FROM A PRE-COLONIAL ORDER TO A PRINCELY STATE: HYDERABAD IN TRANSITION, C.1748-1865

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SUMMARY

This dissertation is about the fortunes and role of the centre in Hyderabad in the transition of the Hyderabad Deccan region from a pre-colonial political order to a princely state, within the nexus of the British empire. Chapters One and Two argue that eighteenth century-Hyderabad was not a typical post-Mughal successor state with a dominant centre presiding over a bureaucratic administration. It was, on the contrary, a regional political order in which the centre was weak and, although aspiring to 'Mughal'-style authority, moulded in practice by an interplay of local, supra-local and regional factors. The zamindars and nawabs of the Hyderabad countryside represented the local factor. They were small independent kings, whose quest for scarce labour and resources, and methods of social legitimation, involved them in a criss cross pattern of alliances and conflicts. 'Intermediaries' with military and revenue assignments represented the supra-local factor in the region. They exploited the zamindars' and nawabs' local rivalries profitably, but taking sides in local conflicts affected their own internal dissensions. They were divided into mutually hostile factions at the Asaf Jahi court. These rival factions attached themselves to rival foreign powers, of neighbouring regions, pursuing conflicting interests in the Hyderabad region. When the British emerged supreme from inter-foreign power rivalries in the 1790s, their resident found himself in the driving seat in the Asaf Jahi court. Chapters Three and Four discuss British efforts to introduce centralization into Hyderabad's old political order in the period c.1798-1850. They explore the motives behind centralization, - mainly military fiscalism, - and its impact: political protest, economic decline and financial crisis. The Epilogue suggests that the period c.1850-65 saw a change in the priorities of imperial intervention, which were related to industrial Britain's need for organizing India as an exporter of raw materials and food grains, and an importer of manufactured goods. A corresponding change also occurred in the character of centralization in Hyderabad. The outlines of the familiar princely state were in fact established in this period.
This thesis grew out of some dissatisfaction I began to experience in the course of earlier work on 20th century India. The broad parameters within which I had read 'modern' Indian history, - nationalism, colonialism and communalism, for example, - seemed inadequate for understanding breaks and continuities from the 'medieval' period into the 'modern' period, or the transition from pre-colonial to colonial India. Nor did the newly emerging historiography of the 18th century offer any satisfaction with respect to Hyderabad, the area I was particularly interested in. So, despite well-meaning advice to the contrary, I decided to write about the Hyderabad region myself.

But, alas, plausibility was one thing and feasibility quite another. The first lesson I learnt was about sources. When one does a study of the late 19th or the 20th century, one tends to assume that sources will not be an impossible problem. If one wanted to write an introductory 'Land and People' chapter on some British administered area, for example, one might consult an abundant supply of gazetteers; statistical reports; survey and settlement reports; maps; official and unofficial records; and secondary works. For further chapters, one might reasonably expect to find the usual series of official records; collections of party and private papers; runs of newspapers and journals; official publications; and secondary works. If one still wanted to seem more original, one might unearth a hitherto unknown collection of records or private papers, and possibly even dip into Indian language sources. For Hyderabad from the mid-18th to the mid-19th century, there was a great scarcity of such regular sources. For what approximates to the 'Land and People' chapter in this dissertation, for example, I had to comb through the records of the earliest military, geological, route and trigonometrical surveys, in the National Archives of India, and through the early issues of the Asiatic Society journals. I had to supplement these fragmentary materials with piece-meal information from all manner of manuscripts in the Mackenzie Collection at the India Office and the Historical Collection at the Salar Jang Museum, Hyderabad.

The materials on which this thesis is based presented many special problems, in other words. The Indo-Persian of 18th century records and manuscripts was difficult to learn. The variations of its Perso-Arabic script were impossible, given that my time and resources were limited. Reliance on translators and transliterators was unavoidable to some extent in such circumstances, and even that was curtailed by limited time and resources. Another problem was the practical inaccessibility of some sources. Only a small fraction of the theoretically voluminous Asaf Jahi records in the Andhra Pradesh State Archives had been catalogued or put in order. The manuscripts in another department of the state government, the Oriental Manuscripts Library, were inaccessible in
practice. Yet another problem was the fragmentary nature of almost all the various types of source used. If the qualitative evidence about economic activity was not absent in colonial and pre-colonial sources, for example, the quantitative evidence was negligible in both. If the pre-colonial sources were, despite their patchiness, rich on aspects of indigenous society and culture, the colonial sources were, despite their continuity, almost dry in this respect. Still, the fragmentary nature of the sources may have been a blessing in disguise. If a particular theme or problem could not be pursued beyond a certain point in its socio-cultural aspect, one was forced to explore it further in its socio-economic or political aspect, if possible. So, though this thesis makes no claims to being a ‘total history’, it is not too narrowly specialized either: different chapters highlight different aspects of social, economic or political history. The spelling of Indian words follows a rough Anglo-Indian convention. The words are underlined when they occur for the first time. They are all listed and explained separately in the glossary.

I incurred many debts in the course of my work. It would not have been possible without the financial support I received from Magdalene College, Cambridge; Cambridge Commonwealth Trust, Cambridge; Smuts Memorial Fund, Cambridge; E.G. Browne Memorial Fund, Cambridge; Board of Graduate Studies, Cambridge; and the Charles Wallace India Trust, London. I would like to thank all these bodies. I would also like to thank the staffs of the following libraries and archives: University Library, Cambridge; Centre of South Asian Studies, Cambridge; Oriental Faculty Library, Cambridge; Seeley (History Faculty) Library, Cambridge; India Office Library and Records, London; British Museum Library, London; National Archives of India, New Delhi; Andhra Pradesh State Archives, Hyderabad; Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi; and Salar Jang Museum, Hyderabad.

Dr Basudeva Chatterji first planted the idea of working on Hyderabad in my head, and continued to be a valuable source of inspiration and ideas later. Dr Tapan Raychaudhuri guided my first attempts at research and graciously commented on a portion of this work after I had ceased to be his student. Dr Chris Bayly, who supervised my research for this dissertation, gave valuable and unstinting support from beginning to end. This thesis would never have been possible without his inspiration and ideas. Dr M.L.K. Murty, Dr Susan Bayly, Dr Neeladri Bhattacharya, Mr Ajay Pratap and Dr Farhan Nizami made valuable comments on particular portions. Mr Peter Avery taught me elementary Persian. Dr Zaibunissa Begum and Mr Tayamul Husaini helped with the translation and transcription of Persian sources.

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This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration. It has not previously been submitted, either in part or in whole, to this or to any other University, for any degree.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAR</td>
<td>Asiatic Annual Register</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APSA</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh State Archives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>Contributions to Indian Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDI</td>
<td>Daftar-i-Darul Insha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fincl</td>
<td>Financial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For</td>
<td>Foreign Department</td>
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<td>For Pol</td>
<td>Foreign and Political Department</td>
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<td>For Sec</td>
<td>Foreign and Secret Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Genl</td>
<td>General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G-G</td>
<td>Governor-General</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GoI</td>
<td>Government of India</td>
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<tr>
<td>Govt.</td>
<td>Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>H.Misc</td>
<td>Home Miscellaneous Series</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRMC</td>
<td>Hyderabad Residency Miscellaneous Correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRPB</td>
<td>Hyderabad Residency Political Branch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRR</td>
<td>Hyderabad Residency Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.S.C</td>
<td>Hyderabad State Committee for the compilation of the History of the Freedom Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IA</td>
<td>Indian Antiquary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IESHR</td>
<td>Indian Economic and Social History Review</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IOLR</td>
<td>India Office Library and Records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAHRS</td>
<td>Journal of the Andhra Historical Research Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAS</td>
<td>Journal of Asian Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JASB</td>
<td>Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JRAS</td>
<td>Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judcl</td>
<td>Judicial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mack Gen</td>
<td>Mackenzie Manuscripts General Collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mack Unbound</td>
<td>Mackenzie Manuscripts Unbound Translations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>Modern Asian Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mily</td>
<td>Military</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MJLS
NAI
Poltl
Rev
SIR, FB and M
SJM

Madras Journal of Literature and Science
National Archives of India
Political
Revenue
Survey of India Records, Field Books and Memoirs
Salar Jang Museum
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adalat</td>
<td>a law court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agraharam</td>
<td>a village granted to Brahmans or temples in charity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>agraharik</td>
<td>the holder of an agraharam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>amaldar, amil</td>
<td>a contractor or sub-contractor of revenues; a revenue farmer’s assistant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>badshah</td>
<td>a king, an emperor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bania</td>
<td>a merchant or trader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bargir</td>
<td>a horseman of the cavalry who does not own his horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bhat</td>
<td>a professional singer of ballads in praise of a family or community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chapati</td>
<td>Indian bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chauth</td>
<td>Maratha revenue demand on territory not ruled directly by them</td>
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<tr>
<td>circar</td>
<td>a Mughal administrative division corresponding to the first sub-division of a suba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>daftardar</td>
<td>a principal record-keeper or bureaucrat in the revenue department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>darbar</td>
<td>court</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dargah</td>
<td>the tomb of a sufi saint; a sufi shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desai</td>
<td>the principal landlord and/or revenue official at village or extra-village level in parts of Rayalseema and Marathwada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deshmukh</td>
<td>the principal landlord and/or revenue official at the extra-village level in parts of Rayalseema, Marathwada, Telangana, Andhra and Berar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deshmukhi</td>
<td>the allowances, rights and privileges of a deshmukh; a deshmukh’s domain; Maratha imposition on the revenues of areas not ruled by them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deshpande</td>
<td>the principal revenue accountant and/or landlord at the extra-village level in parts of Rayalseema, Marathwada, Telangana, Andhra and Berar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dharmashala</td>
<td>a dwelling place for travellers, especially pilgrims, maintained by charitable endowments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dhobi</td>
<td>a washerman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dimmant</td>
<td>a clan or kinship group of peasant proprietors (or khel leaders) in parts of Marathwada and Berar</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
diwan  
the principal minister of a king

diwankhana  
that portion of the palace where the ruler transacts business publicly

doab  
the land between two rivers

dubash  
translator attached to European official

dukandar  
a shopkeeper or trader

faqir  
a wandering holyman, a mendicant; a beggar

farman  
a royal deed or order

fatwa  
an elaboration of religious duties by the cleric leading a Muslim congregation

faujdar  
a regional troop commander

fitna  
political dissent or rebellion

fotedar  
an official in the administrative hierarchy of a revenue farmer's, or collector's, establishment

gajrath  
a temple chariot drawn by elephants

ghadi  
a small fort

gotra  
genealogy or ancestry within a sub-caste

gauda  
the principal village level landholder and/or revenue official in parts of Rayalseema and Karnataka

gramam  
a village

guru  
a teacher, or the leader of a sect

havaldar  
an official in the administrative hierarchy of a revenue farmer's, or collector's, establishment

imam  
a Muslim cleric; the leader of a Muslim congregation

inam  
a land grant which is not assessed for revenue, or assessed only at a concessionary rate

iqrarnama  
a deed of solidarity

jagir  
a military fiscal assignment, usually at the top end of a Mughal style administrative/political hierarchy; a rent free, or concessionary, land grant

jagirdar  
the holder of a jagir

jaidaddar  
a military fiscal assignee at the bottom end of a Mughal style administrative/political hierarchy

jamadar  
a military fiscal assignment at the bottom end of a Mughal style administrative/political hierarchy

jihad  
the holy war in defence of the Islamic realm

kambli  
a coarse blanket
karnam
the principal revenue accountant and/or landholder at village level in parts of Andhra and Telangana-Rayalseema

katchahari
the principal government office for transacting public business at district or taluq/pargana level; a court of law

kavilkar
a ‘law and order’ official at village level in parts of Telangana-Rayalseema

khalifa
a spiritual and organizational leader of the Mujahiddin at regional or sub-regional level

khalisa
the land held or administered directly by the king, or the state

khanga
a Sufi hospice

khazanchi
an official connected with the treasury of a revenue farmer’s, or collector’s, establishment

khel
the principal proprietor of land at village level in parts of Marathwada and Berar

khillat
a robe of honour

khutba
the proclamation in which the cleric leading a Muslim congregation names the ruling emperor

kotla
an aristocratic mansion

kotwal
the head of the police in a ‘law and order’ (or police) district

madrasa
a Muslim school

mahajan
a trader, merchant, financier or banker

mahsuldar
a revenue collecting and policing agent at the bottom end of a revenue farmer’s, or collector’s, administrative hierarchy

mandap
a square platform covered by a canopy, often in front of a temple, for conducting Hindu ceremonies

mansab
a military fiscal assignment at the top end of a Mughal style administrative/political hierarchy; a rent free grant of land, or a pension, given by a Mughal style authority

maqtawala
a ‘law and order’ official at village or extra-village level in Telangana-Rayalseema

math
the seat of the head of a Hindu sect; a religious shrine

maulvi
a Muslim cleric and/or man of learning; a Muslim teacher

mirasi
a rent free grant of land, or a grant of land assessed at a concessionary rate, usually enjoyed by members of powerful clans or kin groups at village or extra-village level

mirasidar
the holder of a mirasi
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mufti</td>
<td>a judge in the Muslim legal system</td>
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<tr>
<td>mujahiddin</td>
<td>Muslim holy-warriors</td>
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<tr>
<td>munshi</td>
<td>a clerk or administrative assistant</td>
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<tr>
<td>muqaddam</td>
<td>a revenue official and/or principal landholder at village (and sometimes extra-village) level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>murid</td>
<td>the follower or disciple of a Muslim (usually a Sufi) spiritual leader or teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>musafirkhana</td>
<td>a rest house for travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mutsaddi</td>
<td>an accountant, clerk, paymaster or minor official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naib</td>
<td>an assistant to a governor, official or revenue farmer; a sub-contractor of revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naik, nayak</td>
<td>the principal landlord at supra-village level; a small king; the principal rebel leader at supra-village level; the head of a Banjara band; the head of a pastoralist, or hill or forest group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nargauda</td>
<td>the principal village or extra-village level revenue official and/or landholder in parts of Rayalseema</td>
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<tr>
<td>naikwari</td>
<td>the principal 'law and order' official at village or extra-village level in parts of Telangana-Rayalseema</td>
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<tr>
<td>nawab</td>
<td>a small king, usually originating in the upper echelons of the Qutub Shahi or Mughal military fiscal elite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nazar, nazrana</td>
<td>a gift or payment, usually by a lower official to a higher one, or by an employee to his employer, or by revenue farmers and military creditors to Hyderabad's diwan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>padah</td>
<td>a measure of land</td>
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<tr>
<td>paigah</td>
<td>the Nizam's household cavalry</td>
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<tr>
<td>palampore</td>
<td>the cloth made in a locality/village of Masulipatnam called Palampur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>palas</td>
<td>a red flower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pargana</td>
<td>a Mughal administrative division</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parikrama</td>
<td>the circumambulation of a temple (or its sanctum), or of the ceremonial fire, by Hindus during worship, or at a special religious occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patel</td>
<td>the principal landholder and/or revenue official at village level</td>
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<tr>
<td>patelki</td>
<td>the allowances, emoluments, rights and privileges attached to the office of patel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>patti</td>
<td>a special imposition levied by a landlord or revenue farmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patwari</td>
<td>the principal accountant and/or landholder at village level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peshkar</td>
<td>the holder of one of the two most important ministerial offices at the Asaf Jahi darbar, the principal secretary of any major office bearer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peshkash</td>
<td>the tribute paid by small kings to more powerful neighbours;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>petta</td>
<td>the annual payment due from the British to the Nizam for the Northern Circars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pir</td>
<td>a settlement with a market, usually protected by a fort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pirzada</td>
<td>a Sufi saint; a spiritual guide, teacher or leader in the Indo-Muslim tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poliam</td>
<td>the son/heir of a pir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poligar</td>
<td>the domain of a small king in Rayalseema</td>
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<tr>
<td>pujari</td>
<td>the principal landholder at extra-village level and/or small king in Rayalseema</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qasba</td>
<td>a Hindu priest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaul</td>
<td>a district level centre of trade and/or manufacture with a significant non-indigenous population as compared to its hinterland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qaul</td>
<td>a revenue deed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qazi</td>
<td>a judge in the Muslim judicial system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qiladar</td>
<td>a fort commander; a military fiscal assignee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raiyyat, ryot</td>
<td>a cultivator/owner of land at village level; a peasant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>raja</td>
<td>a (Hindu) king</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risala</td>
<td>a troop of horsemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>risaladar</td>
<td>the commander or military fiscal assignee of a risala</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rusoom</td>
<td>the revenue shares, fees, rights and privileges of a small king or extra-village level landlord on lands not directly held or owned by him</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ryotwari</td>
<td>a revenue settlement with ryots; matters pertaining to such a settlement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sadr taluqdari</td>
<td>the office of the immediate superior of the taluqdas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sahukar</td>
<td>appointed by the centre in Hyderabad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sajda-nashin</td>
<td>a banker, financier and/or merchant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>samasthanam</td>
<td>the principal custodian of a Sufi shrine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>the royal establishment at the heart of a small king’s domain;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a religious charity endowed by a small king</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
samasthanik: a small king; the holder of a religious charity endowed by a small king
sanad: a royal order or deed
sardar: a troop commander
sardesai: a principal landholder and/or revenue official at extra-village level
sardeshmukh: a principal landholder and/or revenue official at extra-village level
sardeshmukhi: a Maratha imposition on the revenues of territories not ruled by them
sarfi-khas: the lands comprising the personal estate of the Nizam
saraf: a money dealer or banker
sarkar: Government; an honorific; the first sub-division of the Mughal administrative category the suba
sarkari: pertaining to that which is directly connected with, or administered by, the government
serishtadar: a military fiscal assignee at the top end of a Mughal style administrative/political hierarchy
shetsundi: a ‘law and order’ official in Rayalseema at village or extra-village level
sibundi: troops appointed to assist in the revenue collection process
silladar: a horsemen of the cavalry who owns his horse
sisila: a network of Sufi disciples; Sufi descent
sir: the rent shares, fees, rights and privileges of a small king in villages or lands not held by him
suba: the first administrative sub-division of the territory administered by a Mughal style government
subadar: the administrative head of a suba; a military fiscal assignee operating at suba level
swarajya: self rule, independence
takia: the seat of a Sufi pir or sajida-nashin
talari: a ‘law and order’ official at village or extra-village level in Rayalseema
taluq: the first sub-division of the Mughal administrative category - the pargana
taluqdar: the head of a taluq; a military fiscal assignee operating at the taluq level
that which is held by, or pertains to, a taluqdar
revenue or rent remissions and grants to cultivators hit by poor seasons
a police post
a kind of natural silk
the collective for Islamic clerics
a vehicle or conveyance
a diplomatic representative or intermediary; an ambassador
a rent free grant of land, or a grant of land assessed at a concessionary rate, in Marathwada and Berar villages
a small king; the principal landholder, the head of the principal landholding clan, and/or the principal revenue official at extra-village level
the holdings of a zamindar; that which pertains to a zamindar or his holdings
an administrative sub-division associated with the reforms initiated in Hyderabad in the mid-nineteenth century
the administrative head of a zilla
A recent colonial past is one of the most significant legacies of modern India and features extensively in debates about the nature of the Indian economy, society, politics and culture today. It is even more pervasive in historical writing on the period of British rule. Nor is its influence absent in writings on the pre-colonial period, as the concepts, categories, paradigms and assumptions of the colonial and post-colonial periods are projected backwards. This process is explained in part by the fact that history-writing as it is known in the west first grew in India only during the colonial period, and was affected by the ideological and intellectual context of its writing. It can also be explained by suggesting that history-writing in India has not fully outgrown its formative influences yet. Historians of India have long taken the view that the ‘medieval’ period of Indian history ended with the decline of the Mughal empire and the ‘modern’ period began with the establishment of British rule. The intervening time between the two periods has been regarded as a transitional period. Such periodization may at one level be taken simply as a matter of arbitrary chronological convenience. But at another level it may be taken as a statement of certain assumptions that are conventionally made about the three periods. It may be taken, for instance, to represent the view that the medieval and modern periods were periods of relative political and economic stability when compared to the decline of the transitional period. Or, it may be taken to represent the view that the ‘modernity’ of British rule was superior to what preceded it. This latter view began to be challenged by nationalists as early as the mid-19th century in fact. Some of them looked for a golden age of Indian history in the medieval or ancient past. Others raised important questions about the supposed benefits of British rule. The latter trend has continued in Indian historiography to the present day, but the debates it has sparked off have often been constrained by inadequate statistical evidence or partisan polemics. This has happened to some extent because both imperialist and nationalist historians have held on to the old assumption that the transitional period was marked by anarchy and decline, and the modern (colonial) period was one of relative peace and prosperity. But such an assumption has been seriously challenged in recent years. One of the most important findings of recent work on the 18th century is that this was not a period of disaster for the Indian sub-continent as a whole. Indeed, the ‘transition’ was a period of new levels of economic dynamism, political stability and social co-operation for some parts, and its achievements here were undermined in fact during the heyday of British rule.

