

**UNDERSTANDING POWER AND POLITY IN THE
EIGHTEENTH CENTURY: MYSORE UNDER
HAIDAR ALI AND TIPU SULTAN**

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MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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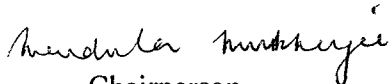
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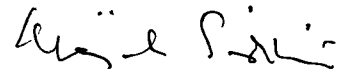
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Certified that the dissertation entitled '**Understanding Power and Polity in the Eighteenth Century: Mysore Under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan**' submitted by **Rachna Singh**, is in partial fulfilment of Master of Philosophy degree from the university. The work presented is original and has not been submitted in part or full for any other degree to this or any other university to the best of our knowledge.

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Introduction

The roots of the state of Mysore in the eighteenth century

The origins of the Wodeyar kingdom of Mysore are somewhat obscure, and can be traced back to the late sixteenth-early seventeenth centuries. This was the period when the Aravidu lineage found itself in control of the heritage of the Vijayanagara super-state. Under the Tuluva dynasty (1505-1572), Vijayanagara rule had extended over the upper Kaveri valley, which later formed the heart of the heartland of the Wodeyar kingdom. Towards the end of the sixteenth century, the Wodeyar rulers began to shake off the control of Vijayanagara representative. This is manifest in the increasingly prominent withholding of tribute to Vijayanagara, and in campaigns leading up to independent territorial expansion. The first figure of real importance is that of Bola Chamaraja, who withheld the tribute to the *mahamandalesvara* or provincial governor of the Aravidu line resident at Seringapatam. During the reign of Raja Wodeyar (1578-1617), the Mysore clan succeeded almost entirely in supplanting the provincial governor, and in gaining control over Seringapatam. The titular Vijayanagara sovereign recognized the process *ex post facto*. By 1612-13, the Wodeyars enjoyed a great deal of autonomy and did not make

revenue transfers to Chandragiri.¹

The contours of the state of Mysore as it emerged over the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries bore the imprint of the age: it was shaped in an era when the aura and power of the Mughal Empire climaxed and then began to recede, and a number of clamorous voices were heard, asserting rights of varying nature and degree, in diverse modes of articulation, and backed by various levels of resources and strength. The Mughal presence was felt most strongly through the gradual absorption of the successor states of the Vijayanagara Empire by the imperial centre --- Ahmadnagar, Golconda, and Bijapur. In 1634, Daulatabad became a part of the Mughal Empire. The province of Ahmadnagar was extinguished by treaty in 1644, and a new province called Carnatic Bijapur Balaghat was formed out of the districts of Bangalore, Hoskote, Kolar, Dodbalapur, and Sira. This was bestowed as a *jagir* on Shahji, who was also the governor of the conquests below the Ghats, referred to as the Carnatic Bijapur Payanghat. The Maratha element was particularly strong in the north of Mysore. After Shahji's death in 1664, a dispute broke out between Shivaji and Shahji's son Ekoji or Venkoji, who governed Mysore and Tanjore. Ekoji reached a compromise with Shivaji and retained the governance of those regions. After Aurangzeb had subjugated Bijapur and Golconda in 1687 and 1688 respectively, he sent a force under Zulfikar Khan, with one Daud Khan as second in

¹ In pre-Haidar days, Mysore did not control the entire peninsula encased between the Eastern and the Western Ghats. One major expansionary impulse, particularly in the direction of the Western Ghats, was that the kingdom of Mysore remained land-locked during this period. In the process, conflict with two neighbouring states was rather pointed. These were the states of Ikkeri, ruled by the Keladi Nayakas, and the fiercely independent Kodagu (or Coorg). Wodeyar ambitions soon carried into the region below the Ghats. Early gains were made in the neighbourhood of Coimbatore, where Travancore, Malabar, and the Carnatic converged. The northern boundary of Mysore, where it adjoined the lands of the Marathas and the Nizam, was not defined clearly by any such physical feature such as the Ghats, but in Chikka Deva's time they ran roughly east and west in a line roughly south of Sira.

command, to reduce the fortress of Jinji or Chenji, and then held by Rama, the son of Shivaji. The place was carried by assault in 1698, but it proved to be unhealthy. Therefore, Arcot was selected as the capital in 1716. A new Mughal province was also formed in 1687 with Sira as its capital, consisting of the seven *parganas* of Basvapatna, Budihal, Sira, Penugonda, Dodbalapur, Hoskote, and Kollar. The province had Mysore, Bednur, Chitaldurg, Anegundi, Kondarpi, and Harpanahalli as its tributary states. In 1687, Bangalore, which had been in the possession of the small Maratha state of Tanjavur, was sold to the *raja* of Mysore.²

Further clarification of the respective jurisdictions of Arcot and Sira occurred in the subsequent years. During the reign of Dodda Krishna Raja (1713-1731), there was a change in the government of Sira. The jurisdiction of Sadatullah Khan, who had hitherto governed the whole of Carnatic Bijapur, was confined to the Payanghat, and he was called the Nawab of Arcot, or, more commonly in European records, the Nawab of Carnatic. A separate Mughal *faujdar* named Amin Khan was given the designation of the Nawab of Sira, and was appointed in charge of Bayanghat, situated on the tableland of Mysore. While Mysore was tributary to the Nawab of Sira, the Nawab of Arcot controlled the southeast coastal strip, which became famous as the Carnatic, and was also known as the 'Coromandel coast'. Conflict between the two seats of power arose soon. Sadatullah Khan ruled with success from 1710 to 1732, but having no son, left the throne to his nephew Dost Ali Khan, who invaded Mysore but was defeated by the troops of

² Chikka Dev made an acceptable bid of three lakh rupees for it. At the last minute, however, the cheque had to be made out to the Mughal general Kasim Khan, who stepped in and captured the place after the transaction had been finalized with the Maratha rulers, and was "in the dismantled state which may be imagined when about to be sold". (Wilks)
op. cit. Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore, the life and death of Tipu Sultan*, 1970, p. 13.

Raja Chikka Krishanraj.³ By the mid-1720s, the question was to which of the two Mughal representatives ought the *peshkash* be paid. Both Arcot and Sira pressed their claims, even as the Marathas kept on demanding *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi*.

Over and above all these chiefs, at least in a certain notional sense of hierarchy, was the Nizam-ul-mulk, the scion of the Asaf Jahi dynasty who held the Subahdari of the Deccan under a *sanad* from the Mughal Emperor himself, granted in 1722. This 'successor state' arose from a *suba* of the Mughal Empire itself.⁴ One contemporary writer, while describing the military action in the Carnatic, often refers to the Nizam's troops as 'the Mughals'.⁵ The sovereignty of the Nizam, in reality, was not absolute in that his power

³ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore, 1766-1799*, p. 2427-2433, Lewin Bowring, *Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, 1803, p. 24.

It was during the rule of Nawab Dost Ali that his son-in-law Hussain Dost Khan, better known as Chanda Sahib, invaded the territory of Trichinopoli, whose raja called in the Marathas. Nawab Dost Ali was killed and Chanda Saheb was carried prisoner to Poona [and subsequently sided with the French against the English]. Safdar Ali succeeded as Nawab, but was assassinated in 1742. His infant son Muhammad Said was installed by the Nizam, but was murdered within a year. Then, the Nizam confirmed Anwar-ud-din, the deceased Nawab's guardian, as Nawab. In the meantime, Chanda Saheb was released from captivity, and he pressed his claim to the Nawabship with the aid of the French. Anwar-ud-din was killed in battle at Ambur in 1749; and his second son, Muhammad Ali, was supported by the English. In the war that followed Clive defended Arcot against the besieging armies of Chanda Saheb and the French. The French were reduced to dire straits, and concluded a treaty with the English in December 1754, subject to confirmation in Europe, which involved a mutual restoration of conquests, and recognition of Muhammad Ali as the Nawab of Carnatic. However, Anglo-French hostilities on the subcontinent resumed with the outbreak of war between the two powers on the Continent, and peace was finally made by the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

⁴ Bayly points out that in the case of Bengal, Hyderabad, and Awadh, the sequence for the rise of successor states seems to have been much the same. The Mughal Emperor, seeking stability of revenue, despatches a noble to revamp the finances and raise the revenue yield of the outer provinces. The noble and his descendants proceeded to amalgamate the office of revenue manager (*diwan*) and governor (*subahdar*) to create a new office of greater power, which became hereditary in his own office. Revenue management was tightened. A new class of local fiscal notables arose, who became in time hereditary nobility contributing to the upkeep of a new central army, which in each case was being organized along European lines before the mid-century. Consolidation of regional power, as in the case of Bengal and Awadh, occurred between the crisis of 1739-43, associated with the invasion of Nadir Shah, and the defeat of the Mughal forces led by the Marathas by Ahmad Shah Abdali at Panipat in 1761.

C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen and bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion 1780-1870*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 25-26.

⁵ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmai, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan being a continuation of the Neshani Hyduri*, tr. W. Miles, first published 1844, New Delhi, Oriental Publishers, 1980, p. 86.

The reigns of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan

Haidar Ali's father Fath Muhammad was in the employ of the Mughal *faujdar* of Sira, Dargah Quli Khan, in the early years of the reign of the Mughal Emperor Muhammad Shah (1719-48). The Mysore ruler Chikka Deva Wodeyar (d.1704) had rendered allegiance to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb when the latter came down to the Deccan. Haidar Ali was born around 1721-22, and, following the footsteps of his elder brother Shah Abbas, he became a cavalry officer in the Mysore army in 1749.

The rulers of Mysore wanted to obtain recruits from the Mughal military classes especially with those connected with the cavalry, which was the most effective arm of Indian armies during that period. It was common for unemployed Mughal cavalymen to move to the domains of newly emerging powers in search of employment. Irfan Habib points out that Haidar Ali's career demonstrated the strong Mughal infusion into a regional army. The next logical step was a shift in political power in favour of the new military element and also a created infusion of Mughal political and administrative institutions into the state of Mysore.⁸ In 1753 Haidar Ali was appointed *faujdar* of Dindigul, and participated actively in the ongoing Carnatic Wars. Mysore participated in the Second and Third Carnatic Wars, as an ally of the French East India Company against the English East India Company. He was deeply impressed by the modes of European warfare and began to recruit Frenchmen to organise his artillery arsenal and workshop. He tried to provide his infantry with flintlocks and introduced new methods of drill.

⁸ Irfan Habib (ed.), *Confronting colonialism: resistance and modernization under Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, Delhi, 1999, p. xix.

over the other actors was never clearly suzerain. At home, there were often other contenders for power, constantly on the look out to upset the applecart of dynastic succession.⁶ Another level of complexity was introduced due to the struggle over smaller principalities, such as those of the Nawabs of Kadapa and Karnul, as well as the smaller chiefs who were subordinate to Sira. Within Mysore, power passed from the hands of the Wodeyar into those of, first, the *Sarvadhikari*, Nanjaraj, and, thereafter, to Haidar Ali by 1761 (even though the Wodeyar remained the titular sovereign).

The mercantile companies of the Portuguese, Dutch, British and French merchant-adventurers, of course, added a dimension to the power game that was very distinctive. The Portuguese were the first to appear on the scene: Vasco da Gama landed at Calicut in 1498. For a very long time they dominated the Malabar, but the Dutch and the English began to overshadow them. However, the remaining Portuguese settlement of Goa was adjacent to Mysore. The only significant Dutch holdings by the time of Tipu's reign were in the west: the fortified posts of Cranganur and Ayicottah, and the principality of Cochin, wrested from the Portuguese.⁷

⁶ For example, Nizam Ali was constantly under threat due to the pretensions of his own brother Basalat Jang, who even conspired with the British and with Mysore to cut him out of sovereign power.

⁷ It was the sale of these two fortress-towns by the Dutch to the Raja of Travancore that proved to be the trigger for the Third Anglo-Mysore War. Tipu Sultan's contention was that the Dutch held these two places on lease from his feudatory, the Raja of Cochin. He, however, undermined his own argument by putting in a bid to counter that of Travancore. The Dutch claimed to have captured these places direct from the Portuguese, and affirmed that they had never paid tribute to the Zamorin, or Tipu's *amildars* at Calicut, or to the Raja of Cochin.

Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 123.

Thereafter, Haidar Ali's rise was rapid. The Wodeyar *raja* was trying to throw off the dominance of his powerful minister Nanjaraj. Haidar Ali took the side of the former even though Nanjaraj was his patron. By 1760-61, he had displaced Nanjaraj and controlled the reins of state. However, he did not depose the Wodeyar ruler, and, when the latter died in 1766, he even installed a successor. Great care was taken to retain the ceremonial of the Wodeyar court and palace. While ruling as regent, Haidar turned to a different source for the legitimation of his power. In 1761 he obtained the title of Haidar Ali Khan, and the office of the *faujdar* of Sira from Basalat Jang, a claimant to the throne of the Nizam. Sira itself fell into Haidar's hands in 1761.⁹ This was followed by the conquest of Bednur, renamed Nagar in 1763. Thereafter, Haidar Ali descended on the Malabar and brought under his suzerainty a number of *poligars* and chiefs.

The revenue administration under him was characterised by an introduction of Mughal elements with a view to increase the state's share in produce and to centralise administration. Haidar declared that the local potentates were *zamindars* and as such their entitlements were not sacrosanct. He imposed the land tax directly on peasants and organised a new bureaucracy for its collection. The system of assessing the tax directly on peasants formed the basis of Munro's Ryotwari system. His system of maintaining troops through Jagirdars was no longer adequate for the maintenance of a standing army. The new methods of warfare entailed a large standing army that had to be paid directly since he himself rose from the ranks of the military, Haidar Ali knew the dangers of

⁹ Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, I, 1810, edited with notes by Murray Hammick, 1930, p. 491-492, op. cit., Irfan Habib (ed.), *Confronting colonialism...*, p. xx.

disaffection in the army and ensured that he paid his troops regularly. Haidar established the system of *risalas*, wherein a standard number of soldiers with fixed allotments of guns and transport were maintained. Haidar established the system of *risalas* on European lines. An important innovation was the bullock and cart establishment, which enabled him to transport rapidly his infantry and supplies.¹⁰

Haidar's short term as regent saw early successes against the English during the First Anglo Mysore War in 1767-69. He was leading his armies in the Second Anglo Mysore War (1780-84), where the Marathas, the Nizam and the French had sided with Mysore against the English, when he died on December 7, 1782. The Treaty of Mangalore (March 1784) ended this war with a mutual restoration of conquests by the two sides.

After Haidar's death, Tipu Sultan assumed the leadership of the Mysorean army and succeeded to his father's office. After concluding peace with the English he waged wars against the Marathas and the Nizam, during 1785-87. The succeeding years were those of reorganization in internal administration. Unfortunately for him, the English managed to win the support of the Nizam and the Marathas, and defeated Mysore in the Third Anglo-Mysore War. The Treaty of Seringapatam in 1792 imposed very harsh terms on Tipu. The revolutionary regime in France was deeply suspicious of the royalist army and could provide very limited aid to Tipu Sultan. He consequently had to cede half his dominions to the allies and pay an indemnity of 3.3 crores of rupees within a year. Till then, two of his sons were held as hostages. Tipu Sultan succeeded in making his payments, even though he had to resort to severe measures to do so. He embarked on a new policy of

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. xxi,-xxii.

rebuilding the military and economic power of Mysore. The English watched him with suspicious vigilance. Efforts to enlist French aid did not yield substantial results, but gave the English an excuse to invade Mysore. The Fourth Anglo Mysore War (1799) ended with the defeat of Tipu Sultan and the restoration of the Wodeyar ruler as a puppet in the hands of the British Resident.

The problematic

The historiography of change on the eighteenth century has usually engaged with the transition from the Mughal Emperor to the successor states, and the corresponding economic changes. The endeavour usually is to determine in this period processes that can be classified as either 'decline' and 'dislocation', or as 'regeneration' and vibrant regional growth.

The aim of this study, however, is to focus on the reigns of these two unusual rulers of Mysore, and place them in the context of that period and that region. It analyses the power relationships that emanated from Seringapatam and ran in two broad directions: those with superordinate and roughly equal levels of authority, such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Marathas, and the Nawab of Arcot; and those with subordinate forces such as the *poligars* of Malabar, the chieftainships of Kadapa, Kurnool, and Sanore, and the petty rulers of small fortress principalities like Chitaldrug. The nature of these relationships, it is argued, defined the nature of the Mysorean polity, and the dimensions of sovereign power. If the nature of political authority and sovereign power is not a

given but a constructed entity, then such a construction can be explored at the two levels outlined above. Chapter 1 sets out the historiographic debate on the subject, and the terms of analysis of the nature of polities, and of political power thereof. Chapter 2 looks at Mysore's relations with the 'big' powers--- the Nizam at Hyderabad, the Marathas, the Nawabs of Sira and Arcot, the English and the French East India Companies, and, most importantly, the Mughal Emperor. Chapter 3 examines Mysore's relationships with 'smaller' political entities, the variety of chieftains and principalities over which eighteenth century Mysore claimed to hold suzerainty. The Conclusion tries to link up the last two chapters with certain aspects of the debate set out earlier, and to arrive at a few generalisations about the process under study.

Chapter I

Certain historiographic approaches to the study of power and polity in the southern subcontinent

Usually, an understanding of the nature and terms of exercise of political power, and the parameters that define a sovereign ruler, is taken simply to be a study of patterns of state formation and nature of state power as embedded in its various visible organs. While the latter is definitely an important constituent of studies of the former, an exploration of politics and power cannot be exhausted with an engagement with the formal apparatuses of a state, such as its bureaucracy, its army, its mode of extraction of revenue, its coercive machinery, etc. Nonetheless, an examination of some of the debates and historiographic currents about state power in pre-colonial and early colonial India is a useful to open up a broader discussion of political power and dimensions of sovereign rule.

Any such study of pre-colonial and early colonial patterns of state formation in the subcontinent would, till very recently, have run into obstacles created by a large body of Orientalist scholarship, which held that the state was epiphenomenal in this context. This knowledge represented the old regime as despotic, and based on enduring and autonomous social structures like the village community,¹ or on caste,² and where the

¹ Karl Marx, *The British rule in India, on colonialism: articles from the New York Tribune and other writings*, New York, 1972, op. cit., Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown: ethnohistory of an Indian kingdom*, Cambridge, 1987, p. 3.

² Max Weber, *The religion of India*, New York, 1958, op cit, Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown....*, p. 4.

nature of the state in medieval and 'late pre-colonial' south India is more ambiguous and contested rather than rich and integrated. More often than not, the issue is seen as one of determining the nature and extent of centralization achieved by various south Indian polities.

Initially, the debate ranged between those who argued for centralized states with strong monarchs, powerful military establishments, and elaborate bureaucracies, and yet others who posited the sovereign who exercised ritual power only over most of his realm outside the core areas. The paradigmatic work of the first school is that of K. A. Nilakanta Sastri,⁴ who describes the Cola sovereigns as strong, centralizing imperial powers, while also positing, based on more rigorous documented records, an almost self-sufficient 'local' level of government. Clearly, there is a discrepancy in the way in which power is visualized as being articulated at these two levels, in the absence of a clear delineation of the linkages between the two levels.

Burton Stein's seminal work, *Peasant state and society in medieval south India*, was aimed at this lacunae. Here, in firmly fleshed out contours, one can see the segmentary model of state formation as applied to the south Indian macro region. He borrows this model of political organisation from the African anthropologist Aidan Southall. "In the segmentary state, the parts or segments of which the state is composed are seen as prior to the formal state; these segments are structurally as well as morally coherent units in themselves. Together, these parts or segments comprise a state in their recognition of a

⁴ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, 'The Colas', second edition, Madras, 1955

sacred ruler whose over lordship is of moral sort and expressed in an essentially ritual idiom".⁵

This model is held to be singularly apposite to south Indian kinship, which is seen as 'sacral' and 'incorporative'. The kings are "essentially ritual figures, except in the often circumscribed core territories of their capitals where they commanded and managed resources and men by virtue of their compelling coercive power (*ksatra*)". By virtue of being the most important symbol of the sacred, moral order to which all men must belong, the kings exercise a sacred and moral authority (*dharma*) far exceeding the core areas where they wield *ksatra*. Stein argues that "given such a conception of kingship, only a segmentary political order---one bound together alone by the common allegiance of many chiefs to a sacred centre---can be appropriate".⁶

Stein's position is that "the South Indian political system could not be differentiated from the political system of most of the subcontinent at the time". Localized political units were 'loosely and symbolically' linked to kings, whose sovereignty might for a certain period be recognized by local chieftains, but whose hegemonic claims were 'ceremonial rather than real in any case' outside of the 'core of real power'. Thus, the Chola rulers, who were Tamilians, could extend their sovereignty over Kannada-speaking or Telugu-speaking chiefs through a style of 'dharmic kingship', that was recognized as the 'legitimate secular authority' by the latter.⁷ Furthermore, he argues for a 'fundamental continuity' between the eleventh and the seventeenth centuries with respect to several

⁵ Burton Stein, *Peasant state and society in medieval south India*, Delhi, 1980, p. 23.

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 44-45.

important aspects of society and culture within the peninsular macro region. He maintains that like Chola kingship, Vijayanagara kingship was also 'ritual' in respect to rule over peoples and territories of the macro region beyond the 'home territories'. The locality units corresponding to the ritual centre of kingship in both cases, (and again outside the riverine core regions of the two kingships, i.e., the Kaveri of the Colas and the Tungabhadra of the Vijayanagara), were not merely self-governing --- linked to imperial centres neither by resource flows nor command --- but were reduced images of the two centres".⁸

Even in the sole (and last) chapter that he devotes to the Vijayanagara state, Stein is very careful not to apply a unilinear model of the segmentary state across epochs in the history of the medieval kingdoms of south India. Though he refers to the Vijayanagara state as an extension of 'pre-modern, South Indian political system' of a segmentary state,⁹ he notes new elements such as the advent of Telugu and Muslim power, and of the European Companies. Among points of continuity between the two epochs, he identifies the pyramidal and segmentary character of the state, the centrality of religious institutions, and the importance of migration and conquest.¹⁰ Certain features of discontinuity,

⁸ *ibid.*, p. 368.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 366.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 367-368.

According to Stein, 'pyramidal segmentation' refers to "persistent combinatorial patterns among social elements which are distinct and often opposed". These 'social segments' are parts of a social whole, "differentiated elements of a single, universal moral system". These combined to make up the various "local social contexts of medieval South India", and also massed to form 'supra local combinations', or 'pyramids'. This is Stein's concept of 'pyramidal segmentation'. Such massing of primary local segments as supralocal formations, he says, provided the basis for state formation in medieval south India.

Peasant state and society..., p. 22.

developed with attention, are the martial nature of the state, incessant warfare, the *nayankara* system (with a comprehensive treatment of the accompanying debate on feudalism), and a new level of supralocal chieftainship.¹¹ Kingship, however, remains 'ritual',¹² and military supremacy is asserted from one part of the core, which happens to support the soldiery.¹³

The more substantial problem was how to bring in explanations of historical change into the 'segmentary state' model, given that the model was constructed by structural anthropologists whose primary concern was not with historical change in any case. This is admittedly a valid point, even if one does not go as far as Subrahmanyam and call it another form of the Asiatic mode of production.¹⁴ In a subsequent essay,¹⁵ Stein proposed a solution to the problem of historical change in the form of a technological motor from outside --- firearms in particular, and military technology in general. Using these technologies, Vijayanagara is said to have embarked on a process of 'thrusting centralisation', involving a freeing of the state from local aristocracy, the creation of an elaborate tax base, and a state organised around war (even as resistance was being offered continuously by earlier community based political structures).

