sultans of Mysore all came to focus on the Tanjore domain, the Nagore shrine became an important focus for this strategic rivalry. (See *Ibid.*, pp. 219- 221)

<sup>124</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. I, p. 132; Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 171.

Furthermore, the Wallajah's legacies, either religious buildings or dynastic monuments were all built in the classic Persianate style or the so-called 'high' Islamicate style of architecture. These monuments do not have pillared halls or lotus emblems, thus no Indic architectural features which were so common in other Islamicate buildings throughout India.<sup>125</sup> This may be seen as a sign that Muhammad Ali tried to strengthen 'Islamic' identity in his kingdom, and an attempt to link his kingdom in southern India with the heartlands of Islam.

### **The construction of political legitimacy**

In the mid-eighteenth century, the whole subcontinent seemed to be in total chaos and there appeared to be a vacuum of power. As described in the chronicle: 'in Delhi, the Padshah [Ahmad Shah] was helpless in the hands of the amirs [ministers]. In these circumstances every one of the neighboring rulers, bound up the waist of his independence, and Hindustan was thus broken up among the kings of the provinces; the empire had been divided.'<sup>126</sup> At this moment, the position of a ruler was mainly judged by military conquest. The stronger got the throne; the weaker, if not eliminated, was waiting for new fortune to come. Muhammad Ali rose to his throne under this circumstance, with the military and financial help of the English Company. However, to build up a stable state, to keep power and to govern people in the long run was another story. The success in gaining sufficient political legitimacy from surrounding people was indispensable for any would be ruler. The *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* reflects very well the various challenges Nawab Muhammad Ali was facing and also his efforts to solve the problems and justify his actions with regard to this respect.

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<sup>125</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 172.

<sup>126</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II 145.

### The construction of the Mughal administrative line

In heated correspondences between Muhammad Ali and Chanda Sahib, the latter once argued: ‘the absolute authority over the kingdom of the Carnatic is entrusted to me by the mandate of the previous sovereign [Nizam Muzaffar Jung, r. Dec.1750-1751].’<sup>127</sup>

Muhammad Ali answered: ‘...by the support of the everlasting *sanad* of the Padshah of the Hind and the Wazir of the Deccan [Nizam Nasir Jung r. 1748-1750], I have a hereditary right to the administration of this kingdom...Your false claim is due merely to force and deceit.’<sup>128</sup>

At the time Nawab Muhammad Ali rose to the throne, the Mughal Imperial law stated that the Nawab of Arcot was in third in rank and subordinated to the Mughal Emperor and the Nizam of Hyderabad. However, as reflected in the message above, in the mid-eighteenth century, during the time of succession wars and fluctuating fortunes, it became very difficult to identify the legitimate overlord of the areas in Deccan and Carnatic. Even in Delhi, the power of the Emperor was also unstable and unreliable. As a consequent, the clear lines of patron-client and legitimate succession in each area were blur and confusing.

Muhammad Ali claimed via the chronicle that, after his father’s death he succeeded the throne by his hereditary right and this was confirmed by both the Emperor and Nizam of Deccan, the two authorized overlords. Confirmation for this was sent to him on numerous occasions. He received the first imperial farman from the Mughal Padshah, Ahmad Shah, through the Nizam of Deccan when he was in Trichy fighting against the usurper Chanda Sahib. ‘This Wazir [the Nizam] on behalf of the Padshah granted to Hazrat-i-A ‘la [Muhammad Ali] the country of the Carnatic, mansabs and titles.’<sup>129</sup> Later, the Padshah delivered another farman, which bestowed more mansabs and titles on him. It also confirmed his authority over the dominion of the Carnatic Payanghat, his new appointment as the deputy [Naib] to the Wazir of Deccan, and an order for all the zamindars, qiladars, and ziladars [landowners] of the Payanghat and the Balaghat to support and obey him.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 79.



Even though there was a power struggle and a change in Delhi, a few years later, the chronicle did not miss to link Muhammad Ali to the new authorized overlord, Shah Alam II (r.1759-1806). As described in the chronicle, the Nawab wrote a letter of congratulate Ali Gawhar Shah Alam in 1759, right after he learned that the latter was crowned as the new Mughal Emperor. Along with the letter he sent 1100 arshrafi as nazr [tribute]. The Emperor then praised the Nawab and granted him the title of ‘Wallajah’, as well as other titles and mansabs to five sons of the Nawab.<sup>131</sup>

With regard to the Nizam of the Deccan, the chronicle is not so clear about who exactly the ‘Wazir’ was: Nizam al-Mulk Asaf Jah I (r.1720-1748) or Nizam Nasir Jung (r.1748-1750). However both of them were known as the allies and supporters of the Wallajah and the English in their fight against the French. Thus the chronicle made a clear line between the legal power and inherited succession of these two Nizams. Nawab Asaf al-Dawla (Nizam-ul-Mulk, Asaf Jah I) was mentioned as the person to whom ‘the Imperial Court entrusted to the care of all the subah of the Deccan.’<sup>132</sup> He was later poisoned by his younger brother Salabat Jang which caused the Mughal Padshah’s discontent.<sup>133</sup> And ‘according to the farman from Delhi’, Nawab Nasir Jang, the son of Nazim Asaf Jah I, inherited the kingdom of his father.<sup>134</sup>

The chronicle also mentions Nizam Muzaffar Jung and Salabat Jung (r.1751-1762), who were the next Nizams of Deccan after Nizam Nasir Jung but supported his enemies Chanda Sahib and the French, but obviously in contradictory way.

Around 1750, when Muzaffar Jung seized the throne of Deccan with the help of the French, he ordered Muhammad Ali to obey him. According to the chronicle, Muhammad Ali replied to him:

‘...though it is necessary for the *nazim* of the Carnatic to obey the *rais* of the Deccan, yet it is impossible for me to obey you in view of the following facts: Your subjugation of the nizamat of the Deccan was through force and wickedness while my sway over the domination of the Carnatic is hereditary, by the sanction of the imperial order; recognition of your authority is not possible without the arrival of imperial orders. In these circumstances your entrusting the

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<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 273.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>134</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, p. 136.

nizamat of Arcot to Husayn Dost Khan (Chanda Sahib), and granting to the French many taluks as jagirs, excite wonder. Certainly these will lead to many troubles and ugly things.<sup>135</sup>

Personal characteristics and morals also played important roles in the war for legitimacy. Nizam Salabat Jung was depicted as an immoral and wicked murderer who poisoned his brother Nizam Asaf Jah I. The latter, in contrast, fell victim to the former because of his innate humanity and generosity, his inherent honesty and sincerity.<sup>136</sup>

All the given examples reveal how Muhammad Ali made full use of the chronicle to construct the ‘legal’ line of political power under the Mughal administrative system, in which he was always incorporated, but his enemy not! The Nawab insisted that he as well as the Nizams who were his supporters, Asaf Jah I and Nazir Jung, were legally, publicly and uninterruptedly acknowledged by the Mughal Emperors as the authorized rulers. On the other hand, Nizam Muzzafar Jung and Salabat Jung’s claims were also unjust in terms of law and morality. This way, Muhammad Ali was also denying and destroying the sources of political legitimacy of Chanda Sahib, his direct competitor, while legalizing and strengthening his own.

Another interesting point worth paying attention too is the fact that throughout the Indian Mughal Empire Muhammad Ali only accepted to be inferior to two persons, namely the Mughal Emperor and the Nizam of Deccan. Apart from this, Muhammad Ali also tried to present himself to be at least equal in position and often also superior to others. This can obviously be seen in the chronicle in which he claimed himself to be the great benefactor of various subordinated rulers of the empire who faced ruin because their luck had turned, and sought refuge:

‘Princes and amirs of high family, the descendants of the sultans of Hindustan, the son of the nazim of Bengal, the grandson of the nizam of Deccan and others found refuge under the shade of his tender care and kindness and obtained greater comfort and solace than was available in their homes.’<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p. 64.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid., p.144.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., pp. 15-16.

### **The portrayal of the Nawayat dynasty**

According to the nineteenth century English gazetteer of North Arcot, the man behind the murder of Muhammad Sa'id, the last Nawayat Nawab was left in eternal doubt. Although many blamed another Nawayat prince, Mortis Ali, for the murder, and saw this as an internal Nawayat dynastic struggle, many also suspected the Wallajah Anwar al-Din Khan, who guided the minor Nawab. As seen from the gazetteer, the English seemed to believe that it was the act of the latter, as it hinted: 'Anwar-ud-din, however, was the only one who derived any advantage from the death of the young prince. He succeeded at least in persuading his patron, the nizam, of his innocent and was by him elevated to the vacant throne.'<sup>138</sup> The English gazetteer also claimed that Saadatulla and Dost Ali, the two former Nawayat Nawabs had been benefactors to the Carnatic, to whom the people clung to with great affection, while 'the alienation of the throne to a stranger was regarded with universal regret and dissatisfaction.'<sup>139</sup>

Even though in 1744 Anwar al-Din Khan, father of Muhammad Ali, was legally elevated to Nawab of Arcot by the Nizam of the Deccan and his position was recognized by the Mughal Emperors, the Wallajah must have been seen in many contemporaries' eyes as the usurper of the former dynasty, facing tough challenges to his political legitimacy with regard to this aspect. The following fragment depicts the succession war between Muhammad Ali and Chanda Sahib in the period 1749-1752, and refers to this problem:

'There was great confusion in the land, and the people had become scattered. There was delay in the receipt of the revenue from the zamindars who were aware of the absolute authority of Hazrat-i-A 'la [Muhammad Ali] and of the strength of Natharnagar. Days passed on the fear and hope, and they were as hesitating as cats on a wall. The question as to whom they should submit to in the end occupied their thoughts.'<sup>140</sup>

The fragment above points out that even after several years had passed and the throne was in the hands of the second Wallajah Nawab, Muhammad Ali, the Wallajah's power was not widely accepted yet. When the Nawayat prince pushed himself as the candidate of the Carnatic's throne, it seems that various smaller local rulers were ready to go over to Chanda Sahib

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<sup>138</sup> Cox, A. F., *Madras District Manuals: North Arcot*. Vol. 1 (Madras, 1895), p. 52.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II, p. 2.

immediately after he won the war. The following examples interestingly reflect on Muhammad Ali's efforts to find justifications to the rise of his family and himself against the Nawayat.