Nevertheless, the new work does not test the old assumption about the transitional periods for other parts of India. It does not raise doubts about the view that ‘states’ were the most congenial, if not the only viable, forums for economic dynamism, political
stability and social co-operation in pre-colonial India. Conversely, it sustains the view, at least implicitly, that areas without states, and with pervasive conflict and warfare, were areas of decline. Hyderabad seemed a good case for testing such notions. It had been seen by historians and officials as a stagnant backwater since the early 19th century; but even the preliminary research suggested such a description was not valid for the pre-colonial 18th century. Further research suggested that its vibrant pre-colonial economy could not be put down to the emergence of a segmentary or successor state: evidence of pervasive conflict was obvious even upon scratching slightly beneath the Asaf Jahi surface. How was one to reconcile the evidence of a weak and fragile Asaf Jahi centre/state and pervasive political conflict with the vibrant economy of the region, which attracted numerous foreign powers and elements throughout the 18th century? On the other hand, the emergence of a strong centre/state in the colonial period seemed to be accompanied with economic stagnation and decline. Could this be attributed to the nature of imperial intervention? It seemed worthwhile in these circumstances to construct a hypothesis which would accomodate three levels of the region's pre-colonial order, - the local, supra-local and inter-regional, - and see what happened to them in the transition to colonial rule. The local level consisted of powerful zamindars and nawabs, who were virtually small kings in their own right. The small kings affected the fortunes of supra-local intermediaries through a criss cross pattern of local alliances and conflicts. The supra-local level consisted of numerous military and fiscal elements of non-indigenous origin, the intermediaries, who mediated between local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts. The inter-regional level consisted of foreign powers, - the Marathas, the Mysore Sultans, the French and the British, - who were interested in Hyderabad for fiscal and strategic reasons, and who found the alliances and conflicts of its supra-local intermediaries a convenient means for playing out their own interests in the region.

The first chapter dwells on the 'local' level of Hyderabad's pre-colonial order. It identifies zamindars and nawabs, or 'small kings', as the key political actors at this level. The small kings' realms were built in ecologically favourable 'core areas' and they competed with each other for scarce labour and resources. This was done partly by providing kingly 'protection' and 'patronage', and partly by the use of 'legitimating rituals', 'consensus building devices' and 'incorporating legends'. The pattern of criss cross alliances and conflicts that developed between the small kings also affected the 'supra-local' level of the pre-colonial order.

The second chapter deals with the 'supra-local' and 'inter-regional' levels of Hyderabad's pre-colonial order. The economic activity of its core areas had attracted a variety of non-indigenous elements and foreign powers to the region since the 16th century. But despite the trappings of a Mughal style bureaucratic and military fiscal state, the 'supra-local intermediaries' of the Asaf Jahi period were in reality unable to establish
a 'successor state' in the 18th century. They were drawn into the criss cross alliances and conflicts of its small kings on the one hand, and into those of inter-regional foreign powers, - the Marathas, Mysore Sultans, French and British, - on the other.

The third chapter dwells on the changes caused in Hyderabad's pre-colonial political order by the emergence of the British as the sole inter-regional power in its affairs from the end of the 18th century. The British strengthened the position of the centre and attacked the traditional independence, privileges and powers of the region's intermediaries and small kings. This was partly a result of their policy of maintaining subsidiary alliances with 'native states'. But it was also a function of the extension and intensification of military fiscalism: supplying intermediary factions with military services in return for lands and revenues. While such policies did strengthen the centre and the state in Hyderabad, they also unleashed severe economic pressures, which were intensified by agricultural depression and poor seasons.

The fourth chapter deals with two kinds of response to the British military fiscal presence in Hyderabad in the first half of the 19th century: collaboration and protest. Although the centre's military fiscal policies encroached upon the traditional independence, powers and privileges of intermediaries and zamindars, the British could not have been effective without some degree of co-operation from within these elements themselves. As the collaborators of imperial rule gained at the expense of their traditional rivals, in practice, they introduced new kinds of social and political tension into the Hyderabad region, in which were also contained the seeds of latter-day 'communalism', 'casteism' and 'landlord-peasant conflict'. Another kind of response to British policies was, of course, protest. Mobilization against the foreigner in Hyderabad took the form of calls for the restoration of older figures, like the Peshwa and the Mughal Emperor, well before the 'mutiny' of 1857-59. The quest for an alternative order to British rule was to some extent informed by motifs from the pre-colonial period; but it also contained new elements.

The protest did not succeed, however. But nor did imperial fortunes improve, and Hyderabad's economy was declining, the centre was indebted, and there was little political peace in the first fifty years of British rule. The way out was found by harnessing Hyderabad to industrial Britain's imperial economy from the mid-1850s. Military fiscalism was now abandoned and Hyderabad was developed instead as an exporter of food grains and raw materials, and as an importer of manufactures. The 'boom' in cotton and grain production in the mid-19th century helped these processes. Hyderabad acquired the familiar contours of the Princely State by the mid-1860s.
1. SMALL KINGS IN THE PRE-COLONIAL ORDER

1.1 Introduction

States and empires tend to dominate the imagination of historians writing on pre-colonial and colonial India, and the 18th century is no exception. An older generation of historians viewed it as a battleground between four empires: the failing Mughal empire and the aspiring Maratha, French and British empires.¹ A new generation of historians emphasizes stable regional states with vibrant economies.² Nevertheless, one old notion seems to persist through the old and the new historiography: that empires, kingdoms or states were somehow the most congenial, if not the only viable, settings for political order, social stability and economic growth in India. Behind this notion lies the assumption that the centres or capitals of the states were the key arbiters in the fortunes of areas and populations they commanded, though some might rule with an iron hand, like the Mysore Sultans, and others might seek to incorporate various powerful regional or local groups into their strategies of revenue appropriation, public expenditure and legitimation, like Awadh, Banaras or the Maratha kingdoms. Some scholars of South India - Dirks and Ludden,³ might object to the inclusion of their writings in generalizations of this nature, and it is true that those broadly sympathetic to the notion of a segmentary and symbolic/sacral state⁴ concede autonomous status even to very small entities, which might appear to the classic Mughal scholar as nothing more than oversized zamindari-s. Nevertheless, these scholars would be at one with their Mughal detractors in one respect. They view their 'small kingdoms', such as Puddukottai and Tirunelveli, as the exceptional fragmentary remains of once larger segmentary medieval states with symbolic/sacral centres. The centres of these states might well have been only symbolic, and their component segments often quite independent in the very concerns which the central authorities of the Mughal or British empires regarded as being essential to their rule, but once they were gone, small kingdoms like Puddukottai, now bereft of a macro-regional order, continued to operate in their image. They were able to create and sustain


⁴ On the symbolic sacral state, see: B. Stein, Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India, (Delhi, 1980); D.D. Shulman, The King and the Clown in South Indian Myth and Poetry, (Princeton, 1985).
in their own localized domains centres similar to, or perhaps even more true to ideal type than, the Chola or Vijayanagara centres. When the British finally incorporated the small kingdoms into their new imperial order, these were transformed fundamentally, as they were now subject to a rather different imperial centre than the sacral/symbolic one of the medieval segmentary state.

This thesis borrows many ideas from the recent writings on 18th century states in India. In particular, it finds it useful to treat the zamindaris, samasthanam-s and nawab-doms of the Hyderabad countryside as small kingdoms in the image of Vijayanagara. But it rejects at the same time the emphasis of recent writings on the importance and power of the centre. It does not see the decline of the Chola or Vijayanagara empires, states or symbolic/sacral centres, - which in any case did not pertain to the whole of the region under examination here, - as resulting in the decline of regional order itself, leaving only small isolated nayak-doms or poligar-doms in its place as remnants of its lost glory. On the other hand, it does not see the Asaf Jahi 'centre' of Hyderabad either as the classic symbolic/sacral centre of the Chola or Vijayanagara empire, or as the powerful bureaucratic and military fiscal centre of the Mughal empire or its 'successor states'.

What was the Asaf Jahi 'centre'? Who were the Nizams, and what was their dynasty about? Briefly, to anticipate some of the arguments in Chapter Two below, the Asaf Jahi centre in the 18th century was shifting and weak, and often barely recognizable or credible, centre with 'Mughal' bureaucratic and military fiscal aspirations. But it was moulded in practice by a criss-cross pattern of alliances and conflicts between small kings at the local level, 'intermediaries' at the supra-local level, and foreign powers at the inter-regional level. How such a centre eventually came to be the powerful and commanding capital of a 'princely state' is the underlying concern of this thesis.

This chapter is about the 'local' zamindari and nawabi alliances and conflicts of the Hyderabad countryside, which in relationship with supra-local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts, affected the fortunes of the Asaf Jahi centre. To say that the local alliances and conflicts of small kings affected supra-local politics is to say that the small kings had something to collaborate and quarrel about, as well as the means to do so. One of the concerns of this chapter, therefore, is to establish a working knowledge of the socio-


6 See discussion of 'intermediaries' as a socio-political category in Chapter Two below.

7 Supra-local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts are discussed in Chapter Two below.
economic conditions of the Hyderabad ‘region’. It seems best to conceive of the ‘region’ as being composed of four broadly dissimilar but internally coherent ‘sub-regions’, in terms of soil fertility, population, agriculture, manufacture, trade and banking. These help us understand why the interests of supra-local intermediaries and foreign powers intervening in the Hyderabad countryside for financial profit lay where they lay, and the implications of their being displaced from a relatively prosperous sub-region to a relatively unprosperous one. The basic argument is that core areas of productivity were differentially dispersed within the different sub-regions. The competition between these core areas for labour and resources formed the key element in their mutual alliances and conflicts. The core areas added up to sub-regions, and a region of vibrant economic activity, mainly around local centres of varying size, population and political power. This picture is in sharp contrast to the latter day stereotype of Hyderabad, dating from perhaps the late 19th century, that it was a backward region and, an economically impoverished political backwater.8 It also helps us understand why all manner of non-indigenous fortune seekers, - including the Mughals, who gave rise to the Asaf Jahis as well as a large number of intermediaries, - were attracted to Hyderabad in the 18th century, not to mention earlier periods.9 Another of Hyderabad’s attractions lay, of course, in its strategic location on the route of northern armies with an interest in gaining access to the economically lucrative regions further south.10 The second theme in this chapter is related to the first: who controlled the productive core areas, and how that control was articulated and legitimated in local society. The interpretations here owe a considerable debt to several recent works on South India which explore the incorporative character of kingship in the small kingdoms of the post-Chola and post-Vijayanagara periods.11 The main focus here is on the construction and maintenance of the small king’s ‘domain’ and ‘community’ through legitimization rituals, consensus building devices and incorporating legends.


10 See, for example: J.F. Richards, ‘The Hyderabad Karnatik, 1687-1707’, MAS, 9, 2(1975), pp. 241-60 

11 See, for example: Stein, Peasant, State and Society; Ludden, Peasant History; Shulman, The King and the Clown; A. Appadurai, Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case, (Cambridge, 1981); Dirks, The Hollow Crown.
1.2 Ecology and Economics

The idea of the importance of geography to history is an old one. Its systematic
application dates from at least the days of Braudel and his contemporaries of the Annales
school in France earlier this century.12 As far as India, and especially south India, is
concerned, several historians have recently found it useful to apply the concepts of the
'macro' and 'micro' regions to understand links between the economy, society and state.13
There is, however, as yet no clear cut consensus on the definition of 'regions'. The term
'region' refers here to an aggregate of its component 'sub-region'. Its boundaries are
loosely defined. It is contained by natural features, such as mountain ranges or the sea,
and by neighbouring regions. Hyderabad's neighbouring regions14 were more distinctive in
their internal linguistic, political and, to a lesser extent, ecological coherence than
Hyderabad was itself. The Hyderabad region represented, to put it negatively, which is
easier, the limits of the geographical framework within which its political order was
confined by the operation of superior political powers in the surrounding regions.
Hyderabad's sub-regions were Telangana-Rayalseema, Andhra, Marathwada, and Berar.
These are easier to define than the region. They represented a significant internal overlap
between soil type, settlement density, language area and nature of economic activity:
agriculture, manufacture and trade. At its largest extent, Hyderabad was made up of all
four of the aforementioned sub-regions, but first Andhra and parts of Marathwada and
then Berar were lost to foreign powers in the period c.1751-1853. The four sub-regions of
the mid-18th century varied in their environments and this was to some extent reflected in
their economies. This was of threefold significance. First, the Hyderabad region as a
whole attracted supra-local intermediaries of non-indigenous origin and foreign powers.
Second, the supra-local elements, including the Asaf Jahis, and the foreign powers were
more interested in some sub-regions than in others. Their fiscal priorities gave the sub-
regions the following order of importance: Marathwada, Andhra, Berar and Telangana-
Rayalseema. Third, the core areas of productivity were more dispersed in some regions
than in others. Together with the general scarcity of labour, and the specificities of politics,
society and culture in the core areas, this dispersal of resources in the latter helped shape
a criss-cross pattern of alliances and conflicts between the local kings of the core areas.

1.2.1 Telangana-Rayalseema

Telangana coincided with the Krishna on its south and roughly with the Godavari on its
north. The eastern ghats formed its eastern boundary, and the waving frontier between the

12 See, for example: F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, 2 Vols,
(London, 1972/73); also: S. Clark, 'The Annales Historians', in Q. Skinner (Ed.), *The Return of Grand Theory in
the Human Sciences*, (Cambridge, 1985).

13 Stein, *Peasant, State and Society*.

14 These were Poona, Nagpur, Mysore and the Coromandel.
black cotton soil of Marathwada and its own red granite soil formed its western boundary.

1.2.1.1 Cultivation

Telangana was by and large a plateau of uneven height marked by granite hills and ranges. Numerous depressions and valleys were present in and it made it possible to collect water by putting bunds across them. The level of the water thus collected depended, of course, on the seasonal rainfall. When the water supply was good, the reservoirs could irrigate two rice crops on the lower ground annually. An additional crop of dry grain was possible where the red soil was mixed with black cotton soil. The principal rivers also inundated or irrigated their lower ground. The fertility of the Telangana tableland was generally in inverse ratio to its height above sea level. The amount of arable land depended not only on the water supply, but also on the extent of hills or woodland in any particular core area. The northern, eastern and southern extremities of Telangana were, thus, mountainous and wooded, and from the agriculturist’s point of view wastes.¹⁵ The same was also true for parts of the northern, north eastern and south western tablelands, which were broken throughout by granite hills and low jungle.¹⁶ About 35 per cent of the total surface area of Telangana appears to have been cultivated in the early nineteenth century, twenty-five per cent under dry grains and ten under wet grains, or rice. Dry grains occupied a little over 71 per cent of the cultivated area and rice under 29. The proportion of rice cultivation was higher in three pockets, however,¹⁷ where it occupied just under thirty-nine per cent (38.6%) of the cultivated area, while dry grains occupied a little over sixty-one per cent (61.4%).¹⁸ Rayalseema corresponded with what are the modern Andhra Pradesh districts west of the ghatas and south of the Krishna, as well as the districts of Raichur and Moodgal, and parts of the Karnataka districts of Chittaldrug and Bijapur. Rayalseema resembled Telangana in its general semi-aridity, rocks and low jungle breaking the red soil throughout. A few

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¹⁵ But see the discussion on pastoralists, shifting cultivators, hunter gatherers, and mobile and hill and forest groups below.

¹⁶ Fifty per cent or more of the surface area of the districts of Devarkonda and Ghanpura, in the south east; of Yadgiri, Kovilkunda and Malkhed, in the south west; of Nalgonda, Khammamett, Warangal and Chinnor, in the east; and of Malangoor, Yelgundel and Medak, in the north was covered with hills, woods or rocky wastes.

¹⁷ These were, Medak, immediately to the north and north west of Hyderabad; Nalgonda, Ghanpura and Pangal, to the south and south east; and Yelgundel and Malangoor, to the north east.

¹⁸ The total cultivated area in these districts was, at under thirty per cent, lower than the average for Telangana as a whole.
patches of fertile black cotton soil were particularly productive, however.\(^{19}\)

The implication of Telangana-Rayalseema's ecological outline can be best appreciated in conjunction with two other factors. The plateau and the doab were both marked by semi-aridity, granite hills and scrubland, or low jungle, as we have already noted, and only about 35% of the surface area was cultivable. But this area was not all in one place; it was dispersed in numerous core areas of productivity. The first factor to be considered, then, is that the productive cores were dispersed, and usually co-incided with areas of good water supply capable of supporting rice cultivation. The margins of the cores were more suited to dry crops. Beyond the margins lay semi-arid stretches, until other core areas were encountered. The second factor was the scarcity of labour in the Deccan as a whole, which meant that, after taking into account fluctuating seasonal water supply and the limits of agricultural technology, not all the core areas could exploit their fullest potential in any given agricultural season. The implications of the sub-region's ecology, taken together with the two additional factors referred to above, were that core areas tended to concentrate labour, capital, manufacture, trade and political power in the Hyderabad countryside. The chief crops of the sub-region were rice and dry grains. Grain was exported to Madras, Poona, Nagpur and Andhra. The chief manufactures were blankets; cotton and silk carpets; cotton cloth and thread; and silk cloth and thread. These were exported from the principal trading and manufacturing centres of the core areas.

1.2.1.2 Manufacture and Trade

An interesting feature of Telangana's trading and manufacturing centres was their higher density in country where more rice was grown than dry grain, or where specialist goods were manufactured for export.\(^{20}\) 57.8 per cent (213) of Telangana's trading centres were located in wet hinterlands. 63.1 per cent (233) were concentrated in the three

\(^{19}\) The material on which this paragraph and the subsequent paragraphs in this sub-section are based has been culled from various fragmentary sources: NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-158, Hyderabad Register and Descriptive Memoir, c.1816; M-163, Route from Hyderabad to Nagpur, 1782; M-47, Memoir of Guvaramkonda, 1810-12; M-227, Memoir on route from Amravati to Ellichpur, 1808; M-34, Memoir of Gooty and Bellary, 1812; M-17, Memoir of Adoni, 1805-10; M-161, Remarks on the Frontier Roads and Military Posts between the Kistna and Hyderabad, 1796; M-182, Memoir of Raichur, 1817; M-176, Memoir of Muddal Circar, 1816-17; M-153, Memoir of Bhongir, 1835-7; M-178, Memoir of Pangal and Ghanpura, 1824-7; IOLR, Mack Gen, 44, Deccan Statistics from the Daftar-i-Azafiyah, c.1789-1809; 60, Deccan Surveys, c.1794-1803; G. Twemlow, 'On Irrigation and Inland Navigation, as applicable to the Dekhan', Gleanings in Science, 3 (1831), pp. 164-6; B. Heyne, Tracts, Historical and Statistical, on India, (London, 1814), pp. 247-325; H. H. Voysey, 'Report[s] on the Geology of Hyderabad', JASB, 2 (1833), pp.298-305, 392-405; 'Extracts from Dr Voysey's Private Journal when attached to the Trigonometrical Survey in Southern and Central India', JASB, 9 (1850), pp. 189-212, 269-302; J. G. Malcolmson, 'Notes explanatory of a Collection of Geological Specimens from the Country between Hyderabad and Nagpur', JASB, 5 (1836), pp.96-121; A. M. Walker, 'On the Geology etc. of Hummukonda', JASB, 10, 1 (1841), pp.471-5; Walker, 'On the Natural Products about the Pundeele River', JASB, 10,2 (1841), pp.509-17; Walker, 'Tour in H.H. The Nizam's Territories', Ibid., pp.725-33; Walker, 'Report on Productions and Manufactures in the District of Hummukondah', JASB, 10, 1 (1841), pp. 386-93; Capt. Newbold, 'Summary of the Geology of Southern India', JASB, 8 (1846), pp. 138-249; Newbold, 'Notes, chiefly geological, across the Peninsula from Masulipatnam to Goa', JASB, 13, 2 (1844), pp. 984-1004; Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, I, 70-156, 173-9, 186-200, 214-58, 308-20; A.R. Choudhary, Andhra Pradesh, (Delhi, 1979), pp. 1-7.