Towards the end of the decade, Stein reaffirms the centrality of the inscriptional record for an understanding of the Vijayanagara state.¹⁶ Vijayanagara now is located in a

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 368.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 384.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 394.

¹⁴ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Agreeing to disagree: Burton Stein on Vijayanagara', *South Asia Research*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (Autumn 1997), p. 134.

¹⁵ Burton Stein, 'State formation and economy reconsidered', *Modern Asian Studies*, 19, 3 (1985).

¹⁶ Burton Stein, *The new Cambridge history of India 1.2, Vijayanagara*, Cambridge, 1989.

trajectory of important changes, culminating in a full-blown 'military fiscalism' in the eighteenth century. He refers to two forms of authority, or even 'dual sovereignty',¹⁷ in the Vijayanagara period, which had been introduced much earlier, but were now transformed and reinvigorated. These were royal and chiefly, central and local, deriving from prebendal entitlements, and communally derived and sustained entitlements. Temples continued to be the major beneficiaries of royal and chiefly largesse, leading to complex negotiations between agents of royal authority, and temple managers who were appointed and supported by local chieftains. Among the new forms of prebendal entitlement, the most notable was the *amara* or *nayankara*. Administrative capabilities and coercive powers were distributed among a large stratum of territorial and local magnates. Lordship itself continued to be segmentary,¹⁸ and all forms of lordship, "from the king to even the most modest chief", were becoming more powerful. This was made possible by "greater militarisation, more lethal arms, larger treasuries based upon the expanding commerce of the time, and more efficient fiscal controls".¹⁹ Therefore, the real motor behind the transformation of the medieval south Indian state was military modernisation, particularly, improved warhorses, archers, and new guns. The processes of monetisation and urbanisation, which supported such military modernisation, were only intensified by the appearance of the Europeans. 'Military-fiscalism' and 'modest bureaucratisation' was not imposed from above, by royal officials, for example, but it arose from "the base of the political system, from its many chiefs, its numerous villages, and its temples".²⁰ Stein reiterates that none of these developments "required or generated

¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 142.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 91-93.

¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 95.

²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 86.

a substantially more centralised administration in the kingdom”. The forms of administration in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries improved and were widely adopted by all lordships, but the model for this improved administration was more the temple of the age than the Vijayanagar state apparatus, which remained ‘primitive’.²¹ In an effort to explain the dynamics of historical change, while still adhering to a diluted but skeletal framework of a segmentary state for a long period spanning two important dynasties, Stein introduced a spin on military-fiscalism.

In the light of this alternative vision, and even otherwise, in an analysis of his hypothesis on its own terms, it is difficult to visualise a powerful military-fiscalism developing merely in the *method* of governance, without significantly changing the *form* of sovereign power. The proposition that new fiscal measures could lie roughly uniformly dispersed across all the segments comprising the state, leading to a simultaneous and similar consolidation of power at all levels of authority/lordship, without generating tensions that could be resolved only when a particular level gained ascendancy, is rather problematic in itself. In *Vijayanagara*, the emphasis might have moved from the model of the segmentary state to the external motor of technological change arising from military-fiscal imperatives that powered historical change. However, the dynamics of the actual transformation of state form from the medieval period into the eighteenth century, and the early modern period, is still not clear.

Stein does seem to be conscious of the anomaly inherent in positing a generalised administrative, fiscal-military improvement across the stratum of lordships, while at the

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 143.

same time denying that the central state apparatus had also become modernised, and, as a result, more aggressively centralising. He seeks to resolve this by holding out the temple as the locus and exemplar of all administrative improvement. Here, Stein seizes upon a well-established scholarly tradition. As pointed out by Bayly and Subrahmanyam, in “the extant syntheses on economic conditions in pre-colonial southern India”, such as those of Appadurai, Breckenridge, Saletore, and K.A.N. Sastri, the temple and religious foundations do play a focal role.²²

Appadurai argues that there are three defining characteristics of a temple. First, it is a ‘sacred space’, which, as an architectural entity, “provides a royal abode for the deity enshrined in it, who is conceived as a paradigmatic sovereign”. Second, as a ‘process’, the temple has a ‘redistributive role’, which consists of a “continuous flow of transactions between worshipers and deity”, whereby resources and services are offered to the deity, and returned by the latter to the worshipers in the form of shares, demarcated by certain kinds of honours”. Third, as a ‘system of symbols’, the temple has a ‘metasocial’ or reflexive quality, which “serves to dramatize and define certain key South Indian ideas concerning authority, exchange, and worship at the same time that it provides an arena in which social relations in the broader societal context can be tested, contested, and refined”.²³ These three elements are held to provide the basic elements of continuity in the temple from the pre-British period to the present. In other words, Appadurai feels that

²² C.A. Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, ‘Portfolio capitalists and the political economy of early modern India’, *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, 25, 4 (1998), p. 404

This theme, they point out, was further developed by Burton Stein in his detailed study of the Tirumala-Tirupati complex, using the translated inscriptions of the time. Stein added further sub themes, such as the investment by temples in cash grants in order to finance the commemorative activity surrounding the grant itself, and the changing structure of donation to Tirupati (cash vs. land, different categories of donors, etc).

²³ Arjun Appadurai, *Worship and conflict under colonial rule: A South Indian Case*, Cambridge, 1981, p. 19.

there was no essential cultural change in the temple, and the consequences of British rule lie elsewhere. What have changed are the rules and actions of temple control, or management of the processes over which the authoritative deity presides. This, he argues, has led to the fragmentation of authority in an important socio-structural sense, even as in a cultural sense, authority continues to be the locus of continuity.²⁴

Appadurai's efforts to combine the methods of history and anthropology in a contribution to the larger project of "reconstructing the colonial constitution of colonial societies"²⁵ do seem inadequate. While the structure of the temple and its redistributive process might be well explicated, the relationship between the religious domain on the one hand, and the economic and the political domain on the other, and the nature of authority in its various forms remains unspecified. This is because the defining characteristics of the temple are abstracted from the processes of historical change, and the temple is reified as an unchanging cultural category.²⁶

Subrahmanyam and Bayly identify 'two unintended negative effects' of the larger corpus of such studies. First, these works suggest a far more unitary ideology, encompassing both state and civil society than did in fact obtain in that period: symptomatic is the neglect of religious and cultural 'deviant groups', and the assumption that making merit through the temple was an immutable component in southern Indian political economy.

²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 19.

²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 228.

²⁶ Dirks also tries to use the methods of historical anthropology to arrive at a 'cultural construction of power' in the eighteenth century 'little kingdom' of Pudukkottai. He denies that the crown was hollow, that kings were inferior to Brahmanas, and that the political domain was subsumed by a religious domain. He argues that ritual and political forms were fundamentally the same and that 'caste structure, ritual form and political process were all dependent on relations of power'.

Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 4-5.

Second, they have served to shore up the superficial view...that a great barrier separated the economy and society of northern India from that of the south".²⁷ The two authors themselves draw on the work of Rao and Shulman²⁸ to argue that the relationship between the temple and political authority had begun to change dramatically in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rather than having the ability to legitimize royal authority from above, it would appear that 'royal claims' to intervene in 'godly' events were asserted with greater vigour.

Their endeavour is to redress this imbalance in historical understanding by delineating "the place of mercantile activity in the evolution of the Indian social and economic structure over the early modern period---the early sixteenth to the early nineteenth century...". Within the rather 'amorphous heading' of 'merchants', they seek to identify the existence of 'portfolio capitalists' who were able to "straddle the worlds of commerce and political participation",²⁹ thereby emphasizing that the two spheres were not mutually closed off in pre-colonial India. There is said to exist a 'certain fragility' of these portfolio capitalists, especially with regard to the smaller scale and relatively specialized units and entities that underpinned their activity. The emergence of a colonial political economy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries severely delimited their prospects, and "ultimately swept them away".³⁰

²⁷ C.A. Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Portfolio Capitalists...', p. 404-405.

²⁸ Rao and Shulman, 'Marriage broker for a god: Vijayaraghava Nayaka in the Tanjavur yaksaganias', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, forthcoming, op. cit., C.A. Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Portfolio capitalists...', p. 405.

²⁹ C.A. Bayly and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Portfolio Capitalists...', p. 401.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 401-402.

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Europeans, they argue, tapped into the networks of *bazaar* and *mahajan* finance, which had once supported the indigenous portfolio capitalist. They point out that in the two areas of the earliest English political penetration, the Bengal and the Carnatic, “private Englishmen --- even if Company servants --- created in the eighteenth century complex enterprises, combining seaborne trade, overland and fluvial commerce, farmed commercial crops, and created private monopolies and monopsonies, thus becoming ever more entangled in the middle ground between Indian sovereigns and the subjects over whom they aspired to rule”.³¹ However, the British portfolio capitalist is seen as different from his Asian predecessors in two ways. First, he brought in his wake the “umbrella of the Company, the larger entity whose logic eventually precipitated full-blown colonialism”.³² Second, the new scale and intensity of British remittances out of India led to a “structural reorientation in patterns of international commodity and financial flows in the second half of the eighteenth century”.³³ With the East India Company’s transition from mercantile to territorial power in India, the contradiction between its new aims, and the military and political position of the portfolio capitalists became apparent the eighteenth century had made apparent two facts about portfolio capitalism: “its dependence on an infrastructure of local capital”, and “the dangers posed to a sovereign state by the volatile combination of external trade, agrarian surplus and military power in the hands of intermediate elements”.³⁴ By 1820, the new Company state, as a result, had replaced revenue-farming with direct collection; the free ‘military labour market’ had been sealed off; state monopolies or ‘free trade’ had replaced private monopolies, except

³¹ *ibid.*, p. 421.

³² *ibid.*, p. 422.

³³ *ibid.*, p. 423.

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 423.



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for petty farms of produce and monopolies in trade; and the state had, as far as possible, severed commerce from political authority, even for its own servants.

The analytic category of the portfolio capitalist adequately serves the purpose of the authors. It successfully demolishes the distinction between the separation of mercantile activity and military and political power in pre-colonial India. It lends itself well to an analysis of economic changes occurring over this period, without having to resort to a theoretical divide in the north and south Indian profiles. Finally, it also incorporates an understanding of the 'colonial insertion', and the transition to full-fledged colonial state power.

What is most relevant for our study is that this is a most promising attempt at the analysis of the nature of state power in the late pre-colonial and early modern period, organized not around a mammoth model like that of the 'segmentary state', but trying to explicate change without resort to theoretical divides such as real/ ritual power, religious/ political-military, royal/ local, northern India/southern India, etc. What is most important is an argument for the possibility of such trajectories of analysis, which also look at the qualitative differences in the model of state power. Subrahmanyam in particular, does not share Stein's anxiety to classify the state form, and looks instead at the "panorama of modes in which the southern Indian polities struggled to come to terms with the changed circumstances of the eighteenth century"; admitting a "variety of historiographic modes" recovered from hitherto neglected literary materials.³⁵

³⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbral visions: making polities in early modern south India*, Delhi, 2001, p. 20-21.

II

Another scholar who attempts to break down distinctions such as that between real and ritual power, the religious/social (caste) and the political-military, and royal and local authority is that of Nicolas Dirks. Dirks denies that, in the eighteenth century, the crown was hollow, that kings were inferior to Brahmanas, and that the political domain was subsumed by a religious domain. He argues that 'ritual and political forms were fundamentally the same and that 'caste structure, ritual form and political process were all dependent on relations of power'. His concern, in the ultimate analysis, is with the 'cultural construction of power'.³⁶

Nicholas Dirks borrows from Bernard Cohn the concept of a 'little kingdom', which denoted 'the lowest level of the late precolonial state'. He disavows any project of looking at 'large transregional states', and says that his 'perspective is one that will reveal the complex and integral interrelations of political processes which ultimately culminated in larger kingdoms with the social forms that are held to be autonomous and nonpolitical' by focusing on the 'cultural, political, social, economic and ritual basis of the little kingdom' of Pudukkottai, he hopes to 'show the inherent problems of these analytic categories and the distinctions they imply'.³⁷

³⁶ Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 4-5.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 5.

Dirks defines his historiographic enquiry as concerned with “the core conceptions of sovereignty; the interpenetrating transactions in gifts, service, and kinship; the structure and form of hegemony”.³⁸ In opposition to Dumont, Dirks argues that caste, kinship, and ritual in Pudukkottai was embedded in the political context of kingship, and thus is inflected at its core with politics. What transpires is a “lack of any clear distinction between ritual and non ritual domains of actions”.³⁹ Thus, gifts were not only “public acts of kingship and established relations, however variable between the grantor and the grantee...”;⁴⁰ they also “provided the infrastructural circuitry which connected ritual and politics, for relations of worship and loyalty were articulated through this single process”.⁴¹

Dirks acknowledges that “the underlying political base of any little kingdom in the old regime was... its military capacity... in turn based on structures of alliance and command, articulated by gifts, privileges, and kinship...”.⁴² He is full aware of the fact that military viability of any ‘little kingdom’, in fact, of any type of polity in the eighteenth century was extremely important, since it was a period of enormous possibilities for state formation, and whichever power could manage a greater control over resources had an edge. In refutation of Eric Stokes argument,⁴³ he maintains that the expansion in the

³⁸ *ibid.* p. 7.

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 128-129.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 128-129.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 98.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 123.

⁴³ The argument of Eric Stokes suggests that the strength of the state falls off increasingly towards the peripheries. Given that collections were in kind, it would also appear that the king should hold on to rights to the royal share near the centre of the state and give away lands at the periphery minimizing, all other thing being equal, substantial transportation costs. However, more units of imams were given away at the centre than in the periphery. This was because was giving and away was a means of incorporating new people into a moral political economy in which the king was at the centre.

position of the *palaiyakkarars* during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries occurred at the expense of that of the centre. He sees it as the 'encroachment' of the periphery over the centre, "if only partially and temporarily". For the British, of course, the demise of sovereign rule was lamentable, and *palaiyakkarar* rule corrupt in the extreme.⁴⁴

Not only was the periphery ascendant over the centre, power relations were being constantly negotiated and contested within the little kingdoms. In Pudukkottai, for example, at the top most level of the political hierarchy, there was a graded sharing of

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 27.

The vast extension of the political and the geographical universe under Vijayanagar provided unprecedented opportunities for mobility and migration especially as it also removed the Pantiyans, the last of the real Tamil kingdoms, from serious contention for over lordship. As a corollary to this expansion, the political geography of Tamil Nadu became more subject to frequent alteration and adjustment, depending on the military skills and political ambitions of the araiyars and their capacity to make lasting local alliances and institutional relationships. This was particularly true of the "mixed economy zones" where agrarian settlement was still at an early stage, and where mobility, for reasons of ecological and political instability was most pronounced. These developments were encouraged by forces above and outside the locality as well as being outgrowths of local political developments. Chiefly groups and individuals emerged out of a context in which local authority and decision making were vested in locality assemblies first by mobilizing their local resources to secure protection rights and then by being conspicuous donors to temples, charities, and Brahman communities. Their control over resources necessary for such beneficent activity was intensified by the transfer of protection rights from locality assemblies to these chiefs. The chiefs gradually acquired more generalize rights than had been initially awarded to them as patikkaval chiefs. Some of these rights had to do with honours accorded to chiefs; others had to do with their control over military followers and their communities. The chiefs continued to be active donors, and they garnered increasing shares of local and temple honors and of local production, as well as greater responsibility to provide protection to all the temples and villages under their general dominion.

The old regime permitted and continued the transformation of peripheral zones in the Tamil country into small replicas of the great Vijayanagar kingdom. The great gifts of the Vijayanagar kings were replicated in the Tondaiman grants to Kallar supporters. From the early eighteenth century, most of these gifts were made during the Dasara festival, performed in mimesis of Vijayanagar. Until their final demise, the *palaiyakkarars* domains preserved the strong social bases—their lineage and subcaste formations—which had permitted their rise to power in the first place".

It was through this process that *palaiyakkarars* began to dominate south Indian society and polity at the local level. Local conditions varied considerably throughout southern India, as did the positions of local *palaiyakkarars*. This is amply demonstrated by the spectrum of political authority in the south, which—below regional kings of the three great mantalam—ranged from Ramantapuram and Puddukotai on the one hand to the tiny estate of certain Tirunelveli *palaiyakkarars* on the other...whether kaval chiefs represented one stage in the developmental cycle of political authority or whether they belonged to a different category altogether, the institutional processes by which protection rights were exchanged for shares of production remained similar and were at the base of local political systems.

Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 154-155.

sovereign powers among the Tondaiman Rajas; the two Jagirdars who represented collateral branches of the Raja's family, were potential rivals and had to be appeased with *jagirs* after a particularly bitter succession dispute in 1730; and the great 'Vakuppu' Cervaikarars numbering between eight and eighteen, who all belonged to the same caste as the Tondaimans—that of the Kallars. The Tondaiman lineage was structurally below that of the Pallavaraiyars. Dirks explains this as a function of the separation of royal honor from caste honour. The royal *kuppam*⁴⁵ TT, to which the Tondaiman king belonged ranked second after the VT within the royal subcaste of Ampu Natu, which also threw up the great Cervaikarars. A 'segmentary logic [rendered] unnecessary the rearrangement of certain categories and groups such as the elevation of the Tondaimans over the Pallavaraiyars, or of TT over VT'.⁴⁶

What could come across at first glance as various anomalies in the articulation of political authority and hierarchy can be better understood if we remember that caste, kinship, and ritual in Pudukkottai was embedded in the political context of kingship, and that sovereignty in the eighteenth century was friable, and had to be continuously constructed with reference to coordinates such as honour, kinship, and service, which resonated with the ethos of the old regime. The king could be "both a member of a sedentary lineage system and the overlord of the entire kingdom" precisely because:

"Kinship is inflected, at its core, by politics; and politics is nothing more than the curious paradox of a king who encompasses all even as he is one of his own metonyms. In the

⁴⁵ Territorial division within royal subcaste.

⁴⁶ Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 235.

social and political way of the little kingdom this meant that the king was an overlord, but one who is nevertheless always embroiled in the strategic concerns of kinship, status hierarchy, protection and warfare, and in the maximization of his own honor and sovereign authority within the little kingdom and in the wider world of other kingdoms and greater overlords".⁴⁷

In such a scenario, the practice of gift giving and gift taking had many advantages as an act of statecraft. It led not only to the redistribution of goods and services, but, in what is more immediate to our concern, also led to the simultaneous establishment of solidarity *and* hierarchy in social relations.⁴⁸ On the one hand, where various social 'segments' had to be incorporated into some sort of a political whole---

"The sharing of the king's sovereignty through the transactions of the festival had the effect of incorporating the disparate elements of the kingdom into his sovereign being and rendering them all parts- metonyms- of himself, even as the emblems were themselves metonyms of his sovereignty".⁴⁹

"The subsequent acceptance of these emblems completes the act of service/worship and serves to acknowledge that it is a great honor for the recipient to share, as a subordinate, part of the king's own royalty. Through this transaction the king not only shares part of

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 260.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 31.

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 42.

"Sovereignty which is gifted, or shared, is always partial, and always represented as a part (not the whole) of the specific sovereignty of the overlord. Gifted titles, for example, are often one, or several, of the titles possessed by the overlord himself, or they describe the heroic actions performed by the lesser lord on behalf of the greater lord. Gifted emblems are usually one or more of the emblems held by the overlord".

Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 47.

his sovereign substance, but incorporates the “servant” into his own sovereignty, or lordship”.⁵⁰

On the other hand, the differentials inherent in any practice of gift taking and receiving also led to the rise of a political hierarchy.

“Participation in the whole was not, however, unranked, for the differential nature and contingent character of all these entitlements provided the basis for the creation of a political hierarchy. Entitlements implied service, stipulated command, and were often contingent upon (and determinative of) kinship forms. Entitlements further expressed hierarchy, involving as they did both the ranking and mediation of individuals and of categories, as well as the (implicitly ranked) degree of inclusion within or exclusion from ranked categories. Ultimately, entitlements by their very nature constituted hierarchy through a logic of variable proximity to the king, to sovereignty itself”.⁵¹

In other words,

“Honors must not only be defined in relational terms, but these relations are necessarily hierarchical...the relationship is always one of periphery to centre, and of part to whole; the periphery (palaiyakkarars) is always oriented to the center (great kings), even as the metonymic part (emblems) only derives meaning from its relation to the whole (the sovereignty, and the full set of emblems, of a great king)”.⁵²

Where there is hierarchy, there is always present the possibility of discord and division.

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 86.

⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 129.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 87.

“... the king’s gift is at once binding and potentially divisive. The more gifts of honors and rights the overlord makes to his subordinate, and- in what is a logical and political consequence of this- the more the subordinate participates in the sovereignty of his overlord, the more the subordinate is represented as sovereign in his own right. While gift giving articulates relations both of solidarity and hierarchy, simultaneously creating by its own internal dynamic the transactional poles of center and periphery, the possibility implicit in every gift is the cessation of the gift relationship. This possibility is made real by the very substance of the gift: authority itself”.⁵³

Therefore, what transpires is that the gift flows from and contributes to the definition and consolidation of sovereign authority. Dirks draws upon a certain sociological and anthropological tradition in his deployment of the gift as an analytic category. First among them is Marcel Mauss,⁵⁴ who isolated the structural principle of reciprocity in ‘primitive’ societies. A gift established a relation that was not only created but also continually recreated by exchange.⁵⁵ Mauss describes a system of ‘total prestations’ for certain societies:

There was no ‘simple exchange of goods, wealth and produce through markets established among individuals’ in ‘systems of the past’. This was because it was groups and not individuals, which carried on exchange, made contracts and were ‘bound by

⁵³ *ibid.*, p. 47-48.

⁵⁴ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift, forms of function and exchange in archaic societies*, translated by Ian Cunnison, with an introduction by E. E. Evans Pritchard, Cohen and West Limited, London, 1970.

⁵⁵ The norm of reciprocity invoked in Durkheimian terms explains little, leaves the question of causation open, and does not explain the origin of the norm. “Mauss merely invokes the norm s a description, and instead show us that exchange, which is a reversible and two-way process, is necessitated by the requirement of reciprocity, and that reciprocity is necessitated by the requirement of exchange”. C. R. Badcock, *Levi-Strauss, structuralism and sociological theory*, 1975, p. 31.

obligations'. The 'persons represented in the contracts were moral persons—clans, tribes, families; the groups, or the chiefs as intermediaries for the groups, confront and oppose each other'. What is exchanged is not so much 'things of economic value', but rather 'courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts; and fairs in which the market is but one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract'. Although the prestations and counter-prestations take place under a 'voluntary guise', they are 'in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is open or private warfare'.⁵⁶

Apart from the obligation of repaying gifts, the system of total prestations implies two equally important obligations---the obligation to give presents, and the obligation to receive them.