The first illustration is the occasion when Nawab Saadatullah Khan, the first Nawab of the Nawayat dynasty was recruited for the army of Emperor Aurangzeb. It was depicted that when he first appeared before the Emperor, Muhammad Said (the original name of Saadatullah Khan) was rejected to be a soldier because of 'his emaciated body and short stature'. But later a person in the army gave him a magical amulet to hide on his head, and told him that it would help him to be recruited. When Muhammad Said appeared before the Emperor for the second time, the Emperor found out about the deceitful amulet and blamed him for resorting to actions like these. The Emperor asked him not to ever do that again. Yet, he eventually accepted Muhammad Said into his army. Then the chronicle continues to depict the rising of Saadatullah Khan using some insulting words like 'the rising of a beggar to the position of a sultan.'<sup>141</sup>

During the transitional period from the first to the second dynasty, the chronicle justified the rise of the Wallajah family by blaming the Nawayat dynasty as 'the source of mischief, trouble, enmity, and intrigue', which caused all the chaotic situations in the Carnatic.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, the Wallajah were the people who restored peace:

'when the Supreme Cause desires to establish peach in the country, he does not choose a ruler who prefers his own advantage to the detriment of the rest of the creation. Nawwab Siraju'd-Dawla [Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan, Muhammad Ali's father], when he was entrusted with the rule of the Carnatic Payaghat, strove from his capital of Arcot to inquire into the conditions of his subjects and soldiers and do all things that would give them comfort and tranquility.'<sup>143</sup>

As expected, the image of Chanda Sahib is the cruelest among all Nawab Muhammad Ali's enemies. His move of taking Trichinopoly from the Hindu ruler of Madurai showed his deceit, shamelessness and immorality. As described in the chronicle, upon the death of the Nayaka of Madurai in 1732, the Rani—his wife—succeeded him. Chanda Sahib went to her

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<sup>141</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, pp. 67-68.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 83.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

under false pretenses and acted as a brother to her. Later, even though he had sworn to god and he knew it was against the rules of Islam, he treacherously broke his word and seized power. This betrayal caused the Rani to burn herself according to the Hindu custom.<sup>144</sup>

Chanda Sahib was also depicted, obviously in contrast to how he is depicted in the majority of primary sources, as a weak military man and a coward. When the army of Chanda Sahib was almost defeated by the army of the Nawab and the English Company, ‘He assembled together his advisers and councilors of war, and placed before them his weakness to fight on the maydan, his inability to spread out, the death of the brave and resolute companions...Then he consigned to flames ponderous articles, and during the night fled towards the temple of Jhamgir and Srirang...’<sup>145</sup>

On the death of Chanda Sahib, the chronicle depicted that it was caused by the sin he had committed: ‘...there was ready the retribution for the oath taken on the praiseworthy and the holy Quran, in the course of his dealings with the Rani of Trichinopoly [Madurai]; the retaliation for the blood, unjustly shed, of the Nawwab Siraju’-d-Dawla Anwaru’-d-Din Khan, and the murder of Nawwab Nasir Jang Shahis, the wazir and the nazim of the Deccan. Hence the polish of any plan failed to remove the rust in the mirror of forgetfulness.’<sup>146</sup>

Various attempts by the Nawab, explicitly and implicitly, to dishonor the former dynasty show that the threatening feeling caused by the Nawayat and Chanda Sahib must have been in the mind of Muhammad Ali for many years after the death of Chanda Sahib. It is also possible that the challenges to Muhammad Ali’s power by the heirs of the former dynasty had constantly laid in wait. Another possibility is that the fall of the Nawayat had still been in the minds of various people or played a role in the political game of Carnatic until the time this chronicle was produced in 1780.

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., pp. 70-72 (quoted p. 71)

<sup>145</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p.109.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid., p.122.

### **The internal struggle: Muhammad Ali and Muhammad Mahfuz Khan**

It appears in some English documents and literatures that under his reign, the relationship between Muhammad Ali and his other brothers was not so smooth. He always suspected them of committing usurpation.

An English source records that in 1760, the Nawab managed to obtain from the English Company council, under the leadership of governor Pigot, a written promise never to assist or protect any of his brothers.<sup>147</sup> The historian Gurney mentions that from his observation of *Ruznameh*, the personal diary of the Nawab, only a kind word to his brothers from the English governor was enough to throw the Nawab into the greatest anguish.<sup>148</sup>

In the eyes of the Nawab, the relationship with his brothers was also an important matter he needed to explain to his Muslim audiences. However, until now no historian explicitly elaborate on this aspect.

One prince, who actually should be given special attention, was the Nawab's oldest living brother, Muhammad Mahfuz Khan (the second son of his father). Apart from being the oldest, this prince also played an important role during the reign of his father. He was appointed governor of Arcot and leader of the army that accompanied Muhammad Ali in his fight against the French and helped the English to retake Madras in the 1740s. Therefore this prince should be seen as perhaps the candidate to succeed his father. But unfortunately during the war with the French in 1749, his father died, and this prince was captured by the French with many other Wallajahs as a hostage. In this vacuum of power, Muhammad Ali declared himself the ruler of Carnatic. Several years after that war, when an agreement was made with the French, the Nawab paid ransom to free his Wallajah cousins. The oldest prince was then released. It is thus reasonable to imagine the complex situation the two brothers found themselves in; while the older brother lost the chance to the throne after being captured by the French, his younger brother rose to the position of the Nawab of Arcot. The story of his brother in the chronicle, provided by Muhammad Ali, may shed new light.

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<sup>147</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 123 (Parterson, Vol. III, pp.255-6).

<sup>148</sup> Gurney, 'Fresh Light on the Character of the Nawab of Arcot', p. 235. (cited from *Ruznameh*, 33 D, 28 March 1775).

In the chronicle Muhammad Ali was presented as the most blessed and excellent of the family; ‘the (choicest) flower in the basket of the children of Nawab Siraju’ d-Dawla Bahadur.’<sup>149</sup> He was the most beloved son of his father who considered him the ‘most worthy to manage every business and successfully in all affairs.’<sup>150</sup> By contrast, his older brother Muhammad Mahfuz Khan was described as a troublemaker. Once his father entrusted him to govern Trichinopoly, the second important city of the kingdom. However, there his oldest son and one of his nephews came into conflicts, which made the old Nawab very angry. Eventually, Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan went to Trichinopoly, subdued the chaos and dismissed Muhammad Mahfuz Khan from the Subah of Trichinopoly. Then, he ‘entrusted it to our Hazrat-i-A ‘la, ... to make it permanent in his possession and that of his descendants.’<sup>151</sup>

Some other time, a conflict arose between the father and his oldest son in the capital city of Arcot. Emotions ran high and Nawab Anwar al-Din Khan decided to stay with his beloved son Muhammad Ali at Trichinopoly.<sup>152</sup> ‘The devotion of Hazrat-i-A ‘la to his famous father, and the affection of the father towards his esteemed son’<sup>153</sup> was shown throughout the book.

According to the chronicle, after Muhammad Ali succeeded his father as the Nawab of Arcot, his oldest brother did commit several ‘rebellious’ actions against Muhammad Ali’s authority. Yet, ‘considering that he was his own brother and also senior in age’, and ‘by the innate disposition and dutiful nature of Hazrat-i-A ‘la, he forgave his brother, and showed him respect as usual.’<sup>154</sup> Eventually the kindness of the Nawab made his brother feel ashamed of his past conduct and he became one of ‘the loyal and intimate companions of the Nawab.’<sup>155</sup>

As seen from the chronicle, it seems that internal challenges to his political legitimacy was as crucial to the Nawab as external challenges. The Muslim inheritance law stipulated that succession depended on the father’s will, which was the foundation of Muhammad Ali’s claim to the throne. The chronicle was again used as leverage against his brother.<sup>156</sup> The romantic ending of their relationship helped to support Muhammad Ali’s sovereignty and morality. However,

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<sup>149</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p. 5.

<sup>150</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, p. 127.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., pp. 127-128.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>153</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, pp. 21-23.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., p. 152.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid., pp. 152, 277.

<sup>156</sup> Nightingale, Fortune and Integrity, p. 124.

what happened in reality seems to be different. According to the diary of his English adviser Paterson, this eldest prince was in the end captured by Muhammad Ali and charged with defecting to the enemy. He had since been kept in confinement.<sup>157</sup>

### **The Nawab and the Europeans in the Islamicate cosmopolis**

Describing a part of *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* :-

‘Although some of the governors of Chennapatnam (Madras) like Lord Pigot, Lord Macartney and other sometimes behaved towards Hazrat-i-A ‘la contrary to the courtesy...the most elegant people in the capital of the kingdom of England, the sardars [ministers] of the Padshah, the wise men in the parliament, the directors of the Company, ordered what was right and correct and did not approve of the actions of these two Lords and others.’<sup>158</sup>

In an open assembly in Chennapatan, General Coote the sardar (of the army) had a dispute with Lord Macarney. The former argued: ‘It is not the manner of the wise to wound the feelings of a benefactor [referring to the Nawab]. As far as possible there must be consideration for him.’

Lord Macarney replied: ‘In the face of justice we have got rights over him, for without our support it is impossible for him to maintain his rule.’

Mr. Coote then argued: ‘General Lawrence and I have been here in this country for a long time...we know more of the past than you, for you are young. Though our people help him in all affairs, yet we have found his kindness to our people, especially on three occasions of difficulty [when the fort St. George and the fort of Devanamoatan were captured by the French]... The help and support (he gave) on these three occasions is the reason for the stability of the English

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 123 (Paterson, Vol. III. pp.255-6).

<sup>158</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* , Vol. I, p. 124.



nation today in this country of Hindustan. For without this help (of the Nawab), the French, instead of our people, would have been all powerful in the affairs of this country.’<sup>159</sup>

The Nawab’s intimate relationship with and his heavy dependence on the English must have been publicly known among the contemporaries. The message above also reveals that it was well known that the English exercised aggression and strict control over the Nawab. Naturally, as an independent sovereign ruler, the Nawab did not wish for other people, either in the Islamicate or Indic world, inside or outside India to see him as inferior to the European powers. Those actions thus must have affected his reputation and political status.

Although it is impossible to prove its authenticity, the conversations between the English Company officials, as quoted in the Persian chronicle, very well show that the Nawab attempted to explain the circumstance. Many other fragments will be provided in the following part to see how the Nawab actually wanted this part of his life to be written.

### **Introducing the English to the Muslim audiences**

When introducing the English to the Muslim world, the Nawab always described their abilities and virtue as better than the other European nations. His praise for the English was in sharp contrast with how he portrayed the French:

‘...the group of English who were celebrated for their virtue and fidelity, well-known for sincerity and friendship, famous for their qualities of justice and equity, firm in the organization of war and battle, bold in the field of battle and fighting, the pearl of wisdom and sagacity, faithful in their friendship, sincerity and real attachment, ... distinguished from the common crowd..., bound to and united with the people of Islam, the embodiment of different kinds of intrepidity and the very source of the characteristics of bravery and courage.’<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 125.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

These words of praise did not only help justifying the Nawab's decision of signing an alliance with the English, these words also aimed at praising the Nawab for his 'far-sightedness and rich and powerful commonsense'<sup>161</sup>

However, the Nawab put a lot of effort to clarify to his audiences that, in this relationship, it was mainly he who were the benefactor of the English nation, not the other way around. The reason why the English had been helping him in these days was because they felt so much gratitude for his and his father's benevolence towards them.