\(^{20}\) Rice was a more valuable crop than dry grains and appears to have been grown chiefly for export. At home, it was consumed by the wealthier elements of local society, the poor usually eating cheaper grains like jawar and bajra.
principal rice producing tracts. 71.7 per cent of the trading centres within the latter tracts were located in wet country. The average size of the hinterland of a trading centre located in wet country was 77.5 sq miles in terms of total area and 29.8 sq miles in terms of the cultivated area, for Telangana as a whole. The comparable figures for centres with dry hinterlands were 105.8 sq miles and 40.7 sq miles. Within the three principal rice producing tracts, the two figures were 61.6 sq miles and 18.2 sq miles for centres located in wet country and 155.8 sq miles and 46.1 sq miles for those in dry.21 Zamindari capitals usually coincided with trading centres with wet hinterlands.22

Their relative size and the composition of their produce appear to be the best indicators of the character of the trading centres in the Hyderabad countryside, in the absence of data on the volumes and values of trade. The major trading centres of Telangana, those of district or supra-district -level significance, may be classified as small, medium sized or large centres. A small centre had between one hundred and two hundred houses, a medium sized one between two hundred and four hundred, and a large one, above four hundred, though rarely exceeding five hundred.23 There were 180 small, 140 medium sized and 49 large centres in eleven of the thirteen Telangana districts for which we have information. Only 14 of these, all of them large, were involved in the export trade. 88 centres, 49 of them large, including the 14 export centres, and 39 medium sized ones were involved in trade at the district level. The remainder, the vast majority, 73.1 per cent, were usually weekly markets for their hinterlands. Rice and dry grains formed the backbone of Telangana’s exports, which were sent mainly to Nagpur, Poona, Hyderabad, Adoni, Gooty, Kurnool, Cuddapah or Walajahpet, depending on the location of the particular exporting centre. Some centres also exported their manufactures.

There were broadly three kinds of principal trading centre in Telangana. The first served as a grain clearing depot for the district or supra-district trade of its hinterland. It was typically a larger version of the interior village barring the presence of a few non-indigenous merchants, sahukar-s, administrators and military men. Sometimes, it was the home of the landed and military elites of the area, and was likely to be a zamindari capital in this case. Palmoor, Wanaparthy and Maktal, three of southern Telangana’s four principal export centres, all specialised in grain export, trading chiefly with Hyderabad to the north, and Bellary, Kumool and Cuddapah to the south. Palmoor and Wanaparthy were also the fortified seats of Reddy zamindar-s based in fertile wet and dry grain country. Khammamet, Nellapalli, Somawaram, Nattigutri and Mullangur were all fortified centres in eastern Telangana based on fertile patches of agricultural country. Khammamet

22 The wet country was more thickly populated than the dry, rice being a more labour intensive crop than dry grains. It was also a more valuable crop, fetching higher revenues than dry grains.
23 Late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century surveyors usually ascribed four members to the individual household.
was described as a ‘large town with a fort’, and Nellapalli as ‘a large and populous place on the high road from Cumummet to Hyderabad’ by a route surveyor in the last years of the eighteenth century.\(^{24}\)

The second type of trading centre bore all the characteristics of the first, but was a centre of specialist manufacture in addition. It had a larger community of artisans and middlemen than usual, including, sometimes, non-Telugu elements from northern or western India. Siddipet in central Telangana was an exporter of grain as well as a centre of specialist manufacture. Its products included brass pots, coarse cloth and blankets, and toddy and arrack. Its population was about 4000. Narayanpet, in southern Telangana, was known for its mint and its manufactures, which included fine and coarse cotton, and silk, cloth and garments.\(^{25}\) It was also a fortified zamindari seat with a population of about 4000. Jaktial in northern Telangana was known for its exports of fine and coarse cotton cloth. It was ‘usual’ for the merchants here ‘to make advances of money to the manufacturers’, in whose products they carried on ‘a profitable trade’. Jaktial was based on a patch of fertile wet country and was a well fortified centre.\(^{26}\) The tusar, or jungle silk, for the famed silk manufactures of northern Telangana centres like Yelgundel, Yamulwada and Koratla came mainly from the hill forests of Chinnoor district, which was under the Yelgundel zamindar’s sway. Tusar was the main product of the district, in fact. It was manufactured by ‘Telongoos of low caste’ in centres like Chilpur, Chinnoor and Madhopur, the last of which had 70 tusar breeding families, and by Gonds throughout the hills. ‘Their life’ in the breeding season was ‘one of the most unremitting toil’ and roused the Telangana breeder into eloquence ‘when he recounts what privations he undergoes, what pleasure he derives himself and what incessant labour he incurs while watching the rearing of the worm and the perfecting of its work’. There were three harvests of cocoons each year. These were bought from the breeders by weavers or banias at the rate of 500 per rupee. A further sum of 3.5 rupees was paid to craftsmen to extract and wind thread from each lot of 500 cocoons. The latter process took 10 days. Silk thread was dyed red with the palas flower, or golden yellow with turmeric.\(^{27}\) Some of the Chinnoor silk also went to Warangal in eastern Telangana, where it was used in the manufacture of carpets. There were about 200 carpet weaving looms in and around Warangal, and ‘a good many’ in Hasanparti were employed in weaving the jungle silk. The remainder wove cotton carpets. The carpetmakers were predominantly, if not exclusively, Muslim. The carpet weaving art itself was not indigenous, but was brought to Warangal by West Asian immigrants, probably sometime in the 16th or 17th century. One of the features of carpet making was the employment of children in executing the more

\(^{24}\) IOLR, Mack Gen, 60.

\(^{25}\) See also, IOLR, Mackenzie General, 14/5.

\(^{26}\) Hyderabad Affairs, I, 241-51.

\(^{27}\) A.M. Walker, ‘On the Natural Products around the Pundeelah River’, JASB, 10, 2(1841), pp. 509-17.
intricate and delicate parts of the work, ‘it being averred that their more limber finger joints are best suited to the finer parts of the work’. 28

The third kind of trading centre in Telangana was an exporter of grain, as well as specialist manufactures, and also a prominent district or supra-district level bazar. Yamulwada in northern Telangana was, thus, ‘a large and populous town situated on the high road from Hyderabad to Jaktial’. Covering an area of 16 sq furlongs, it was based on ‘an extensive sheet of paddy cultivation’. It also exported ‘various and excellent manufactures of coarse and fine cloths, plain and chequered kambli-s, bangles, quilted counterpanes, silks etc.’ to Hyderabad and other places. Besides a garrison of troops and a body of revenue collecting personnel, the inhabitants of Yamulwada were ‘chiefly Telinga of trading and manufacturing castes, with a few brahmins and low castes’. Its various temples, but, especially the one dedicated to Rajeshwara, attracted a ‘large’ number of devotees during a four day annual festival. Muslims also figured among the pilgrims, as the body of a Sufi pir was popularly believed to be interred within the temple walls.

The main crops of Rayalseema were rice, dry grains and cotton, but, unlike Telangana, cotton thread and cloth, not food grains, were its principal exports. The density of trading centres was also higher in Rayalseema. The data on the two doab districts of Raichur and Mudgal, and the fragmentary information on Kurnool, Cuddapah, Chittoor, Anantapur and Chittaldrug south of the doab, across the Tungabhadra, point in such a direction, at any rate. There were 134 trading centres in the two doab districts. At least 8 of them were large. Alampur exported ‘a great quantity’ of cotton cloth, and some silk, to Hyderabad, Kurnool, Cuddapah and Walajahpet. The ‘large and populous’ Gadwal was the seat of a zamindar. The agents of ‘many opulent sabukars of the Deccan’ exported fine and coarse cotton cloth; muslin; silk; cotton and gold thread; and gold and silk embroidery from here to many parts of the Deccan, and elsewhere. Raichur, another large centre, exported grain, jaggery and garden produce (mainly coconuts and betel-leaf) to Hyderabad, and other northern destinations, as well as cotton thread to Walajahpet in the south. While Alampur, Gadwal and Raichur were in the Raichur district, the remaining large centres in the doab, Moodgal, Lingsur, Gurgunta, Kopal, and Sindnoor, - were in the other doab district, Moodgal. They were all known for their exports of cotton thread and cloth. Rajampet in the Cuddapah district, for example, exported coarse cloth, dry grains, coconuts and some spices to Hyderabad and the Andhra coast. Its hinterland appears to have contributed to its manufactures through localised specialist activity. Hublumpet, for example, consisted of 200 families of dyers who specialised in dyeing cotton thread red. Cuddapah was known for its cotton and muslin exports. Adoni was known for its sarees and chintzes.

Kurnool and Bellary were known for their cloth and carpet manufactures.29

1.2.2 Andhra

The Andhra region was made up of the long strip of Telegu speaking country between the eastern ghats and the Bay of Bengal. Its most fertile parts were those watered by the rivers Godavari and Krishna. The plains of Rajamundry, Guntur and Masulipatnam were particularly productive. The districts of Nellore, Ongole and Srikakulam were relatively unprosperous. The Andhra coast was famous for its textiles. Some European Companies involved in the textile trade employed thousands of weavers in their factories.30 The industry was scattered all along the coast, and different centres specialised in their particular brand or type of product. Thus, Behampur was known for its silks, Srikakulam for its muslins, Elluru for its carpets, and Masulipatnam for its patampores and chintzes. The other principal exports of Andhra were rice, fish and teak wood. This last item was used chiefly in shipbuilding.31

1.2.3 Marathwada

Marathwada coincided roughly with the Painganga flowing between the Ajanta hills and the Nanded plain on the north, and with the Krishna flowing between Bijapur and Shorapur, on the south. On the east, its waving frontier extended from the Nanded plain in the north, and passing through Bidar and Gulbarga, to the Raichur doab in the south. Its western boundary was another waving frontier, extending from the Ajanta hills in the north, and passing through Ellora, Patan and Sholapur, to Tallikota in the south. Marathwada was covered mostly with black soil formed from decomposed basaltic trap. It was broken by ridges of iron clay in its middle and southern portions. About sixty five per cent of its surface area appears to have been cultivated in the early nineteenth century, with the exception of the hilly and jungly Nanded district, where only thirty seven per cent of the surface area was arable.32

29 Mahdi Ali, *Hyderabad Affairs*, I, pp. 70-156; NAI, Survey of India Records, Field Books and Memoirs - M-47 (Gurramkonda, 1810-12), M-34 (Chitaval, c.1812), M-17 (Adoni, 1805-10), M-182 (Raichur, 1816-17), M-176 (Mudgal, 1816-17); P.R. Rao, *History of Modern Andhra*, p. 22; IOLR, Mackenzie General, 14/7.

30 Masulipatnam had 5000 families of weavers during Dutch days, for example.


32 This paragraph and the subsequent ones in this sub-section are based on the following sources: IOLR, Mack Gen, 44; 60; 14/5, Description of Daulatabad, 1806; 13/2, Description of Paithan, etc., c.1802; NAI, FB and M, M-155, Memoir of Daulatabad; M-170, Memoir of Paithan, 1842-3; M-177, Memoir of Nanded, 1821-40; Mahdi Ali, *Hyderabad Affairs*, I, 186-218, 259-78, 284-95, 303-7; Twemlow, 'On Irrigation and Inland Navigation'; Newbold, 'Notes from Masulipatnam to Goa'; Summary of the Geology of Southern India'; Voysey, 'Report on Hyderabad'; A. Gibson, 'Notes on Indian Agriculture, as practised in the Western or Bombay Provinces of India', *JRAS*, 8(1846), pp. 93-103; Reprint from *Bombay Gazette*, 17 July 1874, *Bidar*, in *IB*(May 1874), p. 149; G. Smith, 'Description of the Manufacture of Biddery Ware', *MILLS*, (New Series), 1(1856), pp. 81-4; W.H. Sykes, 'Some Account of the Kolisurra Silk-Worm of the Deccan', *Bombay Transactions*(1832), pp. 541-7.
Marathwada was by far the most productive and prosperous of all of Hyderabad’s sub-regions. One indication of this was the higher proportion of cultivated land here than anywhere else: sixty five per cent. The moisture retaining black cotton soil did not require as much investment as the red soils of Telangana and Rayalseema either.\textsuperscript{33} Marathwada’s manufactures and trade also found a naturally more favourable setting thus. Information regarding the density of trading centres and the composition of their trade are the best indicators for Marathwada in the absence, once again, of data on the volumes and values of trade. There were 224 principal trading centres in the districts, approximately half of the total, for which we have information.\textsuperscript{34} There was one trading centre to every 80.45 sq miles of total area and 32 sq miles of cultivated area in these districts. It seems reasonable to expect similar figures in the districts for which there are no detailed figures, as the information that is available suggests the presence in them of at least one dozen prominent grain or manufacture exporting centres, such as Ankalkote, Bid, Parenda, Sholapur, Junair, Gulbarga, Suggur and Naldrug. Since the ecological environment these districts was not substantially different from the remainder, and there do not appear to have been any special factors inhibiting agriculture, trade or manufacture, the actual number of trading centre must have been considerably higher than the one dozen of which we know of. The number of large centres among the 224 in half the Marathwada districts was 104 (46.4 per cent), while 98 (43.8 per cent) were medium sized and 22 (9.8 per cent) small. Almost all the large and medium sized centres participated in district level trade if they were not also involved in supra-district level exports. A proportion of the small centres were also involved in district level trade. A higher density of principal trading centres, as well as a higher incidence of district level centres, and supra-district level export centres distinguished Marathwada from the other sub-regions.

Marathwada’s exports could be divided into three broad categories: agricultural produce, - including dry grains, oil seeds, sugar cane, cotton, garden products (fruit and spices), opium and tobacco; - manufactures, - including oil, coarse and fine sugar, toddy and arrack, horse furniture, coarse blankets, coarse and fine carpets, coarse and fine cotton cloth, silks, gold and silver thread and embroidery, coarse and fine paper, brass and copper utensils, and agricultural implements; - and cattle and horses. The export centres could also be divided into three categories, each reflecting a particular combination of landed, manufacturing, trading, banking, military, administrative and religious elites.

Centres exporting agricultural produce could be sub-divided into the qasba and ordinary categories, the presence of a significant Muslim population distinguishing the former from the latter. Chidgosa in the Bidar district was an example of the latter type of agricultural produce exporting centre. It was the fortified headquarters of a zamindar and

\textsuperscript{33} Even in the most valuable crop of the latter region, and of Andhra as well, rice, irrigation and labour were major investments.

\textsuperscript{34} These districts covered 18,020.80 sq miles of the total surface area of Marathwada.
reflected to a large extent the power relations of the Marathwada interior. The non-
indigenous element in its population of 8000 was small, comprising only a handful of
traders and financiers who invested in the cultivation and trade of dry grains, opium,
sugar cane and betel nuts. The twin settlements of Tuljapur and Chota Tuljapur in
northern Marathwada were located in a large patch of fertile agricultural country.35 The
proportion of qasbas was higher in the second type of export centre, the exporter of
manufactures, accounting for about 40 per cent of them. Their main distinguishing
characteristic was the presence of specialist communities of Muslim artisans. Aurangabad
was an outstanding example, though there was more to its large Muslim population than
simply artisans. It was also the home of literary, administrative, military and clerical
Muslim families, some of whom were famous even outside Aurangabad. Aurangabad’s
most notable exports were its high quality gold embroidered silks.36 Qandahar, Indur and
Baswanthnagar in the Nanded district of northern Marathwada were other examples of
qasbas that exported specialist manufactures. The Muslim artisanal community of
Qandahar, which made up about half its population of 12,000, specialised in making
coarse paper and cloth. Indur had a population of 12,000 and 50 coarse cloth looms.
Baswanthpur had a population of 16,000 and produced coarse cloth, coarse paper, and
brass and copper utensils. The final category of Marathwada export centre did not so
much send out its own manufactures as it re-export the products of other centres.
Malgaon thus hosted a celebrated two part annual fair, horses being sold during the first
part, and cotton cloth, silks and jewellery during the second.

Marathwada was potentially the key to the financial viability and political success of
any supra-local power with regional ambitions in the Deccan. Maratha and Mughal forces
in the seventeenth century, and Maratha and Asaf Jahi forces in the eighteenth century
fought continually and fiercely for a lion’s share of its revenues. But military success
against supra-local rivals was by itself no guarantee of financial success in the sub-region.
That also depended on the supra-local power’s ability to coerce the local landed, military
and commercial elites, or to win their confidence and co-operation. It was not mere
coincidence that the first, second and fourth Nizams tried to found their capital cities in
Marathwada.37 Nor was it anything short of a retreat when the fourth Nizam retired from
Marathwada altogether in order to make Hyderabad, in the heart of semi-arid Telangana,

35 IOLR, Mackenzie General, 60.
36 IOLR, Mackenzie General, 147.
37 Nizam ul Mulk tried to base himself in Aurangabad, as did Nasir Nasir Jang after him. Salabat Jang failed to
consolidate his grip over Aurangabad and moved to Bidar in the last days of his reign. The third Nizam,
Muzaffar Jang, was killed before he could reach the Deccan after his victory over Nasir Jang with French
support in the Carnatic.
his capital.38

1.2.4 Berar

The Berar region was demarcated roughly by the rivers Tapti, Painganga and Wardha, on the north, south and east, respectively. The Ajanta hills and the district of Khandesh lay to its west. Less than forty per cent (40%) of Berar’s total surface area appears to have been cultivated in the early nineteenth century. Most of the fertile land was in the diamond shaped Berar plain, which was marked by Gawilgarh, Akola, Amravati and Malkapur, to the north, south, east and west respectively. The valleys of the Poona, Painganga and Wardha rivers, and of their tributaries, were fertile, but heavily wooded for the most part.39

The typology of Berar’s trading centres was similar to Marathwada’s, except that Berar had historically witnessed the formation of alliances between indigenous and non-indigenous elements in almost all of its productive tracts.40 Almost all the leading centres of Berar could be classified as qasbas. The principal ones were Ellichpur, Patheri, Akola, Amravati, Maiker, Mahur and Namala. These were all based on rich agricultural hinterlands, manufactures or advantageous location along major trading routes. The main group that linked Berar’s commerce to other regions, mainly through their bulk carrying capacity and trade in raw materials and salt, were the Banjaras. The Banjaras could also be, until almost the close of the 18th century, the decisive allies of supra-local powers engaged in warfare for supremacy in the Deccan, owing to their unparalleled carrying capacity.

1.2.5 Scarce Population and Resources

The first comprehensive quantitative estimates of population in Hyderabad are not available until the late 19th century and even these are probably not as reliable as later figures. One official source in 187941 gives the population density as 119/sq. mile and another in 188142 gives it as 114.74/sq. mile. If one averages out the two sources, one can estimate that the population density in 1880 was 116/sq. mile. If one calculates the values for 1855 and 1830 by projecting Guha’s findings for the rates of population growth in the


40 Even though no supra-local power could dominate the sub-region as a whole for any decisive length of time at any period in the eighteenth century itself.

41 NAI, For, Nov 1879, 12-13 A, Mily B.

western Deccan backwords, one gets a value of 52.88/sq. mile for 1830 and 88.90/sq. mile for 1855. If one further allows for the fact that the rate of population growth was exceptionally high in the first quarter of the 19th century, and assumes that it must have been significantly lower in the early 19th and late 18th centuries, then it becomes possible to appreciate the force of the qualitative evidence for low population and resources in the Hyderabad Deccan in the pre-colonial period. It was one of the features of the small kingdoms in the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside that their rulers always sought to project themselves as more generous patrons and more capable protectors than their neighbours, in the constant competition for labour and capital. The same competition was also reflected in the emphasis that was placed in the core areas on the maintenance of one’s own community, as opposed to the community of another core area, through consensus building devices and incorporating legends. Yet another indication of scarce population and resources was the price that some core areas inevitably paid, in terms of loss of population and resources, for the expansion, creation or re-creation of others. The expansion and building activity in a core area, on the other hand, was characteristically linked to its success over rivals in attracting labour, artisans, investors, traders, bankers and holy men. The counterpart of such attraction local warfare consisted typically of raiding a rival core area for cattle, or to undermine the authority of its ruler as a worthy patron and capable warrior-protector, with a view to seduce population and resources into one’s own domain. Not only was a scarcity of population and resources an endemic feature of the pre-colonial order, it was also reproduced to some extent by the way in which small kings constantly destroyed portions of each other’s communities and resources in order precisely to cope with the problem of scarcity. This was also the reason why, in the ultimate analysis, we cannot talk of the pre-colonial economy of Hyderabad, despite its vibrancy and buoyancy, as tending towards developmental growth.