"To refuse to give or to fail to invite, is---like refusing to accept---the equivalent of a declaration of war; it is a refusal of friendship and intercourse. Again, one gives because one is forced to do so, because the recipient has a sort of proprietary right over everything which belongs to the donor".

At another point, Mauss writes:

In reply to all these instances there is a series of rights and duties about consuming and repaying existing side by side with rights and duties about giving and receiving. The pattern of symmetrical and reciprocal rights is not difficult to understand if we realize that it is first and foremost a pattern of spiritual bonds between things which are to some

⁵⁶ Mauss, *The Gift, forms of ...* p. 3.

extent parts of persons and persons and groups that behave in some measure as if they were things".⁵⁷

Certain areas where Dirks develops from Mauss are obvious. One is the postulate of a system of exchanges of economic and ritual goods, without really holding the two to be different, since they were entered into by moral persons or individuals who represented groups, and as such formed the very basis of society. The element of coercion, which made such exchanges obligatory finds echo in Dirks treatise, where the cessation of the gift relationship is seen as a declaration of hostilities.

Dirks also finds Mauss' analysis somewhat limited to his purpose in as far as its ambit was 'primitive societies'. He then looks at Marshall Sahlins work, which looks into the political logic of the gift as the key to understanding early state forms. Sahlins shows that the gift forms the structural basis for a transformation from exchange to redistribution or pooling. Pooling is seen as having a practical and logistic function where it 'sustains the community in a material sense', and an instrumental function where it sustains 'the corporate structure' or the political order itself. At the same time, Dirks is aware of the consequences of focusing only on the rule or the structure, and emphasizes the need to analyze gifts as symbolic actions that take place in particular contexts, defined by the 'different types, contexts, grantors, and recipients of gifts'.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁸ Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 132-133.

To a very large extent, he succeeds in heeding what he cautions against. ‘The hollow crown...’ is a rich text which illustrates the success and elegance with which historical anthropology can be practiced in a study of the patterns of construction of sovereign and state power in the eighteenth century. Cohn said that “in loose terms, research in history is based on finding data; research in anthropology is based on creating data”.⁵⁹ Mauss, for example, has developed the gift as an analytic category with generalizable principles and conceptual rigour, applicable across a range of societies. A study using the same concept in a historically specific context would be of a different nature, and would throw up questions that also engage with the particular. This is one of the standpoints from which this study examines Mysore in the second half of the eighteenth century. The main thrust of the endeavour is to examine the cultural construction of power, the relationship between centre and periphery, real and ritual power, and the political and the socio-religious.

Another effort at the cultural construction of power in the specific context of Tipu Sultan’s reign is that of Kate Brittlebank. The aim of the study is threefold — to examine the strategies adopted by Tipu Sultan to assert his legitimacy as the parvenu Muslim ruler of a predominantly Hindu kingdom, while at the same time testing the conformity of

⁵⁹ Bernard Cohn, *An anthropologist among historians and other essays*, Delhi, 1987, p. 6.

those strategies to the prerequisites identified by Stewart Gordon,⁶⁰ to place actions within their cultural and historical context Tipu's representations of himself.⁶¹ Brittlebank argues that though there was a distinct Islamicising thrust to some of Tipu's actions, he operated within the established parameters of south India kingship, rather than exclusively Islamic kingship.

The next two chapters shall examine Mysore in the eighteenth century during the reigns of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan. The issues that run through the following discussion resonate in the corpus of works described above, which analyse state forms and political power in southern part of the subcontinent. The engagement is not with overall models of the nature of the state, and their evaluation against the evidence provided by Mysore in the late eighteenth century. Rather, I try to see how far one can open up an exploration of the construction of power relationships, and the concomitant process of the definition of the nature of polities and of sovereign power through some of the categories of analysis that emerge from the above discussion --- core and periphery, real and ritual power, royal and local power, coercion and legitimacy.

⁶⁰ Stewart Gordon's postulated four modes of legitimacy by which a ruler, of whatever religious affiliation could be considered legitimate in the rising regional kingdoms of the eighteenth century.

1 A proven protector of the people, capable of establishing a limited sort of public order and preventing external aggression

2 A ruler having a commanding personal presence, competent at courtly etiquette, personally brave, capable of leading the army, and successful at settling factional disputes.

3 The most appropriate ruler rules by heredity' that is the eldest natural son of a reigning king.

4 The holder of a genuine sanad from a strong power.

'Legitimacy and Loyalty in some successor states of the eighteenth century', J. F. Richards, ed., *Kingship and authority in south Asia*, second edition, 1981, p. 297.

⁶¹ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search for legitimacy: Islam and kingship in a Hindu domain*, Delhi, 1997, p. 9.

Chapter II

Mysore and the 'big powers': through the eyes of an imperial and a regional 'centre'

I

The Mughal 'centre': the 'pyramiding' of obligations

Mysore in the second half of the eighteenth century was in ascendant power that had to confront many other big and bigger powers in the theatre of the southern Indian peninsula. One factor that stands out is that from the very outset that other powers --- like the Nawabs of Arcot and Sira, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Marathas --- weave their way into the complex parleys for power in and around Mysore, is that the articulation and adjustment of claims is determined not just by the military force they can bring to bear on proceedings, but also through the relationship they negotiate with the Mughal Emperor.

Most studies of the Mughal Empire during the eighteenth century have drawn attention to its loss of central military and administrative control, and the concomitant rise of regional powers with *de facto* independence. One would imagine that the logical culmination of such a trajectory of development would be distancing, repudiation, or even severance of links from the erstwhile imperial centre. Yet, as Michael Fisher points out succinctly, "these regional powers expended vast sums and great energies trying either to control the Emperor or to reconcile their desired policies with their official positions as his

Emperor or to reconcile their desired policies with their official positions as his subordinates”. Therefore, any study of this period cannot dismiss the role of the Emperor in real politics, but must, instead, assess the “continuing effects of Mughal sovereignty”.¹ Long after the Mughal sovereign could enforce his commands to those who held power from him in different parts of his realm, the Mughal Empire continued to provide the context for political action and debate on the subcontinent, and the person of the Mughal Emperor continued to represent a sacred, cosmic order.

Mughal imperial ideology was marked strongly by the establishment, supervision, and renewal of “effective ties” (J. F. Richards) or “personal links” (Fisher) between the Mughal Emperor and his various deputies and officials. He held daily private and public audiences, which focused attention of his subjects, high and low, upon his person. The practice of giving *darsan*, or a glimpse of his auspicious self, reinforced his central place in the cosmic order, which he himself, in the last instance, embodied. Regular *darbar* were held, where he received memoranda from his administrators, and dictated his official response to them. His subordinates submissively offered him *nazr*, or gold coins and precious gifts, and he bestowed upon them *khilat*, or robes of honour (“putatively worn by the Emperor himself and therefore imbued with his sacred presence”²). No succession was beyond dispute until it had been ratified by the receipt of *khilat* from the Emperor. The coins minted in the provinces bore the imperial legend. The *khutba* was read in his name every Friday in mosques cross the country. Empire without the Emperor was unthinkable; imperial power holders derived their office, titles, and legitimacy from

¹ Michael Fisher, *A clash of cultures: Awadh, the British, and the Mughals*, Riverdale, 1987, p. 5.

² *ibid.*, p. 11.

the Mughal Emperor. Recognition of this fact was as universal, as the loss of control over political events by the Mughal Emperor was genuine.³

(One must also remember that the picture is not one of a placid giving up of powers by the centre. Periodically the Mughal court tried to reassert its military and administrative control over the vast bulk of the subcontinent still nominally under its control. As late as 1794, the Mughal Emperor sent instructions to the governor of Awadh, his hereditary *wazir*, ordering the mobilization of armies to reconquer the subcontinent on his behalf).

Why, then, did “the symbols of power continue to be so persuasive, even though the power which had promoted them decayed”?⁴ The myth and aura of Mughal hegemony in itself was compelling enough to command at least honorific allegiance from the various provincial satrapies, the most important of which were set up by dynasts who still looked to the Mughal court as their model within the domain of temporal Islamic rule. Muzaffar Alam has provided a plausible politico-economic explanation. The eighteenth century, he argues, saw not only the collapse of the power at the centre, but also a “restabilization” in certain areas, accomplished “almost wholly within the Mughal institutional framework”.

³ This is a point that Bayly seems to miss out on, when he says that like the regional powers of Bengal, Hyderabad, and Awadh, the imperial centre itself had, by 1761, “an extenuated satrapy displaying many similar features of political organisation”. The “failed dynast” here was Mirza Najaf Khan, “who fought a brilliant rearguard action on behalf of the Mughal name between 1771 and 1783”. Bayly identifies him as an emergent state builder, who had operated in much the same manner as Asaf Jah, Murshid Quli Khan, and Burhan-ul-mulk, by combining the offices of revenue manger and governor, and setting up a new hereditary local aristocracy, and a new army.
C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen, bazaars: north Indian society in the age of British expansion 1780-1870*, Cambridge, 1983, p. 25-26.

⁴ Kirmani mentions the envoys that Tipu Sultan sent, with gifts of great value to Kutch “to bring thence the Tika”. Kirmani tells us, that the word *tika* “signifies an ornament or mark on the forehead used by ladies. It also signifies the installation or inauguration to an office, of a Sovereign Prince; here apparently it signifies the Daughter of the Raja, who had been affianced to the Sultan, and whose presence was necessary...to his accession to the throne”. This was considered essential, the author explains, because of the established Mughal practice of marrying Rajput princesses on ascension to the throne.
Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan being a continuation of the Neshani Hyduri*, tr. W. Miles, first published 1844, New Delhi, Oriental Publishers, 1980, p. 119.

Despite decentralization and inter-regional warfare, the various segments of the empire remain integrated through trade and monetary transactions, a process that had begun in the seventeenth century and was one of the reasons that led to the rise of these regions in the first place. Since no region could maintain itself in isolation from the other, there had to be a central framework that would allow them to relate to one another. Secondly, the decline of imperial power had created space for “unfettered political and military adventurism”, but none of these adventurers could command the allegiance of the others and, thus, try to replace the imperial power. Each waged his own battle to carve out his own niche. Therefore, each threatened the other. Some succeeded in establishing their dominance over some of the others. However, when they needed “institutional validation of their spoils”, they had to hark back to the imperial centre. The Mughal Emperor and his court provided “the safest such centre, since it had long been accepted as a source of all political power and authority, but now it was too weak and ineffective to resist the adventurers’ ambitions and was also unable to restrict regional developments”.⁵

Therefore, any study of regional power in the southern subcontinent during the eighteenth century needs to contextualise the equations negotiated by various actors with the imperial centre. This equation was enshrined in a document called the *sanad*, whose actual structure and evolution is far more fluid and responsive to changes in ground realities than the strict legalistic definition of the term would suggest. It is worth quoting Stewart Gordon at length about the nature of relationship entailed between grantor and grantee by the *sanad*, and the changes in this institution into the eighteenth century:

⁵ Muzaffar Alam, *The crisis of empire in Mughal north India. Awadh and Punjab, 1707-1748*, Delhi, 1997, p. 16-17.

“Under the Mughal Empire, virtually every political authority, from raja down to village headman, ‘held from’ some larger authority. What most held was a written, dated document, known as a sanad in Mughal-influenced areas which stated the holder’s name, rights and recompense, duties and length of tenure; such a document was signed and sealed by the appropriate Mughal official.

“The sanad system was not as neat and unambiguous as so far suggested. Sanads could be, and often were lost, stolen, forged, or altered, and their authority could, thus, be challenged. Such challenges are common in the Maratha legal proceedings of the eighteenth century. At a more basic level, the sanad system did *not* produce a *simple pyramiding of obligations*. All sanad-holders within a region did not necessarily hold from the same source. A village headman might hold from the local zamindar, with the zamindar holding directly from the Mughal Emperor. In practice, this meant that the Mughal revenue officials dealt only with the zamindar; any attempt to gain village records would have been resisted also, a certain *overlapping and ambiguity* seems to have been *built consciously* into the Mughal system. Rarely, if ever, was a region the responsibility of a single sanad-holder. The administrative, judicial, and military heads (and occasionally large zamindars) held independent sanads from the Emperor; *none was formally subordinate to another, and each was used to check the activities of the others*.

“Finally, the sanad was only as good as the credibility of the sanad-giver. In the best of times, a Mughal sanad represented a final sort of legitimacy. Two brothers, disputing a

throne, might argue their case before a Mughal official who forwarded their case to the Emperor. Once the decision was reached and the sanad sent, all the might of the Empire would be threatened or exercised to maintain the successful claimant on the throne. A sanad was, thus, based on the faith that the sanad-giver could and would maintain a functioning public order, making it likely that the holder could discharge his duties and receive his recompense.

“The eighteenth century, however, was far from the best of times. A sanad no longer meant what it implicitly had, i.e., that the resources of a well-organized and successful empire would back the holder. After about 1715, granting a Mughal sanad meant only that the currently dominant faction was either rewarding one of its members or responding to an immediate political or military emergency. Further into the century, the sanad-system became even more complex. As early as 1720, the Marathas were issuing their own sanads in areas formerly under Mughal control. Within a few years, others (such as the Nizam) were issuing sanads in the name of the Mughal Emperor. Thus, the *sanad-system*, which had *never been perfectly hierarchical*, became *increasingly fragmented*.

“...

“Through the eighteenth century, it more and more became the responsibility of the sanad-holder (rather than the sanad-grantor) to generate the faith that he could maintain a functioning public order... (among) the eighteenth century rulers...(there is) evidence of this relation between ‘kingly’ protection of subjects and legitimacy”.⁶

⁶ Stewart Gordon, *Marathas, marauders, and state formation in eighteenth-century India*, Delhi, 1994, p. 67-69. Emphasis added.

These features of ambiguity, asymmetry, absence of a clear hierarchy, division of powers among various tiers and units without formal subordination of one to the other, and emphasis on the role of the *sanad*-holder as the one responsible for upholding order and governance illuminate to a great extent why the political scenario in which eighteenth century Mysore is set evolved the way that it did. Various fledgling states could insert themselves advantageously and built independent niches by taking advantage of such fragmentation of authority and the absence of a well-articulated imperial hierarchy. Since they did not need to position themselves in clear tributary relations with other powers who also derived their legitimacy from the Mughal Emperor, they had room to manoeuvre and consolidate their position over a period. Yet, the overall pattern of holding power from the Mughal Emperor was not nullified since he was the fount of legitimacy, invoked in a variety of ways by the rising rulers to gain acceptance in the eyes of their subjects and peers.

Scholars have struggled hard to identify the units wherein power exhibits a physical and political manifestation during the eighteenth century. In one of his essays of historical anthropology, Bernard Cohn argues for four analytical levels at which the political systems of eighteenth century India could be analyzed--- the imperial, the secondary, the regional and the local. The imperial level was occupied by the Mughals. Their system encompassed the entire subcontinent, and was characterized by a central administration to and army, and a successful monopolization of the 'symbols of legitimacy'. The secondary level was that of the successor states the Mughal Empire, which lay claim to suzerainty to

a 'major historical, cultural, or linguistic region'. The constituent parts of various secondary states were the regional systems, 'headed by individuals or families whose status, either as officials or rulers, was granted to them either by the imperial or the secondary authority', and in turn were loosely incorporated through rituals of allegiance and financial obligation to the superordinate tier. Leaders of these regional systems were in a state of constant rivalry. The local political level was represented by 'lineages, a successful adventurer, a local tax official turned political leader, or indigenous chief'. Such persons directly controlled the peasants, artisans, and merchants; collected from them cash revenue or a share of the crop, in return for which they offered some protection from outside interference.⁷

Cohn's model is useful as a generalized overview of the broad contours of eighteenth century political geography. However, it must be used against the historical context of this period: at no point in the eighteenth century was there a well-defined vertical hierarchy of command and service linking all these levels; what obtained instead was a 'pyramiding of obligations'. A subordinate political tier was not a simple, reduced replica of the one above. In fact, the very construction of sovereignties inhering in all these units was an ongoing and mutually contingent process. It could not be otherwise, given the fluidity of the political situation, which was making the very institution of *sanads*, through which imperial officials held their offices, power, and legitimacy, so complex, fragmented, and ever-changing. At all levels of political formation, there was available a variety of tools which could be deployed to construct, expand and assert sovereign

⁷ Bernard Cohn, 'Political systems in eighteenth-century India: the Banaras region', *An anthropologist among historians and other essays*, Delhi, 1987, p. 485.

power---such as outright warfare, conquest, levying of tributes, conclusion of treaties, forging of other alliances, formal and informal negotiation; exchanges of titles, honours, matrimonial partners, and prestations; innovation in administration, and the idioms through which power was expressed; religious and ritual incorporation; visual display of wealth and splendour, and public deployment of specific symbols. Certain tools were more appropriate to certain levels. For example, regional powers like the Nizam, the Nawabs of Bengal, and Tipu Sultan made special efforts to *sanads* of recognition from the Mughal Emperor.

What we see is a Mughal imperial idiom of sovereignty that was understood in specific ways by the various segments and officials of the empire, who related to it accordingly. The English East India Company, however, was a different kind of political actor, and, during the course of the eighteenth century, was increasingly imbued with an evolving and distinctive ideology of the British Empire. How did such a power understand the role of the Mughal sovereign?

Bayly refers to certain hard notions of transcendent sovereignty, which were deployed to invade and modify Mughal sovereignty as embodied in the various *firman*s and *sanads* that the Company held from the Mughal Emperor. In fact, he even says that the Emperor himself was “immobilized, becoming a static source of authority rather than an active political agent”.⁸ The English viewed the *firman*s and *parwanas* as definite concessions of legal rights, which were not to be forgone easily. There is a certain discounting of

⁸ C. A. Bayly, ‘The British military-fiscal state and indigenous resistance: India 1750-1820’, *Origins of nationality in south Asia*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1998, p. 250.

Indian notions of shared and constantly re-negotiated imperial authority, of a corporate view of kingship, and of shared and symbiotic rights in land rights.⁹ The explanations proffered for such a discounting are diverse. In Bayly's view, this results from confusion with European categories of thought, or from misleading notions of oriental despotism.

There is a certain opacity of understanding in the echelons of the British bureaucracy in India and the British Parliament when it comes to an assessment of the nature of sovereign power in the subcontinent.¹⁰ However, one can also argue to the contrary that there is a deliberate attempt to reinterpret certain rights by investing them with altered and specific meanings. These meanings flew out of with the practical exigencies of governance, as felt by a power determined to exercise sovereign authority, whether or not it possessed it in name. It is such a preoccupation with the political situation at the ground level that made it possible for someone like Hastings, who otherwise upheld the 'ancient constitution' of the land so staunchly, (acting on instructions from the Court of Directors), to repudiate in 1774 the Company's obligation to pay the Mughal Emperor the annual stipend of twenty four lakh rupees as fixed between Clive and Shah Alam. The argument offered was that the Emperor had become a tool in the hands of the Marathas. The districts of Kora and Allahabad, given to the Mughal Emperor in 1765, were restored to the Nawab of Oudh. Article 11 of the Treaty of Paris which ended hostilities between

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 246-248. Emphasis added.

¹⁰ In his monograph, Ranajit Guha explores the debates around the Permanent Settlement of Bengal. He explains that for Philip Francis it was not the law, which would institute civil order, but the stabilization of property rights of *zamindars* and their co-operation in civil administration. With great acuteness, he noted that the undecided question of sovereignty---whether it lay with native princes, the Subahdar or the Mughal Emperor, with Fort William or with the Nawab of Bengal--- was the root of all the problems of Bengal. The solution, in his eyes, was the restoration of undivided sovereignty, and its transfer from the Mughal Emperor to the British monarch, who would then enter into an arrangement with the Nawab. Ranajit Guha, *A rule for property for Bengal*, Paris, 1982, p. 144.

the English and the French on the subcontinent, recognised Salabat Jang as the Subahdar of the Deccan, and Muhammad Ali as the Nawab of Carnatic.¹¹ Already, the English were redefining the prevalent political hierarchy by emphasizing the separate, distinct, and mutually exclusive existence of these two seats of power (and their potential as allies, especially in the case of Muhammad Ali). With regard to the Carnatic Wars during the eighteenth century, a contemporary observed frankly:

“Probably neither the English nor the French authorities cared much about the alleged rights of either of the claimants of the Nizamat, but were bent only on supporting the one who would be likely to advance their own interests. In any case the contested sovereignty was an authority usurped from the Great Mughal, while the Arcot Nawab was really only a deputy, removable at pleasure by the Nizam”.¹²

This is also not to argue that the English were totally divorced from the eighteenth century patterns of exercise of sovereign power, described above for other native players. Among Warren Hastings’ many titles was *Aman al-Daula* (‘security of the state’). He certainly did not quite live up to the duties to the Mughal Emperor that such a title implied that he owed. However, when he encountered the Emperor’s eldest son when he fled to Lucknow in 1784, Hastings rode behind the prince’s elephant on his entry into the city. He was later depicted sitting deferentially at the feet of the prince in a coloured sketch by Zoffany, who was in Lucknow at that time. Hastings admitted that he was strongly tempted at that time to try and restore the prince to Delhi at that time through the use of British military might, ‘an Act that would have reflected a lasting Honor on my

¹¹ C. U. Aitchison, *Treaties, engagements and sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries*, volume IX (dealing with the Madras Presidency), Calcutta, 1909, p. 2.

¹² Lewin Bowring, *Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, 1803, p. 24.

reputation in India'.¹³ Marshall points out that "Hopes that men such as Hastings might be absorbed into an Indian polity and be made to serve Indian purposes were not quite as futile as they seem in retrospect". Europeans had been absorbed into Indian systems in the past and would continue to be so absorbed well into the nineteenth century.¹⁴

By and large, the English East India Company seems to have deemed the Mughal Emperor the legitimate, but toothless, sovereign of the subcontinent. The decadence of the imperial centre allowed for the rise of smaller powers, ascendant and vigorous, but usurpers nonetheless. It could be argued that the Company held that since all the lesser authorities had exceeded the powers that the letter of their *sanads* had originally granted them, the English were also justified in trying to carve their own place on the ruins of an empire in the very process of decay and dimemberment. Rather than see the institution of *sanads* as an evolving one, adapting to the needs of the new era, they saw it as a decaying system, to be taken advantage of while there was an opportunity to do so.

¹³ Sydney C. Grier, 'The letters of Warren Hastings to his wife', Edinburgh, 1905, p. 302, op. cit., P. J Marshall, *Britain and the world in the eighteenth century: III, Britain and India*, p. 9.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 9.

However, he carefully adds that motives of men such as Clive and Hastings was to make money, but primarily in order "to enable them to take appropriate positions in British society". They were "typical in their strong sense of locality and their ambition to restore or recover ancestral property". More than anything else, men serving in the British imperial service were conscious that they represented the interests of the nation, not just a trading company. "Although there is little to suggest that Clive and others who intervened so forcefully in the affairs of Indian states in the 1750s did so with any sense of incorporating the gains that they made into a world-wide British empire, as the consequences of their intervention became apparent it was an outcome that they quickly accepted".