The event when the French seized the city of Madras in the mid-1740s was repeated several times throughout the chronicle by the Nawab. Details on the war placed emphasis on the fact that Prince Muhammad Ali was appointed to punish the French who were full of 'mischief' and 'treacherous' and to help the English who were 'loyal' and 'trustworthy'.<sup>162</sup>

After this event, the chronicle continues with:

'At all times Hazrat-i-A'la tried to help them [the English] as far as possible in all their important affairs by all possible means... Thus he made the affairs of the (English) Company increase day by day with credit till the high position and glorious power and the French inclined towards decay... (when) the chiefs of Hind and the Deccan stretched out their arms to fight the English,... requesting him [the Nawab] to support them and not help the Directors of the Company, they did not find any advantage... When the letters of the French Padshah [Louis XV] requesting that the French should be treated by the nawab as friends, instead of the English, (the Nawab) did not choose any (ally) besides the English.'<sup>163</sup>

To make the relationship more dramatic, the author mentions that during the process of compiling the book, he read out to him the part of the Nawab's attempts to protect the English during the war of the 1740s. This 'recalled to his mind (the Nawab's) the anxiety and exertions he underwent for the solution of such difficulties, and shed tears'. The Nawab then said: 'I have helped and protected the English whenever they were in trouble, not only because of my generosity, but also out of respect for the advice of my father. I have brought my influence to bear on all their activities in such a way that in the whole of India none has the courage to oppose

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> There were at least four times in Ibid. : pp. 125; 100-103 ; 116; 117, see full details in pp. 116-124.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p.104.

them now. The French with all their power drowned their proud army like Pharaoh in the river Nile and became annihilated.’<sup>164</sup>

### **The Nawab, the English crown, and the English Company**

The next remarkable point the Nawab highlighted in his relationship with the English was the distinction between the English Company and the English king. Although the Nawab praised the English Company enormously, he always stressed that it was socially in lower or subordinate position compared to him. In order to reach the purpose, the chronicle explains in details and correctly what the English East India Company was, how it was formed in England, and how it rose ‘from the position of “merchants” to the rank of “rulers.”’<sup>165</sup> The chronicle also points out that the English East India Company was indeed not different from the mercenary; they only fought for the Nawab after ‘they may be informed that I undertake to meet the expenses of the army and other necessary expenditure.’<sup>166</sup>

By contrast, the Nawab shapely emphasized the social equality between him and ‘the English Padshahs’. More than once the chronicle mentions the strength in friendship and love between Muhammad Ali and the two kings of England, i.e. George II ( r.1727-60) and George III (r.1760-1820): ‘the bond of union between them reached such a limit that the result was a brotherly treaty.’<sup>167</sup> Moreover, ‘in their letters of friendship and union the English kings addressed Muhammad Ali with the title of “brother”’.<sup>168</sup> The chronicle further claims that one of the kings of England even said that ‘as long as our authority over England and the administration of Hazrat-i-A‘la in the Carnatic continues generation after generation, the friendship and union between the two powers will be permanent and firm.’<sup>169</sup> In addition, a few correspondences between the English king and the Nawab were translated and written down in the chronicle.<sup>170</sup>

<sup>164</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p. 51.

<sup>165</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, pp.104-106

<sup>166</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p.77.

<sup>167</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, p. 106.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p 124.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, pp. 250-252.

This part of the chronicle corresponds well with the English evidence that show the struggle of the Nawab against Sir Josias Du Pré the English governor of Madras, in the early 1770s. As already mentioned in the first chapter, around this time many Company men complained about the changing behavior of the Nawab towards the Company after he had direct contact with the king of England via the King's Ministers. One of the conflicts concerned the Nawab's title. In July 1772, the Nawab sent a demand to Du Pré not to call him 'your Excellency', because even the King's Ministers were using the terms 'your Highness',<sup>171</sup> and 'Arzdasht' in Persian, a mode of address used by an inferior to a superior, to address him.<sup>172</sup> The Nawab also claimed that a previous governor had addressed him by a Persian term which could be translated into 'your Royal Highness'.<sup>173</sup>

In the eyes of outsiders like George Paterson, who was new in India at that time, to be addressed by 'Arzdasht' or not was a futile matter. He even warned the Nawab that his enemies would laugh at him and claim all of this to be absurd.<sup>174</sup> On the other hand, evidence indicate that for the people well acquainted with Indian politics, like the Nawab and the EIC officials, this was a very crucial issue. The Nawab insisted on and took every measure available to achieve this goal. He even told Paterson that he would manage to make the French address him in this respectable way as well.<sup>175</sup> For the Company, this provoked controversies. In fact, the governors and many Madras council's members had expressed for years that the Nawab was not entitled to such form of address as he was only a 'foujdar' [A magistrate or native governor].<sup>176</sup> They could not accept if the Nawab would treat them as inferior.<sup>177</sup>

Eventually, Governor Du Pré went against the voices in the council and agreed with the Nawab's request. Paterson believed that there were personal interests behind this decision.<sup>178</sup> Anyhow, the Nawab got what he wanted, as Paterson wrote: '...and now he has got this Presidency's Letter called an 'Arzdasht'. He will acquaint all the courts of India with it...' <sup>179</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 115 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 212).

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.* (Paterson, Vol. IV, pp.12-13, 21).

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, (Paterson, Vol. III, p.252).

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126 (Paterson, Vol. IV, pp.31,44-5).

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.* (Paterson, Vol. iv. p. 31, 44-5).

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116 (Paterson, Vol. IV, pp.14, 12).

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.* (Paterson, Vol. IV, p.26).

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.* (Paterson, Vol. IV, p.26).

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.* p. 117 (Paterson, Vol. III, p.27).

### The supreme leader of Carnatic

Another interesting image that the Nawab tried to create with respect to his relationship with the English and other Europeans is reflect from the two fragments below.

‘I have taken vengeance on Husayn Dost Khan (Chanda Sahib) for the murder of my father. Now with the idea of exacting retribution for the murder of the Nawab Nasir Jang [Nizam Nasir Jang] I have put to death many brave French soldiers.’<sup>180</sup>

‘It is certain that M. Bussy with the Deccan army and Haydar Ali Khan will join M.Lally, Muhammad Najibu’llah Khan and *qil’adars* like Ghulam Murtaza Khan and other zamindars from the Carnatic will gird up their loins in union with the French.’<sup>181</sup>

As seen from the sources, the Nawab wished others to perceive that he was the supreme leader of the Carnatic army and the person who controlled the fate of his own kingdom. The wars occurring under his reign, as he tried to point out, were the fights between him, the supreme ruler and the protector of his country, against the French or other Indian rulers; those were not the Europeans wars between the English and French which he could not prevent from being fought in areas over which he held jurisdiction. The English armies were only introduced as his loyal assistants. One will see this clearly from some more remarkable illustrations below.

In one of the dramatic war scenes, the Nawab and the English army were surrounded by the Kallars and the Marathas who plundered the fort of Trichy day and night. As it was described, ‘even birds did not fly’ and the roads of communication were all blocked; great anxiety left the army and people in great despair. In this crisis, Nawab Muhammad Ali assembled all his nobles, ministers, General Lawrence (the English commander) and other sardars (ministers) of the English army to discuss strategies. The Nawab said:

‘At present, considering the hopeless of help from anyone, the influent of the French in the Deccan, ... We do not think that we will get even Arcot or Trichinopoly. It does not behoove our reputation that we, in preference to the preservation of our borrowed life, lose the vast

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<sup>180</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p. 229.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

inherited kingdom for the sake of which in reality my father shed his blood. In this troubled state, I seek counsel from you, my trustworthy companions.’

All unanimously replied: ‘In these delicate times we do not find any way but to risk our lives according to your command.’

The Nawab responded: ‘The same is our counsel. As long as our breath remains we, in your company, will hold in our hands the sword and try according to the maxim... Since victory is from the side of Allah, it is possible we may achieve success against our enemies.’<sup>182</sup>

In another scene, General Lawrence told the Nawab that it was not necessary for him to go to the battlefield by himself: ‘It is advisable for your majesty to stay at this fort, take your seat in the tower and watch from there the *tamasha* of the bravery of your devoted servants (the English).’<sup>183</sup> Nawab Muhammad Ali refused and insisted that he, the supreme commander, had to be in the field, saying: ‘We have also the same hope from the trustworthy English; we have faith in their eternal fidelity... yet it behooves that the *sardar* in the battle remains behind the valiant fighters. It should not be like the saying ‘In the play of cards, confusion happens without the chief.’<sup>184</sup>

The last illustration is another case of misfortune brought upon the Nawab in the late 1750s. At that time the throne of Arcot was again sieged by Riza Ali Khan, the son of Chanda Sahib and the leader of the united army of the remaining Nawayat family and the French. Muhammad Ali had to escape to Madras to seek for English protection, and there, for security reasons, he was sent out to Trichinopoly by sea.<sup>185</sup> It was well known that after his abrupt escape to the southern capital, the Nawab took refuge there, while the responsibility of getting his throne back was left in the hands of the Company soldiers and his sepoy troops under English command. Whatever the reasons were for his inability to lead the army himself, his shameful flight and his dependence on the English in this war must have badly affected his reputation. In trying to restore his name and status, he explained the situation as follows.

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 156.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid., p. 159.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p. 160.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

As described in the chronicle, the Nawab was in actual fact very hesitant in retreating to Trichinopoly, but as the English insisted he had no other choice. For the supply of provisions, it also of importance that the Nawab headed to the south. The Nawab then told the English about his recent reunion: ‘...had we been at Nattharnagar [Trichy], we would, as far as possible, have certainly helped you with our army and provisions.’<sup>186</sup> Yet, unexpectedly after reaching Trichinopoly, the Nawab fell ill on account of the change of climate he experienced on land and sea. Quoting the chronicle: ‘His illness had made him too weak to bear the toils and exertions of leading an army and continuous journey.’<sup>187</sup> However, he did his best by sending the troops to help the English and wrote: ‘You must understand that I will be there immediately after recouping my health.’<sup>188</sup>

### **The benefactor of all European nations**

Besides providing information on the English, the chronicle also mentions other European nations who had arrived in India to establish their trade factories. The chronicle begins its information on the Europeans by providing a brief but, impressingly accurate overview of world history since the age of discovery: the Eurasian trade before 1483; the scientific development in late 15<sup>th</sup> century Europe; and the desire of the European countries to find the way to Hindustan; the voyage of Columbus under the patronage of the Spanish king and his unintentional discovery of the New World. Then details of the Portuguese, the Denikumar (Denish), the Walandez (Hollanders) and the French are given, one by one. For each nation, the following details are given: the geographic position and size of their country, the original tribes of which they were direct descendants, the name and outlook of the capital city, the density of population, the kings or government, the condition of military power, their arrival in India and their trading activities and settlements in Hindustan.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p. 210.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid., p. 216.

<sup>189</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, pp. 85-109.

These European Companies were depicted as humble merchants who, while settling in the Carnatic, ‘summitted the customary presents and gifts, paid *peshkash* [tribute] for the estates under their management and thus gave proof of their sincerity and fidelity.’<sup>190</sup>

Some of these nations, like the French and Dutch, occasionally committed aggressive and rebellious acts against the Nawab. However, as the chronicle states later they both realized their mistakes and asked for the Nawab’s forgiveness. For illustration, after the death of Chanda Sahib in 1752, the French Governor Dupleix sent the letter of apology to the Nawab in which he humbly had written:

‘A stray incident which happened during these days was due to our union with the unfortunate rebels and it is cause for our repentance...if the exalted master could pardon for my past sins, and bestow mercy in accordance with the favors of generosity and kindness, I take afresh an oath on the religion of our Prophet, ‘Isa and Injil our holy book, that, in the future, I will not associate myself with any mischief-maker in this land. I will be friends with the English and become one with them as brother with brother.’<sup>191</sup>

Yet, the Nawab thought that ‘to do good to the wicked [the French] is doing harm to the good [the English].’ He thus denied the peace offered to him and continued the war against them.<sup>192</sup> It was not until several years later, when the English and the French concluded the Treaty of Paris, that the Nawab decided to accept the French apology. However, as described in the chronicle, the powerful Nawab did say to the French: ‘we had no idea of peace but to expel your deceitful community from this land; yet out of regard for the treaty concluded by the Padshah of the English, our brother dear as life, and the recommendation of our sincere and devoted General Lawrence we consent to conclude treaty’<sup>193</sup>

A similar image is provided for the Dutch case. The conflict between the Nawab and the Dutch was about the jurisdiction over the lands in the Tanjore region. The chronicle claims that the ruler of Tanjore allocated certain places in this district to the Dutch for the establishment of their trade factories, without asking the nawab for permission first. But, ‘since the whole of the Carnatic was under the jurisdiction of Hazrat-i-A ‘la, according to the sanad from the Delhi

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

<sup>191</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p.130.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid., pp. 169-170.