1.2.6 An Economically Attractive Region

The above description of Hyderabad’s sub-regions would suggest that these were not economically stagnant backwaters. The latter day stereotype of Hyderabad, especially of the Telangana-Rayalseema and Berar sub-regions, as a backward region was a product of developments that occurred there in the 19th century under British hegemony. In the

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43 The rate was c.2.1 per cent per annum in the first quarter of the 19th century and c.1.1 per cent per annum in its second quarter. (S. Guha, ‘The Agrarian Economy of the Bombay Deccan 1818-1941’, [Cambridge Univ. Ph.D. thesis, 1981]). The rate of growth for the second quarter as suggested by Guha also accords with the first comprehensive estimate of the population and its growth rate for the Berar portion of Nagpur in 1822-3. (OLR, H.Misc, H/707, pp. 30-4).
44 Guha, ‘The Agrarian Economy’.
45 See discussion in subsection 1.3.4 below.
46 See discussion in subsection 1.3.3 below.
47 See discussion above and below.
48 D.A. Washbrook makes a similar point for the Northern Circars, or the Andhra coastal region, under British rule.
18th century, one is still able to talk of vibrant economic activity in dispersed core areas; so much so that the core areas were in constant competition for scarce labour and resources, as is discussed below. There was also a cultural ingredient in this competition. Yet another dimension of the region's economic activity was the attraction it held for non-indigenous supra-local elements, including the Nizams themselves, and foreign powers. Although the configuration of zamindari and nawabi power in the countryside, their own internal rivalries and the challenge from foreign powers did not allow Hyderabad's supra-local elements to develop lasting bases in the core areas, - unlike in parts of North India, for example, - they continued to remain in the region, nevertheless. Their numbers were even augmented in the 18th century, by new 'Mughal' immigration, including elements from western, central and northern India; central and western Asia; eastern Africa; Europe; and Afghanistan. Other immigrants came independently, as merchants, bankers or traders, from the aforementioned areas, and from southern India. It would hardly have been worth their while and investment if these various supra-local elements had not expected to make profits in the Hyderabad region.

Within the region, the target was Marathwada, which was the most prosperous of Hyderabad's four sub-regions. It is no coincidence that various Nizams, 'intermediary factions' and foreign powers fought for the revenues of Marathwada throughout the 18th century. Andhra was the next most lucrative area from the fiscal point of view, and this, too, remained a bone of contention between Hyderabad and foreign elements throughout much of the 18th century. It is only when they were effectively excluded from both Marathwada and Andhra by their competitors that the Asaf Jahis settled in the relatively unprosperous Telangana-Rayalseema sub-region. Before this, they had re-located their capital several times in the Marathwada sub-region, - in Aurangabad, Gulbarga, Bijapur and Bidar, - in the period c.1724-58, in the face of supra-local and foreign competition. Telangana-Rayalseema itself was not without its attractions, however. Even when most of the revenues of Marathwada and Andhra were effectively lost to the Asaf Jahis, and to Hyderabad's intermediaries, they were still quite willing to invest their fortunes in Telangana-Rayalseema and Berar, rather than migrate from Hyderabad altogether and seek greener pastures elsewhere. This again suggests that 18th century-Hyderabad was considered a worthwhile economic and political frontier by numerous non-indigenous military, political and commercial elements.

1.3 Politics and Society in the Core Areas

The dispersed cores of productivity in the Hyderabad countryside competed for scarce labour and resources, and herein lay potential for conflict between them. This might be construed as an unduly deterministic conclusion with respect to ecological and economic factors if it is not qualified by political and social analysis. This section and the following
ones will concentrate on the nature of politics and society in the core areas. The perspectives offered by some some recent works on South India form the starting point of the analysis. This thesis is not content with the segmentary state model (with its symbolic/sacral/ritual centre) as far as understanding the Hyderabad region’s pre-colonial political order as a whole is concerned. But it does find it useful to draw upon the segmentary state hypothesis to understand the social and cultural articulation of the small king’s authority in the core areas within the sub-regions. The concerns here are not the same as in other works on small kingdoms, as the emphasis here is not on a single small kingdom, but on gauging the relevance of some processes common to most of them in the shaping of the region’s overall order. Though there is no attempt to write a history of particular kin or clan structures, or religious or ritual centres, some speculations are nevertheless offered which might be of interest to the local historian, sociologist and social anthropologist. ‘Communal’ identity is given primacy over caste, sectarian or religious identity for particular social and political purposes, for example.49 The threat of coercion and the forcible depression of internal conflict are, similarly, ranked alongside the more familiar devices of consensus building in the social construction of the community in the small king’s domain. An elementary typology of legitimation, consensus and incorporation is also offered.

1.3.1 The Political and Economic Capitals of the Core Areas

The political capitals of the Hyderabad countryside usually co-incided with its principal trading centres. Local political powers in the shape of zamindars or, as in some cases, nawabs gave protection and patronage to agriculture, trade and manufacture in return for revenue, support, power and prestige. The conception and exercise of local political authority in the Hyderabad countryside went well beyond the performance of mere administrative functions and duties. Zamindars and nawabs were concerned, in practice, with the maintenance of a loyal community in a productive domain, in the context of external hostility and pressure. The mark of the patron-protector was almost always present in the leading trading centres of the Hyderabad countryside. Above all, it concerned the power that he could mobilize from his local base in the event of a confrontation or showdown with local rivals, or with supra-local authority. Bhalki was a grain exporting qasba in central Marathwada, for example, with a population of about 8000. It was the seat of the Nimbalkar family, local Maratha landlords who wielded considerable influence at the Asaf Jahi darbar in the middle decades of the eighteenth century. Raja Nimbalkar was able to cause a coup in the darbar in c.1751 due to Bhalki’s

49 See also Chapter Four below.
strength as a major grain producer. Nimbalkar was here mobilizing, typically, his local power base in the form of the decisive politics of the moment, grain politics. The Nimbalkar family’s main establishment consisted of a Brahman dominated revenue department, and a Muslim and Maratha dominated military department. Brahman and bania grain traders, and Gujarati, Marwadi, Jain and Hindustani sahukars, formed the other elite and influential groups in Bhalki.

In Telangana, too, the most powerful and prolonged opposition to Hyderabad’s authority came from the zamindars of its most productive and prosperous tracts. The districts of Medak, in central Telangana; Malangur and Yelgundel, in northern Telangana; and Nalgonda and Khammamett, in eastern Telangana, were particularly notable in this respect. They were the three principal rice exporting areas of Telangana and home to a majority of its trading centres.

Sadashivpet in the Medak district was ‘a large and populous trading town, surrounded by a strong wall and ditch, with several bastions and four entrances’. It had ‘several merchant shops’ and carried on ‘a very extensive trade of grain of various kinds’ with Hyderabad and Poona. A musafirkhana in the centre of town accomodated traders and travellers. Sadashivpet was located in prize wet and dry grain country and reflected to some extent the social groupings and power relations of its hinterland. It was the capital of one of the most powerful zamindars of the Hyderabad countryside, Sadashiva Reddy, in the late 18th century. Near and distant kin of the ruling Reddy house also dominated land control in the area and formed its military elite. Hereditary revenue accountants serving the Reddys, mostly Brahmans, formed another influential group. Other Brahman families derived status and influence through the control of temples, and yet others were weighty grain merchants and moneylenders. Local trading castes like the Komits, and some Maharashtrians, Gujaratis, Marwadis, baniaks of north Indian origin and Muslims also figured among the traders and financiers. It was the strong presence of merchants and military men, besides the ruling Reddys and their main establishment, that distinguished Sadashivpet from the interior. There were other trading centres in Medak besides Sadashivpet. Rangampetta was the fortified residence of a zamindar, and Andole.

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50 The Nizam, his principal nobles and his army were camped in Bhalki at the time. They were on their way back, in fact, from a disastrous military campaign in the Poona territory. The army was in serious arrears of pay and the penniless soldiers clamoured for food, which was in very short supply. Raja Nimbalkar found this situation ideal to dissuade the leading sardar-s of the army from paying their allegiance to the commander, the Nizam’s diwan Raja Raghunath Das, with whom he had an enmity. He offered them the prospect of grain supplies from Bhalki’s well stocked granary if they would dispose of the diwan. The troops, who hardly needed an excuse in their desperate condition, fell upon Raghunath Das and murdered him upon the first signal from their sardars. The removal of the diwan from the scene opened up for Raja Nimbalkar the promotion prospects that he had been looking for. (IOLR, Mack Gen, 44; 41/13, Early Asaf Jahi Episodes; Pagdi, Eighteenth Century Deccan, [Bombay, 1963]).

51 Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, I, 287-8; Pagdi, Eighteenth Century Deccan.


53 Sadashiva Reddy was the co-leader of a major rebellion in the Hyderabad countryside in 1795 which almost unseated the ruling Nizam. (See discussion in Chapter Two below).

Shankarreddypet, Jogipet and Papannapet were also 'enclosed by walls'. 'All these pettas', furthermore, 'are very large and many wealthy traders live therein'.

Palmoor and Wanaparthi, both leading grain export centres in southern Telangana, were also, like Sadashivpet, seats of Reddy power located in fertile wet and dry grain country. They were well fortified, and populated with soldiers, merchants, landlords, moneylenders and administrators. Yelgundel in northern Telangana was the single largest manufacturer of exports in the whole of Telangana. Its patron-protector, the Velama zamindar Kona Rao, defied the Nizam and his intermediaries for almost sixty years in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. But the Velama household's success went further than simply being able to defend a fertile wet and dry grain tract from external pressure. This was reflected in the presence of several bazars within Yelgundel's fortifications, and a population of about 2000, sustained by exports of grain and specialist manufactures, which included coarse cloth, saris, coarse blankets and quilted counterpanes. A sizable community of Muslim weavers was also present in Yelgundel and the zamindar had an Idgah built for their benefit. Koratla, another principal trading centre in the Yelgundel region, was also the fortified seat of a zamindar. Its outer perimeter wall enclosed an area of about 4 sq miles. Koratla exported rice as well as manufactures. Its artisans operated 8 silk looms, 34 coarse paper manufactories and even more numerous cloth and coarse blanket manufactories.

The district of Yelgundel was divided into twenty one pargana-s, which contained 1500 villages and normally yielded an annual revenue of Rs.11 Lakhs, though that sum was reduced to only Rs. 5 Lakhs by the famine of 1791-8, according to an account of 1798. The district was carved up between three Velama zamindars, Kona Rao, Muna Rao and Jagpati Rao, and one Brahman, Rajanna Pantulu. These men had never been friendly with Hyderabad and had fought its intermediaries on several occasions in the recent past. Kona Rao and Muna Rao maintained a force of 8000 between them and were engaged in hostilities with an English revenue farmer, Finglass, as well as raiding contiguous Hyderabad and Nagpur districts in 1798. They operated from their numerous stone forts when on the offensive, and from the natural protection of hill and jungle retreats when on the defensive. Kona Rao was also zamindar of the neighbouring Chinnoor district, where he shared authority with another Velama zamindar, a man called Narsing Rao. Both the Chinnoor zamindars had been defying Hyderabad's intermediaries since the late eighteenth century and a force that had besieged them sometime in the 1790s was eventually 'obliged to return with a small part of the original force'. Yet, so anxious was Hyderabad

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55 IOLR, Elliot Collection, Ms Eur F 48.
57 His ancestors had similarly defied Asaf Jahi and Mughal authority before him. It was not until 1819 that Hyderabad, with the powerful military backing of the British, was finally able to subdue Kona Rao.
to tap the revenues of the rich core areas of this region that, ‘the [Nizam's] sarkar is very friendly to them’.59

Amravati in eastern Telangana was built by the Kamma zamindar of Chintapalli, Vasireddy, in c. 1793. The zamindar had visited the temple of Amravatipura there while on a pilgrimage to Tirupati, and had been impressed by its location in an open plain, its nearness to the Krishna and the sanctity of the shrine. He decided to move his capital there upon his return from Tirupati. There was yet another reason for the move. Chintapalli had recently been occupied by British troops, sent out by Madras to coerce the zamindar into paying revenues and allegiance to the Presidency's government. But Vasireddy had vowed never to return to Chintapalli while British troops remained stationed there. So he set out to build a new capital in Amravati:

'To effect his views he invited baniyas from Chintapalli, Pennagunchypoole, Nundigamah and Batavole, as well as brahmins and other settlers, to all of whom he made suitable advances of money to enable them to erect habitations.' 60

The ruins of a Veerabhadrachal temple were found under an old mound being dug up to find bricks for Vasireddy’s palace. The zamindar caused the excavated deity to be consecrated and incorporated in to the Amravatipura temple. Another find was a Jain mandap of four pillars. This too was installed in Amravatipura. The engraved stone slabs found under the mound were used to build a flight of steps from the temple to the Shivaganga tank. Other engraved stones were divested of all their carving and used to build a mosque. Many settlers were advanced loans on easy terms to induce them to make Amravati their home and to help them set up shop there:

'...settlers arrived from various places and established themselves. His acts...of charity are said to have been such that...the place was the crowded resort of people of various descriptions, particularly Brahmans, great numbers of whom used to be entertained at a time and furnished with money and other presents'. 61

The fertile plain in which the town was set soon supported vigorous agricultural activity and the town itself became a centre of manufacture and trade. The lay out of Amravati told its own story of economic activity. The Brahman quarter to the west was its most populous area. Its inhabitants were said to be ‘rich from being in the Zamindar’s employ’. Their houses were usually of two storeys, had tiled roofs and were set out in pleasant yards. The eastern quarter of town was occupied by ‘merchants, artificers and others of this denomination’. Their houses were ‘less showy’ than the Brahman dwellings. Their shops in the bazar, too, were single storey affairs with mud roofs. 'The habitations of the

59 IOLR, Walter Elliot Collection, Mss Eur F 48.
60 NAI, FB and M, M-87.
61 Ibid.
lower classes...[including] washermen and day-labourers' were in two poor suburbs. The most impressive buildings in Amravati were the zamindar's own palaces, and the several temples and mosques that he patronized. The main residential palace was expensively furnished with carpets, divans, globes, looking glasses, European and Chinese pictures in gilded frames and silver plating, which covered the pillars of the enormous diwankhana.⁶²

Local political authority was not exclusively a preserve of indigenous zamindari elements in the Hyderabad countryside. Sometimes nawabs and jagirdar-s of non-indigenous origins were also to be found performing that role, albeit in a manner that was consistent with local tradition and practice. The Qutb Shahi kings of late sixteenth century Golconda had attempted to offset the rise of rebellious and independent minded Telegu naik-s by responding favourably to the ambitions of mercenaries who had come to Hyderabad seeking prospects in military service and revenue farming.⁶³ The Mughals had later given further encouragement to such intermediary elements by practically relying upon them for effecting the Deccani conquest.⁶⁴ Although the Mughal revenue farmers and military commanders did not generally win local friends or lasting bases in the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside,⁶⁵ some, nevertheless, sought to establish country capitals and exploit local zamindari rivalries to advantage. They succeeded in their attempt to some extent, by consolidating alliances with financiers, on the one hand, and with at least one of two or more parties involved in local zamindari conflicts, on the other. The latter process appears to have won them allies among landed Brahmans in Rayalseema, southern Telangana and southern Andhra; Kammas in central Andhra; and Velamas in northern Andhra. Some intermediate elements developed their local alliances further in the 18th century, becoming sensitive to the local political culture of kingly protection and patronage for the community and domain. It was from among their ranks that hereditary nawabs like those of Kumool, Cuddapah, Ellichpur and Nirmal appear to have emerged.

Since kingly local aspirations involved them in the protection and patronage of their domains, the nawabs were keen to attract the investment of merchants and financier into their tracts. The subadar of Cuddapah at the turn of the eighteenth century, Daood Khan, encouraged indigenous and foreign merchant financiers to farm out the revenues of his districts.⁶⁶ The practice was continued by his successor, Abdun Nabi, the first nawab of

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⁶² Ibid.
⁶³ See Chapter Two below.
⁶⁴ For a useful description of the numerous official titles and establishments of revenue farming military usurers in the period 1720-1748, see: M.A. Nayeem, Mughal Administration of Deccan.
⁶⁵ J.F. Richards, Mughal Administration.
⁶⁶ Malapadu S. Chetty, for example, came from Mysore. Mahadeva Tamanji was a Maharashtrian revenue farmer. Seemarazu Pantulu was a Telegu.
Cuddapah, and by subsequent nawabs.\textsuperscript{67} One of them, Nawab Abdul Majid Khan (1752-7 A.D.), was indeed helped into his nawabi, at the expense of Abdul Mohsin Khan, his predecessor, by two powerful sahukars, Baqer Saheb and Panni Salim Khan. It was their hostility, too, which in the end was responsible for his undoing. Abdul Majid Khan incurred their wrath by contesting the sahukar-s' accounts of his debts, by being slow in his repayments to them and by not raising satisfactory revenues from his domain. They transferred their allegiance, in the event, to an invading Maratha force, which in 1757 killed Abdul Majid Khan and helped re-instate his predecessor, Abdul Mohsin Khan, into the nawabi.\textsuperscript{68} The first Nawab of Nirmal, Ibrahim Beg Khan, also owed some of his initial, and foundational, success against zamindars in northern and north eastern Telangana, to the financial backing of sahukars.\textsuperscript{69} He continued to rely on them afterwards, to build up his army and forts, which were important not only from the point of view of conquest and defence, but also to project the image of a viable and credible patron-protector.\textsuperscript{70}

The nawabs' specific attempts to build up links with sahukars can be seen as part of a wider concern to see economic growth in their domains. Sahukari investment provided an important boost to agriculture, manufacture and trade.\textsuperscript{71} The first Nawab of Cuddapah, Abdun Nabi Khan, encouraged the building of trading centres and participated directly in the expansion of Cuddapah and Neknampetta.\textsuperscript{72} The second Nawab of Kurnool, Ibrahim Khan Panni, supervised vigorous building activity in the second decade of the eighteenth century. New Pathan settlers arrived in Kurnool during his reign. Alif Khan, the third nawab, continued to encourage the expansion and growth of trading centres in Kurnool.\textsuperscript{73} Elsewhere, Nirmal continued to be a celebrated manufacturer of exports under its nawab

\textsuperscript{67} IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/17. The Duvur talaq was given to revenue farmers between c.1748 and c.1775 under Abdun Nabi's successors, for example. (IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VII/56). The jagirdars of Nellore, too, like the nawabs of Cuddapah, attempted to attract merchant and banker investment to their tracts. (I.A.C. Boswell, A Manual of the Nellore District, [Madras, 1873], pp. 482-95; G. Mackenzie, A Manual on the Kistna District, [Madras, 1883], pp. 152-297, 297-8).

\textsuperscript{68} IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/42; Bh. Sivasankaranarayana, Anantapur District Gazetteer, (Hyderabad, 1970), p. 83. Locally based hereditary nawabs were, of course, not the only in-coming elements who wooed financiers; that need was felt by almost any military commander or revenue farmer with aspirations in the Deccan. The first Nizam himself made concerted overtures to merchants and bankers, for example. On his decisive march against Muhammad Khan in 1724, he sent an emissary, Ghiyas Khan, to Burhanpur to attempt to win over the governor there to his side by diplomacy. Ghiyas Khan himself failed, but the favourably inclined 'bankers and merchants' of Burhanpur 'placed Anwar Khan', the governor, 'in such embarrassment that he was obliged to make terms'. (E.B. Eastwick, The Kaisernanah-i- Hind, I, [London, 1877], Appendix, p. 7). A later Nizam, Salabat Jang, marched in the middle of a military campaign to Bidar in order to persuade the saraf-s there to give their financial backing to his plans for military conquest. (IOLR, Orme Collection, O.V./42).

\textsuperscript{69} Ibrahim Beg first won decisive campaigns against the Reddys of Gopalpet and the Velamas of Palunsah in north eastern Telangana. Next he subdued the powerful Surya Rao family, as well as some smaller zamindars in the Nirmal region of northern Telangana. The latter was eventually to constitute the core area of his nawabi.

\textsuperscript{70} Mohammad Imamuddin, Tazkira/Tarikh-i-Nirmal, (Hyderabad, 1327 A.H.), (Urd), pp.77-112.

\textsuperscript{71} IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/3. It was also with a view to encourage settlement and agricultural growth that Cuddapah nawabs, for example, periodically reviewed revenue settlements, granted revenue remissions in favour of irrigation works and made endowments to village temples.

\textsuperscript{72} IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/42.

\textsuperscript{73} The late eighteenth century chronicler Mir Husain credits Alif Khan (c.1724/5 - c.1747/8) with great building efforts. (Mir Husain cited in W. Kirkpatrick, Select Letters of Tipu Sultan, [London, 1811], Appendix).
Ibrahim Beg Khan in the 1760s and 1770s. Adoni, the jagir of the Nizam’s brother Basalat Jang, was also a centre of manufacture and export on the Hyderabad-Gooty road until the 1780s.  