II

Seringapatam as a 'centre' and her 'big' neighbours: treaties, alliances, tribute, exchanges, gifts, honours, titles, display, and innovation.

So far, we have examined how the threads of power emanated from the Mughal imperial centre, and got enmeshed in diverse ways at the political levels below it, feeding into the construction of various derivative sovereignties that dotted the political landscape in the eighteenth century. We have also examined the multiple ways in various actors at the sub-imperial, semi-autonomous level related to the imperial centre, tapping its potential for legitimation of authority at that level. The focus of analysis has been from the centre, reaching out to the peripheries, and vice-versa. Eighteenth century Mysore was situated in a matrix of other regional powers, which straddled a spectrum of constantly evolving power equations with it, with the imperial centre, and with one another. This section shall look more carefully at the lateral negotiation of power relationships between Mysore, its neighbouring powers, the European mercantile companies, and the Mughal centre.

In 1699-1700, the Wodeyars sent an embassy to Aurangzeb in the Deccan, at the imperial court at Ahmadnagar. The embassy returned in 1700, bringing a new signet from the Emperor, bearing the title of Jug Deo Raj (Jagat Deva Raj, or 'the sovereign of the world') and the permission to sit on an ivory throne. Thereafter, the Wodeyars accepted the suzerainty of the Mughal Emperor. The Mysore Wodeyar is also believed to have carried out administrative reforms (the formation of eighteen administrative departments)

in imitation of the Mughal court.¹⁵ The Mysore kingdom inherited in the early eighteenth century from Chikkadevaraja Wodeyar, by his son and successor Kanthirava Narsaraja, was “at the same time a strong and weak state”. “Its strength came from several sources, among which one should count its superior access to animal power, which helped support its war-machine...The kingdom was a weak one in certain senses, for even its expansion was predicate upon the making of alliances that were potentially counter-productive”. The Wodeyars achieved survival and expansion due to “compromise, and even subordination”.¹⁶

By 1761, the star of the Wodeyar rulers had eclipsed. Hayavadana Rao quotes Innes Munro’s account, which describes the usurpation of power by Haidar Ali in Mysore and subsequent events. Munro gives a brief but apt summary of the legalistic points of the case. He points out that Haidar’s star rose due to his military prowess, particularly against the Marathas. His exploits won him the admiration of his countrymen, especially the soldiers of the army:

“Hyder soon after availed himself of this attachment in the usual Asiatic manner; for, upon the demise of his sovereign, the old King of Mysore, he immediately usurped the

¹⁵ Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer*, Volume II, first published, 1930, first reprinted 1984, p. 2448. Nikhiles Guha points out that Haidar Ali continued with the administrative departments of Chikka Deva Raya (1672-1704). Tipu Sultan changed the names of many departments, though their functions remained the same. For example, the department of ‘Athavanam’ (Department of revenue accounts and administration) became the *cutcherry* of *Mir Asaf*, and that of ‘Cagala Kandacaram’ (Department of military accounts) was renamed the *cutcherry* of *Mir Sadr*. Guha’s larger project is to demonstrate that rather than bearing the germs of a unique modernity, eighteenth century Mysore was a successful example of the personalized monarchy that had prevailed in India for so long.

Nikhiles Guha, *The British State System in South India. Mysore, 1761-1799*, Calcutta, 1985. p. 90-93, p. 146-147.

¹⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Penumbra Visions. Making politics in early modern south India*, New Delhi, 2001, p. 70-71.

throne under the title of regent and guardian to the young prince (who was then an infant); and has ever since assumed the supreme authority and titles of Navob of Mysore, keeping the real heir confined within the walls of Seringapatam, the capital of the Mysore country, who is occasionally exhibited to the public by way of show or form, as Mahomed Ally, the Nawab of Arcot, is at Madras by the Company, who, excepting empty titles, has likewise been divested of every prerogative in the Carnatic".¹⁷ During the last years of the reign of Immadi Krishnaraja Wodeyar (1761-1766), Haidar Ali retained for the latter's personal use a *jagir* worth three lakhs. During the reigns of his latter's successors, the *jagir* was reduced to one lakh.¹⁸

At the same time, as Rao himself is quick to point out, Haidar Ali "never went beyond retaining for himself and his successor the position of the Regent or the *Sarvadhikari* and steadily strove to maintain the semblance, if not the substance, of the sovereignty of the ancient Hindu Dynasty of Rulers by keeping *intact* the succession of minor kings".¹⁹ Rao draws upon Kirmani's *Haidar Nama*, and says that during the annual *Dasara* durbar, Haidar carefully regulated his behaviour towards the Wodeyar, and instituted a regular system of rent-free village grants called *umbali-grama* for dependent Ursu families, varying in value from 30 to 600 *varahas* according to their rank. At some point, he also seems to have acquired another source of legitimacy: In 1761 he obtained the title of Haidar Ali Khan, and the office of the *faujdar* of Sira from Basalat Jang, a claimant to the

¹⁷ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 397.

Captain Innes Munro of the 73rd (or Lord Macleod's) Regiment of Highlanders, who took an active part in the military operations against the combined forces of the French, the Dutch, and Haidar Ali on the Coromandel coast, from the year 1780, to the peace concluded in 1784.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 414.

¹⁹ Hayavadana Rao, *Mysore Gazetteer...*, p. 440.

throne of the Nizam. Sira itself fell into Haidar's hands in 1761.²⁰ ✎ This would have strengthened Haidar Ali's hands in dealing with Mysore's neighbours, and also, at home, drawn away attention from his usurpation of power, and his ambiguous relationship with the Mysore ruler. The fragmentation of authority, and ambiguity embedded in the system of *sannuds* made possible the seemingly ambiguous coexistence of both the Wodeyar and Haidar Ali as legitimate rulers in Mysore.

Tipu Sultan inherited this ambiguous relationship, which had already existed between his father and the incumbent Mysore Kartar. Perhaps this is what impelled him to look for recognition from the Mughal Emperor. Rao tells us that Tipu Sultan had received the title of Fath Ali Khan from the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam, but did not use it in his official correspondence.²² When the Sultan sends *nazr* to Delhi, in acknowledgement of "the Imperial Mandate", the exact nature of the latter is not clear. It could have been the bestowal of this title by the Mughal Emperor. The entire exchange, at any rate, was rife

²⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Mark Wilks, *Historical Sketches of the South of India*, I, 1810, edited with notes by Murray Hammick, 1930, p. 491-492, op. cit., Irfan Habib (ed.), *Confronting colonialism...*, p. xx. Also, Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore, the life and death of Tipu Sultan*, 1970, p. 117.

Tipu renamed the town of Sira, Rustomabad, during his reign. Hayavadana Rao tells us that the Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot was the biggest obstacle in the way of Haidar Ali's plans for expansion in the south. He sought to counter his opponent by obtaining at the hands of the Nizam, the investiture of the Nawabship of Arcot for his son and heir Tipu Sultan. Thereafter, in 1767, he entered into a treaty with the Nizam, wherein they decided to join forces against Nawab Muhammad Ali and the English. Thus began the First Mysore War, "which was fought over the issue whether or not Mysore was to be the ultimate successor to the sovereignty of the whole of South India including the Karnatic Payanghat". This treaty came to nought when the Nizam defected, and concluded a treaty with Nawab Muhammad Ali of Arcot and the East India Company. The Nizam "confirmed Muhammad Ali in the government of the Karnatic-Payanghat independently of the *subah* of the Deccan under *sannuds*, real or supposed, he had held from the Mughal". The Northern Sarkars, comprising of Chicacole and Rajahmundry was yielded to the English as indemnity for the expenses of war.

Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 40, 44-45, 68.

✎ ²² Rao quotes Kirmani, and says that the form of signature adopted by Tipu was a cryptogram, which meant *Nabbi Mulik*, or 'the Prophet is Master'. Some orders bore this signature, as also impressions of a square seal which bore his name Tipu Sultan.

Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 1042.

with anomalies. Kirkpatrick points out some of these. In his letter to Shah Alam, Tipu says:

“Upon receipt of the Imperial Mandate, [my] glorified head touched the summit of honour. The special gifts of ennobling quality [or virtue], which your Majesty, in your boundless favour, graciously bestowed [on me], by the hands of Rao Bal Mukn Doss, also arrived in the most auspicious conjuncture, and put [me] in possession of the wealth of distinction and pre-eminence. In acknowledgement of this magnificent donation, [I] respectfully offer [my] most humble obeisance. This stedfast believer, with a view to the support of the firm religion of Mahommed, undertook [some time since] the chastisement of the Nazarene tribe; who, unable to maintain the war [I] waged against them, solicited peace [of me] in the abject manner. This is so notorious a fact, as not to require to be enlarged on. With the divine aid and blessing of God, it is now again my steady determination to set about the total extirpation and destruction of the enemies of the faith. “In token of [my] sincere attachment [or devotion] to your Majesty, [I] send, *by way of Nuzr*, a hundred and twenty-one gold *Mohrs* to your resplendent presence: let them be [or may they be] honoured by [your Majesty’s] acceptance. [I] am humbly hopeful, that [I] may continue to be honoured and distinguished by the receipt of your ennobling commands. More would exceed the bounds of respect”.²³

²³ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters of Tippoo Sultan to various public functionaries*, Letter LXXI, to Shah Alam, June 23, 1785, p. 91.

Tipu Sultan despatched a bag containing an *arz-dasht*,²⁴ addressed to the Mughal Emperor. Kirkpatrick finds this address singularly “deficient in the forms of respect, invariably observed in all addresses to the Emperor of *Hindustan*”, and there was no use of terms such as “the slave”, “the devoted servant”, or even “the dependent”, usually employed by persons when expressing fealty to the Mughal Emperor. In fact, Kirkpatrick points to the deliberate omission of the nominative case, where Tipu Sultan would have had to employ such terms. The only instance, he says, when Tipu does speak in the nominative voice is when he styles himself “this stedfast believer in Muhammad”.²⁵ (The implications of this become manifest later, as we shall see).

Tipu says, in the next letter to Muzoor Ali Khan, chief of eunuchs at the court of Delhi, and the principal confidential servant of Shah Alam, that the gold and silver coins of the age, which were stamped with the names of the rulers of the age, contravened “the prescriptions of our liturgy”. Therefore, he had minted a new gold *mohr*, in which only the names of God, the Holy Prophet, and of “the august Prince of Sanctity and of Sages” (Ali) appeared. The *nazr* to the Mughal Emperor, and the token gift of twenty-five gold *mohrs* to Muzoor Ali Khan, was composed of this new coinage. Kirkpatrick writes that most rulers of the successor states of the Mughal Empire (he calls them “pseudo sovereigns”) styled themselves as ‘faithful slave’, ‘devoted subject’, etc.; gave presents and *nuzr* as appropriate on special occasions; and solicited and accepted titles of honour. “But the *chief symbol, or vestige, of the nominal power*,²⁶ thus conceded to him, consisted in the general practice which had obtained among these upstart rulers, of continuing to

²⁴ A memorial from an inferior to a superior.

²⁵ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, p. 92.

²⁶ Emphasis added.

stamp the current coins of their respective territories with the usual legend of the imperial coinage; by which means the Emperor, for the time being, became every where ostensibly recognised as the legitimate sovereign...Of this empty honour, Tipu Sultan was, I believe, the first, and indeed, the only one of these self created princes who thought fit to divest him". Kirkpatrick repeats that the frivolous justification offered by Tipu did not disguise the real affront embedded in the action of sending a *nazr* of coinage that did not bear his names and imperial titles to the Mughal Emperor. Such a *nazr* was not calculated to win the friendship of Shah Alam.²⁷

Yet, Tipu did realize the importance of a *sanad* from a higher temporal authority in the assertion of legitimacy. He applied for, and received the sanction of an authority long recognized within the Islamic tradition, superseding therein the authority of the Mughal Emperor, namely the Ottoman Sultan in his role as the Caliph. He sent an embassy to Constantinople in 1786, and got from the Caliph a *firman* recognizing Tipu Sultan as the legal ruler of Mysore. Denys Forrest states that unlike Haidar Ali, who at least received the title of Subahdar of Sira from the Mughal Emperor, Tipu needed the Caliph's sanction before he assumed the attributes the royalty. He proceeded to do the latter when the remnants of his embassy returned four year later.²⁸ Brittlebank argues that through this gesture, Tipu not only expressed his independence from Delhi, but also the overtly

²⁷ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter LXXI, to Muzoor Ali Khan, June 23, 1785, p. 95-99. Kirkpatrick wonders that if this was not the aim of Tipu, why he should have bothered at all to send such a *nazr*. He discounts the possibility of desire for intelligence about Delhi as an adequate explanation.

²⁸ The envoys chosen were Lutf Ali Beg, Nurullah Khan, and Jafar Khan. The embassy had further objectives. Its brief was to request for a body of Turkish mercenaries, and to proceed from Constantinople to Paris with proposals for a Mysore-French treaty against the British. Of the one thousand men who had set out in March 1786, some of them against their wishes, only sixty-eight returned in December 1789. Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 117.

Islamic nature of his rule.²⁹ Guha points to the greater note of confidence in Tipu's administration thereafter. His government was described in state papers as the '*Khudadad Sarkar*', '*Ahmadi Sarkar*', and '*Asad Ilahi Sarkar*', different appellations denoting a government by divine ordinance. The seal affixed to his signature carried in its middle a quotation from the Koran meaning, 'I am the messenger of the true faith. Around the edge, there was a couplet in Persian reading, "From the conquest, and protection of the royal Hyder, comes my title of Sultan; and the world, as under the Sun and the Moon is subject to my signet". In 1790, Tipu inscribed on his palace gates a high sounding title in Arabic, which he had received from the Ottoman Emperor:

"The royal Tipu Sultan, the shadow of the most gracious God, defender of the faith; may God ever bless his country and kingdom with prosperity"³⁰

During the 1780s, Tipu Sultan's actions reflected growing confidence and power. His government was called. Even before he had received the Caliph's sanction to rule, he still felt secure enough to almost entirely sever his links with Delhi. By issuing coins that did not carry the name of Shah Alam,³¹ by replacing the Emperor's name in the *khutba* with his own, and by adopting the appellation of Padshah, he directly challenged the accepted hierarchy of power on the subcontinent. In January 1786, soon after he returned from the suppression of the Coorgs, it was suddenly proclaimed to a great gathering in the Lal Bagh mosque that Tipu's name was to be substituted for that of the Mughal Emperor

²⁹ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search for legitimacy: Islam and kingship in a Hindu domain*, Delhi, 1997.

³⁰ *Khudadad* means 'God-given Government'.

³¹ Although Tipu did apologize to the Mughal Emperor when the latter took offense at the present he had made of coins that did not carry Shah Alam's name, this did not prevent the Sultan from continuing to mint such coins.

Shah Alam in the *khutba* read out on Friday, and that in future, he would be referred to by the title of Padshah (King).³² Zain-ul-Abidin Shustari had already compiled a set of one hundred and four political sermons, each ending with a reference to the *jihad*, or Holy War against the infidels. These were read out in thousands of mosques across Tipu's dominions. In one of his letters a few months later, he argues his case thus: praise God and the Prophet, and after them the Prince who is acting as the Protector of the Faith.

“As to those idiots who at this time introduce the name of Shah Allum into the Khutbah, they act through ignorance, since the real condition of the above-mentioned is this, that he is actually enslaved and a mere cypher; being the servant of Scindeah at the monthly wages of 15,000 rupees. Such being the case, to pronounce the name of a dependent of infidels, in reciting the Khutbah, is a manifest sin”.³³

The trouble that Tipu takes to get his sovereignty ratified by an authority recognized as venerable within the Islamic tradition can be interpreted at many levels. There is a definite escalation in ambition from the times of Haidar Ali, and a discounting of the claims to honorific and titular power, if not real power itself, of the Mughal Emperor and the Wodeyar. Haidar Ali was content being recognised as successor to the *Sarvadhikari* Nanjaraja, as long as he held all the reins of governance. The *sanad* that the Mughal Emperor bestowed upon him was that of the Nawab of Sira, a place that had traditionally been the seat of the Mughal *faujdar* who collected *peshkash* from Mysore. In other words, Haidar Ali was now the chief Mughal representative exercising overlordship over

³² Tipu's first bid for broader recognition as Padshah came during the peace negotiations with the Marathas. However, Nana Fadnavis did not concede a title more exalted than 'Tipu Sultan Khan Bahadur' Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 116.

³³ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter CCCXXI to Kutub-ud-din Khan, dated August 1, 1786, p. 116.

Mysore. He had risen to prominence by consolidating a regional power base. However, he could not assume complete sovereignty without challenging the traditional, regional power structure of the Wodeyar dynasty, which held legitimacy in the eyes of its subjects. Therefore, he took resort to an imperial authority, which was recognised as the ultimate embodiment and fount of sovereignty throughout the subcontinent. In doing so, he utilised an office that had been a part of the central Mughal administrative umbrella, but had gradually asserted certain independent rights of territorial and revenue administration, and eventually come into its own as a locus for the determination of all power equations in the southern peninsula. The symbolic power of the imperial centre, and its capacity to confer legitimacy on its derivative political units, is harnessed through an office which had consolidated itself when that very centre began to lose administrative control over its peripheries.

Tipu, on the other hand, wanted greater recognition as an independent sovereign. One strategy, as we have already noted, was to adopt the exalted tone of a true Islamic ruler governing a God-given state (*Khodadaad*). Islamic doctrine and political philosophy acknowledges the co-existence of three levels of sovereignty: the divine, the spiritual, and the temporal. In the interests of proper temporal governance, it is argued, even a despotic ruler is preferable to a world without a ruler.³⁴ Certainly, temporal governance across the Mughal realm, under Shah Alam, existed more in name than in reality. Yet, the trajectory

³⁴ Ayesha Jalal, *Self and sovereignty: individual and community in south Asian Islam since 1850*, Delhi, 2001, op. cit., Mridu Rai, *Hindu rulers, Muslim subjects, Islam, rights, and the history of Kashmir*, Delhi, 2004, p. 9.

Hindu traditions of kingship look upon a realm without a king as one of chaos, where the weak are at the mercy of the tyrannically strong (*matsya nyaya*).

of historical development over the preceding centuries had been such that temporal rule had to be sanctioned by divine ordinance in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the subjects. The Mughal Emperor was *far-i-izzadi*, or part of divine light. And Tipu was not an iconoclast who wanted to overturn all established patterns of governance, nor did he wish to repudiate established regional (even Hindu) forms of securing legitimacy, as we shall see later. This explains his early attempts to pay *nazr* to Shah Alam. When the latter protested against the scarcely disguised effrontery behind that application, Tipu sought to validate his position by appealing to yet another tenet within Islam--- a worthy ruler must be strong enough to be the Protector of the Faith. Probably, it was consciousness of the enormity of his actions in severing ties of fealty with Delhi that made him adopt stridently this tone Khasa-Chamaraja Wodeyar of being the true crusader against infidels, and the mighty defender of Islam.

Hayavadana Rao tells us that even “at the height of his power”, Tipu had “not omitted the customary from of tendering homage to the reigning king Khasa-Chamaraja Wodeyar before his assembled court and people at the feast of the Dasara”. Drawing on a contemporary record, Rao says that the people of Mysore held the Wodeyar in such reverence that he was “formidable” even in his current “state of subjection”. Tipu did not dare to extinguish this royal family, but “according to the usual policy of despots, (had to) adorn him with the pageantry of a crown... to unnerve his mind, and at stated times to present him, a royal puppet, to the view and acclamations of his people”. However, when Khasa-Chamaraja Wodeyar passed away in April 1796, Tipu did away with even the “ceremony of a nominal succession to the throne of Mysore, removed the family to a

mean dwelling, and plundered the palace of everything, including the personal ornaments of individuals". Rao terms this, even by Tipu's reckless standards, a "daring departure from the policies of his father".³⁵ This departure came soon after the general civil and military reorganization in Mysore after the Treaty of 1792, and the return of his two sons who had been held hostages by the English in 1794. Kirmani writes of Tipu's much heightened distrust of Hindus after the Third Anglo-Mysore War, and his growing predilection for Islam.³⁶ The repudiation of the overlordship of the Hindu dynasty of Wodeyars was a dramatic change in the ambitions of the house of regents, and was recognised as such in those times. Particularly unnerved were the British, with whom the widow of the deceased Wodeyar kept up an incessant correspondence, pressing the claims of succession to the throne of Mysore of her infant son.

Not only did he refuse to acknowledge the supreme authority of the Mughal Emperor and the Wodeyar ruler, Tipu also was lacking in respect for the European powers that he had to deal with. Tipu acknowledged the receipt of a letter from the Governor of Pondicherry, intimating him about the declaration of peace between England and France, saying that this "afforded [him] much satisfaction".³⁷ Kirkpatrick points out that this letter was almost the only instance in which the title of Badshah, or King, is bestowed upon any European sovereign by Tipu Sultan. Tipu "appears, on all other occasions, to have thought as if this designation would be degraded by being applied to any but a prince

³⁵ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 928-934.

³⁶ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 230-231.

³⁷ Letter V, To the Governor of Pondicherry, dated March 6, Kirkpatrick, William, *Select letters of Tippoo Sultan to various public functionaries*, London, 1811. p. 13.

professing the Mahomedan faith”.³⁸ He usually called the king of England, and also that of France, ‘Raja’, designating them “as nothing superior to the petty Hindoo Rajahs of India, and, in fact, as Idolators”. Furthermore, the title had become “extremely common...being borne...by one Hindoo at least, in the service of the Sultan himself, and being frequently bestowed on their subjects of that religion, by the different upstart rulers of the dismembered empire of *Hindustan*”.³⁹

At home, the web of tributary relations that knit Mysore together the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the English East India Company was very complex. All contemporary powers seem to have had a clear perception that the nature of the threat represented by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan’s Mysore (especially the latter) was much greater than that of any other power in the eighteenth century subcontinent, whatever obfuscation might exist about the legality of their position as rulers of Mysore. Kirkpatrick dedicates his work to Richard, Marquis Wellesley, valorising him for victory against Tipu Sultan, “the most formidable power with whom we ever had to cope in that quarter of the globe”.⁴⁰ Tipu Sultan’s “favorite object and most ardent desire, was to resume, at the earliest possible moment, hostilities against the English ...”, and alignment with the French.⁴¹ The real cause of the Second Anglo-Mysore war, Kirkpatrick says, was not the unwillingness of Tipu Sultan to pay the dues, but the uneasiness in the minds of the Marathas and the Nizam on account of Tipu Sultan’s ambitions.⁴²

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 13-14

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 13.

The reference here is to Raja Ram Chandra.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. ii.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴² *ibid.*, p. 10.