Padshah, the behavior of the zamindar [Raja of Tanjore] and the merchants [the Dutch] was contrary to discipline.’ This angered the Nawab and as a response he sent a strong army to subjugate Tanjawur [Tanjore] and expelled the Dutch. (these were the so-called two Tanjore Wars). After the country was subdued and the zamindar was imprisoned, and the lands that were leased out were taken back, the Nawab claimed: ‘The Walandez conveyed their apology and thus saved them from the disgrace of expulsion’,<sup>194</sup>

Furthermore, the chronicle often claims that the French, the main European enemy of the Nawab, did admire his capabilities, especially in the military skills.

‘War against Muhammad Ali Khan will bear no fruit. ...For he is a sardar possessing great wisdom and sagacity. He is a commander with understanding and power. He is skilled in the methods of war; the master who subdues the kingdom; the king who wields an experienced sword. The superiority of his stratagem ties the hands of brave men. ...In opposing him the enemy loses his head and becomes helpless. I had occasions to know his method of fighting, and regretted having opposed him. My fear was that a war with him will be prolonged...’,<sup>195</sup>

‘The whole country of Hindustan [North India] with its abundant wealth and property is without a ruler or a governor, a wazir or a sultan. It is a house where booty is deposited, and it will be ours without any doubt or difficulty provided there is a little but firm endeavor on our part. ... But in the Carnatic, Nawab Muhammad Ali Khan is a blood-shedding sword; he is a storm on every battle-field and maydan creating a scene of the judgment day; he is a fire that will quickly catch the heap of the enemy’s army. In opposition to him there is neither a place to stand on the battle-field nor a way to flee from it.’<sup>196</sup>

The two remarkable examples are claimed to be the words of Dupleix, the French governor of Nagapatnam, which he addressed to Chanda Sahib and the French king. Yet, they seem to reflect the imagination of the Nawab more than the reality.

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<sup>194</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. I, pp. 94-96.

<sup>195</sup> Hasan, Tuzak-i Wallajahi , Vol. II, p. 3

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p.186.

All the evidences in relation to the European powers in *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* and elsewhere show that Muhammad Ali did not only wish to justify his close involvement with the European powers with the argument that he could protect his dignity and fame in the Muslim world. He also aimed at using all of these European powers to support and strengthen his image and his political position. By displaying that he had deep and wide knowledge of the world and all the European nations present in India, he was telling the Islamicate cosmopolis that everything was always under his control. He claimed that he was a brother of the great English king and that the powerful English Company was his loyal friend. He also claimed that he was respected by mighty nations as French and Dutch. Therefore, his social status and military strength was not to be challenged by anyone. The French acknowledgement and praise for his military abilities could strengthen his personal charisma and disguise his military weakness.

### Chapter Three:

#### The Nawab and the Indic Cosmopolis

In the court chronicle *Tuzak-i Wallajahi* and various Dutch documents, Nawab Muhammad Ali claimed himself to be the ruler of vast territories along the eastern coast of the Tamil country. The kingdom of Carnatic stretched from the Kistna river in northern Tamil to Cape Comerin in the most southern tip of the subcontinent, and expanded further inland until the border of the Mysore kingdom. According to his claim, the smaller Nayaka and Poligar states of Madurai, Tinnevelley, Tanjore, Theuver, Ramnad, Sivaganga, Maliwar, Tondaman, Tirur, Manaparai, were all his vassal states.<sup>197</sup> Because of various rebellions throughout his reign and because of his military weakness, the power of the Nawab and his control over his territories fluctuated and were thus hard to identify in exact terms. However, the long conflict between the Dutch and the Nawab over the Tanjore district in 1750s-1780s, and the benefits in Pear fishery at Manaar in Tuticorin prove well that his claim above was not just a mere boast or the castle in the airs; the influence and real political power of the Nawab and his role in the Tamil world more or less expanded to the far south.<sup>198</sup>

The story of Nawab Muhammad Ali and his kingdom of Carnatic has been analyzed in previous literatures within the contextual framework of the European expansion, and to lesser extent, the Muslim world. But, ironically, historians have forgotten or ignored the fact that this ruler was also living in the heart of the Indic world among millions of Hindu people. This gap in historiography may be partly caused by the limitation of historical sources. Until now the main primary sources used in the study of the Carnatic are mostly English archives, which focus on providing information about the Nawab in relation to the activities of the British and other European powers in India. Persian documents in which mainly the Nawab was presented in the context of the Muslim world have been used to a much lesser extent.

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<sup>197</sup> Burhan Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II, trans. S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar (Madras, 1939), pp. 25-26; VOC 3312, Memories van overgave (final reports) from Governor Pieter Haksteen to Reynier van Vlissingen, September 1771, Fol. 2055 v- 2056r.

<sup>198</sup> VOC 3292, The Mission to Arcot in September 1770 by Pieter Sluysken, Fol.713 v-714r.

But in actual fact, the Indic cosmopolis was most tangible world to the Nawab. It was the centre of his universe. It was the place where his kingdom was situated. The majority of the people he ruled over lived in this world. How he related with this world is no less important than his relationship with the European and Islamic world. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that this gap of historiography is closed in order to have a comprehensive understanding of Muhammad Ali and his kingdom.

As the successor of a new dynastic line who was seen by many local people as an illegal usurper of the former dynasty, as a stranger who was different from the majority of the population in terms of ethnic, culture and religion, as a new comer whose presence in the South was very brief, and as a rather weak ruler who was not able to retake his position without the help of the English Company, one can imagine the response of the Tamil people to the rise of the new Nawab, Muhammad Ali.

As reflected in the Persian court chronicle and several English accounts, in the beginning period of his reign, the Nawab faced critical problems in subjugating his Hindu subjects. A historical scene in 1755, in which the Nawab made his official entry into the city of Arcot for the first time, shows that it was the English army that subjugated all local South Indian subjects and ensured that the Nawab kept his throne.

The Madras records describe the ceremony:

‘The Nabob made his public entry this morning in a very splendid manner, and this evening visited the fort...He [the Nawab] then desired that we [the EIC] would mention aloud at his durbar that, now the army has arrived here, the poligars and his other tributaries should be first invited to settle accounts and pay off their arrears, but if they did not comply without delay, they should be forced to it.’<sup>199</sup>

‘In 1757 Colonel Heron had been dispatched to Madurai and Tinnevely to subdue refractory poligars, as well as to collect the rents due to the Nawab’.<sup>200</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Henry Davison Love, *Vestiges of old Madras: 1640-1800: traced from the East India Company's records preserved at Fort St. George and the India Office and from other sources*. Vol. II (New York : AMS Press, 1968), p. 475.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 476.

Throughout Muhammad Ali's reign, the English colonels with their armies were often sent to subdue refractory Poligars and to collect the revenues. Even though the EIC was not willing to do so, it could not refuse these assignments because with these revenues Muhammad Ali could pay off his considerable debt with the Company.<sup>201</sup> The second fragment above is an example of similar missions that can be found in the Company records. Both fragments prove that the English advancing conquests in the Tamil world were carried out under the name of the 'nominal' Nawab.

The use of the powerful Europeans to threaten the indigenous people was obviously the main strategy of the Nawab to keep his position, especially in the beginning of his reign. However, the Nawab was well aware of the fact that force only could not help him govern his people and be a successful ruler in the long run. Moreover, being heavily dependent on the English only strengthened the image of the Nawab as a dependent ruler. It was an image which the Nawab always tried to avoid and eliminate as much as possible. How did this Nawab manage to govern his Hindu subjects and to what extent was he successful?

This chapter aims to show my preliminary research in order to answer these questions and shed more light on the Nawab's political life in the Indic context. The main aspects of this study will be paralleled to the study of his relationship with the Islamicate cosmopolis in chapter three. For example, how the Nawab integrated himself into the Indic cosmopolis, how he positioned himself, which images the Nawab created to present himself to his audience, which strategies he used to build up his legitimacy and maintained his power, and how he integrated his European ally into this world. Besides consulting a variety of secondary literatures, I will re-explore the 'old' English and Persian sources and some 'new' Dutch East India Company sources, in order to reach this goal.

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<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

### The integration into the Indic cosmopolis

In heated conversations between Nawab Muhammad Ali and the Dutch officials over the rights and privileges as regards the pearl fishery business in Tuticorin, the Nawab bluntly said:

‘These provinces have always belonged to the turban wearers. Are they meant to be under the rule of the Europeans?’<sup>202</sup>

‘Which nations inhabited those lands in the past? Men who wore turbans or hats?!

Were the white or black the people who owned the country before?!

The white were always in Europe and the black always have occupied these lands (India)!’<sup>203</sup>

The aforementioned messages, even though addressed to the Dutch, may be a good start for us to see how this Nawab tried to position himself in the Indic cosmopolis.

Facing this world, the Nawab chose to forget his ‘white’ Turan origin, his pious Muslim religion, and his condition of being a foreigner whose family came to this land even after the European companies. As he claimed himself to be a ‘turban wearers’ and ‘black’; he pointed out that he was like the people of this land, unlike the European ‘hat wearers’. When the Nawab was refusing the European powers rights or benefits over the Indian lands, he was at the same time eliminating the demarcations that existed between himself and the Indic rulers and population, in order to show that he was the justified ruler.

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<sup>202</sup> VOC 3691, Translation of the letter of Nawab of Arcot Muhammad Ali to the Tuticorin opperhoofd in the year 1766 (on the dispute over the benefits in Pear fishery at Manaar), Fol. 946r.

<sup>203</sup> VOC 3292, The Mission to Arcot in September 1770 by Pieter Sluysken, Fol. 713v-714r.

## **The construction of political legitimacy**

In my opinion, it is worth to discuss Nawab Muhammad Ali's religious policy with respect to Hinduism and his policy of controlling the South Indian strategic points here. These two matters clearly reveal the efforts of the Nawab to integrate himself into this world and how he constructed his legitimacy over these lands.

### **The religious policy towards Hinduism**

The Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, to whom the Wallajah family was devoted, was famous for his religious policy of anti-Hinduism. Tipu Sultan of Mysore, one of the Muslim state-builders of southern India and a contemporary of the Nawab, was remembered in Malabar and the Tamil country as a Brahman-killer and a destroyer of South Indian temples.<sup>204</sup> Nawab Saadatullah Khan of the previous Nawayat dynasty was also recorded by the famous Hindu shrine of Tirupati as the Muslim ruler who reduced the daily allowance of the temples that were fixed by the former Vijayanagara and Nayaka rulers.<sup>205</sup> As we have seen in the previous chapter, Muhammad Ali was the ruler who also placed great emphasis on Islamic connections and presented himself as a devoted Muslim. But surprisingly, in contrast to other contemporary rulers, he seemed to have chosen a religious policy that imparted tolerance and syncretism. At least, judging from all the sources so far, he never implemented any anti non-Muslim programs.

According to some specialists on South Indian's religions, Susan Bayly and T.V. Mahalingan, the Nawab did not only not denounce the 'syncretism' of the region's Sufi foundations and cult shrines with their many links to Hindu and even Christian traditions of worship, he also continued to act as a patron and protector of the region's Hindu temples throughout his reign.<sup>206</sup> He continued to take Hindu holy places, especially the most celebrated ones around his kingdoms under his patronage, and saw to it that no harm was done to the sites

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<sup>204</sup> Susan Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King: Muslims and Christian in South Indian Society 1700-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

1989), p.165.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 182.