1.3.1 Pastoralists, Mobile Groups, and Hill and Forest Groups

The discussion of the political economy of the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside has so far concentrated on groups and settlements associated with settled agriculture. However, this is not to suggest that pastoralists, mobile groups, and hill and forest groups were not important in the Hyderabad region. Pastoralists like the Kuruvas, Gollas, Boyas (or Bedars) and Dhangars controlled grasslands on which agricultural livestock depended. They also supplied manure to agriculture; wool to artisanal industry; and milk and animal products for consumption in villages and trading centres. Hill and forest groups like the Chenchus (or Chencoowars), Bhils and Gonds also controlled pasture, as well as supplying raw materials and articles of consumption. Their supplies included wood (for fuel and building), silk, dyes, herbs, honey and fruit. Mobile groups like the Banjaras owned vast herds of draught-oxen and provided crucial carrying services across the region. They were well known for the bulk carriage of grain from Marathwada to Telangana, and of salt from the Andhra coast into the interior.

The importance of shifting cultivator, pastoralist, mobile, and hill and forest groups was not limited to economic functions. They were also politically powerful on the southern, northern and eastern borders of Telangana, and the northern and western borders of Berar. The groups outside settled agriculture in all these areas were at least as numerous, and economically as dominant, as the settled agriculturalists. They could swing the fortunes of war between local small kings one way or another. Indeed, some of them emerged as small kings in their own right, like the Boya poligars of Deodrug and Shorapur. Others, like the Bhil and Gond naiks of Berar, would emerge as the leaders of communal domains in the rebellion against the British regime in Hyderabad in the period c.1811-53. The economic and political importance of non-settled groups in some areas of

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74 Adoni’s fertile hinterland produced dry grains and cotton, and its manufactories produced cotton cloth, carpets and thread. (See, for example: NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-17).


76 By withholding strategic access to one party while granting it to another, or augmenting the forces of one against the other.
pre-colonial Hyderabad was also reflected in their ties of marriage, kinship and religion with settled agricultural groups.

1.3.2 The Social Articulation of the Small King’s Authority

The creation and sustenance of core areas of zamindari and nawabi power, in other words, depended on more than merely favourable ecological factors. In practice, zamindars and nawabs laid emphasis on protection and patronage. There was an intermingling of the strategic and the symbolic in their approach. The concentration of population, investment, production and trade in the core areas made obvious economic sense with respect to water supplies, resources, raw materials and markets. Fortification and military protection were also likely to be easier and more effective in localized settlements, rather than in a scattered settlement pattern. But together with temples, irrigation works, choultries, rituals and festivals such concentration was likely to have the maximum visual and symbolic impact on the inhabitants of the core areas. Nevertheless, forts, armies, temples, irrigation works, charities, rituals and festivals were only one part of the small king’s legitimation, in a context where various small kings competed for labour and resources using similar strategies of protection and patronage. Another crucial dimension to the small king’s legitimation was the elaboration of incorporating legends, legitimation rituals and consensus building devices, all of which contributed to the making and sustenance of a sense of community within the core domains. The role of festivals, oral traditions and royal ceremonies mediated by specialists, such as Brahmans and bhat-s, or conducted directly by commonfolk, cannot be overestimated in this context.

The zamindar of Chintapalli participated in several annual public festivals. One of them, Navaratri, lasted nine nights, on each of which a different vahana of Vishnu was taken out in procession, to the accompaniment of music and dancing. The festival culminated on the tenth day with the celebration of Vijayadashmi. The patron deity of Amravati was on this occasion mounted on a brass horse and taken out in procession to a sacred tree near the Ramalingam temple in the afternoon. Here the God was made to shoot an arrow, which event was followed by a discharge of firearms on the part of the processionists themselves. The sacred tree near the Ramalingam temple might have been the Sumi tree. Telegus worshipped it elsewhere on the occasion of Vijayadashmi believing it to be ‘efficacious in expiating their sins and destroying their enemies’. The discharge of firearms was a symbolic representation of the victory of Rama over Ravana in the Hindu epic Ramayana. It might also have represented a hopeful concern with Amravati’s success against the attacks of enemy zamindars and British troops. The zamindar might

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have figured as a victorious leader in verses composed and sung in honour of ‘its great men’ on the occasion of Navaratri. The connection between his role as patron-protector and the community’s welfare was certainly evident at the time of another annual festival, Mahashivaratri. The zamindar would take a collection from devotees on the last day of this five day festival and use its proceeds to make precious ornaments for the deity or to ‘enrich the temple’ in other ways. He also bore part of the cost of the festival himself, supporting its processions, for instance. The latter culminated with the taking out of the great gajrath, or elephant drawn chariot, on the final day, which was accompanied, as usual, with music, dancing, singing and a ‘multitude of people of both sexes’. The gajrath was taken out in procession again at Sankaranti bearing the image of Amreshwar, the chief deity of Amravati. The zamindar made presents of cloth to his staff, to pujari-s and to Brahmans at this time. He made a liberal contribution to yet another festival, the Kartika Deepam, which lasted over a whole month. Public parikrama-s of the Amreshwar temple were conducted during this period and the town was illuminated with lights.79

The local sovereign’s virtues were not all realised until he was seen to give protection and patronage to the religious institutions of the community over which he ruled. Though they could not participate directly in Hindu festivals and rituals, nawabs supported temples and agraharam-s through grants.80 Similarly, they supported the religious establishments of their own faith, Islam. The pir Shah Mastan played an important role in the spiritual and political affairs of Kurnool in the time of its sixth nawab, Munawwar Khan, who was his principal murid, as well as patron. Shah Mastan played a leading role in Kurnool’s war, and subsequent peace negotiations, with Hyder Ali of Mysore.81 The jagirdar of Adoni in the 1770s, Basalat Jang, confirmed and instituted numerous grants to dargahs and agraharams. The grand mosque of Adoni was also built by him.82

The Mughal governors of Cuddapah in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century are described in Telegu sources as destroyers of temples. Temple traditions of places other than Cuddapah also record the adverse effects of early Mughal invasions. The most famous temple of the Telegu region was, and is, Tirupati. Its 18th century tradition looked back with nostalgia upon pre-Mughal days, when grants were still considerable. Though later Muslim rulers re-instituted grants that the early Mughals

79 NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-87.
80 The second nawab of Kurnool, Ibrahim Khan confirmed a royal grant to the temple of Srissailam in 1712, for example. The amount of the grant followed a Qutub Shahi sanad issued to the temple by the famous Brahman ministers Madanna and Akkanna in the late 17th century. (N.G. Chetty, A Manual of the Kurnool District, [Madras, 1866], p. 30).
81 William Kirkpatrick implies in his Select Letters of Tipu Sultan ([London, 1811], Appendix) that the war and the peace negotiations in question took place sometime in the 1760s. Another source, N.G. Chetty, A Manual of the Kurnool District, ([Madras, 1886], pp.35-6), which calls the pir Miskeen Shah instead of Shah Mastan, however, places the events in 1775. For an account of kingly patronage for Sufi silsila-s and khanqas in the Deccan from the fifteenth to the seventeenth centuries, and for dargah-s and sajda-nashin-s in the seventeenth century, see, R.M. Eaton, The Sufis of Bijapur, 1300-1700, (Ann Arbor, 1977), pp. 82-145, 210-51. For the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see, D.Prasad, Saints of Telangana, (Hyderabad, 1969), pp. 8-17.
82 NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-17.
resumed, they did so only on a reduced scale.\textsuperscript{83} British administrators, later still, did not increase the grants to pre-Mughal levels either.\textsuperscript{84} Daood Khan, subadar in the first decade of the early eighteenth century, is praised for his charity, however.\textsuperscript{85} Daood Khan's successor, the first nawab of Cuddapah, is also similarly praised. The third and fourth nawabs, Abdul Mohsin Khan and Abdul Majid Khan, are credited with confirming existing grants as well as with instituting new ones.\textsuperscript{86} The nawabs' grants to Hindu religious institutions, it appears, amounted to more than individual acts of charity, every grant representing, in actual practice, the creation of a consensus between themselves and the elites of local society. The grant deeds were signed not only by the nawab's representative and the grantee, but also by the principal landed families of the locality in which the grant was to be located.\textsuperscript{87} The nawabs and the local elites were involved, it might be said, in the building up of a sacred shared domain.\textsuperscript{88}

The public affirmation of bonds between a ruler and his subjects through religious rituals, festivals and ceremonies had been known in south India since at least the days of the Vijayanagar sovereigns.\textsuperscript{89} Some recent works establish their importance in small kingdoms in the post-Vijayanagara days. The coronation ceremony of the Raja of Kalahasti in 1778 inspired a visitor to record his impression of the tremendous appeal it held for the local populace:

'The silence of the multitude...during all this was admirable. The awe and reverence with which they beheld the rites, and listened to the Brahmins was so great that...the voices of the Brahmins were distinctly heard of the fort, but the moment of adoration, which was...when the last rite...was completed, no sooner come, that a simultaneous shout burst from the

\textsuperscript{83} IOLR, Mack Gen, 16.
\textsuperscript{84} IA, (June 1872), p. 192.
\textsuperscript{85} Though there is no evidence of Daood Khan's having directly instituted temple grants, there are several examples of his Hindu bankers and revenue farmers repairing damaged temples and instituting fresh agraharams and other religious charities.
\textsuperscript{86} IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/3, 17, 42.
\textsuperscript{87} Thus when the agraharik of Bhairavasamudram, Ganjikotta taluq, Cuddapah district, Raghunath Somayya, was awarded a grant, the document was signed by an agent on the nawab's behalf, by the recepient of the grant and by the heads of the fifteen dominant Reddy families of the Bhairavasamudram quarter of Ganjikotta taluq. (IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VII/3). For other examples of consensus-based religious grants by the Muslim nawabs to Hindu institutions, - in the Chamnoor, Siddhavatam, Nosum and Kamalapur taluqs, - see IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/42.
\textsuperscript{88} The religious charity of the Cuddapah nawabs was not exclusively directed at Hindu institutions. They were also responsible for instituting many Muslim religious charities. The latter process involved inviting Sufi pirs of some reputation to set up their takia-s in the Cuddapah region in some cases. An example was the setting up of a takia in the Tadparti qasba by a newly arrived pir. (IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VII/17).
\textsuperscript{89} H. Krishna Sastri suggests in his \textit{South Indian Images of Gods and Goddesses} [(Madras, 1916), pp.3-7] that the principal ritual performed every day in temples dedicated to Shiva or Vishnu was the rajopchara, or 'the paying of royal honours', which brought into play gifts given by kings and chieftains. In the richer and more celebrated temples, thus, the paraphernalia of rajopchara included jewels, crowns, umbrellas, palanquins, elephants, camels, bodies of servants, and troupes of dancers and musicians. A ceremony similar to the rajopchara was also performed, though on a smaller scale, in non-Brahman, non-vedic temples dedicated to local village goddesses. (For this aspect, see also: J. Stevenson. 'On the Ante-Brahmanical Worship of the Hindus in the Dekhan', \textit{JRAS}, 5(1839), pp. 189-97; \textit{JRAS}, 6(1841), pp. 239-41) The relevance of religious ritual and festivals to the practice of kingship in south India since the early Vijayanagar days, c. early fifteenth century, is also brought out in C. Hayavadana Rao's scholarly study, \textit{The Dasara in Mysore}, [(Bangalore,1936), pp. 3, 128-66, 195-200].
whole'.

The smallest of poligars in the Raichur doab was 'regularly installed with all the forms of a prince of extensive territory, and had his nominal officers of state subsisting on small portions of land'. Religious festivals like Vijayadashmi, and coronation ceremonies, were explicitly royal in their imagery and symbolism. They were, as it were, legitimation rituals mediated by Brahmans. But such rituals only addressed themselves to the community from on high, or a distance. They could not make or maintain the community in quite the same terms as some other social practices, which one might loosely define as consensus building devices.

These were public occasions which invited communal participation and reaffirmed a sense of community. The festival of Holi, celebrated all over India, serves as an example. We have an account of it as it was celebrated in villages of central India and the northern Deccan in the early nineteenth century. A sacred spot was chosen in the village a month in advance of the main Holi ceremonies. The spot was then hallowed by the village pujari in the presence of the pate\[

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and village elders. A pole was next planted here for the Holika. The children of the village devoted themselves to the construction of the Holika from cow dung cakes, wooden planks and combustible rubbish during the ensuing month. The Holika was communally worshipped on the appointed day at the end of the month and then burnt. It was set up in front of temples of Shiva or Vishnu in some parts of the Deccan. The more 'solemn ceremonies' of Holi ended with the worship and burning of the Holika, and a carnivalesque strain now emerged. The playing of Dulandi on the day after Holika went hand in hand with the free use of 'abusive' language:

'All distinctions of rank are levelled; any chance passenger, 'be he hakim, old man or raja', is obliged to bow to the law of the Huli; they must bear with good grace, all the vulgar gali...' 

The normally 'respectable' individual would also occasionally join in:

'He will forget, for the time, all sense of decency, and think it no degradation to expose himself for the sport of the insane rabble...his face having been blackened, he is mounted on a sorry donkey, and paraded in mimic state through the streets, his drunken attendants hooting and shouting, calling him all the fine names they can think of...'.

However, 'many of the more respectable persons' withdrew into their houses to perform a private Holika ceremony when 'persons of the lower orders sally forth into the streets'. They clearly disapproved of the behaviour of the 'lower orders', notwithstanding the efforts of the Bhavishyottara Purana to incorporate it into the 'official' tradition about

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90 Brown, 'Ceremonies Observed at the Coronation of a Hindu Rajah', *Asiatic Researches*, 13(1820), pp. 311-16.
91 IOLR, Elliot Collection, Mss Eur F-47, T. Munro to Madras Board of Revenue, Letter, 20 Mar 1802.
Holi:

‘Then let the people, fearless, thrice circumambulate the fire..., and let them sing and laugh, and let everyone utter without fear, whatever comes into his mind. In various ways, and in their own speech, let them freely indulge their tongues, and sing...whatever songs they will. Apalled by these vociferations, by the oblation to fire, and by the loud laughter of the children, that wicked rakshasi will be destroyed and thenceforth the festival of Holika shall be renowed among mankind’.

The ‘levelling dimension’ of Holi was short lived and the ‘return to the state of sober citizens’ was noticeable. Customary social roles were highlighted, as if to emphasise that people had ‘become rational again’. The zamindar was attended by his raiyyat when he set out to exchange gifts with his relatives. Various tradesmen went from door to door, in order to earn their customary cash tokens. The barber thus carried his mirror about and the pattal-maker a colourful pattal. In Rajputana, ‘princes and chiefs receive gifts from their domestics’ to mark the end of riot and the return to sanity. As the Holika burnt down, people also dashed off with glowing bits of wood or cow dung cake to rekindle ‘the culinary fire at home, which has (previously) been religiously extinguished’. This practice was known in many parts of India, and not only among Hindus. Some non-Hindu families also took great pains to keep the freshly kindled fire alight throughout the year, until the time of the next Holika:

‘In travelling among the Bheels of Bagur we met with some tribes among whom the prejudice on this point was very remarkable’.

Khan Ali, the author of the foregoing observation, noted with some surprise that Muslims ‘of the poorer sort’ also shared with Hindus and Bhils the significance of this Holi practice.

A very elementary analysis of the foregoing description of Holi suggests that it incorporated two almost paradoxical elements within it: the rejection and defiance of authority and also its recognition and reaffirmation. If it is remembered that Holi was celebrated publicly in the 18th century context of the communal domain, one or two of its features take on an additional significance. The Holika ceremony, which was meant to put an end to the dark side of things, - bad agricultural seasons, epidemics, personal misfortunes and so on, - and inaugurate the good side, - health, plenty and happiness, - was performed in front of the local temple, the most potent symbol of the king’s patronage. When the people became ‘rational again’ after dulandi, and reverted to their ‘customary roles’, the zamindar, or local king, led his raiyyat in public procession in person, while visiting relatives to exchange gifts with them. Holi was a manifest display of communal consensus about who was king, who was the community, and what relationship they bore to each other.
If Holi symbolized incorporation within the domain, certain other visual, or hypothetically visual, symbols emphasized the opposite: exclusion. The wooded and hilly margins of settled agriculture in Telangana and Berar were the home of a variety of shifting cultivator and hunting gathering groups, such as the Chenchos, Bhils, Gonds and Boyas. Their marginality was emphasized in the small kings’ domains in the settled agricultural tracts in terms of disassociation and exclusion through telling motifs. The Chenchoowars residing in the hills near Srisailam aroused sentiments associated with the unfamiliar and unacceptable among the people of the neighbouring plain. Their wandering life and different ways were regarded with misgiving:

‘They never stay in one place for more than a month. Some of them used to erect...huts on the hill of Srisail...and,...if they wanted any provisions, used to go to the gramaam [to] buy...bhomeapatram [or mudpots], cholem, sajaloo, netchmy, rice, salt...tamarind..., carry them to their own places, beat the cholem with stone, for they...[have]...no...pestle and mortar, dress it in the mudpot, and [thus] take their victuals. They also eat chechoogadaloo [or a jungle root] after rooting it’.93

The Chenchoowars’ want of a sense of dress and toilette, the latter including a disregard for the imperatives of the menstruation cycle, also excited strong disapproval:

‘...they never clean the dirty places unless they found water at that very time’.94

Legitimation rituals and consensus building devices were as temporary as they were influential. Although they recurred, they were based on short lived experience. They could fade from memory in intervals. Incorporating legends were, however, potentially more abiding. They relied on the constant renewal of memory; simply through the telling formally or informally, in public or in private, by specialist or non-specialist, by child or adult, in part or in whole. They could also be written down or inscribed. The following oral traditions, - myths, legends, histories and folklore, - from the 18th century were, in fact, transcribed. The manner and context in which this was done, - by the Brahman agents of a British officer, - must have have introduced distorting layers of interpretation and interpolation. Nevertheless, they are no less a valuable portion of the 18th century record than are Asaf Jahi and British documents, for we know that their original authorship was local, both in the sense of being indigenous and in the sense of coming ‘from below’, at least as low as one can get in the circumstances.

The importance and role of legitimation rituals and, to a lesser extent, consensus building devices, in the maintenance of kingship in medieval and post-medieval South India have been emphasized by various historians in recent years. But since both

93 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 38.
94 Ibid; see also: Mack Gen, 52, Hill People of Bhadrachalam and Palunsha, 1798; Elliot Collection, Mss Eur D 318, Aboriginal Caste Book, III.
legitimation rituals and consensus building devices tended to be articulated through formal and spectacular means, the less obvious, but probably more abiding, role of incorporating legends, - as folk memory, - has gone almost unnoticed. Local traditions usually traced the origins of the patron-protector and his domain to divine intervention, and selectively glorified their subsequent history.