Unlike Haidar Ali, who made early efforts to conciliate the English,⁴³ Tipu seems to have always identified them as his greatest enemy in the subcontinent. In the letter to Shah Alam mentioned above, Tipu announces himself to be a crusader in the cause of Islam, who had defeated the infidels or “Nazarenes”.⁴⁴ Kirkpatrick feels that the hatred that Tipu bore for the Marathas was far less virulent than that which he bore to the English; nor was their power viewed by him with the same fear or jealousy”.⁴⁵ Various accounts cite different reasons for this mutual animosity between the British and Tipu Sultan--- religious bigotry,⁴⁶ Tipu’s megalomania, his pretensions to replacing the Mughal at the imperial centre, his appreciation of the embryonic but colonial nature of the British enterprise in India, the possibilities of an alliance with the French against the British on

⁴³ In 1763, Haidar Ali granted a *firman* to the English East India Company ‘ permitting them to establish a factory and warehouse at Onore, and to enjoy certain commercial privileges. The next year, he wrote a letter to the Governor of Madras expressing his wish “that everything that will conduce to the increase of our friendship may be done by us both”, and sending *khilats* which included a turban and woven with gold thread, one piece of flowered border, two pieces of flowered coat, one piece of Gujarati waist band, one piece of damask and a shawl. During hostilities with the Marathas towards the end of 1764, Haidar asked the Company for military aid, promising in turn to let pass unmolested its trade in rice and sandalwood through his dominions. When he invaded Malabar in 1767, he took pains to ratify the grants and privileges made over to the English by various powers on that coast for the sole right to purchase and export pepper, sandalwood, and cardamom from the Malabar frontier to the territory north of the Zamorin’s dominions. Despite hiccups on account of the refusal of the Tellichery factory to help him during this invasion, in 1770, he concluded a treaty of peace with the English at the Presidency of Bombay.

Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...* , p. 43-44.

⁴⁴ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter LXXI, to Shah Alam, June 23, 1785, p. 91-94.

Kirkpatrick believes that though, when referring to the ‘Nazarenes’, Tipu clearly meant the English, there was still, at this stage, a certain caution that made him try to hide his real sentiments of hostility from the British. If questioned closely, he could have easily said that when he referred to the ‘Nazarenes’, he meant the Coorgs, the Nairs, or the Marathas.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 93-94.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p 5.

“The Koran taught him that it was not necessary to keep faith with the infidels, or enemies of the true religion, in which class it was not difficult for him to persuade himself that it was right to include all who opposed, or refused to co-operate in, his views, for the extension of that religion; or, in other words, for his own aggrandisement. Hence it was, that our Musulman allies and subjects were scarcely less obnoxious to his hatred and vengeance than ourselves. With regard to the secret murder of his English prisoners, his dreadful slaughter of the Coorgs and Nairs, and his forcible conversion of so many thousands of the two latter tribes to the Mahomedan faith, he most probably thought such enormities no less warranted, both by the examples and precepts of the founder of his religion, than the infraction of oaths and engagements in transactions with unbelievers”.

the subcontinent, and the undoubted military excellence of eighteenth century Mysore among the array of native Indian powers of that period.

By the time Haidar Ali rose to power, Mysore had entered into formal tributary relations with the Marathas. In a missive to his diplomatic agents at Poona,⁴⁷ Muhammad Ghyaz and Nur Muhammad Khan, Tipu Sultan is said to have instructed the former to pay 'the fixed or regulated money' to the chief of Poona on demand. The other instruction was that if the contumacious' *zamindar* of Nergund could not be reasoned into observing proper conduct by the Marathas, then he was to be 'exterminated'. Negotiations were to be conducted only by Mahommed Ghyaz and Nur Mmuhamad Khan; the *brahamanas* attached to the mission were not to be a part of it. The mission was not to entertain any fear of 'the chiefs of that place' sending forces to aid the *zamindar* of Nergund. Kirkpatrick tells us that Tipu Sultan crushed the *zamindar* of Nergund, but had to pay the arrears of tribute to the Marathas. He notes the reluctance of Tipu Sultan to use the term '*peshkash*' or 'tribute', which he was "bound by former treaties to pay to the Government of Poonah; but which he does not deem proper to recognize, or designate, by any term denotative of inferiority, which the word *Paishcush* certainly is".⁴⁸

Obviously, ascendant powers were trying to renegotiate their position within the framework of the treaty and tributary relations that they had entered into earlier, when they had no other option but to submit. Tipu's insistence on referring to the *chauth* and *sardeshmukhi* demanded by the Marathas as "regulated money" is an interesting example.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, Letter III to Mahommed Ghyaz, the chief diplomatic agent of Tipu Sultan at Poona, dated February 21, p 5-10

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 9.

Another clear example is Kirkpatrick's account of the relations of the English East India Company and the Nizam. He points out the concern of the former to explain away their tributary relations with the Nizam. Having established the derogatory and unequal power relationship that the word *peshkash* entailed, Kirkpatrick is at pains to explain how the English came to be obliged to pay it. He says that in the first treaty that the East India Company negotiated with the Nizam of Hyderabad, the term *peshkash* was used, which "virtually, but, no doubt, unconsciously placed the East India Company in the situation of a vassal to that chieftain...".¹ Kirkpatrick points out that, thereafter, it was difficult "to obtain the suppression of this degrading appellation". However, it was also not very important, since the Nizam had declined in strength, and possessed only the "shadow of power". He adds that the current situation of the East India Company was different. It was possessed of "increased political consideration throughout India", and of "improved knowledge of its languages and usages". It was no longer "at the mercy of native agents and interpreters". Whatever the truth about the role of native interpreters, the point about the decline of the Nizam's power is well taken. What is important is the assertion that no matter what the form of tributary or vassalage relations when first negotiated, the performance or non-performance of its provisions depended on the current power status of the contracting parties.

The implications of such emphasis on the terms of the drawing up and interpretation treaties, the gifts and honours that were considered necessary on this occasion, the careful attention paid to forms of address and the behaviour of envoys, and the conferring of titles, are much broader. It adds up to something far bigger than forms of etiquette in the

subcontinent: the system of exchanges in “late pre-colonial” societies gives substance to sovereign power.

When Tipu Sultan succeeded his father, Haidar Ali, as Sarvadhikari or regent, he received ambassadors “with letters and presents of great value”, from the “chiefs of Poona, and the Nizam of Hyderabad, containing congratulations”. The former also required him to send the horse shoe tribute, in arrears for two years, and “these persons having discharged their commissions, they demanded the Chouth or fourth of his revenue”.⁴⁹ Tipu refused indignantly, saying that Haidar Ali, had bankrupted his treasury by trying to conquer the Payanghat “by the advice, and at the instigation” of the Marathas, and the Nizam. The latter powers proved to be perfidious. Tipu accuses--- “with all this exertion, you notwithstanding your engagements, to assist him, gave him no aid whatever, as by your treaties you were bound to have done”.

Tipu instructs his ambassadors to express his inability to pay the horse shoe tribute at that moment, but to say that he had “a number of guns and muskets inherited from our pardoned father (Hazruti Marhum) and they are ready at their service”. He undertakes to pay “the customary amount” after “the settlement and regulation of this country”. Kirmani adds that “After this address to the ambassadors, containing rules and instructions for their guidance; from motives of policy and precaution, he dispatched a certain Muhammad Osman, a servant of the late Nawab, a discreet person well acquainted with the forms of courtesy and etiquette of society, to Poona, with money and valuables, and certain curiosities from the country of the English, plundered by his troops

⁴⁹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 22.

in the province of the Karnatak, merely as a lesson or a warning".⁵⁰ Tipu's line seems to be to fight shy of an open breach with the Peshwa, but at the same time, to parry the demands for tribute. His reference to the guns of his late father being at the service of the Marathas could be an oblique way of reminding the latter of past promises of military assistance in certain ventures, or of proclaiming that he spoke from a position of might. Through a carefully chosen ambassador, bearing carefully chosen prestations, he manages to effect a suitable exchange of honours as among two sovereigns, to buy time for the payment of tribute, and at the same time convey a sense of his military prowess, of his recent victories over the English, and a warning to any who might be thinking of using the English against the might of Mysore.

On the one hand, both the Nizam and the Marathas are very careful not to get onto the wrong side of their powerful neighbour. They are prompt in recognising Tipu's accession to power by despatching embassies bearing gifts appropriate for the status of another sovereign. Technically, the position of the *Sarvadhikari* or Regent was being made hereditary in the house of Haidar. A *firman* or *sanad* ratifying such a succession could

⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 22-23.

not have been issued since the Wodeyar was still the titular sovereign of Mysore.⁵¹ At

⁵¹ A comparison with the accession of Nawab Umdatul-Umara Bahadur to the throne of Arcot in 1796 comes to mind. In 1765, the Mughal Emperor conferred upon the Nawabs of the Carnatic the title of 'Walajah'. The Walajah Nawabs and the British had had treaty relations since 1787, with the terms being increasingly weighted in favour of the British. When the Walajah Nawab Umdatul-Umara Bahadur was slated to succeed to the throne of his father, who was on his deathbed, he announced that he did not consider it necessary to inform the Governor of Madras about the state of the Nawab's health. Since he was "the eldest son and the heir apparent", he could, "on his own authority, succeed to the throne". He asked his officers and the men in the *angrezi-darul-insha* to ensure that word about the serious illness or the death of the old Nawab did not reach the Governor of Madras. Having ascended the throne in this fashion, however, the Nawab always strove to get a letter from the English king confirming his own government, and kept up a regular correspondence with England to gain this end. In addition, he engaged *shaykhs* for incantation, pious men to repeat prayers and read the Koran daily. When this letter and various other presents finally arrived, he appointed an auspicious Friday to take charge of these, from the Governor of Madras. The Nawab "prostrated joyfully as a token of his submission and thanksgiving to Allah". The royal *howdah* was sent to the residence of Lord Hobart to bring the letter from the English king to the *darul-amara*. A salute of twenty-one guns was ordered to mark its arrival, a salute of twenty-one guns after reading the letter, and a salute of nineteen guns at the time of the Governor's arrival at, and departure from, the *bagh*. A relay of troopers between the Nawab's big *bagh* and the *bagh* of the Governor brought in information about the party that carried the letter. The party arrived, consisting of the Governor, and his Council, who came by *charats*. The son of Lord Hobart sat in the *howdah*, bearing the letter, a portrait of the king of England, and presents. The Nawab ordered the portrait of the English king to be hung on the eastern wall of the *diwan-khana*. He said, "Thanks to Allah, by the kindness of this affectionate brother the letter confirming my title to the throne has reached me soon".

When a royal letter addressed to the Nawab, from the "Emperor of Delhi" came with presents of imperial garments, the Nawab gave orders for the decoration of the *diwan-khana* of Kalas-Mahal with carpets, lamps, *masnad*, and *shamiyana*, and the like, such that "it might have the same appearance as that of the imperial *darbar*". On the appointed day, all officers, "high and low", were present in the *diwan-khana* at the appointed time. The royal letter was placed on a *nalki* by a high noble, who started "with all paraphernalia" and entered the big *diwan khana*. The Nawab was dressed in the imperial garments presented by the Mughal Emperor, and seated in the *darbar*. A salute of twenty-one guns was fired on hearing of the arrival of the *farman*. "Then, the Nawwab sahib set out towards the *nalki*, took out the letter, carried it on his head as far as the *shamiyana* and handed it over to Mubariz Jang Bahadur asking him to stand with the *farman* in his hands held over the *masnad* underneath the *shamiyana*. Then the Nawwab made his way to the *adabagh*, bowed deferentially at every step in accordance with the conventional rules of making obeisance in the imperial court, came as far as the *masnad*, got the letter from Mubariz Jang Bahadur and got upon the *masnad* with the letter placed reverently on his *dastar* like a *kalghi*. Then he handed the letter to Rai Khub Chand Bahadur, the *mir-munshi*, and ordered him to get upon the *chawki* furnished with *makhmal* and read it aloud. The *mir-munshi* did as he was bidden. Immediately after the reading of the letter, a salute of twenty-one guns was offered. The Nawwab received *nadhr* (*nazr*) from those present. Flowers and betel leaves were distributed and then the Nawwab dissolved the *darbar*. There was a social gathering that night".

Finally, the Nizam Asaf Jah Nizamul-Mulk Bahadur addressed an *inayat-nama* to Nawab Umdatul-Umara Bahadur, congratulating him on the marriage of his son. He sent this, along with presents of *khillat* and *jawahir*, through the Asaf Jahi *wakil*, to Madras. When Nawab heard of its arrival, he decorated the *diwan khana* of the Kalas-Mahal, and got ready to receive the *inayat-nama* in *darbar*, when all his officers and servants were present. "The Asaf Jahi *wakil* was given a warm welcome and the *inayat-nama* and *khillat* were received with high respect. The *mir-munshi* was asked to read the *inayat-nama* and the Nawwab rejoiced to hear the contents. He presented the *wakil* with a *sarpech* set with precious stones, an expensive scarlet *dushala*, *pandan*, *gualb-pash* and *itr-dan*, and bade him farewell".

S. Muhammad Husayn Nainar (ed.), *Sources of the history of the Nawabs of the Carnatic*, Volume III, *Sawanihat-i-Mumtaz*, first part, Muhammad Karim, 1940.

any rate, it would have been redundant because Tipu's rise to power was in no way contingent upon ratification from the Nizam, or any other sovereign. What is also significant is that the demand for tribute comes from a power that did not exercise suzerainty over Mysore by virtue of any *firman* from Delhi, but could cause disturbances through depredations carried out across the more porous northern frontiers of Mysore.

The *chouth* demanded by, and deemed by the *khodadad sarkar* to be payable to the Marathas, was a constant refrain throughout the history of Mysore in the latter half of the eighteenth century. In a letter to Muhammad Ghyas, despatched in 1785, Tipu discusses the payment of "Darbar charges" to the Marathas. Kirkpatrick tells us that these charges are:

"the *douceur* to be paid to the Mahrattah ministers upon the conclusion of a settlement. This is a matter of course in the negotiation of all treaties, and in the adjustment of differences between the native powers of India. Sometimes the presents, or largesses, made on these occasions, are, *to a certain degree, reciprocal; but it is generally on the weaker, or yielding party of the two, that the chief burthen falls*".⁵²

Whereas the reciprocity would arise from the fact of exchange between two sovereigns, the 'darbar charges' arose from a definite inequality in power equations, which stopped short of a clearly defined vertical line of hierarchy and authority. The same transaction encoded the comparable rights of two sovereigns to enter into treaty relations with one another, and, at the same time, recognized a "weaker, yielding party".

⁵² William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter XII, to Muhammad Ghyas, dated April 4, 1785, p. 25-26. Emphasis added.

In a longstanding dispute with the Marathas (arising out of the latter's support to an errant *zamindar*, who Tipu believed to be his vassal), Tipu crushed the *zamindar* of Nergund, but had to pay the arrears of tribute to the Marathas. Kirkpatrick notes the reluctance of Tipu Sultan to use the term '*peshkash*', or 'tribute', in his official correspondence, which he was "bound by former treaties to pay to the Government of Poonah; but which he does not deem proper to recognize, or designate, by any term denotative of inferiority, which the word *Paishcush* certainly is".⁵³ Here is yet another example of an exchange between the Marathas and Tipu Sultan, where the latter addresses in the most concrete possible terms the question of tribute payable to the former, yet is at great pains to transform the tributary nature of the relationship into one of political expediency and administrative bargain.

When the Peshwa agreed to the conclusion of peace with Tipu Sultan after the hostilities of 1785-1786, the latter's ambassadors, who carried presents of "rarities, valuable cloths and jewels", were received favourably. The Peshwa, then, dispatched his own ambassadors with "rarities, honorary dresses, gold, jewels, fine horses and elephants". There was, however, also a "request" that the *taluks* of Nargunda and Jalihul be presented to them as "gifts". The manner in which Kirmani portrays the subsequent transaction is very interesting:

"The Sultan, the asylum of the world, from policy and according to the verse----'be generous, be generous that the stranger may become thy slave,'----agreed to their request,

⁵³ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters....*, Letter III to Mahommed Ghyaz, the chief diplomatic agent of Tipu Sultan at Poona, dated February 21, p. 9. The other important agent was Nur Mmuhamad Khan, who, the author tells us, resided longest at Poona, and was probably sent there by Haidar Ali.

and forwarded the sanad of those three Taluks to them. It is not to be omitted here, that as the chief of Puna (the Paishwa) gave the Sultan's ambassador the district of Kusalpur in Jagir, so that in return, the Sultan gave him these three Taluks".⁵⁴

Kirmani, of course, adopts a style of prose that does not admit of the subordination of Tipu Sultan to any other power (just as Kirkpatrick is anxious to preserve English dignity even when he has to explain the tribute levied on that power by a native Indian prince). What is revealing about all such narratives, irrespective of the individual veracity of the events that they describe, is the availability of a variety of ways and levels in which seemingly ambiguous power relations between states can be negotiated, when the very nature of these sovereignties is difficult to pin down and label.⁵⁵ Apparently contradictory relationships can be encoded in simultaneity, through carefully ordered exchanges. The very construction of sovereignties becomes contingent upon the way such exchanges are negotiated, the subtleties that mark the time and choice of presents, the mode of sending them across, the ordering of a formal embassy, etc. Clearly, there is at one level, an inflection of parity between the two or more sovereigns. Yet, at another level, the hierarchised nature of the exchange is clearly visible. The same transaction defines the exchange as occurring between parties that enjoy comparable power and rights over the polities and peoples that they rule, but are, yet, not comparable to each other in terms of the extent of absolute power exercised.

⁵⁴ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 64-65.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 62.

This is probably a better framework for understanding other statements made by Kirmani, such as, at one point in military operations, Tipu Sultan "by dispensing gold and sending honorary dresses and presents of all kinds in the way of courtesy and friendship, made several of the chiefs of the Mahrattas obedient, and the slaves of his commands". Prestations could be a way of effecting defection and enlisting service.

Nicholas Dirks' has attempted a massive and spectacular analysis of the system of exchanges in old regimes, and of sovereignty. Dirks define his historiographic enquiry as one concerned with "the core conceptions of sovereignty; the interpenetrating transactions in gifts, service, and kinship; the structure and form of hegemony".⁵⁶ Dirks draws heavily on Marcel Mauss' construct of a system of 'total prestations', and some of the emphases here are very relevant to our understanding of the kinds of exchanges described above:

"In the systems of the past we do not find simple exchange of goods, wealth and produce through markets established among individuals. For it is groups, and not individuals, which carry on exchange, make contracts, and are bound by obligations; the persons represented in the contracts are moral persons-clans, tribes, and families; the groups, or the chiefs as the intermediaries for the groups, confront and oppose each other. Further, what they exchange is not exclusively goods and wealth, real and personal property and things of economic value. They exchange rather courtesies, entertainments, ritual, military assistance, women, children, dances and feasts; and fairs in which the market is one element and the circulation of wealth but one part of a wide and enduring contract. Finally, although the presentations and counter-prestations take place under a voluntary guise they are in essence strictly obligatory, and their sanction is private or open warfare. We propose to call this the system of *total prestations*".⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 7

⁵⁷ Marcel Mauss, 'The gift: forms and functions of exchange in archaic societies', 1967. Emphasis added.

Dirks builds a sophisticated theory about gifts resources and kingship in the little kingdom of Pudukkottai in the old regime (meaning, largely, pre-colonial regime). Gifts could range from land rights, titles, emblems, honours, and privileges of service, usufruct, and command. These gained significance, he argues, not just through the fact that they were given, but also because of the identity of the giver (and the producer, for that matter). These are as much a sign of sovereignty, as a factor contributing towards sovereignty. Gifts and entitlements embodied and constituted hierarchy “through a logic of variable proximity to the king, to sovereignty itself”. This was not surprising given that they involved “both the ranking and mediation of individuals and of categories, as well as the (implicitly ranked) degree of inclusion within or exclusion from ranked categories”.⁵⁸ When such exchanges occurred between two more or less distinctly defined sovereignties, the expression of hierarchy was articulated in far more subtle and complex forms.

It would perhaps be not be illegitimate to include within this net of (less than voluntary) gifts, the booty captured during war, and try applying Dirks’ analysis to it. In 1785, after Tipu Sultan repulsed a concerted offensive of the Maratha Peshwa and the Nizam of Hyderabad, he tried to take the fort of Adoni, then governed by Mahabat Jang, the son of Basalat Jang, the younger brother of the Nizam of Hyderabad. As a part of the plunder, Tipu captured the whole of the armoury, tents, and wardrobe of Basalat Jang.⁵⁹ In another incident around the same time, Tipu Sultan defeated Abdul Hakim Khan, the chief of Sanore. After that fort was taken, the victors made systematic attempts to confiscate its

⁵⁸ Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 129.

⁵⁹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 48.

wealth. This included not only gold, silver, carpets, tents, vessels, and arms, but also “fifty turbans of different colours, of the Burhanpur chintz kind, hung upon pegs in the wall, and honorary dresses of great splendour and value, of the same colour corresponding to the turbans, under cloth covers or in packages; but besides these; articles of great value brought from all countries laid about in heaps and these with list of all of them were sent to the Sultan, and after being inspected by him were deposited in the Tosha Khana”.⁶⁰ Describing the action at Tiruvannamalai on a particular day during the First Anglo-Mysore War, Rao says that the Nizam’s “great elephant was killed and the howdah plundered and stripped of its ornaments by the English forces”.⁶¹

Clearly, clothes and accessories of the sovereign are especially important. Not only is “the substance of the gift... the partial sovereign substance of the king”,⁶² royal/ princely accoutrements probably signified a heightened level of proximity to the person of the sovereign, and therefore to sovereign power. The wardrobe of Basalat Jang and the fifty turbans of the chief of Sanore could have had little economic value for Tipu. Plundering the royal *howdah* in the midst of a grim battlefield could not have contributed significantly to military success. It can only be understood as a symbolic violation and desecration of the person of the king, desacralising it in the process, and thus breaking an important link that legitimised sovereignty.

Women work their way into this system of gift resources, exchange, and kingly authority in ways that are rather more complex. On the one hand, the capture of the women of the

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 58.

⁶¹ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 55.

⁶² Nicholas Dirks, *The hollow crown...*, p. 129.

enemy in warfare stood for a most comprehensive humiliation, greater than the one inflicted on the battlefield. In so far as the sanctity of their person is a measure of the honour and independence of any power that claims to be sovereign, they figure as 'emblems' in the general sense outlined by Dirks. On the other hand, their contribution towards the construction of sovereignty itself is somewhat more complicated than Dirks' postulate that the identity of the giver invested the gift with its meaning and value. Women appear as possessing meaning and value as actors in a capacity that is *also* independent of the 'producer' or 'giver' of the gift.

For example, eighteen Maratha women were captured in a surprise attack on their camp in the hostilities of 1785, referred to above. These prisoners were returned to the Maratha camp after they entered an agreement on oath, wherein they undertook that by every art and means, they would prevent their husbands from continuing the war, and that they would never withdraw their husbands from continuing the war, and that they would never withdraw their hands from importunity and solicitation until their husbands laid their heads in submission on the orders of the Sultan". The Maratha men, however, harboured suspicions that these women had been violated by the infidels. They kept the returned captives in separate tents, and forbade them from entering the other tents in the camp. The affronted women proceeded "to reproach and revile the illiberality and want of shame manifested by their husbands, to extol their own purity; to praise the kind and honourable treatment they had received from the Sultan; and lastly pertinaciously to insist that peace should be made".⁶³ The outcome of this intervention is even more interesting. The Maratha chiefs abandoned their 'bad opinions', but still felt duty bound to their own

⁶³ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 63.

chief. Therefore, they resorted to retreating whenever Tipu Sultan's army advanced. After one month of such farcical hostilities, Tipu Sultan decided to initiate discussions about a peace settlement.