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 176.

during wars. The local Hindu traditions and customs also continued without interference from the nawab.

Examples of Hindu temples under the patronage of this Nawab were Sri Partasaratisvami temple in Triplicane near Madras, Ranganatha in Srirangam near Trichinopoly, Tirumala Venkateswara Temple in Tirupati, Sri Nellaiyappa temple in Tirunelveli and other shrines in major fortresses in Palaiyamkottai and Trichinopoly.

Evidence exists that at the time of Muhammad Ali's reign as nawab of Arcot, it became customary to use the great tank of the Hindu Triplicane temple for the ceremonial immersion of the panjas (sacred emblems) during the Madras Islamic Mohurram festival.<sup>207</sup> Another case is mentioned in the court chronicle. It involves the Ranganatha temples in Srirangam, which were severely damaged in one of the Carnatic wars. The French 'cut down the trees, destroyed, plundered and vacated the buildings and devastated the temple.' Immediately after the French retired from the place, 'the army of the sarkar entered it and according to the custom [the sarkar] appointed the qil'adar, the darugha, and other managers, issued orders to rebuild, inhabit and fortify it [the temple].'<sup>208</sup>

The next interesting example is an event that occurred in 1796. Although it was during the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali's son, it reflects the policy of the Wallajah court towards Hinduism very well. At Chidambaram, there was a Vishnu temple situated in a Siva shrine. Conflicts between the two Hindu sects over the place date back to many centuries ago and Siva priests frequently interrupted Vishnu worships. After many years of interruptions, the Vishnu temple was restored by the famous Ramaraja of the Vijayanagara Empire, who also worshiped Vishnu there. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the temple received some benefactions again by Krishnappa, the Nayaka of Ginji. In 1796, during the administration of Hazrat Muhammad Mui al-Din Khan Sahib, an official of the Carnatic court, a similar conflict occurred at the shrine. This time the Vishnu temple was re-opened through the interference of the Muslim governor.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, there are also records of Muhammad Ali to have arbitrating disputes

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<sup>207</sup> Ibid., pp. 166, 182.

<sup>208</sup> T.V. Mahalingan, 'The Nawabs of the Carnatic and Hindu Temples' in *Readings in South Indian History* (Delhi: B.R. Publishing Corporation on behalf of the Indian Society for Prehistoric and Quaternary Studies, 1977), pp. 192-195, p. 193; Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. II, p. 240.

<sup>209</sup> Mahalingan, 'The Nawabs of the Carnatic and Hindu Temples', pp. 193-194.



over ceremonial ‘honours’ and precedence at the Hindu temple of Srirangam.<sup>210</sup> Despite the fact that Nawab Muhammad Ali and other Wallajahs were Muslim rulers, their actions show that they were prepared to take over the role of the previous Hindu Rajas in settling disputes that arose among different Hindu groups or parties.

It can be said that this strategy of Muhammad Ali to build up his legitimacy to rule over Hindu population was very successful. As a result, the Wallajah were seen as different from other Muslim rulers in Tamil world. Muhammad Ali was even praised in chronicle of several South Indian temples for being a ruler who fulfilled the standard ‘dharmic’ obligation just like previous rulers of Vijayanagara and Nayaka states.<sup>211</sup>

### **The control over the South Indian strategic points**

According to historians like A.F. Cox and S. Bayly, the control over Hindu holy places seemed not only to be important for religious or idealistic reasons in the eyes of early modern Hindu or Muslim Indian people. Control over these places was directly linked to sovereignty in various aspects. First of all, many important traders, artisans, ritualists and military men of each locality clustered around these major temples or ‘temple-towns’. Therefore these were the strategic points for the would-be rulers in South India where they could build alliances with or have control over these key specialist groups in each region. Furthermore, these places were also long-term sources of revenue from the taxing of devotees along the region’s major pilgrimage routes. Any would-be rulers in South India including the Wallajah were well aware of their value; if they wished to usurp the authority in the region, they had no choice but to fight for power over the region’s key sacred sites. Therefore most of the wars in the Carnatic concentrated on one of the temples or the towns situated near these holy places.<sup>212</sup>

One most striking example is the celebrated Hindu-Vishnu Tirupati temple complex, one of the most-visited places of worship for Hindus in the present time. The significance of this sacred site in the past was by no means less than now. According to a British colonial historian, it was the ruler of the district where temple was situated who received the revenues of Tirupati;

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<sup>210</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 166.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 165, 182.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167; A. F. Cox, *Madras District Manuals: North Arcot*. Vol. 1 (Madras, 1895), pp. 71-72.

the Nawabs of the Carnatic, like their predecessors, had yearly received nearly two lakhs from the place.<sup>213</sup>

During the 1750s Tirupati appeared to be the scene of several power struggles. In 1753 the temple was menaced by a freebooter named Muhammad Kamal from Nellore. In 1756, it was threatened by a brother of the Nawab named Nazibulla who rebelled against the Nawab's authority from Vellore. As an assertion of his sovereignty, he set up blockades to stop pilgrims from travelling to Tirupati. In 1759 the Maratha force under the leadership of Gopal Rao also seized and occupied the temple in an attempt to invade the kingdom of Carnatic.<sup>214</sup>

A particularly interesting event occurred during the latter incident when the Nawab and the English tried to regain the place from the Marathas. During one battle, a force of 300 sepoys and 15 Europeans was sent from Arcot to evade Gopal Rao. But on the spot the army discovered that only eighty of these sepoys were Hindus of clean caste who, according to the Hindu customs, were the only privileged people permitted to ascend the hill on which the temple was situated and where the Marathas were positioned.<sup>215</sup> At this crucial moment, Arcot decided to send only a handful of mere Hindu sepoys to fight the adventurers, instead of taking every measure to recapture the place and sending the whole force up the hill. As a result, quite a number of these sepoys were killed and the rest were driven back. A request for reinforcement was then sent to Madras, after which a new troop was sent out. However, the previous error was repeated; the majority of the men sent out were either Muslims or other Hindus who did not belong to the class entitled to ascend the hill. Eventually, Calliaud, the English Major who commanded the sepoy force, decided to opt for new strategies in order to conquer the place.<sup>216</sup>

The battle shows that in contrast with a general 'Hindu' army, the forces fighting on the Nawab's behalf remained strict in preserving the purity of the Tirupati shrine, even though the immediate situation was critical. It reveals that the Nawab and the English were aware that this battle was not only fought for the sources of revenue or strategic advantage, but also for ideological reasons—the repositories of sovereign power. This was the battle in which the

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<sup>213</sup> Cox, Madras District Manuals: North Arcot, pp. 71-72.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73 ; Bayly, Saints, Goddesses and King, pp. 167-168.

<sup>215</sup> Cox, Madras District Manuals: North Arcot, p.73.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73-74.

strategic, financial, and sacred considerations overlapped.<sup>217</sup> More importantly, it also reveals that the Nawab could not compromise his position as patron and protector of Hindu holy places in exchange of an immediate military victory in front of his Hindu populations.

The town of Trichinopoly may be another interesting case worth to discuss here, in order to reflect on the Nawab' strategies to position himself into the geopolitical map of the Indic cosmopolis.

In the history of the Carnatic, especially during the reign of Muhammad Ali, it is well-known that the most important town of the kingdom, apart from the capital city of Arcot, was the town of Trichinopoly (Trichy).<sup>218</sup> At times, the city even seemed to have been more important than the capital. When Muhammad Ali made his bid for the throne of the Carnatic in 1749, Arcot was seized by his enemy. It was from Trichy where he declared himself Nawab of the Carnatic. It was also perceived that throughout the early period of his reign, Muhammad Ali ruled directly from the Trichy fortress. Even after he moved from Trichy to the formal capital of Arcot and then to the British-built palace at Chepauk in Madras, Trichy continued to be hailed as the second capital of the kingdom.<sup>219</sup> Dozens of pir shrines around the town are known to have been patronized by the Wallajahs and their courtiers.<sup>220</sup> Every time the Nawab was defeated and chased away from Arcot, he immediately moved to Trichy, his stronghold from where he attempted to regain power.

Its strategic position made Trichy very valuable to the Nawab. Trichy had been famous for its 'Rock fort' with four miles of walls, towers, ditches and ramparts built by the Nayaka rulers in the seventeenth century. They had transformed this ancient temple town into the one of the strongest military strongholds in South India.<sup>221</sup> But if one carefully considers the significance of this place in the Indic context, one can conclude that its ideological value should by no means be underestimated. This town was important for the local Tamil populations in many ways, especially with respect to the sociopolitical aspects.

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<sup>217</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 168.

<sup>218</sup> The Islamic name of Trichy was Natharnagar .

<sup>219</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 162.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 161.

The local Hindus and Muslims believed that the 'Rock fort' of Trichy itself was a place full of shrines and holiness. It consisted of the rock-cut Siva temples dating back to the Pallava time, the sacred footprint sites which are associated with the Hindu god Vishnu and the great Muslim pir, Nathar Wali, and the massive Sri Thayamunavar temple which was cut deeply into the interior of the Rock. The surrounding countryside of this town was also dotted with strategically placed rock formations of which the so-called Golden Rock and the so-called Faqir's Rock were the most celebrated: these too contained important local temple and pir cult sites.<sup>222</sup> One other aspect that made Trichy important is that it once had been the capital city of the old Nayaka kingdom of Madurai, the largest, wealthiest and most powerful of the three main Nayaka kingdoms, which were the successor states of the Vijayanagara Empire.<sup>223</sup>

With all its importance, Trichy can be called as the heart of the Tamil world. As a historian notices, the man who held Trichy was almost by definition a ruler of South India.<sup>224</sup> Therefore, throughout the eighteenth century almost every ambitious ruler, either Hindu or Muslim (including Chanda Sahib and Muhammad Ali Wallajah) sought to conquer the town. Anyone with control over this town could claim the Carnatic throne as well.

The dramatic act of Nawab Muhammad Ali after the death of Chanda Sahib at Trichy is another case in point which should be discussed. It shows that according to Muhammad Ali's worldview, the meanings of Trichy and his political strategy may be even more complicated than all its importance above.

It is said that when Chanda Sahib was put to death by the Raja of Tanjore, his body was handed over to Muhammad Ali. The latter then ordered the severed head to be tied to a camel and paraded five times around the walls of Trichy, and the dismembered torso to be buried inside the precincts of the dargah of Nathar Wali.

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>223</sup> Catherine B. Asher and Cynthia Talbot, *India before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 176, 221; Velcheru Rao, David Shulman, Sanjay Subrahmanyam. *Symbols of Substance: Court and State in Nāyaka Period Tamilnadu*. (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992). p. 83.

<sup>224</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 162.

According to Bayly, the Nawab might have had several reasons for this order. The simplest interpretation is that he wanted to show to all the local people that Chanda Sahib's domain had been taken over and absorbed into the realm of the triumphant Wallajah.