In the tradition of a Deshmukh of Udaigiri, one of his ancestors, Lakshmana Rao, was eulogised for having suppressed the destructive activities of an enemy, Mukku Timmanah, and bringing ‘good order’ to the country. His measures to achieve good order involved acts befitting a patron-protector. He is said to have repaired tanks, sunk wells and ‘induced the inhabitants to give danapatrams’, or deeds of charity. Some landed elements gave a tenth part of their land, others an eighth part and yet others a fifth. Another deshmukh recalled the measures of patronage undertaken by his grand uncle, Ramchandra Bhopulla Bala Rao, who built, among other things, an agraharam for Brahmans, complete with fields and gardens around it.95

The tradition of Pratikanda also highlighted the activities of patrons; a zamindar who built a reservoir, a goldsmith who endowed a temple, and a Begum Sahiba who instituted charities. The family tradition of the Dupaad zamindars attached a foundational significance to the measures of patronage undertaken by a certain Venkatadri Naid. The Naid chose to build up Srisailam as his capital on account of the presence in it of a Mallikarjunaswamy temple. He sent for sahukars, banias, Brahmans and various other settlers, and Srisailam boasted at least one thousand houses in a short time. The Naid also built a village some distance east of Srisailam and established a temple there. This village was called Venkatadrinaidpalam after him. Furthermore, he had one new reservoir dug out and several old ones repaired. Still more settlements, gardens and temples, were also established, and grants instituted for their upkeep. His sons continued to build settlements and to institute new charities. Their father’s sisters also joined in to build a temple dedicated to Venugopalaswamy in a village called Malempullah, besides building several choultries and instituting other charities. A later Naid in the Dupaad tradition established fifteen new agrahams. Two other Naids, later still, were also involved in similar activity. Subba Naid, who recounted the Dupaad tradition in the early nineteenth century, was himself known for his generosity towards religious folk, kinsmen, bards, dancers, performers, servants and others; he was popularly referred to as the kalpavriksha, the proverbial tree that never ceased to bear fruit.96

The local traditions of several villages around Gooty recalled favourably the activities of generous patrons and those of the selfish and oppressive with bitterness. The

95 IOLR, Mack Unbound, VII/15.
96 This kalpavriksha was demoted of much of its fruit by Munro’s revenue settlement, however, which left Subba Naid somewhat impoverished and bitter according to his tale in the first decade of the nineteenth century. (IOLR, Mack Unbound, 34)
foundational importance of the community over which the patron-protector presided was emphasised in the Gooty traditions. Stories regarding the establishment of villages described how patrons had been instrumental in inviting settlers from various regions and bestowing offices, grants and honours upon them, according to status and rank. Descent and gotra were accounted for in these appointments. Various village authorities, – karnam, purohit, blacksmith, carpenter, potmaker, washerman, barber and others, - thus received hereditary functions. The grants and allowances connected with each person and office were recorded, which usually took the form of land demarcated by stone inscriptions at regular intervals. Each inscription invoked a particular god and his qualities, and gave the details of possession. Anyone disturbing the stone inscriptions was warned to expect punishment for the sin of killing a cow at Kashi.77 In Mootalapadu, tradition having been recounted to link patron with community, and community with land, the location of the settlement was described in sacred terms, - by the names of the holy temples, tanks and rivers in various directions, - as well as in relation to nearby villages, marts, towns and forts.78 The karnam of the village Bhairavasamudram in the Ganjikotta division of the Cudddapah district in southern Rayalseema had a historical record of grants made by various patrons to temples and individuals.79 Elliot observed for a district in north eastern Telangana that ‘ancient names and ancient boundaries for every sub-division of a village exist everywhere... The limits of the padah are known to everyone in the village. Each padah has a name given to it from time immemorial and is [still] talked of by that name in everyday’s conversation. Many ryots cultivate within the padah without exceeding its limits [although] the individual holding in it [might] shift from accidental causes such as poverty, death and desertion’.80 More abstract conceptions also suggested the habitation of settlements under the shadow of patron-protectors by communities linked in traditional ways.81 The linking of community to patron in reverential terms was evident to a surveyor of irrigation works in southern and eastern Telangana in the late 18th century:

‘...attached to the memory of the founders of these works [are] peculiar ideas of respect and estimation, not inferior to those of the founders of pagodas, choultries and other public edifices, to which...religion... [has] annexed a superior stamp of sanctity and honour. ...the care of making and keeping them in constant repair has always been a peculiar object of the ...Hindoo Governments and ...Mohmmmedan chiefs as were distinguished for a regard to the welfare of their people’.82

77 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 36.
78 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 39.
79 IOLR, Mack Unbound, VIII/3.
80 IOLR, Elliot Collection, Mss Eur F 47, Local History, II.
81 As in an eighteenth century manuscript of a popular Kannada account of caste divisions that was shown to one of Mackenzie’s agents. (IOLR, Mack Gen, 20/4)
82 IOLR, Mack Gen, 59.
In the tradition of the zamindar of Aygoody, as related in the early 19th century, the ancestor who founded the zamindari was at first a sardar in the army of a Delhi _badshah_. The badshah became infatuated with a young woman of the sardar's family and one day proposed marriage. The sardar, however, pleaded that his religion and caste did not sanction such an alliance. But the king was adamant and threatened to take the woman by force if the sardar would not give way. The troubled family decided to flee Delhi by night. But the king's agents came in pursuit the following morning, and began to catch up with the sardar and his family when the latter were forced to check their progress at the banks of a violent stream. The trapped family prayed to their family deity for help. A divine miracle saved them. Two Pongoo trees on either side of the stream bent low to form a bridge over it, and came upright as soon as the sardar had crossed over with his family:

"This circumstance is regarded...as an occurrence of itself sufficient to emblazen the lives of these poligars."\(^{103}\)

Thereafter, the sardar arrived in Vijayanagara, where he was honourably received by the king and given the position of a naik in his service. The naik subsequently had a dream in which he was urged to go a certain tract, clear the jungle there, and establish temples and settlements in it. The dream also informed him of the imminent arrival in the tract of certain families being driven from their homes by famine. The tradition of Aygoody thus emphasised the creation of a patron-protector, and his community and domain, through divine intervention. A similar strain was also to be found in the tradition of the Tottiars further to the south.\(^{104}\)

Ballads, rituals, traditions and the other efforts that emphasised the importance of the defence of the community and domain, as well as the leadership of the patron-protector, usually tend to give the impression that all was happy and well within the domain itself. But when that impression is placed in the context of the constant efforts small kings made to maintain defensibility against external attacks, it belies a somewhat deliberate and overstated emphasis on depressing internal conflict and creating internal consensus. Internal conflict could arise from a variety of factors: the unequal distribution and appropriation of land and other resources, and social and religious inequalities.

The inevitability of caste inequalities was recognized frankly in a Kannada document of the late eighteenth century. There were those castes, it declared, which were free and those which were servile.\(^{105}\) The general sentiment was borne out in the actual treatment of weavers, for example, with regard to their place of residence in villages. Weaver

\(^{103}\) NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-19, A biographical account of the Zamindar of Aygoody, 1801-20; see also: M-24, An account of the Tottiars of Dindigul, 1818.

\(^{104}\) Ibid.

\(^{105}\) IOLR, Mack Gen, 20/4.
families were common in districts throughout Hyderabad. They were usually obliged to live apart from the main settlement, which was reserved for the more respectable castes, the former's ritual status and occupation 'not requiring residence where there is any local objection'\textsuperscript{106} When the ritually inferior were allowed in the same settlements as higher castes, elaborate rules governed their access to various public places and occasions. They were debarred, for instance, from entering temples or participating in certain religious festivals which involved high caste participation and received the patronage of the zamindar. Their own shrines and festivals were placed at a safe distance from the respectable precinct. In Amravati, the annual festival in honour of shakti goddesses was confined to the outskirts of town, being shunned in particular by the Brahmans, who refused to visit outcaste temples. Another Shudra festival, sheddel, was also confined to the outskirts. It was managed, furthermore, solely out of the contributions of its participants, in sharp contrast to festivals like Navaratri, Ramanami and Sankaranti, which were supported in grand style by the Zamindar of Amravati and celebrated in public thoroughfares with great ceremony and elan\textsuperscript{107}

The communal disfavour which governed the occupation and residence of particular groups was evident to observers in the Raichur Doab in the early years of the nineteenth century. Land and resources were unequally distributed 'between the [upper and] ..middle classes and the lowest classes, or between the farmer and the slave'. Bedars, who straddled this divide, occupied an ambiguous social position. Some politically powerful families, such as those of the Raja of Shorapur, and the poligars of Arugiri, Keeadigiri and Gullug, were 'indulgently treated', but the majority of Bedar families were ranked below the Shudras, and regarded as outcastes on account of their hunting activity. Dheds in the Raichur Doab shared the Bedars' fate, 'being here the same miserable wretched creatures as elsewhere'.\textsuperscript{108} 109

The possibility of internal tensions arising from social and ritual iniquities was recognised by political and religious authorities, and attempts were made to resolve or depress them. A dispute over the use of caste insignia arose between members of right and left hand castes at a marriage ceremony in Rayalseema. It was, as usual, referred to Kanchi for settlement. The decision taken there was ratified by the local authorities. Kanchi had issued a list of insignia appropriate to each of the sub-castes each caste involved in the dispute. Leaders were allowed privileged access to some additional insignia, however:

'Besides the...[insignia]...to which the nadudesha are entitled, as the white

\textsuperscript{106} NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-64, Memoir, 1810; see also: Walker, ' Tour in the Nizam's Territories'.

\textsuperscript{107} NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-87.

\textsuperscript{108} NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-182, Memoir of Raichur, 1816-17.

\textsuperscript{109} IOLR, Mack Gen, 59, Extract from Letter, J. Sullivan to Court of Directors, 3 Feb 1779, On the Northern Circars.
umbrella and the palpavada (spreading of cloths) are the highest honours, sanyasis, gods and princes are entitled to them.\textsuperscript{110}

A warning was issued against any disregard for the Kanchi’s prescriptions: ‘whoever takes an insignia to which he is not entitled, his family will surely die’.\textsuperscript{111}

Caste sanctions were also regularly provided for in the legal proceedings of Marathwada villages, affecting both offenders and victims. When the non-Brahman officer of a sardesai carried away a Brahman family from a village he was attacking and retained its youngest daughter in custody, the horrified authorities described his conduct as ‘unworthy even of a Muhammadan’. The officer was severely punished and the sardesai whom he served was also issued a reprimand. In another case of caste offence, a Maratha who killed his mistress and her paramour was granted a pardon, but was directed to undergo the purification ceremonies necessary for recovering caste. Victims of caste outrage were no less subject to notions of caste honour than offenders. A Maratha returning from Muslim captivity was considered to have lost his caste and was not allowed to resume residence in his village until the local patels had considered his case. In one instance, they decided to allow him back into the fold after he had undergone the purification ceremonies enjoined by the shastras. The patels’ decision was approved of and confirmed by the higher authorities.\textsuperscript{112} The concern of the Dasari division of the Chenchu tribe in Telangana to preserve their social integrity was reflected in the dim view that their guru took of acts that questioned the community’s ritual norms. The Dasari Chenchu were required ritually to affirm their allegiance to their order by making presents and paying respects to their guru at the math of Ahubol annually, at the time of the phalgun festival. Any individual failing to comply with the requirement received a stern message from the guru. The messenger would usually convey to the deviant that he had forfeited the privilege of wearing the red mark of the sect on his forehead and would not be released from the guilt of his act of omission until the guru himself had personally pardoned him. This was, in effect, a threat of excommunication and rarely failed to work.\textsuperscript{113}

Particular caste disputes might be resolved, but deeper antagonisms were another matter. Certain Brahman castes of the Deccan looked upon the Karli Brahmans of Maharashtra with suspicion. It was believed that:

‘They...beguile Telegu brahmin youths into their houses; such a one they feed luxuriously and give him a female to attend him, so that attachment for her may keep him there until...[the festival of Navaratri]. On this occasion they feed him amply and then bring him before the...Goddess, and as he bows down to her they slay him. This is done in every

\textsuperscript{110} J.F. Mackenzie, ‘Caste Insignia’, \textit{IA}(1875), pp. 344-5.
\textsuperscript{113} IOLR, Mack Unbound, 38.
house...".  

The Karli Brahmins' methods were said to have become more covert after their public humiliation, a parade with shaven heads, in Poona as a punishment for their malpractices. They were now accused of claiming Telegu Brahman victims with even greater guile than before: by serving them food that contained slow working poison at the religious feasts to which they traditionally invited them.

1.3.3 Communal Domains in Conflict

The attempt so far has been to indicate how the productive cores of the Hyderabad countryside concentrated labour and resources; how their competition held the potential for conflicts; and how the nature of zamindari and nawabi authority gave real meaning to this potential. This section looks at the way in which such potential was translated into a criss-cross pattern of local alliances and conflict. Numerous Telegu local histories that become available from the late 18th century allow for a long term insight into the pattern of competition and conflict between the core areas of zamindari and nawabi power in the Hyderabad countryside. This had implications for local powers and for any attempts to build up a regional power in the Deccan. The Telegu regions of Hyderabad, - Telangana, Rayalseema and Andhra, - were, generally speaking, sparsely populated and offered only limited opportunities for agricultural expansion, except in the fertile river valleys and well watered plains. Most of the more ambitious land-controlling groups hence concentrated their expansionary efforts in a limited number of fertile core areas. This meant that the boundaries of agriculture and ambition were liable to meet and clash as the bosses of local domains competed for fertile land and labour from a scarce pool. Such a situation provided potential for local conflict. Local bosses were tempted to attempt expansion by military means, or to destroy the villages and crops of enemies. Both methods put further pressure on scarce resources. Local traditions often represented the encounters of their patron-protectors and communities with the wider world in terms of the quest for more land or the defence of existing possessions. Support for the patron-protector in the defence of his domain was, indeed, even enjoined upon inhabitants as a matter of sacred duty. They were called upon to follow their leader in defending the honour and sanctity of the community and domain. Zamindars themselves represented any attack on their authority as an attack on their rusoom, or customary privileges, to which they were entitled as the patrons and protectors of their tracts.

Local bosses in the quest for more land and power also represented their encounters with the wider world as matters of inter-communal rivalry and conflict. The neighbouring Boyas figured prominently as an enemy community in the tradition of the Naid zamindars


115 For a brief discussion of the 'sanctity' of the Gadwal, Wanaparthy, Jatprole and Amarchinta samathanam-s in the context of external pressures, see: M.V. Rajagopal, Mahbubnagar, (Hyderabad, 1976), pp. 38-41.
of Dupaad. For example, conflict with the Boyas had occupied much of the career of one of the Naid ancestors, Suryappa Naid. The Boyas had at one time begun to ‘destroy the [Naid] countries’ east of Srisailam so comprehensively that Suryappa even considered flight. Such activity on the part of the Boyas was characterised with hostile disapproval in the Naid tradition. The appearance of Muslims, too, was first seen in similar vein, as the advent of turshaloo. Their offensive characterisation was initially understood with reference to the activities of Fakhrullah Khan and Ibrahim Khan, Mughal intermediaries of the late 17th century. Fakhrullah Khan inflicted a crushing and humiliating defeat on Venkatadri Naid, a successor of Suryappa’s. He destroyed the buildings and temples of Srisailam, massacred most of the Naid household, and dishonoured its women. After surveying the scene of destruction, Venkatadri Naid retired to his native village, bathed in the sacred tank there, prayed to his household deity, despaired of redeeming his honour and committed suicide. The experience of one of Venkatadri’s successors, Mallikarjuna, with Ibrahim Khan, was similar. Two further descendants, Purushottam and Chinnappa Naid, had ‘much trouble’ with yet other neighbours, Reddy zamindars. Chinnappa’s sons were again severely humiliated, by a qiladar who received assistance from one of their cousins, and committed suicide. Their descendants struggled to avenge the humiliation and losses, but were diverted by the attacks of the Boyas, who were by now back in business.\footnote{IOLR, Mack Unbound, 35.}

The zamindars of Chintapalli, Innaconda and Bellamkonda also had troubled relations with their neighbours, the Chincowars and Cammawars of the hills that marked the western boundaries of their domains, and with the poligars beyond the hills. Friction heightened between the local bosses on either side of the hills in the 1790s. The zamindars on the Chintapalli side accused those on the other side of provoking them by attacking their domains. They described them offensively as leaders of communities ‘who have neither mercy, nor truth, nor modesty’ and consider the murder ‘a trifling matter’. The zamindars also suspected the hill people of conniving with the attackers, by deliberately leaving the passes in the hills poorly guarded. The hill people replied that this was merely an excuse on the part of the Chintapalli zamindars to avoid paying them the customary allowances due for the defence of the passes, and warned that provocative aspersions were being cast on their sense of honour. They soon retaliated by burning and plundering the Chintapalli zamindars’ villages. The latter also replied by carrying fire and sword into the hills.\footnote{IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/30/849, c.1796.}

Jupulli Appa Rao, a zamindar of Udaigiri, Khamman and Sarvepalli in the 1790s narrated another tradition that referred to local enmities and conflicts. Neighbouring poligars had begun ‘interfering’ with the Rao villages in his great grandfather’s time and
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\(^{116}\) IOLR, Mack Unbound, 35.

\(^{117}\) IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/30/849, c.1796.
were forcibly subdued by him. But Mukku Timmannah ‘resumed to destroy the countries’ after a quiet interlude. Appa Rao’s grandfather also had an unhappy relationship with ‘the Damarla people’, who deprived him of villages and rights. Appa Rao’s son, Lakshman Rao, was forced by the Damarlas to relinquish his possessions and go into exile. Jupulli Appa Rao himself grew up in exile, but later managed to regain some of the Raos’ traditional influence. Syed Qadir Khan, a jagirdar, now proved to be the main obstacle in the way of the fulfilment of his hopes:

‘which being my rights...we have asked him why he would not allow [us] our rights...’.118

Ramchandra Rao, another zamindar, narrated another tradition, which again recalled the story of several generations of uncertain possession and influence on account of enemy activities. One of his ancestors, Dharma Rao, had for many years remained engaged in conflict with the poligars of Udaigiri, as they had encroached upon his domain. A descendant of Ramachandra’s had had similar experiences with ‘the Damarla people’, as well as with other ‘Rao peoples’, and finally died in great distress. The father of the narrator of this tradition, Ramachandra Rao, had been able to retrieve the situation somewhat, though he, too, continued to be harassed by the Damarlas. Ramachandra Rao himself had inherited the ancestral domain in the context of external enmities and hostilities. He spoke of enemy neighbours with bitterness, referring offensively to their caste and community. He represented his losses as injuries to the honour of his community and domain, and to his gains as adding to their glory. He displayed the symbols of the latter, - robes, titles, riding in state, - with pride:

‘We being Vellamahs,...belong to the Gotra of Viplav...[The] Rayangaroos... are [among] my [illustrious] relations. We used to dress [in]...gold embroidered cloths, and the cincar also presented the same to us. We also dressed [in] the gowns of white cloth...’.119

The Raos of Hannamkonda also referred to enemy communities in bitter and offensive terms, while glorifying their own status and deeds:

‘The faujdar used to send a proper person...to meet [us]...outside... [the] village, and...always [rose]...from his seat when...we went to [the] cutcherry. He used to seat us near his pillow...’.120

External observers also noted that the patron-protectors’ quest for authority led to local conflicts. Patupoliam, the petta of a ‘petty poligar’, was ‘populous, owing chiefly to the insecurity of the jungly tract in its neighbourhood from the contentions of this poligar and

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118 IOLR, Mack Unbound, VII/15.
119 Ibid.
120 IOLR, Mack Unbound, VII/16.
his neighbour of Cotupaliam’ in the early years of nineteenth century.\footnote{121} The poligars of Keeadigiri and Arakil were:

‘very apt to encourage their retainers in predatory incursions into the Raichur districts, on account of their claims to rusoom being unsatisfied’.\footnote{122}

The Cavital pargana of Raichur was plunged into ‘a state of great confusion owing to the unsettled pretensions of the Zamindars on the fiefs of Neelkantha Rao and the Desai, both of whom have been ejected and are refugees within the Kannagiri district...’\footnote{123} at the turn of the nineteenth century. The ejected local bosses’ attachment to their land as their main source of livelihood is understandable. It must have been the greater for its being reinforced by traditions that mixed the defence of the domain with the honour of the community and of the patron-protector. Though the Rao and the Desai had been forced to flee, ‘their tenants deny all allegiance to the Zamindar; they slight his authority on all occasions of its being asserted and retaliate on his villages whatever evils be produced on theirs’.\footnote{124} The ejected parties complained bitterly about the zamindar’s dishonesty and injustice, and their resentment took the form of counter attacks:

‘...every poligar maintains his tenants in an armed state, and if he thinks himself sufficiently powerful, demands his rusoom at the head of a force; otherwise he sends parties in the night to rob the villages and lay waste the fields of those who refuse compliance, and retire from such depredations to the security of their ghadi-s, situated for the most part on numerous low hills.’\footnote{125}

In the Rawdiconda pargana tensions ran so high as to ‘keep nearly the whole of the male population in an armed state’.

Sometimes, the community of a disputed poligar domain would retire into the hills or jungle when forced out of their rusoom on the plain. In Gurramkonda, ‘the former co-adjutor of the poligar of Toomalgudy’ would emerge from his retreat at night accompanied by his loyal band. They would carry torches and sound drums and trumpets as they went attacking villages, making no secret of their sense of outraged honour.\footnote{126} Similar means were adopted by the nadu gauda-s of Raichur district. When the Raichur Zamindar forced the nadu gaudas to flee and tried ‘to assume the management of the villages’ himself, he found ‘considerable opposition on the part of the inhabitants

\footnotesize{121} Mahdi Ali, \textit{Hyderabad Affairs}, I, 70-105.
122 NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-158.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid.
125 Ibid.
126 NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-47. ‘In Gurramconda in particular’, according to Munro, writing in 1802, ‘every head of a village favoured by natural strength of the country became a poligar’. (IOLR, Elliot Collection, Ms Eur F-47, Thomas Munro to Madras Board of Revenue, Letter, 20 Mar 1802; see also, Munro Collection, Ms Eur 151/10, ‘Instructions to William Thacery, Adoni Division, 31 Dec 1800).}
themselves, where villages... afford sufficient protection against any but serious attacks'.