The principles of a well-established system of exchanges seems to have regulated much of the politics in the southern half of the subcontinent during the second half of the eighteenth century. Mysore appears to be operating within this system. At every stage in political negotiations and transactions, or so called 'real power', the symbols and forms of exchanges, prestations, courtly etiquette, public events and festivals, the various manifestations of what is termed 'ritual' or 'symbolic' power also come into play. Apart from the fact that it gets articulated at many levels and in diverse ways, sovereign power cannot be adequately analysed in terms of binaries such as 'real' and 'ritual sovereignty'. Dirks' rich ethnographic analysis points out that the ritual and symbolic aspects of power are not really symbolic: real and ritual sovereignty feed into one another in so many diverse ways that it is really difficult to privilege one over the other.

If honours were recognised as not being 'empty' (contrary to what Kirkpatrick would have us believe), and exchanges fed into the very construction of real power and sovereign claims, then did Mysore in the late eighteenth century operate within the broad, political framework of that period in all other respects also? It is important to examine how Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan showcased their rule to their subjects, what cords did they strike in order to gain legitimacy, where did they change the extant order of things, how did they chose to do so, and to represent it. Of Haidar Ali, Hayavadana Rao writes:

“He was no iconoclast. He did not seek to destroy any of the old symbols and ideas, nor seek to create new ones. He built on what he found at hand. Both in the military and civil departments, he was a resuscitator, a re-organizer, and a re-maker rather than an innovator”.⁶⁴

Tipu, on the other hand is credited with a number of innovations. After the Second Anglo-Mysore War, the establishment of peace, and his return to Seringapatam, Tipu “addressed himself seriously to the regulation of the country, his army and all the departments depending on his state, and revised and altered the rules and principles of the protection and defence of his kingdom after a new form”. The period from 1784 to 1786 in his regime is identified as that of innovations.

Tipu changed the names of the twelve months and the cycle of sixty years in contradistinction to the Arabian names. In 1784, he had changed the Islamic calendar with its twelve lunar months, which move irrespective of the solar calendar, to a calendar based on the Hindu system. Three years later, he decided to rename all the months again. He called this new era *Malaudi*, and began it from the date of the Prophet’s spiritual birth, rather than from his *Hijra* or Flight, as is usual in the Islamic calendar. A similar

⁶⁴ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...* , p. 415.

zeal was exhibited in changing the names of a number of forts.⁶⁵ Tipu ordered the destruction of the town and fort of Mysore, and started the construction of another fortress in the neighbourhood, called Nazarbar.⁶⁶

The changes initiated in provincial administration were far deeper rooted. During the period between the Treaty of Mangalore and the year 1786, Tipu redrew the local boundaries to increase the number of provinces from seven to nine, and then from nine to seventeen. After ceding almost half his territories in the settlement that followed the Third Mysore War, he carved out thirty-seven provinces from his truncated kingdom. After his return from the Maratha campaign in 1787, he divided his dominions into three parts---the country on the coast, or 'Suba Yum' (the sea); the cities and the towns of the hilly and wood country, or the 'Suba Tarun'; or the open and level country, or the 'Suba Ghubra' (the earth). Each *pargana* was under the control of a civil governor called *Asaf*, and a military governor called a *Faujdar*, both with equal and, technically, clearly

⁶⁵ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 48. 39.

<u>Old name of fort</u>	<u>New name</u>
Chital Drug	Furrokh Yab Hissar
Gutti	Fyze Hissar
Bellary	Sumr Puttun
Punugundi	Fukhrabad
Pao Garh	Khatmi Garh
Nandi Garh	Gardun Shukoh
Devanhalli	Yousfabad
Pungalore	Darussurrur
Makri	Sawan Garh
Bul	Mankurabad
Coorg	Zafarabad
Kalikote/ Calicut	Islamabad
Dindigul	Khalikabad
Sunkli Drug	Muzuffarabad
Kishangiri	Fulk-il-azum
Sira	Rustumbad
Mysore	Nazzarbar

All these names lapsed after Tipu's death.

⁶⁶ Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 906.

demarcated powers. The provinces were subdivided into over one thousand groups of forty villages each under an *Amildar*, with *Tarafdhars* as their subordinate officers.⁶⁷

Forrest describes the Code of Instructions issued to one of the *Amildars* thus:

“(I)F all its 127 clauses had been fully implemented, ‘the second District of Waumhoor dependent on the Cutchery of Awulpatam’ would have been one of the best governed— if slightly over-governed-----regions of the earth. Everything is provided for”.⁶⁸

It is difficult to ascertain how many of the detailed codes regarding the promotion of good farming, the curbing of extortion; the regulation of commerce in harmful products; the livelihood of the lame and the blind; the public duties of *amildars*; the regulation of their public life and working hours; etc., were actually implemented. There is likely to have been much corruption and collusion at the ground level. Yet, one cannot but agree with Forrest when he says, (in context of the depredations committed by the Nizam, the Marathas, and the British during the course of the Third and the Fourth Mysore Wars, and Tipu’s own scorched-earth measures of laying waste areas that were about to fall into the hands of the enemy):

“It is probably the supreme tribute to the internal strength of the Haidar-Tipu dynasty that, despite the shortcomings of its servants, it survived the strains of that time without bankruptcy, without rebellion, and without a collapse of the government machine”.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore*..., p. 218.

The author draws on ‘The Mysore Revenue Regulations’, translated from Persian by Burrish Crisp in 1792, which forms a part of *British India Analyzed*. He tells us that the manuscript was found by Colonel John Murray (Military Auditor-General) during the Coimbatore campaign of 1791.

⁶⁸ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore*..., p. 218; Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore*..., p. 904; Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan*..., p. 67.

⁶⁹ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore*..., p. 221.

Tipu's measures with regard to his frontiers and intelligence were very meticulous. Around every city, town, and fort, at the distance of one *farsang*, Tipu constructed a strong stockade with four gates, and appointed vigilant guards there, who were instructed not to allow anyone to pass through "without his authority and permission, and the signature or mark of the military governor".⁷⁰ Tipu Sultan had invited Muslims from all countries, "and had filled his kingdom with them, contrary to its former state (when it was full of Hindus)". These people had prospered under the liberal rule of Tipu, and after amassing great wealth, left for their own countries without obtaining "leave or license". These restrictions were to prevent this from happening in the future.⁷¹ The Sultan also stockaded the frontier between his dominions and the districts of the Karnatak Payanghat, from Dindigul and Karur, to the Ghat or the mountains of Budweil, and Khummum. Twelve thousand foot soldiers were placed along this stockade, "as a cordon, to prevent any one from entering his dominions from the Payanghat, or anyone quitting the Balu Ghat for that quarter".⁷²

In another instance, Raja Ram Chandra expressed his inability to find a suitable groom for his daughter from his own caste within the Sultan's dominions. He was obliged to seek for one in the Payan Ghat, and asked Tipu for "passports for the ingress and egress of parties, whom it will be requisite to invite on the occasion". Tipu Sultan instructed Raja Ram Chandra to either detain within his realm any such groom selected from the

⁷⁰ Kirmani says that thereby, "the intercourse of foreign merchants and the commercial men of the country was entirely cut off". A more plausible explanation is that offered by Kirkpatrick, who says that Tipu Sultan was opposed only to such commerce as profited the English, and otherwise gave special benefits to foreign traders and merchants in order to promote foreign trade. William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter XII, to Turbiyat Ali Khan, Chief Collector of Bangalore, dated March 28, 1785, p. 24.

⁷¹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 67.

⁷² Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 67-68.

Payan Ghat, or to find someone who was “in this country”. Kirkpatrick points out the distrust with which Tipu viewed any kind of intercourse with the Carnatic. While he did not object to the entry of strangers into his dominions so long as their purpose was to settle there, “it was extremely difficult for any, who had found admission into his dominions, to quit them again”.⁷³ Such an emphasis on the definition and policing of frontiers is an integral part of sovereign political authority, and certainly distinguishes Tipu from other contemporary sovereigns.

The military administration of Mysore was one realm where Tipu Sultan made important changes. Under Haidar, “the exercises and manoeuvres of the regular troops were arranged and performed, and the word given according to the French system of military evolution or tactics”. Tipu, with the advice of Zain-ul Abedin Shustri (the brother of Abul Kasim Khan, Hydarabadi, who was also honoured with the title of Mir Alam Shustri), “changed the military code of regulations and altered the technical terms or words of command, ...to words of the Persian and Turkish languages”. Zain-ul Abedin Shustri wrote a treatise called *Futuh-ul Mujahidin* (‘Triumph of the holy warriors’), and “his system was confirmed”.

The regular forces were originally organized into *kushoons*, *risalas*, and *juqs*, roughly equivalent to brigades, battalions, and companies, and commanded respectively by *Sipahdars*, *Risaladars*, and *Juqdars*. Five thousand men selected from the regular infantry formed a *kushoon*. In each *kushoon*, there were four *Risaladars* or colonels of infantry, and one of cavalry. Under each *Risaladar*, or colonel, were ten *Jowkdars* or

⁷³ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter XXIII, to Raja Ram Chandra, April 10, 1785, p. 38.

captains. One hundred men formed a *Jowk*. Every *Jowk* or company included two *Sur Kheil*, ten *Jamadars*, and ten *Duffadars*. Terms for old offices were also changed. In the regiments of troops or regular horse, which were formed and appointed after the manner of the Europeans, the *Teepdar* and the *Subadar* who, in the French and English languages are called major and adjutant, were now called *Youzdar* and *Ankib*. In distinction to the *Nakib* of the *Kushoon* and the *Risala*, he, who was called *Yussakchi* had his name changed to *Shurbushurn*. The officer commanding three or four *Teeps*, (regiments of cavalry), was called *Mokubdar*. The *bar-cutcherry* (regular infantry) was renamed the *jysh cutcherry*; the troop or regular horse cutcherry as the *uskeri-cutcherry*; and the *banda* or slave cutcherry as the *Asad Ilahi* cutcherry.⁷⁴

The *Sipahdar* had to consult his *Risaladars* if a serious problem arose, and, if necessary, had to take their opinion in writing. Denys Forrest points out that some of the letters in Kirkpatrick's collection suggest that *Sipahdars* were free to write to Tipu directly, over the heads of their commanding generals, even on matters of current strategy.⁷⁵ By 1790, Tipu had put through one of his reorganizations. Brigades were called *cutcheries*; there were four each for cavalry and infantry, the former being divided into four *mokums* or regiments, and the latter into six *kushoons*. The latter term was, thus, downgraded. The command of the *cutcheries* was given to a *Bakshi*, hitherto a mere paymaster, and under him were *Mokumdars* (cavalry) and *Sipahdars* (infantry). Another officer of subaltern rank was the *Saryasaqchi*. He had wide powers of inspection and report. One of his duties was to report to the higher authorities, (including, in some instances, Tipu

⁷⁴ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan....*, p. 14-15; Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 900.

⁷⁵ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p.

himself), about the discipline and morale of the *risala* to which he was attached. M. H. Gopal tells us that that the *Saryasaqchi* was equivalent to a brigade-major who helped the *Sipahdar* on the administrative side, while the *yusakchi* was an adjutant who conveyed the *sipahdar*'s reports to the Sultan.⁷⁶

Rao quotes Munro, who has highlighted the “perfection in European discipline never before known amongst the black powers in India”. Munro points out that while Haidar Ali recruited military adventurers from all nations and tribes into his army, he held out special rewards to lure the European artificers and sepoy, who had been trained in the Company's service. He also praises the meticulousness with which Haidar nurtured his power at sea, and military intelligence. “Nor can any prince be”, Munro writes, “more watchful over the intrigues of his enemies both abroad and at home; by which means he knows well where to anticipate hostile designs, and where to take advantage”.⁷⁷

The artillery employed by the Mysore armies had a decisive advantage over that of the English. Their field pieces, mostly cast in Mysore under French supervision, were of heavier bore and longer range than anything issued to the Company's forces, and their mortars could do great damage. So could the rockets. Which were like ordinary fireworks, but with a cylinder of iron, and sometimes having an explosive charge or a sword blade fitted at the forward end. According to many accounts, the most versatile of Tipu's troops were the irregular cavalry, or *silahdars*. In contrast to the ‘stable horse’ or *askar* troops, these found their own arms and mounts, and their pay and allowances were

⁷⁶ Gopal, M.H., *Tipu Sultan's Mysore: an economic study*, Bombay Popular Prakashan, 1971, p. 29.

⁷⁷ op. cit., Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 398.

adjusted accordingly. Together with the irregular infantry, they were responsible for much of the havoc wreaked by Tipu's armies in the Carnatic and the Malabar.⁷⁸

Tipu Sultan initiated a sweeping alteration of weights and measures. *Seers* and *maunds* were replaced by *dekks*. The standard measure of length was defined as twenty-four thumb breadths, since there were twenty-four letters in the confession of faith. The breadth of a thumb was fixed by that of a certain number of grains of rice of a specific weight and the whole was then translated into a new *kos* of two and three-quarter miles, against the usual Indian measure of two and a half miles. Tipu specifies that one *kos* was equal to 6000 *guz*, and was to be travelled by postmen in a *ghurry* and a half (33 minutes and 45 seconds). *Harkarahs* were to be flogged if they were late. One *kos* was approximately 15000 feet. Postmen were expected to move at a speed of more than five miles per hour. This "considerably exceed(ed)... (the) ordinary rate of mail in British India. However, Kirkpatrick adds that in the Company's dominions, torture such as that practised by Tipu Sultan was not heard of."⁷⁹

Tipu minted new coins, as noted above, which are universally regarded as the finest issued in the eighteenth-century India. They also had distinctive values. His *Sultany Fanam* was worth seven pence. His *Sultany Pagoda* was worth ten shillings, against the usual eight shillings.⁸⁰ Kirmani tells us that "The silver coins and rupees called Imami, having on one side the misra or line, 'The religion of Ahmad enlightened the world from

⁷⁸ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 139-140.

⁷⁹ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters...*, Letter CLXXX, to the Seven Superintendents of the Post, at the Seven Capital Cities of the Sultanut (or Kingdom), December 16, 1785, p. 215-216. The letter does not specify the names of these seven cities.

⁸⁰ Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 217.

the victories of Hydar'; and on the reverse the sentence, 'He is the sole or only just King', were coined by his orders".⁸¹

After the return of his second embassy from Constantinople in 1789, and his own return to Seringapatam in May 1790 after his attack on Travancore Lines, adopted the tiger motif in a big way. The tiger stripe appeared in the uniform of the infantry, in casting guns, on his seals, flags, and coins, as wall decoration, and probably, in its most spectacular example, on his throne, which displayed a massive gold tiger head with crystal teeth.⁸² The stripe was stamped on the bindings of his books and served as the watermark on his paper, the interior walls of his tomb are entirely covered with the pattern.⁸³ Tipu himself was described leaving the palace 'in a dress and accoutrements adorned with the tyger's head'.⁸⁴ Two calligraphic designs depicting the head were used; one a *tughra*, made up of the name of Tipu Sultan, which was used as his seal, and the other a tiger mask made up of the words '*asad allah ul-ghalib*' ('the victorious lion of god') which was used as decoration both on his arms and his banners. The most well known are the naturalistic representation of the tiger as decoration (frequently just the head) and the tiger stripe alone. The latter is commonly referred to as *habri*, from *habr*, meaning tiger, although in fact the term appears more properly to refer to the cloth on which the motif appeared. Brittlebank points out that by adopting the tiger, Tipu was making use of an

⁸¹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan...*, p. 68.

⁸² Tipu "collected all the treasures of the State, or rather assumed the pomp and splendour of royalty, and directed the formation of a throne of gold, ornamented with jewels of great value in the shape of a tiger, a figure from the first most approved by him, and signified also by his own name (*Tippoo*, lit. tiger)". Incidentally, Tipu never formally ascended this throne.

Hayavadana Rao, *History of Mysore...*, p. 915-914.

⁸³ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 140.

⁸⁴ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 141.

emblem had connections with earlier dynasties, yet not with the Wodeyars, thus lending a sense of continuity to his claims for legitimacy.

The Sultan possessed great wealth, which he took great pains to display publicly through the ritual of the *darbar*, the practice of *darsan*, grand *suwari* or retinue through the realm. The richly caparisoned elephants, the loud drumming of the *naubat* (royal band or drums), the elaborate insignia and brightly coloured flags, and the large numbers of disciplined and uniformed troops are described in detail by many contemporaries. On the arrival of Tipu and his retinue at any place, rocket or cannon salutes were fired. Even the royal children were surrounded by pomp and ceremony.⁸⁵ The palace at Bangalore was opulent. The fort of Seringapatam contained Daria Daulat palace in which Tipu often resided, which stood in its own garden, the pavilion in the Lal Bagh not far from Haidar's tomb, the main palace constructed within the fort by Tipu. The A'la Mosque was built by Tipu in the 1780s. Buchanan has described the small palace at Lal Bagh as 'the handsomest native building that I have ever seen'.⁸⁶ The decoration is marked by its sumptuousness, clearly for public viewing. The apartments of the *zenana*, always closed to outsiders, were drab, and 'anything but splendid'.⁸⁷

Certain decorative elements predominate in the descriptions of Tipu's buildings. The calligraphic design was a vehicle for *barakat*. Green, the colour of Islam, was used extensively by Tipu in his buildings, his campaign tent, and his flags. Red was linked with female qualities, evoking blood and danger, and in South India, it was associated

⁸⁵ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p.133.

⁸⁶ Buchanan, *Journey from Madras*, p.73, op. cit. p. Brittlebank, p. 133

⁸⁷ Price, *Memoirs*, p. 447, op. cit. Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 135-136

with power and energy in both the cults of the *pirs*, and the worship of the goddesses. It was, thus, a colour associated with *ksatriyas* or warriors, and when used by kings, was regarded as a 'sign of wrath'. Major Price, during the attack on Seringapatnam in 1799, remarked that the sight of red umbrellas amongst the Mysore troops denoted the presence of officers of 'the highest rank'.⁸⁸

Jewellery and gemstones, in addition to demonstrating wealth, were also perceived to have magical and talismanic qualities. In Islamic belief, minerals were not regarded as being dead but as having a life of their own, and that they were closely associated with the planets. With their regenerative qualities, some were believed to have protective medicinal powers. Islamic belief also held that six of the seven heavens were made of precious substances: emerald, white silver, large white pearls, ruby, red gold and sapphire. Gemstones were also linked to the four elements, in which manner there is evidence of their use by Tipu Sultan. Hindus, on the other hand, classed diamonds, rubies and sapphires along the lines of the four *varnas*, depending on their colour. Both Hindus and Muslims believed that the influence of planets was strengthened by the wearing of certain stones, with the appropriate combination producing the same effect as a planetary combination.⁸⁹

In Islam, the pearl represents the divine word, according to a *hadith*, which states that the world was created from a white pearl.⁹⁰ There is also an association with the feminine, and it is notable that the Mughal women wore pearls a great deal. Haidar Ali is known to

⁸⁸ Price, *Memoirs*, p. 426, also p. 421, op. cit., Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 137

⁸⁹ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p.137-138.

⁹⁰ Burckhardt, *Art of Islam*, p. 91, 180, op. cit., Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 139

have given a pearl necklace to one of his commanders, along with the *khilats*. The hostage princes were also adorned thus before being handed over to Cornwallis.⁹¹ A portrait of Tipu Sultan painted in the 1790s shows him wearing several strings. The pearls of his rosary were said to be particularly fine, being of ‘uncommon size and beauty’, and pearls hung from the canopy of his throne.⁹²

Many issues influenced the choice of kingly adornment, whether it is of royal buildings, the human body, or other regal accoutrements. Most significant were the links with the sacred, be it within the recognized Islamic or Hindu traditions---and Indian rulers drew upon both---as well as other cosmological forces.⁹³ South Indian kings had a close relationship with the goddess, and this was often as Sri, who was regarded as the source of sovereignty, as well as Durga and Durga-Lakshmi. Abul Fazl, writing of Akbar, also associated ‘external signs of grandeur’ with divinity. [*Ain-i-Akbari*, 1, p.52.]. Tipu, like Akbar drew upon imagery, which had meaning for all those he wished to bind to him, whatever, their religious affiliation. Thus, his use of the solar motif would have emphasized to Muslims his special relationship with God, while at the same time representing his absolute power to his predominantly Hindu subjects. In fact, Mysore itself is thought to have a long history of sun worship amongst the cult deities of the villages. In Mysore city, Whitehead identified Bisal Mariamma, a goddess believed to have been originally connected with some form of sun worship.⁹⁴ As recognizable images to both Muslims and Hindus, the tiger and the sun had deep historical roots in the region.

⁹¹ Kirmani, *History of Hydur*, p. 455, op. cit., Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 135

⁹² *Narrative sketches...*, p. 87, op. cit., Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 139.

⁹³ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan's search...*, p. 139-140.

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 150.

Both emblems, through their links with the sacred, were closely associated with access to, and expression of power. Furthermore, both images contributed to his numinous quality, a fundamental aspect of Indian kingship, which it was essential, he cultivate in his search for acknowledgement and acceptance as ruler of Mysore.⁹⁵

With regard to the renaming of towns, Buchanan wrote that ‘like all then Mussalmans of India, [Tipu] was a mighty changer of old Pagan names’.⁹⁶ Haidar had changed the name of Bedur to Haidarnagar and of Mangalore to Kurial. The foundation of towns was not new either. Hyderabad was built in the late sixteenth century as the new capital of the Qutub Shahi dynasty of Golconda, Akbar built Fatahpur Sikri. Nor was the introduction of a new calendar unusual. Akbar had introduced the solar Ilahi era, which was changed by Aurangzeb who reverted to the lunar Islamic era.⁹⁷

“These precedents for Tipu’s actions confirm the view that the steps he took possessed a cultural logic understood by those who observed them”.⁹⁸

Brittlebank points out that scholars like Stein and Fisher, who regard Tipu as an outsider having no ideological affinity with his subjects, and preferred to draw upon Islamic rather than regional forms and conventions to express his rule, overlook the commonly held beliefs and values of the south. In the establishment and confirmation of his position, Tipu drew upon both regional and Islamic conventions. His development of an aura of

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, *Tipu Sultan’s search...*, p. 151.

⁹⁶ Francis Buchanan, *Journey from Madras*, 1, p. 301; 2, p. 427, *op. cit.* Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan’s search...*, p. 122. Denys Forrest, *Tiger of Mysore...*, p. 217.