The Sufi Muslim perspective was more sophisticated: by interring Chanda Sahib in the ground of the shrine, the Nawab's vanquished enemy was transformed into a disciple and subject of that warrior pir, just like the sacred bull Nandi which was slaughtered at the hands of the triumphant Penukonda saint. The fact that Chanda Sahib was consumed and assimilated into the realm of Nathar Wali who was the Wallajah's pir and patron, thus also means that he was integrated into the realm of the Wallajah.<sup>225</sup> At the same time, in the Hindu perspective, the move also fitted in the motives that were used to describe succession and domain-building in the Poligar world. In this context Chanda Sahib was treated as the defeated demonic enemy who was beheaded by the lord of a newly founded warrior chiefdom.<sup>226</sup>

The South Indian dynastic politics can also be seen as a motivation. In the Wallajah court chronicle, Chanda Sahib was depicted as a person who resorted to fraud and deceit to get Trichinopoly. This betrayal caused the Rani of Trichy to burn herself according to Hindu customs. According to the chronicle, 'the immolation of the Rani was a startling event; how Husayn Dost Khan [Chanda Sahib] was avenged in a fitting manner for this sin.'<sup>227</sup> In my opinion, the Nawab used this incident to his own advantage. He presented himself as the avenger of the Madurai queen and invoked the idea that he was the legitimate successor (at least more than Chanda Sahib) of Nayaka kingdom of Madurai.

The policy of controlling the South Indian strategic points can also be seen in the Nawab's strong and relentless ambition to have the Nayaka state of Tanjore in his possession. After the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb invaded South India in the late seventeenth century, Tanjore was annexed as a tributary state of the Nawab of Carnatic. Though it was ruled by its own Hindu Rajahs, these states constantly had to send tributes to Arcot. Throughout the reign of Muhammad Ali, the Rajahs of Tanjore always tried to seek independence from the Carnatic.<sup>228</sup> The Nawab could never hide that he hoped that Tanjore would become more than a tributary

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<sup>225</sup> Ibid., 163-164.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Hasan, *Tuzak-i Wallajahi*, Vol. I, pp. 70-72 (quoted p. 71).

<sup>228</sup> Pamela Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity: A Study of Moral Attitudes in the Indian Diary of George Paterson, 1769-1744* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 69.

state; he wanted to have full control of that kingdom and eliminate the local dynastic power-holder. This led to the two Tanjore Wars in 1771 and 1773 in which the Nawab did everything to make the English Company help him fulfill his ambition. He even offered the company troops ten lacks of pagodas, and used a large amount of money to buy all the English from the governor, council members to the King's men.<sup>229</sup> These wars increased his debts with the Company and he almost became bankrupt. The question to be asked here is: why did the Nawab have to invest so much in order to be the supreme ruler of Tanjore kingdom?

Most contemporary English people, as well as some historians believed that the financial aspect was the reason behind this. According to them, Tanjore was one of the most productive rice-belt areas in South India with revenues almost equal to those of the Carnatic. With Tanjore, the Nawab could give his financial status a great boost. Not only was he able to pay off the debts to the English Company, it was also possible that he could become one of the wealthiest rulers in India. An EIC official, Goodlad, mentioned that the profit of the Nawab from this expedition 'was not only a great treasure but countries worth Rs 20 lakhs a year.'<sup>230</sup>

The economic advantages must have been the main goal of Muhammad Ali in this expedition. However, one should not ignore the fact that the Nawab always put emphasis on the ideological aspect. After the fall of the Vijayanagara, the empire was disintegrated into three main successor Nayaka kingdoms: Madurai, Senji and Tanjore. Senji Nayaka came to its end in 1649 and its sovereign power had passed from Bijapur to Mughal and to the Nawab of Carnatic since the foundation of the Arcot kingdom in the early 1710s. Madurai was also annexed by the Nawabs of the Carnatic in the 1730s. Had Tanjore come under his possession, the Nawab would have been the overlord of the whole Nayaka world. Furthermore, the capital city of Tanjore used to be the capital of the Cholas Empire—the longest-ruling Tamil dynasty in southern India from the third century BC until the thirteenth century.<sup>231</sup> Tanjore was thus one of the most important sources of South Indian sovereign power, no less than Trichy or Madurai.

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid., p. 142. (Paterson, Vol. V, pp. 47-8)

<sup>230</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 177; Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 114.

<sup>231</sup> Rao, Shulman, *Subrahmanyam, Symbols of Substance*, pp. 38, 84; Asher and Talbot, *India before Europe*, p. 14.

### **The Nawab and the Poligar rulers: Comparative cases between Nawab Muhammad Ali and Yusuf Khan**

By combining the use of force with many ideological strategies to accommodate himself in the Indic cosmopolis, the Nawab was able to receive official recognition as the ruler of the Carnatic. Many Hindu temple records hinted that he was able to win the hearts of many Hindu people. Gradually he expanded his territory with firm steps. It is said that the procurement of Tanjore and the revenues of that country in 1773 allowed Muhammad Ali to acquire more troops and expensive new weaponry. As a result, for the next few years Muhammad Ali made unprecedented claims of suzerainty in the far south, and asserted new rights of overlordship in Ramnad and the other southern warrior domains.<sup>232</sup> The percentage of revenues rose steadily in the years during which 'Poligar peshcash' (tribute) was successfully collected, especially after 1761. At that time only forty percent was collected. During the 1780s it rose to eighty per cent.<sup>233</sup> Yet, the restless use of forces and the frequent wars between the Nawab and the Nayaka-Poligar sub-rulers throughout his reign also show that these local leaders indeed never acknowledged him as the legitimate ruler.<sup>234</sup>

The story of Yusuf Khan, another contemporary South Indian Muslim figure may be worth depicted here as a comparative case; this person was known as being successful in subjugating the Poligar warriors.

Muhammad Yusuf Khan was one of the most outstanding sepoy in the English Company troops who fought for Nawab Muhammad Ali. But later he turned into a rebel and eventually was executed by the Nawab. After his death, he became one of the most celebrated warrior saints of South India, a martial pir who nowadays is still deeply respected and worshipped in the Madurai, Ramnad and Tirunelveli districts. The question is how Yusuf Khan became a saint and a divine power in the eyes of the Tamils and many Deccanis both Muslims and Hindus?

Like many other 'new men' of the eighteenth-century, Yusuf Khan was of modest descent. It is said that he began his career as a trooper in service of Muhammad Kamal of

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<sup>232</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 178.

<sup>233</sup> Nicolas B. Dirks, *The Hollow Crown: Ethnohistory of an Indian Kingdom*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987), p. 21.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*

Nellore. By 1748 he followed the path taken by other successful military adventurers of the period: he formed his own cavalry troop and managed to sell his services to a number of new and more promising patrons. In the early 1750s he was recruited by the famous English East India Company's commander, Lord Robert Clive. He appeared in English letters and memoirs as 'the gallant Isoof Cawn', the hero of many campaigns against the French, Mysore, Madurai and Tirunelveli Poligars during the 1750s. He was highly admired by many English Company officials, especially for his charisma and military skill, which were superior to the Nawab's. Some of them even tried to persuade their superiors to discard the Wallajah and form an alliance with this skillful and experienced soldier. It was said that he, rather than Muhammad Ali, stood a good chance of subduing the southern Poligar country and making its warrior chiefs pay the 'Poligar peshkash', which no one, certainly not the Nawab, had yet been able to extract from them.<sup>235</sup>

By 1754 he commanded the whole East India Company's sepoy force in the Carnatic. One of his most celebrated feats was the storming of the 'Kallar barrier'—a complex of thorn-hedge barricades and earth-work fortifications— at Mannapparai, thirty miles south of Trichy. Because of Yusuf Khan's victory, the most powerful of the southern Kallar chiefs was forced for the first time to pay the full Poligar peshkash that was claimed by the Nawab of Arcot.<sup>236</sup>

In 1755 the Nawab and his British faced a new crisis. The strongest of the region's Marava Poligars had forged a menacing new alliance. Furthermore, there were signs that the new alliance was likely to receive support from Haidar Ali of Mysore, the Raja of Travancore, and a surviving son of Chanda Sahib. At this moment, Muhammad Ali proposed to the Company to abandon Trichy and shift the court to the old Nawayat centre at Arcot. As a consequence, Yusuf Khan was installed as a provincial commander at Madurai. Among his duties were the administration of the area and the command over all the forces— Nawabi troops as well as Company's sepoys— that were campaigning in the Poligar countries.

The combination of military and tax duties placed him in the ideal position to establish himself as the dominant military power in the southern Carnatic and to launch his celebrated rebellion. It is said that when Yusuf Khan ceased to be an agent of Nawabi overlordship around

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<sup>235</sup> Bayly, *Saints, Goddesses and King*, p. 193-194.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.



1759, the warriors of the southern poligar domains were eager to serve in his new force. The Khan army thus consisted of the most experienced warriors, recruited from Kallar and Marava clansmen who recently had fought against him.<sup>237</sup>

Yet, despite his initial success, Yusuf Khan failed in his bid to found a dynastic state in the southern Carnatic. This is because his attempts to forge links with Haider Ali and the French marked him as a real threat to the English Company's interests. As a result, in 1763 the British joined the Nawab's forces to attack Yusuf Khan's stronghold at Madurai. This war ended when the 'rebel' was betrayed and handed over to the English by one of his own French mercenaries. Khan was hanged on the Nawab's orders in October 1764.<sup>238</sup>

The comparison between the life of Yusuf Khan and Nawab Muhammad Ali reveals the significant nature of the political societies in the Poligar world. Since long ago, this region had been disintegrated into hundreds of warrior groups that were competing with one another. They wanted a leader who was charismatic and possessed great military skills, and who could help them survive and bring them glory in difficult circumstances. It is obvious that the Nawab could not be compared with Yusuf Khan in this aspect. The Nawab was superior in terms of descent, his strong links with other great powers (for instance the Indian kingdoms in the past and the Muslim and European powers in the contemporary time), and his role as a religious benefactor. These were all qualities of an imperial ruler in the fifteenth to sixteenth century Vijayanagara Empire, and also in other contemporary empires or big kingdoms. These qualities were to some extent significant in the Tamil world, but they were not effective in winning the sympathy of the local warriors.

However, the fact that Muhammad Ali and not Yusuf Khan or any of the other smaller Poligar rulers came out as the winner in this South Indian political game, also reveals the changing circumstance in the region in the eighteenth century. Great military skills and a strong charisma used to be the most ideal qualities for a ruler in the Nayaga-Poligar period, but these qualities were not enough anymore to survive in the mid to late eighteenth century when European powers became involved in the internal politics of South India. Local rulers could hardly wish for success in their bid for power without integrating the Europeans into their world

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid., pp. 196-197.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid., p. 199.

and gaining the strong support from at least one of them. Moreover, they realized that any act against the interests of the Europeans usually brought them disaster, more than if the opposite was the case. It was also crucial for a ruler to know how to position himself between the European rivals. Muhammad Yusuf Khan and his Tamil allies are good examples of local Tamil rulers who miscalculated and were not able to adjust themselves to all the new circumstances. In contrast, Nawab Muhammad Ali was able to stand between the two worlds and made use of both worlds to support his status. Therefore, he could survive, at least for a longer period than others.