In the Mudgal Circar, local bosses tried to make sure that their ghadis were ‘of competent strength against any hasty insult or revenge of their neighbours...’. One of them, Venkatiah of Tawurugiri and Halapoor, was considered a ‘highly respectable’ old man. But since old age and respectability were no guarantee of rusoom, ‘He has upwards of a hundred armed retainers’. In Tawurugiri, local bosses were generally regarded the ‘sovereigns of the villages they own’ and the sense of community they commanded in their villages was closely aligned with the military measures they took for the defence of their domains. Their villages were generally surrounded by ramparts and the towers were kept in good order. Most of the inhabitants bore arms and were expected to be ready to fight when called upon by the patron-protector to do so: ‘The independent...tone of the Dessyes pervades their dependants and tenants’. The latter apparently had good reason to put their faith in the leadership of their patron-protectors:

‘The population of the villages belonging to the Desais is usually great and the inhabitants themselves much better conditioned than those of the circar villages; this arises from the immunities they receive, the mutual protection they afford each other, contrasted with the insecurity of the circar tenants, whose lands are laid waste and property plundered, either from the wantoness of the Desai’s tenants or with the object of inducing their settling within the Desai’s protection, which in some instances is bought by the payments of fees or rusooms’.  

Patron-protectors and inhabitants felt it necessary always to be in a state of readiness to respond to unexpected threats to community and domain. Not even the death of the poligar was allowed to compromise this concern in Aygoody. If the death of a reigning poligar could be anticipated, his heir was ceremoniously prepared for the succession a few hours before the expected event. He was then led to his father’s deathbed to receive from him the chief arms of the poliam. Next he was taken in joyous procession to a dharmashala specially prepared for the succession. Here he demanded tokens of tribute from the ‘principal subjects’ of the poliam as proof of their allegiance. When he had received these, he was declared the lawful successor, and ‘the people raised their hands and adored him’. The new poligar was expected to assume his responsibilities without any delay. He was hence forbidden to see his father’s corpse or to show any signs of grief at his death. The funeral rites were performed by a younger brother or cousin.

While spectacular public rituals played an obvious part, ballads were another familiar means of inspiring leaders and populace to give priority to the defence of their
community and domain. As the popular prescription of the Sumati Shatakam put it: ‘To attack in battle’s meritorious for a man; this quality the poets should praise and education teach’. A 17th century ballad of the Naid of Kurnool began with a kind of war cry on the part of the hero; ‘I come, its I, the mighty Papadu!’ It then described the hero taking leave of his mother with ambitious intentions on his mind:

‘Then to his mother quick he hied,  
And lowly bent him by her side:  
‘Mother’ to fix and drive the share,  
The filthy household pot to bear,  
Are not for me. My arm shall fall  
Upon Golkonda’s castle wall:  
I’ll scorn the lord of Delhi’s might;  
To me shall Bandar yield this night;  
Before Kurnool I then will stand.  
And with gold jewels deck this hand.  
Let not my followers miss the prize  
That fortune holds before their eyes’!

Next came the appearance of the hero clad in armour, inspiring respect and terror in the hearts of all:

‘Within its form low crouched the hare;  
Trembled the deer to leave their lair;  
The tender babes refused their breast;  
The fox and the lion slunk to rest."

Then came the meeting of the poligar with his loyal band of warriors. Every act on this occasion, even their nervous consumption of liquor, was invested with heroic significance. The fragment of the ballad of the Kurnool poligar ends at this point, but it is not difficult to imagine the strain in which it might have continued, describing the exploits of the warriors which led to the greater glory of the poliam.

Zamindars found internal conflict depressing and consensus building devices a necessary part of their efforts to mobilize people and resources in their domains so as to effect further expansion or to defend against aggression. Defensive or offensive manoeuvres also tended to distract from internal conflict. Conflicts in the Hyderabad countryside were thus the products of external exigencies as well as the internal realities of the core areas of local power, and became ideological ingredients in the traditions about, and the practice of, local sovereignty. Not surprisingly, therefore, the zamindar in the Deccan was, par excellence, a warrior chief. Nor did he hesitate to suppress internal conflict with armed force when traditional conflict depressing and consensus building

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133 IOLR, Mack Unbound, VII/38.  
135 Ibid.  
136 Ibid.  
137 Ibid.
devices failed to work.

The zamindars' local warfare also helped shape the overall framework and character of the regional political order of Hyderabad Deccan. The sorts of political alliances that emerged in Hyderabad were striking for the shifting basis of terms between neighbouring zamindars and intermediaries, usually revenue farming military usurers. Family annals from the late eighteenth century and the early 19th century illustrate the point. A zamindar of Khammam district recalled the history of his family's fortunes in terms of the chequered story of their possessions on account of impermanent and uncertain alliances with neighbours and with intermediate elements. His grandfather had seen a considerable reduction in his possessions and resources. His father, Lakshman Rao, had then been able to retrieve them by serving the Cuddapah Nawab, who rewarded him with a jagir of 32 villages and gave him 'leave to beat drums and sound trumpets' when riding in state. But subsequent wars with the neighbouring Damarlas took their toll once again, and Lakshman Rao was forced into exile in Venukonda. He sought to cultivate good relations with the revenue farmers of the Nawab of Cuddapah from his retreat. The efforts eventually bore fruit. The author of the story, Appa Rao, was restored to deshmukhi rights in the Udaigiri district. Not all of his problems were solved, however, as Syed Abdul Qadir Khan, a rival jagirdar, would not let him resume some villages, even though the intermediary revenue farmer, Narasimha Reddy, had agreed to this proposal.138

Venkatarama Bhopulla Bala Rao was another deshmukh in Khammam with a story of changing alliances and fortunes. There was a time during his father's reign when 'the faujdar used to send a proper person to...meet [us in the]... village,...always...[got]...up from his seat when we went to the Cutherry [and would] seat us near his pillow'. But the 'Damarla people' had forced Bala Rao's father out of his possessions and the situation had not altered until Bala Rao has been able to find favour with the revenue farmer Hafiz Himmat Khan. The sarkar then recognized the deshmukh's status, sending him robes of honour on the appropriate occasions.139

The struggle over rights and possessions had, in yet another part of Khammam, driven the heads of two branches of a family into the camps of rival poligars of the neighbourhood. One of the heads, Abahu Naid, was able to gain the additional support of Khammam faujdar-s against his opponent. The rivals embarked upon a confrontation in which they sought to expand the range of their own support and to destroy the other's domain. Meanwhile a third party, the samasthanik of Venkatagiri, made quiet gains by encroaching upon the lands of both the distracted opponents and had his acquisitions confirmed as jagirs by greasing the right palms in the Hyderabad darbar. One of the Naids sent a Brahman agent to Poona to solicit the Peshwa's support. Encouraging hints

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138 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 7/15.
139 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 7/16
came from that quarter, but no concrete help. The Naid’s position deteriorated. He was finally captured along with his brother by the rival Naid, Abahu, who was then in league with Sadashiv Rao, the faujdar of Khammam. The brothers were thrown into prison, where, unable to bear the indignities and humiliation they were subjected to, they both committed suicide. One of the descendants of the eclipsed branch was able revive its fortunes somewhat; he managed to win over a new faujdar, Mir Saheb, to his side. The process of recovery was arrested, however, once Mir Saheb was recalled, especially as the rival had by now managed to gain the support of Boya Raja, one of the most powerful of the Khammam poligars. Fortune smiled briefly on the wretched when a new faujdar came looking for support against the Boya Raja, who had become a serious menace to supra-local authority in the region. Sheshachalapati Naid saw his chance and pitched his forces on the faujdar’s side. Here matters rested when he narrated his story at the end of the eighteenth century.140

The Reddys of the Krishnagiri district in Kumool recalled yet another story of changing fortunes in the late 18th century, charting its course between the tussles and alliances of the Reddys with the Nawab of Kumool, the Raja of Gadwal, the Sultan of Mysore and local poligars. Towards the end of the story, Munawwar Khan brought an army from Kumool and ‘ruined the thana established by the Gadwal people’. Then Hyder Ali struck the fatal blow: ‘the people…having suffered a great loss by the disturbances of Hyder Naik…ran away to strange countries’.141 The affairs of Mootalapadu samasthanam in Duvur taluq were also subject to the uncertainties of shifting local alliances, as well as the changing postures of intermediary revenue farming military usurers. Several amaldar-s arrived and departed within a short period, for example, variously on behalf of the Nawab of Kumool, the Nizam of Hyderabad and the Rajas of Gadwal and Raichur. Duvur was also subjected to the periodic ascendancy of several neighbourhood poligars. Each phase of changing alliances brought with it confirmatory sanads, rituals and robes of honour, but also war and dispossession.142

Local poligars were the main actors in the quest for authority and resources in the Raichur doab. They constantly sought to bring more villages under their control and were highly sensitive to any diminution in their orbits of influence. They regarded their sway over villages as protective and termed the tribute payments to which they lay claim in return as rusoom. The latter was an important source of income and a great point of honour. Any threat to rusoom was seen as a threat to the poligar and to the poliam. Poligars were consequently locked in a web of bitter conflicts amongst themselves and with intermediate revenue farming elements. It was against this backdrop of their mutual

140 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 35
141 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 37
142 IOLR, Mack Unbound, 39
rivalries that the poligars of the parganas of Jalihal, Mosulkul and Berrudona sought alliances with Hyderabad’s revenue farmer for their region; for example, the Raja of Shorapur. In some cases, they cultivated his support through marriage alliances. According to a contemporary, the Raja himself ‘provoked rather than alleviated’ the local conflicts. He was, in fact, ‘deeply interested in the maintenance of the system’ of local rivalries, since they allowed him to exercise a powerful local influence. A neighbouring revenue farmer, the Raja of Raichur, who farmed the Raichur and Cavital districts, was similarly disposed. The two *raja*-s frequently lent their support to rival poligars. The poligars of Keeadigiri, Arakeyri and Gullug, whose poliams were situated in the Raichur Raja’s districts, and who were at war with that Raja as well as with poligars loyal to him, were, for example, supported by the Shorapur Raja, who accorded them shelter and provision in his districts.143

Despite the widespread willingness of weighty elements in the Hyderabad countryside to defy the demands of revenue farmers, strands of co-operation and collaboration continued to subsist between them, manifesting themselves usually as temporary alliances of expediency. The context for such co-operation was set by the conflicts between zamindars, and between zamindars and intermediaries. Some of the larger zamindars themselves doubled as revenue farmers. The Raja of Raichur was an example in the 18th century. He first became the manager of the jagir of an intermediary, Munir ul Mulk, and then used the influence this position afforded him to set up as a revenue farmer in his own right, eventually to become the largest and most powerful revenue farmer in the Raichur doab. In his dual capacity as zamindar and intermediary, he collected more for, - although he probably also withheld more from, - Hyderabad than any other person in the region. He was also able to get the Nizam to confer royal honours upon him. He farmed the two doab districts of Raichur and Mudgal and maintained a force of 1000 cavalry, 1500 infantry and an even larger ‘militia’ to enforce his revenue collecting authority. Much of his force was concentrated in Cavital and Bhunnoor in the early nineteenth century, as it was here that he faced the maximum opposition from local bosses. The leading opponents were a *mirasidar* called Neelkantha Rao and a *desai*:

‘Both of the ejected parties are loud in their complaints on the injustice and dishonesty of the Zamindar’s conduct...they foster a spirit of resentment which operates in encouraging their tenants to great irregularities’ 144

The Raja of Shorapur was another zamindar who doubled as a revenue farmer. His ancestors had managed to extend the boundaries of the poliam by military force until it was one of the strongest core areas of local power in the region by the early 18th

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143 NAI, SIR, FB and M, M-182; M-158.
144 Ibid.
century. They had also begun to intervene in the disputes of other, smaller poligars in order to gain additional income, status and land. Such developments in Shorapur were paralleled by similar ones in the neighbouring Gadwal and Deodrug. Deodrug emerged as the major rival of Shorapur and held the upper hand for some time. The first Nizam, Nizam ul Mulk, for example, appealed to the Raja of Deodrug for help when he was unable to dislodge the Raja of Shorapur from the fort of Waggangiri sometime in the 1720s; the Raja of Deodrug achieved the same object merely by sending threatening summons to the Raja of Shorapur. Although the Raja of Shorapur had to pocket the insult on this occasion, he built up his strength and resources in subsequent years and waited for the right opportunity to seek revenge. That opportunity presented itself when the two raja-s became engaged in an armed conflict over some disputed territory. The Raja of Shorapur was able this time round to inflict a crushing defeat on the Raja of Deodrug.

The latter was so shocked and humiliated by the extent of his reversal that he gathered up his family in a room stocked with gun powder in his hill fort and fired the explosive material. The Deodrug poliam never revived afterwards. The neighbouring zamindari of Gadwal was able to build up great strength by the late 17th century. It was able to defeat an army sent by the Sultan of Bijapur against it. Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor campaigning in the Deccan, became keen on an alliance with the Raja. The Raja continued to exercise considerable influence afterwards, and even a respectable neighbour like the Nawab of Kumool was obliged to pay him tribute until the middle of the 18th century.145

All the nawabdoms, not only Kumool, that emerged as local powers in the 18th century in fact suffered adverse consequences from the local and supra-local conflicts of that century. The reverse side of Ibrahim Beg Khan’s conquest of a fertile and productive core area in Nirmal was that the tract was gradually ravaged through warfare with hostile local zamindars. Some productive pockets became rebel strongholds and too expensive to conquer profitably. The Nawab relied increasingly on taxing the manufactures and trades of Nirmal for revenues towards the end of his reign. The same policy was not only continued by his son and successor, Ihtesham Jang, but even carried to a destructive limit. Traders and artisans actually began to flee Nirmal on account of the oppressions of the tax collectors in his time. Faced with a shattered economy and declining revenues, the nawab also became increasingly vulnerable to local and supra-local opposition. He was finally overthrown by an army under the Nizam’s personal command in 1782.146 The experiences of the Nawabs of Kumool and Cuddapah were similar to Nirmal’s, except that they continued to survive with restricted areas and diminished influence for varying

145 Ibid.
146 Imamuddin, Tarikh-i-Nirmal; IOLR, Mss Eur 48, Account of Nirmal, 1798; IOLR, H.Misc, H/219, Extracts from the Bengal Secret Consultations, 13 Jan 1783, pp. 211-21.
periods into the 19th century.\textsuperscript{147}

1.3.4 The Local Factor in Hyderabad's Regional Order

The four sub-regions of Hyderabad were variable in their productivity; this was reflected in their agriculture, manufacture and trade. The main centres of economic activity were located in core areas, which were distinguished by their fertile agricultural hinterlands, and capacity to support manufacture and commerce. Principal trading centres also tended to coincide with the principal centres of political power. This coincidence was not accidental. Zamindars and nawabs, the local bosses of the core areas, were actively interested in the growth of economic activity. They also patronized many social and religious institutions in their domains. This was intended in part to give their authority legitimacy in the context of external and internal conflict. Externally, the patron-protectors competed with rival local powers for scarce resources. Internally, they sought to depress tensions arising from economic, social and ritual iniquities, which might threaten the integrity and defensibility of their domains. Rituals, festivals, traditions and ballads were some of the means used to elaborate and glorify the patron-protector's authority, as well as to mobilize the loyalty of the community that inhabited his domain.

Yet although patron-protectors strove to build solidarity and consensus within their domains, the success of sovereignly local powers in the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside did not contribute here in the 18th century to the emergence of a political order to match that of Awadh or Banaras in north India. The very external and internal imperatives that led to the strengthening of zamindari and nawabi domains also led to an heavy reliance on military methods, which continued to fuel warfare. But one of the features of local competition and conflict was, nevertheless, the operation of strands of collaboration, albeit expedient and temporary, between local bosses with common enemies. The fluctuating character of political relations between the core areas also opened up possibilities for supra-local powers, who could profit by local rivalries. The Asaf Jahi regime was thus ultimately based on the shifting sands of temporary alliances of expediency in the countryside. While these factors raise doubts as to whether a stable and peaceful bureaucratic state could operate in Hyderabad, they might also have had implications for the overall character of the regional political order in relation to the imperial aspirations of several powers in southern and central India in the 18th century.

1.4. Conclusion

The most general point that emerges from this chapter is that it would be too simplistic to equate areas with apparent dynastic coverage with stable 'successor states'.

\textsuperscript{147} For details of their decline, see, for example, IOLR, Mackenzie Unbound, VIII/3, 17, 42; W. Kirkpatrick, Select Letters, Appendix.
Similarly, areas without dynastic covers, but with internal conflict, cannot be equated with areas of political disorder and economic decline. Several historians have already explored some 18th century areas with dynastic covers in recent years and come up with alternative formulations to the classic stereotype of the bureaucratic and military fiscal Mughal state. Nevertheless, they still perpetuate some old notions: that a strong, or at least a dominant, centre was the necessary pivot of a regional political order, and that the regional political order, or its centre, was co-equal with the state. Hyderabad seems to provide a useful counterpoint to such notions. Both the regional political order and the centre here were moulded by a criss-cross pattern of alliances and conflicts in the countryside, in inter-relationship with similar factors at the supra-local and inter-regional levels, which are discussed in the next chapter. A further point emerges from this. Conflict and warfare were not necessarily indicators of disorder or decline, a factor which has not generally been appreciated in the historiography of 18th century India.

This chapter has tried to unravel some of the realities behind the alliances and conflicts at the local level of politics in the Hyderabad countryside. Far from being an economic backwater, the Hyderabad region was dotted with core areas of productivity, which were more dispersed in some sub-regions than in others. The core areas concentrated population and resources in order to sustain investment, agriculture, manufacture and trade. Since labour and resources were both scarce, the core areas competed for them. The manner in which they did so was inextricably linked with the nature of the society in those areas. Political authority was exercised by local zamindars and nawabs, who were no mere administrative functionaries appointed and controlled by the centre, but virtually independent indigenous small kings. The small kings tried to elaborate the role of the patron and protector in a post-Vijayanagara tradition. This meant that they had to be, and had to be seen to be, warriors capable of defending their communities and domains. They had to be seen to be divinely blessed royal patrons. The complexity and living quality of kingship as an ongoing process can only be guessed at. But the ‘cultural’ record, - monumental, oral and literary, - is still quite rich with hints and details of legitimation rituals, consensus building devices and incorporating legends.

As the small kings competed for scarce labour and resources, as well as the glory of their communities and domains, they entered into multi-lateral alliances and conflicts. Amongst those to whom they turned for help were supra-local elements of non-indigenous origin. The latter, armed with superior military skills and capital, as well as banker support, hoped to be able to lay the foundations of a ‘Mughal’ style bureaucratic and military fiscal state in Hyderabad. But sandwiched between local kings and foreign powers, they were themselves drawn into local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts.

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148 One is still today struck by the remains of 18th century mud and stone forts throughout what used to be the Hyderabad region.
The frustration and failure of Mughal style state building in Hyderabad did not induce the supra-local elements of Hyderabad to go away. Even a shrinking and volatile Hyderabad was apparently still a land of hope and profit.¹⁴⁹ How they continued to operate here is the subject of the next chapter.

¹⁴⁹ Most of the Maratha sub-region and the whole of the Andhra sub-region were lost to foreign military fiscal interests by the end of the 18th century. The Berar sub-region and parts of Rayalseema were lost in the middle of the subsequent century.
2. SUPRA-LOCAL AND INTER-REGIONAL FACTORS

2.1 Introduction

Several historians have written sophisticated accounts of new regimes with stable underlying structures in 18th century India in recent years.¹ These accounts uniformly question the conventional wisdom that the eighteenth century was largely one of anarchy, warfare and decline. They redress an imbalance in the historiography of the century by emphasising important developments in the stable areas of the sub-continent, and by qualifying the ills of the unstable ones. However, a hiatus still seems to exist between recent works and older works on the 18th century. The new work does not so much deny as, for the most part, shy away from the themes of conflict that preoccupy much of the older work.² Yet, what stands out in the politics of 18th century Hyderabad is its criss-cross pattern of alliances and conflicts, - at the local, supra-local and inter-regional levels, - which shaped the fortunes of its centre.