⁹⁷ Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan’s search...*, p. 122-123.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 123.

universal kingship was couched in terms of Islamic tradition as the Shadow of God.⁹⁹ However, this was done within the context of what it meant to be a south Indian king. Brittlebank argues that in the early part of his reign, Tipu demonstrated his control and ‘enunciation’ of order by carrying out the redefinition of his universe. Although there was an Islamicizing drive to this redefinition---in the renaming of towns, the adoption of Persian as the language of the court, etc.---he did not overlook the importance of control over the sacred geography of the region as a source of his power. A long history in South India of such practices meant that there was no contradiction in the Mysore ruler’s benefaction of both Hindu and Muslim institutions in order to assert his dominance and to increase his sovereignty.¹⁰⁰

Tipu undoubtedly operated within many accepted idioms of south Indian kingship, as Brittlebank convincingly demonstrates. His innovations appear as such more because of the zeal with which they were pushed through a short span, rather than their departure from the established norms of kingly behaviour. However, the Islamicising drive behind some of his measures is more pronounced than Brittlebank would have us believe. Certainly, Tipu was not consciously modelling himself on Akbar or any other Mughal ruler in his adoption of the solar motif, or in the patronage of the goddess and other Hindu shrines, even if there is definite precedence in the Mughal period for such measures. Nonetheless, they do not point so much to religious bigotry, as to efforts to

⁹⁹ Tipu’s recruitment of artisans from different lands, his acquisition of items of wide ranging provenance [especially clocks, watches, automata], the botanical gardens of his realm, the backgrounds of the women in his zenana---all reflected the universality of his kingship, and were designed to augment his claims to be the Shadow of God on earth. The Islamic ruler had to display his sovereignty over all of God’s creations. Kate Brittlebank, *Tipu Sultan’s search...*, p. 114-119.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, Chapter V, *Kingly Behaviour*, p. 130.

reorient the nature of governance from that prevailing under the Wodeyars. In that limited sense, innovation did play an important role in the construction of sovereign power in Tipu Sultan's reign.

Brittlebank's second argument that is developed here is much easier to accept: in the visual display of his power and sovereignty, Tipu Sultan was operating within a recognized tradition of Indian kingship. As Susan Bayly has pointed out with regard to Elijah rule in Arcot, given what could be regarded as the open ended nature of sovereignty on the subcontinent, it was also essential for aspiring rulers to develop a 'convincing aura of kingship', in order to resist the ever present threat of *fitna*.¹⁰¹ "Such public display was associated with the 'numinous or sacral quality' which all Indian kings possessed".¹⁰²

III

Conclusion

Mysore in the late eighteenth century used all the tools that were used in that period to assert and defend its claims to sovereignty-----outright warfare, conquest, levying of tributes, conclusion of treaties, forging of other alliances, formal and informal negotiation; exchanges of titles, honours, matrimonial partners, and prestations; innovation in administration, and the idioms through which power was expressed;

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 111-112.

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 131.

religious and ritual incorporation; visual display of wealth and splendour, and public deployment of specific symbols. Usually, these modes of legitimation of sovereign power are divided into two categories, dealing respectively with 'real' and 'ritual sovereignty'. This segmentary state model, developed by Burton Stein, is held to be singularly apposite to south Indian kinship, which is seen as 'sacral' and 'incorporative'. The kings are "essentially ritual figures, except in the often circumscribed core territories of their capitals where they commanded and managed resources and men by virtue of their compelling coercive power (*ksatra*)". By virtue of being the most important symbol of the sacred, moral order to which all men must belong, the kings exercise a sacred and moral authority (*dharma*) far exceeding the core areas where they wield *ksatra*.

However, this study of the terms of exercise of sovereign power in the Mysore of Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan suggests that such a division is inappropriate. There are instances of symbolic or ritual victories over the enemy's body in the midst of the very 'real' action in a military theatre. There are also instances of a subtle undermining of subordinate status through the exchanges and terms of address employed in the negotiation of treaties.

If real and ritual power cannot be demarcated as separate from one another, what of their association with, respectively, the core and the periphery of a kingdom? Bayly has stretched the case a bit too much when he argues that the empire at Delhi itself became a sort of a successor state to the Mughal Emperor.¹⁰³ Gordon has pointed to the increasing fragmentation of a *sanad* system that was never perfectly hierarchical to begin with. What is clear is a flattening of the political hierarchy into a more lateral political field.

¹⁰³ C. A. Bayly, *Rulers, townsmen...*, p. 25-26. See footnote 10 in this section.

The Mughal Emperor, or even the Nizam, still represent an imperial centre, but not the 'core' of the realm in the sense that Stein uses the term. There are many with many actors, 'big' and 'little' kings, each imbued with their own refraction of sovereignty, and all knit together in some manner or the other into a complex whole, where tenuous transactions, intrigues, embassies, exchanges, warfare and rhetoric.

Within the panorama of eighteenth century southern India, Mysore is a slightly atypical case. What is most important is an argument for the possibility of trajectories of analysis that move away from mammoth models of state power. Dirks ultimately claims that there is case for "a totalizing analysis, one which in the Indian case is sensitive to the complex interweaving of ritual symbolic forms with the so called actual mechanisms of state power". We shall now look at another level of construction of power relationships and the definition of the polity.

Chapter III

Mysore and the 'smaller' powers: 'entanglement' of allegiances

In the preceding chapter, we examined the nature and construction of power relationships between the Mughal centre, and various other *sanad* holders under the Mughal Emperor, including the state of Mysore. In this section, we shall look at the variety of chieftains and principalities over which eighteenth century Mysore claimed to hold suzerainty, and the nature and construction of power relationships thereof.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, the major political actors in the southern half of the subcontinent were the Marathas, the Nizam of Hyderabad, the rulers of Arcot and Mysore, and the English and the French East India Companies. Among these powers, there was constant jostling for supremacy, and territorial and other aggrandizement at the expense of the others. There was also a push for a clearer delineation of power relationships, even if there was not much engagement with a vertically defined line of hierarchy. However, the relationship of these powers with the lesser principalities, chieftains, and *poligars* over which they claimed dominion was far more ambiguous. There seems to be a remarkable toleration of the fact that *zamindars* and petty chieftains could profess allegiance to more than one power simultaneously. The treaties of the period often acknowledged this clearly, as a matter of course.

For example, Tipu Sultan ordered Burhanuddin Khan to move to Kittoor, after operations in Nergund were concluded. Kirkpatrick tells us that the *poligar* of Kittoor is mentioned in the tenth article of the treaty of Poona, concluded between the British and Marathas in June 1790, “as one of those feudatories, dependent, at the same time, both on the courts of Poonah and Hyderabad”. He could also have been a tributary of Mysore. The Nawab of Shanore, says Kirkpatrick, was a tributary of all three, though in the treaty of Poona was referred to merely as “subject to service with both the *Nizam* and the *Paishwa*”.¹

Sometimes, such a situation arose because an ascendant power like Mysore upset the established patterns of allegiances and hegemony through its expansionary thrusts, and the smaller principalities were placed in a position of duality with respect to which overlord they should recognize. Aitchison writes that from the earliest records it is evident that the Nizam appointed Husain Ali Khan as the *kilahdar* and *faujdar* of Banganapalle in 1761. A few years afterward the country fell under the dominion of Mysore. A letter, in which Tipu, on the death of Husain Ali Khan in 1783, conferred the *jagir* upon his minor son Ghulam Ali Khan, shows that Husain Ali Khan’s possession of the estate had been recognised by Tipu. Soon after 1783, however, Tipu ordered the confiscation of the *jagir*. Some seven years afterwards, according to the family’s traditions, Ghulam Ali Khan and his uncle, Asad Ali Khan defeated Tipu’s deputy, and regained possession of Banganapalle. From certain correspondence of 1800, it appears that the Nizam recognised them as the joint Jagirdars of Banganapalle.²

¹ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters*, Letter CXLVII, to Burhanuddin Khan, November 7, 1785, p. 180-181.

² C.A. Aitchison, *Treaties, engagements and sanads relating to India and neighbouring countries*, volume IX (dealing with the Madras Presidency), Calcutta, 1909, p. 217.

Even when conquest was more definite in that it suppressed effectively the old networks of fealty, service and tribute that bound the vanquished principality to former overlords, there was no guarantee that allegiances would not shift again. A good example is that of Cannanore, which passed from the hands of Mysore to the English East India Company. Cannanore became firmly aligned alongside in the 1760s, when Haidar Ali invested it with the governance of some of the conquests in the Malabar, taken from the Zamorin of Calicut. The Zamorin claimed to be the sovereign paramount over the smaller principalities in the southern districts of Malabar, and had reduced most of them to subordination by force of arms. This spirit of conquest was one of the many reasons that had led to the invasion of his domain by Haidar Ali in 1766, which reduced the whole country from Chirakkal to Cochin. The chiefs of Cochin, Kurangott and Randatara, subordinate to the Dutch, French, and English Companies respectively, were allowed to retain their possessions. The others were driven out, and the management of their estates was entrusted to Maddana in south Malabar, and to the Adi Raja, the Mappilla Chief of Cannanore, in the north.³ Thus, the Cannanore family, at first a tributary of the Kolattiri, became independent about the middle of the eighteenth century, and an ally of Mysore.

In 1784, during the Second Anglo-Mysore War, Cannanore was taken by the British. The ruler of Cannanore was then a lady, who had succeeded her uncle, Ali Raja Bibi. A treaty was concluded by the British, by which she agreed to pay an indemnity of one and a half lakhs and an annual tribute of one lakh rupees. On the conclusion of peace with Tipu, matters reverted to their former position; but when in 1790 war broke out with Tipu, the

³ *ibid.*, p. 12.

Bibi instigated the Mappillas against the Nairs, the allies of the Company.⁴ Kirkpatrick writes that Ali Raja Bibi, the Queen of Cannanore, was tributary to Mysore till the treaty of 1792. Thereafter, all rights claimed by Tipu Sultan in the Carnatic were transferred to the British.

On the whole, the existence of multiple allegiances in various forms among the petty principalities was very much an integral feature of the manner in which kingdoms were built, and sovereigns governed, in the southern peninsula in the eighteenth century. The powers in action here might have had a long presence in this region, but their political ascendancy and efforts at state formation were not more than a century old. Therefore, allegiances among the lesser *zamindars* and chieftainships seems to have been still entangled, as a matter of course, in the second half of the eighteenth century. The conquests in the period of our study only intensified patterns that had been in place earlier.

The evidence does seem to suggest that there was a wide array of smaller powers, which could not be completely subdued and brought unequivocally under the realm of any one of the bigger powers, but which remained important enough to determine the balance of power among the latter. A good example is that of the fortress-principality of Nergund. In 1785, Tipu tried to subdue the assertiveness of the *zamindar* of Nergund, but ran up against the hostility of the Marathas, who claimed that Nergund was under their protection. Kirkpatrick says in a very perceptive elucidation of the problem:

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

“The ostensible, or more immediate cause of the present rupture, is to be traced, on the one hand, to the right which the Sultan assumed of chastising a contumacious tributary; and, on the other, to the protection which the Mahrattah Government thought, or affected to think, it incumbent upon them to extend to this offender; who was, perhaps, a feudatory of the Mahrattah Empire, in like manner with many other *Zemindars* and Polygars, who depend, in various shapes, and at the same time, on different superiors; rendering to one Paishcush, or tribute, and to another military service”.⁵

It is doubtful whether the issue of entangled allegiances of small *zamindars* could be resolved by such a simple distinction of payment of tribute to one power, and rendering of military service to another. Power relationships in such a variegated terrain were very complex. In this case, there is an interweaving of multiple sets of tributary relationships--that between Mysore and Nergund, Poona and Nergund, and finally, Mysore and Poona. Mysore herself had fallen into arrears of tribute to Poona. Therefore, in a missive to his

⁵ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters of Tippoo Sultan to various public functionaries including his personal military commanders; governors of forts and provinces; diplomatic and commercial agents; & c. &c. &c. Together with some addressed to the tributary chieftains of Shanoor, Kurnool, and Cannanore, and sundry other persons*, London, 1811.

Letter III to Mahommed Ghiaz, the chief diplomatic agent of Tipu Sultan at Poona, dated February 21, 1785, p. 9.

The other important agent was Nur Mmuhamad Khan, who, the author tells us, resided longest at Poona, and was probably sent there by Haidar Ali.

diplomatic agents at Poona, Muhammad Ghyaz and Nur Muhammad Khan, Tipu had to address the question of tribute and fealty at two levels. He instructed his agents to pay 'the fixed or regulated money' to the chief of Poona on demand, and to 'exterminate' the 'contumacious' *zamindar* of Nergund if he could not be reasoned into observing proper conduct by the Marathas. The mission was not to entertain any fear of 'the chiefs of that place' sending forces to aid the *zamindar* of Nergund.

"If a petty *zemindar*, and a subject of our government, like this, may not be punished, how shall our authority be maintained?"⁶

Rao Rasta, the Maratha chief who was favourably disposed to Tipu Sultan's regime, entered into a long negotiation with Muhammad Ghyas. He urged that the Sultan should give up the siege of Nergund in exchange for a fine, "... by which mode of adjustment we should not only be the gainer, but appearances would likewise be saved with the world".⁷ Tipu invariably insisted that not only the *peshkash* due by the *zamindar*, but also damages for the depredations committed on his kingdom must be paid for before he lifted the siege.⁸ Probably as a means of procrastination, he also repeatedly insisted that Nur Muhammad Khan be allowed leave to proceed to Seringapatam, so that Tipu could ascertain for himself the true state of affairs at Poona. In fact, it was understood that even

⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷ *ibid.*, Letter XII, to Muhammad Ghyas, April 4, 1785, p. 25-26.

⁸ *ibid.*, Letter XV, to Muhammad Ghyas and Nur Muhammad Khan, April 7, 1785, p. 27-29; also in Letter XXVII, April 14, 1785, p. 41; Letter LXXI, May 14, 1785.

the annual tribute paid to the Marathas would be withheld by Tipu Sultan until the question of Nergund was settled to the latter's satisfaction.⁹

Once again, the terms of treaties and undertakings between two powers assumes great significance in the determination of power equations. Rao Rasta urges a 'fine' to 'save appearances', while Tipu adamantly demands a *peshkash*, interpreting anything less than that as a bad precedent that would erode his sovereign authority. The outcome is also mixed for Mysore: Tipu Sultan crushed the *zamindar* of Nergund, but had to pay the arrears of tribute to the Marathas.¹⁰

It was difficult to take such a firm and clear line when dealing with some of the bigger principalities, such as that of Savanur, variously called Sanore or Shanore. Kirkpatrick says that Sanore was a *jagir mushrooteh*, or a *jagir* held under specific conditions or stipulations, as opposed to a 'free' or 'ordinary' *jagir*. This principality was compelled to submit to Haidar Ali in 1764, compelled to pay a certain percentage of its annual revenue as tribute to Mysore, and to enter into a double marital alliance with the family of the Mysore ruler. The Nawab of Sanore, Abdul Hukeem Khan, revolted in the regime of Tipu Sultan and sought the protection of the Marathas. Sanore was finally ceded to the

⁹ *ibid.*, Letter XII, to Turbiyat Ali Khan, Chief Collector of Bangalore, dated March 28, 1785, p. 25-26; Letter XV..., p. 27-29.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, p 9.

As noted previously, Kirkpatrick points out that Tipu Sultan is reluctant to use the term '*peshkash*' or 'tribute', which he was "bound by former treaties to pay to the Government of Poonah; but which he does not deem proper to recognize, or designate, by any term denotative of inferiority, which the word *Paishcush* certainly is".

Marathas in 1792, “when its dispossessed chieftain became wholly dependent on the government of Poonah”.¹¹

The correspondence between Sanore and Seringapatam for the period 1785-1786, reproduced by Kirkpatrick, is very revealing. Abdul Hukeem Khan constantly tries to renegotiate the levy of tribute on his principality. Efforts to adapt terms of previously negotiated treaties, and formal and informal agreements to new political realities, which we took note of in the preceding section, continues to be a means of the redefinition of power equations between Seringapatam and its lesser chieftainships.

On an application to that effect from the ‘Khan of Shanoor’ in 1785, Tipu Sultan refused to remit the payment of tribute.¹² He further asked the Nawab to advance the revenue payment of the coming year. Kirkpatrick comments that Tipu seemed to harbour suspicions of the Nawab siding with the Marathas, as he did in fact, openly, and not long after, and was, therefore, taking a stern line.¹³

Seven months later, the tone of the voice from Seringapatam changed again. Tipu Sultan expresses great pleasure on receipt of a letter from the Nawab, and discusses the arrangement for the payment of *peshkash* in four instalments, to the *diwan* of Nugr. He takes note of embezzlements to the tune of twenty-six lakhs and requires the Nawab to extract that amount from the guilty through flogging and other forms of punishment. Kirkpatrick tells us that the mellow tone of this letter could be attributed to the changing

¹¹ *ibid.*, Letter XVI, to Abdul Hukeem Khan, Nawab of Sanore, April 10, 1785, p. 29-30.

¹² *ibid.*, Letter CL, to Hukeem, Khan of Shahnoor, dated November 16, 1785, p. 183-184.

¹³ *ibid.*, Letter CLI, to Hukeem, Khan of Shahnoor, dated November 17, 1785, p. 184-185.

political climate. The Nawab would soon have to declare himself on the side of one or the other contending parties. He feels that Tipu was putting a false front of relaxation of demands and conciliations, to carry out his real design of overrunning that territory and driving the Nawab out of his country.¹⁴

A few more months elapse and Tipu could still be heard reiterating his willingness to accommodate Abdul Hakim Khan, and the tribute due from Shannor on easy terms, and assures that he would ask the concerned Naik to be less exacting in his dealings with the latter. Tipu seems to accept as legitimate the Nawab's explanation that "the husbandmen, inhabitants, and others in that quarter" had fled the country on seeing the enemy's approach, and that this hindered the collection of revenue.¹⁵ Well into the year 1786, Tipu Sultan reiterates his promises of goodwill and friendship to his "friend", even as, Kirkpatrick says, he is planning the destruction of Shannor.

"For as much as the requisites [or reciprocal duties] of union and concord are firmly established between us, how is it possible that our mutual regard should give way to estrangement and misunderstanding?"¹⁶

Towards the close of 1786, Tipu Sultan expresses displeasure at a recent "ungracious proceeding" of the Nawab, but repeats his promises of friendship. Kirkpatrick tells us that though Abdul Hakim Khan may have been disappointed in his expectations from the Marathas, he probably knew Tipu Sultan too well to expect generous treatment from him. Therefore, despite the latter's encouragement to "return hither", the Nawab did not return

¹⁴ *ibid.*, Letter CCXXVIII, to Abdul Hakim Khan, dated February 20, 1786, p. 260-261.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Letter CCLIV, to Abdul Hakim Khan, dated April 16, 1786, p. 277-278.

¹⁶ *ibid.*, Letter CCCXLIII, to Abdul Hakim Khan, dated August 15, 1786, p. 382.

to Sanore till the end of the war. From the proceeding letter, it becomes apparent that Tipu had reached Shannor, and that the Nawab had taken flight.¹⁷

Many of the same themes --- simultaneous allegiance by a principality to more than one of the bigger powers, the necessity of securing the allegiance of the chief due to impending hostilities with rival powers, easy terms of levy of revenue and evocation of the ties of friendship and affection for that purpose --- recur in the story of Mysore's dealings with the Pathan Nawab of Kurnool, Runmust Khan.

Tipu Sultan remitted four lakhs of the total eleven lakhs due from Runmust Khan, due to "consideration for the attachment which that friend has so longer borne to me, as well as for the sake of the true faith, and on account of the eminence of your family". Kirkpatrick tells us that Runmust Khan was forced to pay an annual tribute by Haidar Ali, "though he was, at the same time, a feudatory of the Nizam, to whom, when required, he was bound to render military service". By the treaty of 1792, Runmust Khan's son and successor was released from his "dependence" on Tipu Sultan. The tribute payable to the latter was transferred to the Nizam, who probably ceded it to the English East India Company by the treaty of 1800.¹⁸

It appears that Tipu sequestered certain territories falling in the dominion of the Nawab of Kurnool, who made a bid to recover them. On receiving a complaint from Mir Kasim Ali Khan, Post Master at Fuz Hisar (Gooty), Tipu Sultan urged this official not to worry

¹⁷ *ibid.*, Letter CCCLXXXVII, to Abdul Hakim Khan, dated October 25, 1786, p. 437

¹⁸ *ibid.*, Letter CII, to Runmust Khan, Nawab of Kurnool, undated letter, given the place that it occupies in the manuscript, p. 135-136.

about the attempts being made by the “Nazim of Kurnool” to recover the territory sequestered by Tipu Sultan. “If they should dare to take such a step, they shall see the fruits [or feel the consequences] of it”.¹⁹ The Sultan narrated his victory over the Coorgs, and how he had made them Ahmedis. He also informed the Nawab of his intention to repair to Kurnool. Kirkpatrick feels that this was a subtle warning to the Nawab, who was supposedly trying to recover some part of his territory that had been taken over by the Sultan.²⁰

Here again, there is a mellowing of the tone of authority and punitive action. Tipu Sultan further decreased the Pathan Nawab’s revenue from seven lakhs to six and a half. He also told the Nawab that he had given up the sequestered districts that were claimed by Runmust Khan, and had issued orders to the *diwan* and *bakshi* of Fuz Hisar (Gooty) to that effect. Tipu Sultan urged the payment of revenue at the earliest, and sent an elephant and *mehtabi* (a sort of silver tissue) as a token of regard.²¹

The necessity of regular reports and intelligence is couched in terms of a desire for regular communication from a friend. Tipu complains that he had not had any communication with Runmust Khan, and that “this neglect is very different from the established rules of friendship, since friendship renders it incumbent [on you] to afford me regularly the satisfaction of receiving letters [from you], containing accounts of your welfare”. Tipu announces his arrival in those parts, and requests an audience to discuss

¹⁹ *ibid.*, Letter CXCII, to Mir Kasim Ali Khan, Post Master at Fuz Hisar (Gooty) December 31, 1785, p. 228-230.

²⁰ *ibid.*, Letter CXCVI, to Runmust Khan, January 5, 1786, p. 228-230.

²¹ *ibid.*, Letter to Runmust Khan, January 13, 1786, p. 235-236.

important and delicate matters. Kirkpatrick points out the discrepancy between the general polite tone of the letter, and the designation of the Pathan chieftain as Faujdar at the beginning of it. One explanation that he offers is that Tipu Sultan might have been in the habit of addressing Runmust Khan as such when with his secretaries, and that this style of address was unconsciously adopted by the transcribers of the correspondence.²²

Even the mighty Sultan takes pains to not to compromise the position of the Nawab of Kurnool by agreeing to an arrangement that would ostensibly not alienate him from the Nizam. Tipu informs the Nawab of the appointment of Qutub-ud-din Khan as the *faujdar* of Adoni, and asks the former to cooperate with the latter in his mission of recruiting horsemen. For this purpose, Qutub-ud-din Khan would keep “one or two respectable persons” at Kurnool or Kumrnagar.²³ He also complies with the Nawab’s request that the persons employed by Qutub-ud-din Khan for the collection of horsemen in Kurnool be enjoined to work in great secrecy. Kirkpatrick explains this unusual concession thus: while the Nawab of Kurnool might feel constrained to allow Tipu’s officers to function within his territory, he was afraid of “thereby incurring the displeasure of the court of *Hyderabad*, whose vassal he was”. Kirkpatrick notes that even as Tipu promises to enforce secrecy on his officers, he exerts his “personal authority and influence” on the Nawab to ensure the success of his endeavour, which, “with whatever secrecy it might be employed, could not but fail to expose him, still more, to the imputation that he was so anxious to escape”. Kirkpatrick sees two possible explanations for this: the contradictory

²² *ibid.*, Letter CCCXV, to Runmust Khan, July 7, 1786, p. 344-345.