### **The Nawab and the Europeans in the Indic cosmopolis**

#### **The Nawab's ambition: his position in the Indic cosmopolis**

‘My high authority cannot be compared with theirs (the past kings of Madura), who know themselves in the small trifles.’<sup>239</sup>

‘By the mercy of God, I have the supervision over the area from the river Kristna to Cochin...Most of the kings who are on equal level to the prince of Trichinopoly are my vessels.’<sup>240</sup>

‘The kingdom of Candy [Sri Lanka] is only under Madurai.’<sup>241</sup> To these people the Company shows so much respect. And (what does it show) me?’<sup>242</sup>

These are the words the Nawab addressed to the Dutch officials in the negotiations about the rights over the pearl fishery. The statements above, his claims on enormous territories in the region, and all the religious and political moves he made to integrate himself into the Indic cosmopolis, clearly show that this Nawab did not want to be seen as merely one of the South Indian rulers who were equal in the rank of any of the Nayaka-Poligar Rajas. His ambition went

<sup>239</sup> VOC 3691, Translation of the letter of Nawab of Arcot Muhammad Ali to the Tuticorin opperhoofd in the year 1766 (on the dispute over the benefits in Pear fishery at Manaar), Fol. 947 v.

<sup>240</sup> (VOC 3218) Translation of the Persian letter written by the Nawab Mohammad Ali Khan of Arcot to the VOC Coromandel governor Pieter Haksteen, 20 April 1768, Fol. 1389-1393, Fol. 1391r.

<sup>241</sup> The Nawab claimed to the Dutch that in the past Madura had given a young girl to the Kingdom of Kandy as a token of peace. The two families (and the two kingdom ) then become ‘one’. Therefore the Kingdom of Kandy, like Madura, was inferior in position to that of the Nawab’s. (See VOC 3691, Translation of the letter of Nawab of Arcot Muhammad Ali to the Tuticorin opperhoofd in the year 1766, Fol. 947 v.)

<sup>242</sup> VOC 3292, The Mission to Arcot in September 1770 by Pieter Sluysken, Fol. 713v.

far beyond that level. In my opinion, he was attempting to end the period of regional disintegration, the so-called Nayaka-Poligar era which lasted from the late sixteenth century until the early eighteenth century. During this period hundreds of strong Tamil warrior groups were able to turn into autonomous polities. The Nawab wished for more centralization and political integration in the Carnatic, just like before the seventeenth century. He also wished to place himself in a supreme position, comparable to the Vijayanagara Emperors in the past.

Moreover, the ambition of the Nawab in the Indic cosmopolis also went far beyond the border of the Carnatic. The tools to fulfill all of his ambitions were none other than his English friends who were usually seen as his master/superiors. In this part, I will elaborate in details how the Nawab integrated the Europeans into the Indic world and made use of them to achieve his ambition with regard to the neighboring Indian countries.

### **The Tanjore Wars 1771-1773**

In February 1771, the Nawab launched an appeal to the English East India Company council in Madras against the Nayaka of Tanjore. He claimed that the Nayaka had omitted to pay him tribute and also had attacked Marwar, another tributary state under his jurisdiction. Moreover, he feared that the Carnatic would probably be surrounded by enemies if the French and Dutch would join the Tanjore and the Marathas, or if Mysore would take this chance to attack the country.<sup>243</sup> Therefore he pleaded that his true ally, the English East India Company, would immediately help him by sending a Company army to subjugate that Nayaka kingdom. The Madras council, at that time was under the leadership of governor Du Pré, refused the Nawab's request, saying it had no money to take part in such hostility; the Company could only help him against Tanjore if he paid the expenses of the expedition!<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Nightingale. *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 69 (Paterson, Vol. II, pp. 170-171).

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 72 (Paterson, Vol. II, pp. 187-188).

After his request was steadfastly refused by the Madras Council, the Nawab turned to the King's Minister, requesting for Sir John Lindsay's intervention to press the Company to give him the assistance he needed. This led to one of many clashes over the affairs of the Carnatic between the two English groups, the Madras government and the King's Minister.<sup>245</sup>

The King's Minister officially declared that after careful consideration, it was not only in the best interests of the Nawab, but also of the Company and the British nation to support the Nawab's policy. The governor of Madras and many senior Company servants also explained to their superiors in London why they disagreed with the plan of the Nawab. Their main concern was to prevent the Company from falling into the Nawab's master plan and the local political game. They believed that the Nawab's insistence on attacking Tanjore was part of his complicated plan, which aimed at ultimately eliminating Haidar Ali of Mysore, another enemy of his. Since the present ruler of Tanjore was a Hindu dynasty of Maratha ethnic descent, the attack on Tanjore would draw the Marathas from outside (from Maharashtra) into the Carnatic. By that time the Nawab would make use of the situation and force the Company into an alliance with the Marathas to fight against Mysore.<sup>246</sup>

However, behind their official explanation—fighting for the interests of the Nawab, the British nation or the Company—it seems that personal interests were also involved. When Paterson was the secretary of the King's Ministers he claimed that during his two years in Madras Sir John Lindsay secured 69,385 pagodas from the Nawab. According to Paterson, he also made the Nawab promise to hire him as his representative in England after he was recalled back, with an allowance of 1,000 pagodas. Sir Hartland, the successor of Lindsay received no less than his senior.<sup>247</sup> These benefits must have played an important role behind the King's Minister's fervent support of the Nawab's policies.

Paterson also claimed that he heard from credible sources (namely two Company officials, Benfield and Maclay who were known as opponents of Governor Du Pré) that Du Pré annually received 30,000 pagodas from the Raja of Tanjore; this explains why he strongly opposed the Nawab's plans in the beginning. Indeed, Du Pré (and his friends) only wanted to

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<sup>245</sup> Ibid., p. 71 (Paterson, Vol. II, p. 228).

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., p. 90

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., p. 70 (Paterson, Vol. II, pp. 186, 274, 189); p. 76 (Paterson, Vol. V, p. 157); p. 74 (Paterson, Vol. II, p. 299)

delay the expedition to bargain with the Nawab for a suitable reward which had to be more than what he got from the Raja of Tanjore.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, the Tanjore Raja also owed large sums of money to many other Company servants. They had to object to this expedition, because had he fallen they might have fallen with him.<sup>249</sup>

Whether it was because of the claim about Du Pré's negotiation with the Nawab, or because of the pressure by the King's Minister, the governor eventually announced his readiness to proceed against Tanjore in June 1771. But then unexpectedly, the Nawab withdrew himself and wanted to give up all plans for the expedition. This is because the Nawab began to suspect that the Company had a secret agenda. He feared that the Company would keep Tanjore for itself or at least garrison the fortress. Throughout July 1771 the Nawab bargained with Du Pré for the terms, which would allow him to keep the country and the fortress for himself.<sup>250</sup>

After seven months of delay, the Madras government at last ordered the Company army to march to Tanjore. Yet, the dramatic conflicts of interest had not ended. Although it was confident that the siege would be successful, the Arcot-English army did not attempt to storm the fortress and a peace contract was signed on 31 October 1771.<sup>251</sup>

Outsiders, like the King's men, were shocked by this outcome and demanded an explanation. They intended to defend both the interests of the Nawab and the English nation; the King's Minister believed that if this outcome had a bad effect on the Nawab, the Company's men were to blame. However during the investigation, the King's men were even more astonished when the Nawab tried to avoid all communication about the subject.<sup>252</sup> Harland was so dissatisfied, and sent some warning words to the Nawab, demanding an explanation from him. If not, 'should it be suspected that the Nabob had acted an improper or deceitful part... it might serve totally to destroy that favorable impression which His Majesty and the Ministry had entertained of him.'<sup>253</sup>

After being pushed by the King's Minister, the Nawab put the blame for the peace negotiation on the Company servants. He claimed that many Company servants had loaned

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<sup>248</sup> Ibid., p. 87 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 56); p. 94 (Paterson, Vol. III, p.213).

<sup>249</sup> Ibid., p. 90 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 56-57)

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., p. 73

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., p. 82 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 34, 44)

<sup>252</sup> Ibid., p. 82 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 34).

<sup>253</sup> Ibid. (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 35).

money to the Raja of Tanjore and it was not to their advantage to see him defeated. As the Nawab mentioned: ‘the private interests sways every action of the people here; their first consideration is always how to serve themselves.’<sup>254</sup> However, the Nawab refused to reveal his own negotiations over Tanjore with the governor of Madras, saying: ‘If I reveal this once, I might as well expose all my friends.’<sup>255</sup>

Yet, the correspondences between the Company’s senior officials showed completely different stories. Goodlad said that the Nawab’s jealousy of the Company’s power most probably contributed to the unsatisfactory peace agreement, which prevented any final settlement as regards his relations with Tanjore. As Goodlad described, the Company’s forces were ‘acting as auxiliaries without a will of our own, and having our operations wholly subservient to the Indostan politics’.<sup>256</sup> In the end Paterson, who was appointed to investigate the incident had to conclude that no one could certainly know what actually happened. The only thing that was sure is that there were conflicting interests in the whole Tanjore affair.<sup>257</sup>

Less than two years later, the Nawab came with a plan for a second expedition against Tanjore. Paterson, who in this time was hired by the Nawab as his consultant, recorded in detail how in this operation the Nawab was eventually successful in getting the cooperation of the Company’s council in Madras.

The decisive factor was Alexander Wynch, who had succeeded the Madras Governor Du Pré and who was very sensitive to bribes. According to Paterson, whereas Du Pré was not mainly concerned about his private fortune when he considered the first Tanjore expedition, Wynch showed no concern whatsoever for the Company’s or the nation’s best interests when a second expedition was proposed. Wynch even showed his discontentment when the Nawab did not raise his personal advantages before discussing the amount the Company would receive for the Tanjore expedition.<sup>258</sup> Furthermore, when the Nawab expressed his constant fear that the Company would keep Tanjore for itself, Wynch assured him that he would give Tanjore to him.<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup> Ibid., p. 83 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 55).

<sup>255</sup> Ibid., p. 92 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 131).

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., p. 90, 91

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., p. 90 (Paterson, Vol. III, pp. 56-57)

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 150 (Paterson, Vol. V, p. 66); p. 151 (Paterson, Vol. V, pp. 175, 177).

<sup>259</sup> Ibid., p. 151 (Paterson, Vol. VI, p. 97)

Apart from Wynch, the Nawab also managed to bribe the majority of the Madras councils. As Paterson recorded, in June 1773, the Nawab laughingly said: ‘we are the majority of Council. The Governor, General, Messrs Smith, Stone, Stracey and the Nabob; that makes six: You have not so many more in Council.’<sup>260</sup> Many other military men also did business with the Nawab.<sup>261</sup>

Eventually, with the cooperation of several English men who were ‘blinded with the Nabob’s promise’,<sup>262</sup> the Nawab succeeded in deposing the Raja of Tanjore and becoming the master of the whole Nayaka world, which he had dreamt of.<sup>263</sup>

### **Marathas and Mysore**

Even though he was weaker, it seems that the Nawab’s policy towards his strong competitors, the Marathas and Mysore, was always rather aggressive. He always had a strong desire to eliminate them and expand his territory. In order to fulfill his ambition of subjugating these two power-holders, the Nawab used similar tactics as in the Tanjore case.

In 1772 the Nawab claimed that the Marathas, who were fighting with the Mysore, were moving their armed forces towards the Carnatic, thereby threatening to destroy the Nawab’s country unless he (and the English) would join the fight against Haidar Ali of Mysore. With this pretext, the Nawab tried to convince the English Company council in Madras to agree with the Marathas’ proposal. But the council repeatedly turned down his proposal. The official reasons the council put forward for its refusal was that a balance of power in the region was paramount; as the Marathas were bent on subjugating the whole peninsular, the presence of the Mysore would serve well as a barrier against the Marathas’ expansion in the South.<sup>264</sup> The Company had also concluded a peace treaty with the Mysore in 1769, therefore it did not want to yield to Muhammad Ali’s request.

Again, the Nawab turned to the King’s Ministers. The Nawab accused the Company’s council of accepting bribes from the Mysore, without caring about the possibility that his country

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., p. 152 (Paterson, Vol. V, p. 209)

<sup>261</sup> Ibid., p. 153 (Paterson, Vol. V, p. 234).

<sup>262</sup> Ibid., p. 177

<sup>263</sup> Henry Davison Love, Vestiges of old Madras, Vol. III, p. 4.

<sup>264</sup> Nightingale, Fortune and Integrity, p. 107 (Paterson, Vol. III, pp. 105-106).

could be invaded by the Marathas. If an alliance was forged with the Marathas, not only his country be safe, but the Marathas also promised that he would also get the countries which were now occupied by Haidar Ali of Mysore, stretching from the Carnatic to the Ghats. This incorporation of these countries would increase his revenues, enable him to support more troops and improve the security of his borders.<sup>265</sup>

His high diplomatic skills helped the Nawab to eventually convince the King's Ministers that the Marathas should be seen as ally, whereas Haidar Ali should be seen as an implacable enemy of the Nawab and a friend of the French. Without an alliance with the Marathas, there would be no hope for safety of the Nawab, his country, and ultimately the British nation in India.<sup>266</sup> Despite this threat, the government of Madras still forged an alliance with the Mysore, which was 'against the interests of both of the Nation and the Company.'<sup>267</sup> But the Company pointed out that it was familiar with the Nawab's tricks and Indian politics; the inexperienced King's Ministers were used by the Nawab to trick the Company into choosing the wrong policy. Some senior Company servants claimed that the threat of a Marathas invasion was false; 'the Marathas had been encouraged, if not invited, by the Nabob himself to threaten this province in order to frighten or compel us into an alliance with them'<sup>268</sup> This way the Nawab intended to use the English Company and the Marathas to eliminate Sultan Haidar Ali of Mysore. Had this plan succeeded, the Nawab would have had much less to fear. Moreover, it would have enabled him to shake off all dependence on the Company.<sup>269</sup> With these opposing ideas, the two British groups again came into another conflict.

Interestingly, it seems that in the end the suspicion of the Company was quite close to reality and the King's men had to admit that they had fallen in the Nawab's trap. As reported in English records, the Nawab immediately started negotiations with the Marathas after he heard that neither his negotiations, the threats of the King's Ministers, nor the danger of a Marathas invasion could induce the Madras governor and council to accept his plans of joining the Marathas. In just a few days a treaty was concluded. The Nawab could easily dismiss the

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<sup>265</sup> Ibid. p. 106 (Paterson, Vol. III, pp. 65,85), p. 112 (Paterson, Vol. III, p.76).

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., p. 67, p. 107 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 95).

<sup>267</sup> Ibid., p. 81 (Paterson, Vol, III, p. 26).

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., p. 110

<sup>269</sup> Ibid., pp. 113-114 (Paterson, Vol. III, p. 143)



Maratha envoy by paying a choute (a kind of promising money). In 1760 he had agreed to pay them an amount between Rs 6 and 12 lakhs.<sup>270</sup>

In 1773, the King's men discovered with even more astonishment how the Nawab played his game and how they were used by him. As recorded by Paterson, after many years he had strenuously recommended the English an alliance with the Marathas and 'both King's Ministers had used every argument to the same purpose, both from the respect which they had for his wisdom, and from their own judgment of the best means of establishing peace on a permanent footing in this country',<sup>271</sup> the Nawab suddenly changed his policy by starting negotiations with Haidar Ali of Mysore. Furthermore, instead of consulting this new policy with the King's Ministers, he secretly began negotiations with the Company's governor.<sup>272</sup> But when the secretary of King's Ministers (Paterson) confronted the Nawab with this, he simply replied that he did not genuinely mean to forge a serious alliance with Haidar Ali. He only wanted to buy some time until Tanjore would fall and Maratha's position would become clear.<sup>273</sup> Frustrated by the sudden shifts in diplomatic approaches by the Nawab, Paterson wrote in his diaries that 'such a step would be of the utmost prejudice to his Highness's character in England' and that 'it would be said that he had no principle but ambition and no guide but caprice.'<sup>274</sup>

### **The throne of Bengal**

The Nawab's political ambitions went beyond controlling his vast kingdom of the Carnatic or his neighboring areas. He also had a long-time ambition in Bengal, and again he wished to use his friendship with the English Company as a bridge. This ambition began in 1757, when he was good friend with celebrated Colonel Clive, who had helped him seize the city of Arcot in the succession war. For this the Nawab had rewarded him with a lot of money. Ever since they kept in touch.

When the Colonel Clive wrote to Muhammad Ali in 1757, he told him about his success in the war against the French in Bengal. The Nawab replied:

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<sup>270</sup> Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>271</sup> Ibid., p. 143.

<sup>272</sup> Ibid., p. 143 (Paterson, Vol. V, p.49)

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., p. 157 (Paterson, Vol. VI, p.103)

<sup>274</sup> Ibid., p. 143

‘I have with great pleasure received your letter, informing me of your success against the Nabob of Bengal and the French at Chandernagore... Our interest is mutual. I trust that, when you have concluded Matters in Bengal to your satisfaction, you will send for my Naib [Deputy] and give him the charge of the country. There are with me several great and understanding men of those parts. I write this from the friendship subsisting between us...By the favour of God and your bravery I hope to get possession of Bengal.’<sup>275</sup>

After this period, there is no further information about how the English Company turned down this request of the Nawab. But more than a decade later, in 1774, another group of English men from Bengal, including John Macpherson, Lauchlin Maclene, and John Stewart, arrived at the durbar of Arcot, offering their services to the Nawab. One of their offers was to help the Nawab to get the throne of Bengal.<sup>276</sup>

The arrival of this new group caused a change in the durbar. They became the new favorite Europeans, and George Paterson knew that his time had come to an end. According to Paterson, these people were the remarkable adventurers of this period. They were only interested in earning money of the Nawab by playing on his greatest weakness: his ambition to be a great and independent prince, and securing the throne of Bengal for one of his sons.<sup>277</sup>

Whether Maclene and his friends were deceiving the Nawab or not, their influence on him does show that the Nawab had not given up his idea of getting control over Bengal, although he never succeeded in this. Moreover, the Nawab was not only interested in some nominal power over Bengal to satisfy his yearning for glory or fame; he wanted to have real power over the region. He told Maclene that he would only accept the throne of Bengal for his son if he would become the established ruler of the country, instead of a mere puppet of the Company.<sup>278</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> Henry Davison, *Vestiges of old Madras: 1640-1800*: Vol. II p. 481.

<sup>276</sup> Nightingale, *Fortune and Integrity*, p. 203

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 200, 203.

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203 (Paterson, Vol. VIII, p. 480), p.204 (Paterson, Vol. V III, p.70)

## Conclusion

This research is an experiment, aimed at approaching the historical development of Arcot in the second half of the eighteenth century from the point of view of its indigenous ruler. This methodology, influenced by the revisionist historians, allows me to explore various aspects of Arcot's history from different angles that a colonial framework and Eurocentric viewpoint have prevented. New lights are shed on Arcot's history and one can see clearly that the traditional narrative of Arcot should be re-evaluated.

After carefully exploring the various old and new primary sources, I can conclude that Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot was politically weak and had insufficient military power. Therefore he had to rely on the English military power in order to subjugate his tributary states and maintain his political status. I can also conclude that the English played a significant role in the internal political affairs of the Carnatic. Their involvement was even paramount for the fate of this Nawab and many other local power-holders. These are by no means unfamiliar impressions one can get from previous literatures. However, this research also reveals different results which were never explicitly discussed by historians so far. Some images even contradict previous studies

I do not see that the Carnatic in the second half of the eighteenth century (since the 1740s) was dominated by 'a duel for empire between the English and French culminating in the firm establishment of British power at the close of the century.'<sup>279</sup> I do not see Muhammad Ali as merely a puppet or a nominal ruler who was passively and totally controlled by the English who were governing his country. Instead, I see the tricky and active Nawab who attempted to make use of the European powers rising in India in order to play his political games. The English were struggling to survive in India, while trying to prevent themselves from being used as instruments in local politics at the same time. I also cannot see the so-called 'British power' that systematically planned and gradually expanded its imperial control over the southern Indian region since the mid-century at the expense of the local rulers.

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<sup>279</sup> Holden Furber. *Rival Empires of Trade in the Orient, 1600-1800: Europe and the World in the Age of Expansion*. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), p.125.

In reality 'British power' consisted of various interest groups of English people fighting with one another and negotiating with local rulers mainly for their own benefits than for the greater good. On top of that, the Nawab of Arcot was playing on the rivalries between the English factions. From the very beginning, it seems that the English East India Company was trying really hard to maintain its position as outsider. In fact, it was Nawab Muhammad Ali who saw the advantages he could gain, and therefore he gradually drew the English into his political circle. The process of transformation of the English from the position of merchant to the ruler, or in another words the process of British colonization in Carnatic, in my opinion, was more the result of their reactions and fights against the exploitations of this Nawab towards them.

By moving the Europeans aside and playing down their roles in Nawab Muhammad Ali's life and the history of Arcot, I am allowed to see clearly that the real world of this Nawab was much wider than Arcot-Madras. His world reach the Tamil heartland, expanded as far as Arabia and was connected to Western Europe at the same time. The revisionist approach also allows me to bring in various new key figures who had dealings with the Nawab, such as his local enemies, his brothers, his subjects and superiors. As a result, a more dynamic and comprehensive view on the political developments in Arcot can be constructed. In the last fifty years of the eighteenth century, Arcot, under the leadership of this Nawab, was not just a background of European expansion. It was the scene of the Nawab's struggle to establish his kingdom, build up his legitimacy, expand his territory and eliminate his enemies. The Nawab's complex policies towards his different audience are disclosed, as well as his interesting role in connecting and integrating the three divergent overlapping worlds in South India (the Islamicate, Indic and European worlds) and how he used these to maintain his political power.

The actions of this Nawab also reflect the changing circumstances in late eighteenth century South India, when the region became increasingly connected to the global context. Meanwhile the European powers became gradually intertwined with the region's politics and societies. The local rulers responded to these changes in various ways. Some were able to survive the new circumstances, while others were eliminated in the storm of developments. But they all had their roles and these were not necessarily passive. They all deserve a place in historical writings, and should not be overshadowed by the Europeans. The case of Nawab Muhammad Ali and his enemies are good examples.

With this research I expect to shed new light on the history of Arcot. I hope this research will arouse new questions and reconsiderations on how one should perceive or write about the history of Arcot and South India of the late eighteenth century. By supporting the historiographical trend as suggested by revisionist historians, this research contributes to the ongoing historiographical discussions on late eighteenth century South India. Instead of being in a state of decline—as argued by the traditional scholars—the Carnatic was full of dynamics, and at least in some periods there were signs of regional consolidation, expansion, and prosperity.

However, in my opinion the historical development of Arcot under the reign of Nawab Muhammad Ali in this study is still very preliminary. Further studies, not only on its politics but also on its economic, social, and cultural aspects are also significant and full of potential. From my preliminary survey, there are still numerous primary sources, both from the European and indigenous side to be discovered. These sources are preserved in London, Madras, and The Hague. I believe that the history of Arcot can help historians to have more clear and comprehensive understanding of the developments in the late eighteenth century India. It may also lead us to new questions and perspectives we may never have thought of before.

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