²³ *ibid.*, Letter CCCXXX, to Runmust Khan, July 13, 1786, p. 358-359.

nature of Tipu Sultan, or a deliberate design to make Runmust Khan fall out with the Nizam, so that he would have to side with Tipu eventually, having no other choice.²⁴

Several pertinent points emerge from this discussion. Sanore did not pay tribute directly to Seringapatam, but through the *diwan* of Nagar. Gooty and Adoni seem to be integral to Seringapatam's hold over Kurnool. This seems to have been the terms of control over most of the principalities that came under the control of Mysore in the eighteenth century: Seringapatam is not the sole, centralized locus for tributary or subsidiary relations. Even the provisioning of the army seems to have been done on similar lines. Tipu repeatedly writes to the officials posted in various towns and fortresses, and to the rulers and functionaries in various subsidiary principalities, to provide his army passing through or near the territories of the latter, with fodder, men, board, arms, and other provisions. The request to Runmust Khan is a case in point. If any one of these subsidiary principalities fell out of the loop of control from Seringapatam, it would affect immediately and adversely the control of other such principalities. This was a feature of most pre-modern polities, but is especially true for Mysore in the eighteenth century, given the short span into which a lot of expansionary activity had been compressed by Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan.

The fragility of the links in political and military authority was always accompanied by a realisation that threatening or rival powers could be edged out only by keeping on one's side as many of the lesser *zamindars*, chiefs, and Nawabs as possible. Kirkpatrick might be correct in saying that Tipu was merely allaying the suspicions of Abdul Hakim Khan,

²⁴ *ibid.*, Letter CCCLXX, to Runmust Khan, September 21, 1786, p. 413-414.

and was actually planning the destruction of Sanore all along, and that the show of friendship to Kurnool was hypocritical. The efforts to conciliate these small principalities can be interpreted in other ways also. This was a period of always-imminent warfare in the southern half of the subcontinent, and many big powers were eyeing the resources and allegiance of a wide number of smaller principalities. Insistence on the extraction of tribute, yet accommodation in the terms of such an extraction could have been a move to consolidate Mysore's hold over a territory that was not at any point tributary to any one power alone. The explanation proffered by Kirkpatrick, in the case of Kurnool, is more plausible: assertion of certain forms of control over chieftains by one power would create suspicions about the latter's trustworthiness in the minds of others who claimed overlordship over it. An intensification of demands on a subsidiary principality tied through service and tribute relations to more than one power, in times of imminent war, was not just a fiscal necessity in the southern peninsula; it also forced the latter to clearly show its hand, and declare its fealty to one or the other of the bigger powers.

There is also a distinction to be made in the authority, tenacity, and stringency with which claims of suzerainty are asserted over lesser powers. The imperious tone in which Tipu demands *peshkash* from the *zamindar* Nergund, is qualitatively different from the regard that he repeatedly professes for his 'friends', the Nawabs of Sanore and Kurnool. In fact, 'friendship' becomes a convenient rubric that masks the somewhat subterranean inequalities of power relations with semi-autonomous principalities. The rulers of Sanore and Kurnool are consistently referred to as Khans or Nawabs. The one instance where a letter addressed to Runmust Khan calls him a *faujdar* is seen by Kirkpatrick as an

aberration. Even the explanation he offers for it is very suggestive: while Tipu, amidst his own courtiers, may be very clear that he was suzerain over a principality such as Kurnool, he would still not, in the matter of course, omit honorifics or appellations that suggested some kind of parity between his status and theirs. Such was the delicacy of the political balance in the southern peninsula; and such was the weight carried by a number of smaller principalities.

There is, of course, a spectrum of power equations between payment of *peshkash* and idioms of 'friendship' that describe the relations of Seringapatam with a number of subsidiary states. In cases such as that of Kudapa, ruled by another Pathan chieftain, Tipu seems to have been in touch not with the Nawab of that place, but the Diwan, Moinuddin Ali Khan. The tone that he adopts is also that of great sternness, such as he would display towards a functionary directly under him at Seringapatam, about whom he had received an unfavourable report. He forbade Moinuddin Ali Khan from making the servants of the government of Tipu Sultan residing at Kurpah evacuate their houses. "Act according to the instructions that have been delivered to you, and do not pursue the suggestions of your own fancy".²⁵ Tipu Sultan makes it clear that he was acting on a complaint by Kamruddin Khan against the Diwan of Kurpah.²⁶ Yet, we know of the definite existence of the Nawab of Kudapah: when the Marathas invaded Mysore for a fourth time, the Nizam Ali, who was alarmed by the rising star of his brother Basalat Jang, gave tacit

²⁵ *ibid.*, Letter CXXI, to Moinuddin Ali Khan, the Diwan of Kurpah, September 18, 1785, p. 158-159.

²⁶ *ibid.*, Letter CXXII, to Kamruddin Khan, September 18, 1785, p. 158-159.

support to Haidar Ali. Haidar proceeded to levy contributions from the Nawabs of Kadapa and Karnul, as well as the smaller chiefs who were subordinate to Sira.²⁷

Another position in this spectrum, even more extreme than that occupied by Sanore, is that of Cannanore, which seems to be almost completely autonomous, and deals with orders from Seringapatam with an indifference to consequences of recalcitrance that is not seen elsewhere. Tipu Sultan constantly remonstrated with Ali Raja Bibi since she did not present herself at Seringapatam. This, said Tipu, was a part of “the performance of services; the execution of orders; obedience and fidelity” to be shown by “servants and dependants”. He gave the example of Rooe Wurm (Rai Varma), a *raja* who presented himself before Tipu Sultan, and was granted the farm of the Taluk of Cherkul, and other gifts. The Sultan held out the promise that the *rani* would also be rewarded similarly, if she so acted.²⁸ Tipu Sultan approves of her payment of twenty thousand rupees to Meer Zainul Abedin, *faujdar* of Zuferabad, and requires of her the payment of the remaining balance. He also desires the Bibi to “transmit incessantly intelligence of what passes at *Bombay* and *Tillicherry*”.²⁹ Though she may have complied with the requirement for tribute and intelligence, Ali Raja Bibi consistently refused to wait on Tipu at Seringapatam.³⁰ Kirkpatrick says that was conciliatory towards Ali Raja Bibi as she was Muslim. However, adherence to Islam had never saved from aggression any ruler that Tipu found to be a grave threat. The Bibi of Cannanore comes across as an independent ruler in her own right, who welcomes the British magnanimously, if resignedly.

²⁷ Lewin Bowring, *Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan*, 1803, p. 60.

²⁸ William Kirkpatrick, Letter CLXXXI, to Ali Raja Bibi, December 16, 1785, p. 216-217.

²⁹ *ibid.*, Letter CCLXVI, to Ali Raja Bibi, dated May 4, 1786, p. 314.

³⁰ *ibid.*, Letter CXXIV, to Ali Raja Bibi, September 18, 1785, p. 160.

At the other end of this spectrum of power equations are the smaller *poligars* or *zamindars*, who appear to be manipulated more or less like pawns on a chessboard by the bigger powers. Kirmani tells us that by 1791 the Nizam, the Marathas, and the English entered into a pact to “destroy the Khodadad state”, and divide among themselves the whole of the Balaghat provinces. Colonel Read, who was the Darogha of the intelligence department, was appointed to the command of Ambur Garh.³¹ He “brought over to his side the whole of the Poligars of the Balaghat, who from the oppression and cruelty of the late Nawab, and the tyrannical character of the Sultan had abandoned their own country and sought refuge in the towns of the Karanatak Payahghat”. These *poligars* included those of Gunugundi Pala, Khut Kumnir, Madanapalli, Anikul, Onkus Giri, Cheel Naik, etc.; the sons of Bhyreh Koor, the *poligar* of Chak Balapur; the *poligar* of Venkatgiri Kote, who was residing at Charkul; and Shunk Rayel, or Rawul, the chief of Punganur. These *poligars* received written assurances of protection, and were dispatched to their own districts on the condition that they would provide the English army with forage and provisions. They were also empowered “to retake or recover (by any means) their own districts and Taluks.

Punishment was meted out swiftly and ruthlessly, through means fair or foul, to *poligars* who defaulted in their commitments to Mysore. Chitaldurg is one such example. In 1779, Haidar Ali tried to wreak his vengeance on the *poligar* of that, who had defaulted in co-operating with him in the recent struggle against the Marathas. “The chief made a gallant

³¹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo Sultan being a continuation of the Neshani Hyduri*, tr. W. Miles, first published 1844, New Delhi, Oriental Publishers, 1980, p. 81.

resistance, but having in his service 3,000 Musalman soldiers, Haidar found means to corrupt them through the agency of a holy fakir who resided near the town". Thus, Chitaldrug was taken.³² Haidar Ali next wanted to teach the Bedars, who had heroically defended their hereditary chief, a lesson. "Not content with confiscating all their available property, and ravaging the district for the support of his army, he carried off to his capital 20,000 of the inhabitants. The young boys were afterwards trained to arms, and formed the first nucleus of a band of compulsory converts from Hinduism to Islam; a band which was largely augmented in the reign of Tipu Sultan, under the title of the Chela, or disciple battalions".³³

In another instance, Tipu Sultan asked Mah Mirza Khan to move with his troops against the rebellious *zamindar* of Punganoor and to reduce the fort of Oalpilly (in Oalpilly district adjoining Punganoor). He also asked that he imprison the *zamindar* Chukra Mull (Chakramal), and his Naigwaries (officers of the *Kundachar* or militia). Tipu further instructed that if these persons escaped through the woods surrounding the fort, and take refuge in the districts of Chandragiri, Chittoor, "or other *Polygars* depending on the Fringy", Mah Mirza Khan was to write to the *talukdar* of each district stating that the fugitives were robbers who had defrauded Tipu Sultan's government, and should be delivered to the latter. He was also to write to Tipu, so that the latter could make similar representations to the Governor of Madras. The *bakshi* of Ehsam (at Bangalore) was asked to dispatch military requirements. Moinuddin Ali Khan, the Diwan of Kurpah, and Raja Ram Chandra were asked to supply gram to Mah Mirza Khan's horses. Tipu gave

³² Lewin Bowring, *Haidar Ali and...* p. 74.

³³ William Kirkpatrick, p. 74-75.

strict instructions not to lay waste and not to cause disturbances, since the object was to collect revenue. No incursions were to be made into the territories of the *Fringy*, and the latter were to be given assurances to this effect. The reward for prisoners among the rebels, dead or alive, was fifty rupees per head.³⁴

Apart from the extent of punitive action against errant *poligars*, this episode demonstrates another important fact relating to the nature and construction of power relationships with the variety of chieftains and principalities over which bigger powers in the eighteenth century claimed to hold suzerainty. Tipu organizes the hunt for the fugitive on two levels. At one level, Mah Mirza Khan is required to enlist the support of the *talukdars* of domains held by the English East India Company. At another level, he enters into direct communication with the Governor of Madras, who accordingly sent strict instructions to the *talukdars* of Satghur not to harbour *zamindars* or other rebels from Punganoor. The Sultan repeatedly asks Mah Mirza Khan not to disturb “the country of the English”. Since Tipu was satisfied with the response from Madras, he drops the appellation ‘Fringy’.³⁵

Clearly, engagement at only one of the two levels was not adequate for the purpose of maintaining order in the dominions of Mysore. This points to the larger issue that sovereign power was not a given entity in the eighteenth century. It was not the logical culmination of a definite set of pre-requisites, nor was it embodied in definite political hierarchies. Rather, it was an extremely friable quantity, in the process of constant construction, imbricated in the various tiers and forms in which political authority got

³⁴ *ibid.*, Letter CXIX, to Mah Mirza Khan, September 16, 1785, p. 153-157.

³⁵ *ibid.*, Letter CXLII, to Mah Mirza Khan, October 23, 1785, p. 176-177.

articulated in the eighteenth century. Even though powers over the small *poligars* were far more comprehensive than over petty chieftains of a different order, the former also retained a certain autonomy of action on count of their traditional power base in the revenue machinery, and had to be taken into count while determining negotiation among far superior territorial and military powers. This explains why, when Cornwallis was settling the conquered territories in 1791, and had appointed Colonel Read to the collectorship of the revenue at Bangalore, Huskote, Kolar, Murwakul and Hosur, (as reward for bringing in supplies and provisions for the army at a critical juncture), it had to be done “with the political agency of the Poligars of that part of the country”.³⁶

So far, the study of the variety of chieftains and principalities over which eighteenth century Mysore claimed to hold suzerainty, and the nature and construction of power relationships thereof, pushes further one of the central arguments of the preceding section. This was that at no point in the eighteenth century was there a well-defined vertical hierarchy of command and service linking all the levels at which political power got articulated; what obtained instead was a ‘pyramiding of obligations’. A subordinate political tier was not a simple, reduced replica of the one above. In fact, the very construction of sovereignties inhering in all these units was an ongoing and mutually contingent process. The corollary to this, at the level of study in this chapter, is that there was an ‘entanglement of allegiances’ among the smaller principalities over which eighteenth century Mysore claimed dominion. And this was an inevitable product of the same forces that fed into the ‘pyramiding of obligations’ at the level of secondary and

³⁶ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo...*, p. 98.

tertiary powers (in the sense in which Cohn uses the term), and resulted in the absence of a vertical political chain of command and service.

What then, of the second argument set out in the preceding section? How far are the tropes of 'real' and 'ritual' power, as modes of legitimation of sovereign power, collapsible into one "totalizing analysis, one which in the Indian case is sensitive to the complex interweaving of ritual symbolic forms with the so called actual mechanisms of state power". What can we make of the "shared sovereignty of overlord, king, chief, and headman" that Dirks refers to from our evidence set out in this chapter?

Seringapatam as a political centre exercising dominion over a range of lesser powers does display a certain pre-occupation with the tools of real power-----warfare, conquest, treaties, and tributary relations, as opposed to those usually classified under the head of 'ritual' power-----honours, prestations, exchanges, title, and display. Brittlebank makes much of the incorporative mechanisms and ritual practices that Tipu adopted in order to subordinate and bind people to him. She argues that he functioned within the established parameters of south Indian kingship.³⁷

While dealing with the lesser principalities outside the heart of his kingdom, however, it is difficult to find instances of the 'incorporative mechanisms' that Tipu deployed. Conversion to Islam could, perhaps, be one such mechanism, especially with respect to those defeated in the battlefield. The Coorgs are a case in point. Kirmani tells us:

³⁷ Kate Brittlebank, p. 151

“Of the two chiefs, one Mumoti Nair in a short time died, and Ranga Nair was honoured by being circumcised and made a Musalman by the Sultan, and named Shaikh Ahmad, and appointed a Risaladar. The Sultan also adopted him as his son”.³⁸

Similarly, after conquering the fort of Adoni, Tipu Sultan decided to chastise the widow of the *poligar* of Kanchan Garh, who had been conniving with the Marathas. She escaped, but her son was captured and “honored by being circumcised and made a Muslim”. He was named Ali Mardan Khan. After some time, he was married to the daughter of Khan Jehan Khan, who was also an adopted son of the late Nawab.³⁹

However, ‘ritual’ is hardly the right word to describe a practice of which force is such a prominent component. For example, Tipu Sultan asks Meer Zainul Abedin to crush the recalcitrant Coorgs at Zuferabad. Thereafter, “both the slain and the *prisoners* are to be made Musulmans”.⁴⁰ In fact, Kirmani suggests that the real advantage that accrued to Tipu after the conversion of the defeated Nairs to Islam was that these unfortunate persons were no longer accepted back into the fold of the remaining Nair community, since they had become ritually impure. This prevented them from recouping their resources and reconsolidating their traditional power bases in order to challenge the

³⁸ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo...*, p. 39.

³⁹ He was originally the son of a Brahmin, the Deshpandia of Kolar, who in his youth being ill treated by his school master, of his own pleasure, the great and true guide shewing him the way, reached the presence of the deceased Nawab, and became a Musulman and his wife also, after arriving at the years of discretion, of her own free will, and after obtaining permission of her father and mother, embraced the religion of her husband, and thereby secured to herself happiness in both worlds”.

Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo...*, p. 48.

⁴⁰ William Kirkpatrick, *Select letters of Tippoo...*, Letter CXVIII, to Meer Zainul Abedin, Sipahdar of a Kushun, September 17, 1785, p. 139-141.

Kirkpatrick is not clear whether this person is the Zainul Abedin Shoostri (native of Shuster or Suza, in Persia) who composed the *Futuh-ul-Mujahiddin*.

authority of the conqueror. They were forced to look to the latter for the security of their families and fortunes, and for all future advancement. There could be no greater reason of realpolitik than this.

Instances of other forms of ritual incorporation of lower rungs of authority into the person and power of the sovereign are not abundant in the descriptions of relationships between Seringapatam and the lesser principalities over which it claimed suzerainty. The only exceptions occur when Tipu replaces the defeated power with an old and loyal functionary. One such example is the conquest of Nagar, and its bestowal on Syed Hamid.

“Syyad Hamid, the Sipahdar for his faithful and good services was honoured by the present of kettle drums, an elephant and howda, and also ennobled by the title of Nawab, and he was then appointed to the Government of Nagar”.⁴¹

Clearly, Mysore in the late eighteenth century relies more on force than on ritual incorporation to assert, define, retain, and consolidate its authority over all subordinate tiers of authority. Certain tools for the construction of power relationships feature far more prominently than the others. To assert claims to sovereignty over ‘smaller’ chieftains and principalities, Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan seem to resort to warfare, conquest, show of military force, levying of tributes, imposition of treaties, and the forging of alliances; rather than to exchanges of titles, honours, matrimonial partners, and prestations; evolving of cultural idioms through which power was expressed; religious and ritual incorporation; visual display of wealth and splendour, and public deployment

⁴¹ Meer Hussein Ali Khan Kirmani, *The history of the reign of Tippoo...*, 107.

of specific symbols. In other words, power relations are constructed more in 'real' than in 'ritual' terms. Seringapatam as a political 'centre' exercises dominion over its political subordinates in ways that are markedly different from the manner in which Delhi functions as an imperial centre to a host of powers, and to Mysore in particular. There is, therefore, a certain disjuncture in the manner of construction of power relationships between Mysore in the late eighteenth century and the other 'big' powers in the southern peninsula, as negotiated through the Mughal imperial centre, and between the former and the *poligars*, Nawabs, and chieftains who occupied lower rungs of the political ladder, where Seringapatam is the 'centre' for reference. The evidence from the first and the second set of relationships forces us to re-examine some of the terms of analysis as set out in the first chapter.

Conclusion

A 'totalising synthesis' about the nature of power and polity in eighteenth century Mysore needs to account for two sets of relationships, at different levels of analysis. These are the linkages between Mysore and, on the one hand, certain 'big' powers, constructed in a variety of ways at the imperial and regional levels, and, on the other hand, certain 'small' powers over which Seringapatam claimed suzerainty. Both these sets of political relationships, in their turn, need to be placed against the backdrop of the enduring legitimacy of Mughal rule throughout the subcontinent.

The Mughal imperial centre in the eighteenth century was placed in a certain position of undisputed legitimacy and superiority over the political tiers of authority below it. Seringapatam, however, had to constantly compete with other regional political centres like Poona, Madras, and Hyderabad, to define its claims of overlordship over a host of lesser powers. In the process, there was a lot of contestation and ambiguity about the nature of the hold that any of these political centres had over the fealty, resources, and tribute rendered by the smaller powers. Secondly, the mode for defining this hold seems to have been through force, coercion, (what Stein would see as the exercise of *ksatra*), rather than ritual incorporation. Seringapatam appears to have functioned in a manner more oriented to, or at least aspiring to, being a 'core' that commands tribute and revenue transfers from other parts, rather than a 'centre' that is content with ritual subordination, and being the ultimate font of legitimacy.

Stein's model of 'dual sovereignty', namely, royal and chiefly, central and local, deriving from prebendal entitlements, and communally derived and sustained entitlements, seems to have been a model that was under siege in Mysore in the latter half of the eighteenth century. There was military modernisation, and the concomitant processes of monetisation and urbanisation, were realities especially under Tipu Sultan. Nonetheless, as argued in Chapter 1, it is difficult to visualise a powerful military-fiscalism of the type Stein posits from the eighteenth century in particular, as developing merely in the *method* of governance, without significantly changing the *form* of the polity and the monarch who headed it.

When dealing with substantial powers like the Nizam, the Marathas, and the English East India Company, Haidar Ali and Tipu Sultan attached great importance to the exchange of *khilats*, prestations, titles and honours. Simultaneously, the treaties and alliances were negotiated painstakingly; the wars were fought with passion, and the victories were hard won; and tribute was exacted with relentlessness. Exchanges of the kind described above seem to have been tailored to meet the realities of wars and treaties. Even activities that usually get interpreted under the head of 'ritual' power do not help define sovereignty and political authority in distinctive ways. Rather, they are entered into, in most cases, to highlight the power equations as they are determined through war and treaties. In other words, real and ritual power do not seem to interweave with one another in quite the same manner as Dirks had demonstrated that they did in the 'little kingdom' of Pudukottai.

What we arrive at, therefore, is a picture of Mysore in the period between the 1760s and 1799, where real and ritual power, and the core and the periphery, do not figure exactly in ways that were outlined by either Stein or Dirks. This study is not in a position to answer whether the reason behind this is limitations within these analytical models that make them not generalisable across the subcontinent in the eighteenth century. What is clear, though, is that Mysore in this period was by no means atypical regional power, and this is evident from the analysis of the two sets of relationships described above. Even though the construction of power relationships by Mysore, with these 'big' players, is negotiated in many important ways through the dynamics of a Mughal imperial centre, the ritual subordination to the Mughal Emperor was overthrown decisively by Tipu Sultan, when he minted coins without the imperial legend, assumed the title of Padshah, and had the *khutba* read in his own name. Tipu did realise the need for sanction from a temporal authority within the Islamic world in order to be seen as legitimate in the eyes of his subjects. Yet, he subverted the long honoured pattern of ritual subordination to the Mughal imperial centre, and sought to establish ties with other regional powers in the southern peninsula on terms that challenged the pattern of regional autonomy within the overall framework of Mughal sovereignty. This is something that even the British in India did not try for another century and a half. This coupled with its obvious military might, was the reason why eighteenth century Mysore was identified as the single biggest threat by all powers, including the English East India Company.

The scale of ambition that drove the ruler of Mysore in the last two decades of the eighteenth century was such that there was not much room or leisure to accommodate

idioms of ritual power. This resonates in Tipu's relationship with lesser chiefs and *zamindars*. There, the need to seek legitimation through ritual incorporation of subordinates into the very body of sovereign power seemed even less, because the ease with which force and coercion could be used, and the prospect of the results that it would yield, was even greater than when dealing with, say the Nizam or the Marathas. The peculiar conditions of Mysore in the late eighteenth century----the ambiguous position of the Wodeyar ruler, the expansionary activity that was compressed into a brief span of time, and an escalation in the scale of ambitions that could not be contained in the existing Mughal framework of sovereignty --- makes it a study in power and polity in eighteenth century Mysore that at least qualifies significantly other works on the same subject dealing with various parts of the southern subcontinent in the eighteenth century

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