The last chapter indicated that a dynastic cover did not imply a strong regional centre in Hyderabad, and even less a bureaucratic and military fiscal state. On the other hand, it also suggested that pervasive local conflicts did not imply a region of anarchy, disorder and decline. On the contrary, the local conflicts symbolized dynamic economic activity in the core areas; competition between them for scarce labour and resources, and a post-Vijayanagara tradition of kingship and community in the zamindari and nawabi domains. This chapter seeks to locate the supra-local and inter-regional factors in Hyderabad's political order, in the context of and in inter-relationship with, alliances and conflicts at the local level. The first section addresses itself to the typology of pre-colonial states in the historiography and suggests that this is inadequate to deal with a region like Hyderabad. The second section suggests that just as the older concept of 'zamindar' does not recognize the full reality of the 'small kings' in the Hyderabad countryside, so, too, terms like 'mansabdar' and 'jagirdar' misrepresent the character of 'supra-local intermediaries', by imputing to them more bureaucratic and military fiscal power than they actually had. The term 'supra-local intermediary' would suit the Hyderabad case because the 'mansabdars' and 'jagirdars' here were really a species of military creditor and revenue farmer. They could not settle down in the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside on any permanent basis, unlike their counterparts in North India. Instead, they remained a highly mobile group, farming military and revenue assignments throughout the region as and when they could. The later sections explore the actual dynamics of

¹ Barnett, North India Between Empires; Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars; Calkins, 'The Formation of a Regionally Oriented Ruling Group'; Khan, History of Tipu Sultan; Sen, 'A Pre-British Economic Formation'; Alam, The Crisis of Empire.
² Sarkar, Fall of the Mughal Empire; Sardesai, New History of the Maratha People.
intermediaries in operation. The way they operated was, *inter alia*, relevant to the nature of foreign intervention and, later, British expansion in Hyderabad. Military fiscalism, rather than commerce, private trade, or industry is suggested as the main engine of foreign intervention and expansion in the 18th century.

2.2 The State in the Historiography

The most influential and abiding paradigm about the nature of the state in India in the two or three centuries immediately prior to British rule is still today, - when alternative paradigms are being generated rapidly, - that of the Mughal state. Such terse formulation necessarily does injustice to the differences of method and interpretation in a vast corpus. The purpose here, however, is simply to highlight some underlying assumptions of that corpus and of the related historiographies of the Maratha states, the Delhi sultanate, and the Deccan kingdoms, which are all influenced by it. The Mughal paradigm assumes the overarching importance of the state, and within the state, of the centre, in the pre-colonial political order. The key components of the state and the centre are the imperial court and the military fiscal bureaucracy, headed by the nobility. The Mughal system eventually rested on the countryside: indigenous rural elites, - zamindars, patels and *patwari*-s, - were assimilated to the Mughal state’s administrative bureaucracy as local functionaries. When these local functionaries rebelled, or were alienated, as happened in many parts of the sub-continent from the late 17th century onwards, the Mughal state faced crisis. The crisis might equally originate in, or be compounded by, divisions among the nobility; withdrawal of support by merchants and bankers; weak emperors; foreign invasions; and long drawn warfare. The crisis of the Mughal empire after the death of Aurangzeb was until recently taken as the starting point of the final decline of the Mughal empire. In recent years, however, a new dimension has been added to the analysis: ‘decentralization’. Alam and Nayeem argue, for example, that the decline of the empire in some parts did not mean that the empire declined as a whole. If Punjab was lost, the empire continued to survive in other regions, - such as Awadh and Hyderabad, - albeit in a decentralized


regional guise, which was more suited to contemporary conditions. There are two problems with the Mughal paradigm as far as Hyderabad is concerned. Since it sees areas without strong bureaucratic and military fiscal administration, - whether emanating from the imperial centre or from its regional surrogate, - as areas without political order, the realities of Hyderabad beneath its Asaf Jahi dynastic cover would presumably qualify it only as a region of disorder and decline. Yet, we have evidence of dynamic economic activity based on vibrant core areas, and of well articulated small kingdoms within them. The other problem is that the Mughal paradigm cannot see a regional order operating as it were through a pattern of local, supra-local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts, at least not without the state and centre being dominant.

The typology of 18th century states that emerges from several recent studies questions some older notions about the nature of the Mughal state, its paradigmatic significance for the sub-continent as a whole, and the effects of its decline. Cohn, Barnett and Bayly, for example, see the decline of the Mughal empire as part of a wider process of decentralization in north India, which was characterised by the emergence of regional regimes based firmly on their own local dynamic and underlying structures. The aspirations and activities of regional elites, who commanded new developments in the growing agricultural and commercial economies of their regions, occupy a central place in the discussion on the decentralized ‘successor states’. The successor states are thought to have been based on intimate alliances between magnates of rural society; local notables and aristocrats; captains of manufacture and trade, and sc правор the sword wielding elites. Such alliances were shaped by, and, in turn bore upon, those various forces of which the most telling motif was ‘the penetration of market forces into agriculture’ and examples were, the ‘involvement of farmers with trade and trade with farming’; market-oriented production of rural and urban manufacturers; growth of rural and urban markets with links to inland and overseas commerce, and increasing sophistication in money use and banking. When these various developments became pegged onto a regional political order, they bestowed power and dignity on the principal participants, giving them material and ritual returns for their investment.

Bayly dwells on the post-Mughal political regimes in North India, taking care to account for the varying circumstances of their decentralization. One of his concerns is to analyse the post-Mughal ruling elites across the Ganga valley, in relation to their intimate connections with commerce and with the ‘rooted service gentry’. Though agricultural prosperity deserted older Mughal centres, labour and capital found fresh opportunities in

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7 M. Alam, The Crisis of Empire; Nayem, Mughal Administration of Deccan.
9 Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars.
areas experiencing new growth and protective patronage. The decline of older tracts might well have been balanced out by regeneration and growth in the ‘core stable areas’ of the successor states in the period 1730-1800.

Whilst this happened, the increasing monetary demands of regimes like those of Banaras and Awadh added weight and dignity to the position of merchants and commercial farmers in politics and society. The activities of the latter groups, together with the kingly style of the new aristocracies and the expansion of settled agricultural communities, propelled manufacture, trade and commerce, and consolidated markets and towns. Commercial and trading links between the ‘stable’ areas also set off regeneration in unsettled intermediate tracts.

The influences of the European economy worked through Indian commerce well before formal British rule was established, preparing the stage for that later event. The disruption of bullion flows from Bengal into the upper Ganga valley, for a variety of reasons, in the period 1740-60, and their subsequent reversal, caused the movement of merchants eastwards towards Calcutta. After colonial rule became a reality, some previously established patterns in the political economy continued to prevail in the period 1780-1830. The economic centres of the decentralized states - Lucknow, Fyzabad, Farrukhabad and Banaras, - continued to prosper, benefiting local merchant communities in their ‘final flowering’, even as they founded partnerships with the cash based British revenue system. It was not until the 1830s that the political economy of post-Mughal regimes was seriously disturbed as, among other things, the small town aristocracies declined, government expenditure fell and revenue demands increased.

If the building-blocks of the new states outlasted the early days of colonial rule, they also raise questions about the background to the emergence of the new regimes. The terms in which the passing of the Mughal empire has been viewed deserves a change in emphasis. Decline and degeneration can no longer be seen as its principal motifs: there is plenty of growth, regeneration and change to be discovered in state-building away from the old Mughal centres. If some of the latter, together with the groups associated with them, were eclipsed, other centres and groups, old and new, acquired wealth and stability, and shaped society in a decentralized political setting.

Perlin’s understanding of the transformations of the political order in the 18th century extends beyond even the problem of the passing of the Mughal empire.\(^{11}\) He would have us pay greater attention to changes in the economy and society of the subcontinent as a whole, in relation to developments in the wider world from as early as the 15th century, from which time began the settlement of extensive tracts of agricultural country and ‘accelerated urban growth at all levels’. Population held steady, even grew, while this happened. At the same time, the tax-gatherer became more inclined to collect in cash, and

\(^{11}\) Perlin, ‘Proto-Industrialization’.
systems of measurement 'of all kinds' became more exact. Monetization went hand in hand with a growing sophistication in monetary, financial and accounting techniques and institutions. Urban and rural manufactures gathered volume and pace, networks of trade and commerce cutting increasingly across political and ecological boundaries. Food and raw material production also tended to align themselves with developments in manufacture, trade and commerce. Nor were these several trends isolated. They became integrated across the sub-continent. Money circuits were created between major industrial centres and ports, as also between these and agricultural production: witness the role, for example, of bankers in taxation and politics. Proliferating mints further emphasized greater recourse to cash wages, whether to craftsmen, labourers, soldiers or servants.

The long term changes in economy and society observable since the 15th century became, despite patches of decline, more intense in the late 17th and 18th century, and complemented transformations in the political order in the latter period. Political 'decentralization', from successor states to small lordly courts, was the counterpart in fact of the mature 'rurban economy'. Both developments took place in the context of an 'open frontier' with European Companies. The local and international needs of the British drew them, for example, into advance payment systems, but only previous money use and 'rurbanization' could have made the systems at all possible. From advance payment systems, to supervision and control of manufacturers was but a short leap. There were, of course, additional reasons for the British wanting, and being able effectively to establish commercial and political control: for example, particular features of commerce and industry in Western Europe, and the emergence of its maritime power. Yet the road to colonial conquest was long and complex, and cleared in the days of the pre-colonial economy.

The analyses of both Bayly and Perlin open up sophisticated new ways of looking at the pre-colonial political economy. Yet one of its important aspects appears to have been underestimated by them. They seem to imply that local elites effectively created the underlying structures and building blocks of regional regimes, which supplanted the Mughal empire in the eighteenth century whenever they became involved in the commercialization of their agricultural, manufacturing and trading bases. The areas that witnessed conflict and decline, on the other hand, were those where markets, commerce and regional elite co-operation failed to emerge. There is a danger in such a view of overlooking the shifting regional dynamic that might have characterised not only the Mughal economy, but also economic activity in earlier periods of Indian history. A situation of political conflict need not necessarily have inhibited economic activity. In some regions, according to Raychaudhuri, it even helped improve the fortunes of

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12 See, for example: H.K. Naqvi, _Urban Centres and Industries in Upper India 1556-1803_, (Bombay, 1968); H.K. Naqvi, _Urbanization and Urban Centres under the Great Mughals_, (Simla, 1972).
commerce. Washbrook takes the point further for the Coromandel coast, where ‘expansive commodity markets’ in the latter half of the eighteenth century came, in part, ‘from the instabilities of climate and warfare’.

The Hyderabad region was by no means a stranger to the operation of vigorous commercial and market forces in the eighteenth century, zamindars and nawabs being ever keen to develop bonds with bankers, and to protect and patronize centres of production and trade. Yet local co-operation between landed and commercial elites did not emerge in Hyderabad as the foundation of a successor state, as in Awadh or Banaras. Indeed the growth of economic investment and social and political co-operation within the core areas may even have exacerbated tensions at the the local level of Hyderabad’s regional political order as a whole.

Closer to Hyderabad, in central and western India, Surendra Nath Sen was writing as long ago as the beginning of this century of the increasing regionalization of Maratha power after the passing of Shivaji. Shivaji’s quest for a centralized swarajya was compromised in the days of Shahu and the process was taken further in the Peshwa period, when powerful regional Maratha chiefs carved out independent political bases, while paying lip service to the notion of centralized sovereignty. The recent works of Gordon, Wink and Perlin give greater depth to Sen’s original hypothesis about the fragmentation and regionalization of Maratha power in the 18th century. Gordon writes about the slow formation of the military, administrative and economic building blocks of Maratha rule in Malwa, which was conquered in the eighteenth century. Perlin finds the increasing strength and power of regional Maratha chiefs reflected in the social and economic changes that were occurring in Deccan villages in this period. Wink concentrates on a more general theme, the crisis generated by the incompatibility of regional political ambitions with an ideology of universal sovereign domain. As the ambitions of regional Maratha chiefs grew more strident, they took the form of fitna, which progressively undermined the old ideal of a centralized Maratha swarajya.

Stein provided the initial context for modern research on south India by formulating the concept of a pyramidally segmented and sacrally ruled state in the Chola and Vijayanagara kingdoms of the medieval period. Appadurai and Dirks have extended the

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16 Bringing to bear the findings of Southall’s work on Africa on to his own work on south India, Stein uses the characterization primarily to describe the Chola state. He extends it to the Vijayanagara state as well, but in a modified form. For, supra-local warrior chiefs, or nayak-s, and villages, rather than the Chola nadu became focal points of power in the Vijayanagar period. (B. Stein, Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India, [Delhi, 1980]; ‘The State and the Agrarian Order in Medieval South India: A Historiographical Critique’ in Stein [Ed.], Essays on South India, [Honolulu, 1975]).
implications of his research since. Concentrating on pre-colonial and colonial Tamil Nadu, Dirks recognizes the legacy of a Vijayanagara style of kingship, as described by Stein, in the small kingdom of Puddukottai. This informs his subsequent analysis of links between caste formation and caste power, and between royal and religious functions and rituals in Puddukottai. Appadurai’s emphasis is on the role of temples, which were crucial to the maintenance of kingship in his view.

The works of Stein, Dirks, Appadurai, Barnett and Wink, it can be argued, generally tend to underestimate the importance of conflict in the shaping of regional politics in India in the pre-colonial period. Mostly concerned with offering systemic explanations of Indian phenomena over time and space, they seem inclined to view political conflict as a functional variable within the logic of an overall consensus. If it is not that, then it was a dysfunctional element, which eventually undermined the state or empire from within.

This enquiry into 18th century Hyderabad does not equate the regional political order with the state or place a special emphasis on the power of its centre. It gives primacy to alliances and conflicts at all three of its levels: the local, the supra-local and the inter-regional.

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17 The political hierarchy and social network in relation to which local kingly power was exercised, and interacted with kinship and caste, were, in Dirks’ view, related to the ritual-religious functions of kingship and to the military might of the nayak or raja in question.

18 The temple enshrined the paradigmatic sovereign. The leader of the sect associated with the temple provided the key link between the temple and the king. The king intervened in sectarian and temple disputes in his capacity as an administrative, human sovereign. He thereby became an important object of the same ‘metasocial’ and ‘reflexive’ concern with which society viewed the temple. (A. Appadurai, Worship and Conflict under Colonial Rule: A South Indian Case, [Cambridge, 1981]; ‘Kings, Sects and Temples in South India, 1350-1700 A.D.’, IESHR, 14, 1 [19]).

19 Perhaps one reason why some modern day historians of the 18th century appear to fail to give political conflict the primacy it seems to deserve in some situations, is that they wish to escape identification with an older tradition of writing, in which both imperial apologists and nationalist ideologues shared common assumptions about the degeneration and decay of India on the eve of colonial rule. Another reason for underestimating the importance of political conflict seems to be the influence on these modern writers of a certain tradition in sociological writing, - ‘equilibrium models’ from Durkheim to Parsons, - which appears to favour a view of social and political consensus more suited to some modern western societies while constructing models of foreign societies. Moreover, anyone wishing to gain intellectual recognition and academic respectability must project the findings of a particular case study as a ‘model’ relevant to the understanding of the wider region as a whole. Such influences do not necessarily rule out either a genuine concern with the ‘world views’ of indigenous societies or scholarly advances in ways of understanding them. Nevertheless, they can lead to serious problems in the writing of history if the importance of temporal change and regional variation is underestimated.

The possibility of an unsatisfactory treatment of conflict by several historians of 18th century India has already been alluded to. One may further refer to such volumes as Kingship and Authority in South Asia [J.F. Richards, (ed.), Madison, 1978] and Realm and Region in Traditional India [R.G.Fox, (ed.), Delhi, 1977-8] for the kind of model building that is so concerned to conquer time and space at a sub-continental level, that it gradually loses the flavour of the unique in dealing with its immediate subject of study. The sophistication of the authors’ methods is no comfort in this context. Dirks’ recent work on Puddukottai is a most interesting example of the problems that can arise for a historian who wishes to reconcile his sophisticated understanding of a foreign culture with the quest for a ‘model’ that will decode its history almost without reference to the specificities of time and space. He makes the untenable assertion that it is precisely the atypicallity of the minuscule Puddukottai that qualifies it as an ideal case for generating a ‘model’ for understanding the history, society and culture of pre-colonial and colonial India better than before. He uses, further, the questionable methodological device of ‘freezing’ time over a period of 150 years, some of them years of crucial historical change, to generate the basic framework of his interpretation.
2.3 The Writing on Hyderabad

Most existing work on Asaf Jahi Hyderabad assumes the existence of a Mughal style dynastic bureaucratic state, and its recent examples follow a nineteenth century tradition of narrative writing on dynastic, diplomatic and military affairs. Regani and Chaudhari, for example, assume that weak Nizams were symptoms of a weak dynastic bureaucratic state, and focus on the diplomacy of the British, which supposedly coerced a weak but sovereign state into an increasingly unsovereign-like and subordinate status under the hegemony of the British empire.\(^{20}\) Their main difference with the imperial apologists of the 19th century is one of emphasis, not method. While writers like Fraser and Gribble presented Hyderabad’s subsidiary alliance with the Company as one beneficial for a state prone to internal strife and external vulnerability,\(^{21}\) Regani and Chaudhari express strong doubts about the fairness of British diplomacy, the integrity of their promises and the long term effects of their alliance on Hyderabad. Leonard offers a much more sophisticated account, but does little to question the conventional assumption about the existence of a stable dynastic bureaucratic state, except for the early Asaf Jahi period, when, she argues, Nizam ul Mulk laid greater emphasis on military coercion than on bureaucratic administration.\(^{22}\) Nayeem’s more recent work on Nizam ul Mulk contends that in fact the first Nizam presided over a full blown Mughal style government. He suggests that far from being an independent state, Hyderabad continued to be a loyal, even an exemplary, Mughal _suba_ under the first Nizam (1724-48).\(^{23}\)

Earlier work on Qutub Shahi Hyderabad is also rather prone to the uncritical acceptance of the notion of a dynastic bureaucratic state. The voluminous and painstaking researches of Siddiqui and Sherwani, the two major writers on Qutub Shahi history, allow us, however, to speculate along somewhat different lines from their own.\(^{24}\) Two circumstances that attended the first Golconda king, Quli Qutub Shah’s, break away from Bahmani Bidar were his serious differences with fellow nobles and his emergence as a highly successful military commander against rebellious Telegu and Maratha naiks. Once he was independently established in Telangana, Quli continued to spend much of his time fighting with the landed and militarized naiks. The relative peace that marked the last seven or eight years of his reign might have been due to the capitulation by the naiks of


\(^{21}\) Fraser, _Our Faithful Ally_; Gribble, _History of the Deccan_; see also: Briggs, _The Nizam. History and Relations_; McAuliffe, _The Nizam_.

\(^{22}\) Leonard, ‘The Hyderabad Political System’.

\(^{23}\) But Nayeem is clearly suspect on this point. The same trusting acceptance of descriptions in the Asaf Jahi records that leads him to conclude that the Nizam was a loyal subadar also leads him to believe that he administered virtually the whole of peninsular India, - from the river Narbada in the north to the Indian ocean in the south, except for a narrow strip on the west coast, running from Surat in the north to below Cochin in the south, - as a dutiful governor on behalf of the Mughal emperor in Delhi. The independent regimes of Mysore, Poona and Madras, to name only a few of the bigger ones, must be regarded as aberrations of Mughal rule on this view. (Nayeem, _Mughal Administration of Deccan_)

\(^{24}\) Siddiqui, _History of Golconda_, (Hyderabad, 1956); Sherwani, _Qutb Shahi Dynasty_.

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the poorer core areas, not because they had grown any more friendly towards him, but because their resources were exhausted by years of warfare. The naiks of the richer core areas continued to defy Qutub Shahi authority.25

The expansion achieved by the second Golconda king, Qutub ul Mulk, into parts of Rayalseema was chiefly due to his astute exploitation of local zamindari conflicts there. He gave military support to zamindars opposed to Vijayanagara backed rivals and gained revenues and territories from them in return. The Golconda sultanate did not sit on a firm territorial foundation, but on the changeable fortunes of its military intervention in the political affairs of the naiks. In practice, it was not always possible to contain naik warfare within manageable limits. The reign of Jamshid Qutub Shah (1543-50) is described by Sherwani as a period of savage civil war. The intensity of warfare was lower in the subsequent reign of Ibrahim Qutub Shah, as Golconda was now more willing to recognise, and to compromise with naik power than before. The naiks themselves were happy to offer token submissions to Golconda in return for the recognition of their local authority. Such conciliation and compromise was an important factor in the sultanate’s victory over Vijayanagara, - where relationships between the centre and the naiks were, in contrast to the situation in Golconda, greatly strained. Another key factor in Golconda’s victory, which was achieved in 1565 in combination with the four other Deccani sultans, was the important change that was taking place in its military technology, which was exemplified by the incorporation of recently arrived superior foreign artillery into its campaigning strategies.

This change gave rise to an important new influence in Golconda’s politics, however, that of powerful military intermediaries, which was to have a lasting impact. The intermediaries were desirable allies when kept happy, but dangerous opponents when dissatisfied. The delicate balance between Golconda’s stately ambitions and the aspirations of powerful local naiks that had begun to emerge through the patchwork of local warfare by the mid-16th century was upset by the rise of ambitious supra-local intermediaries. The centre’s already precarious hold over the margins of Telangana and Rayalseema also began to crumble in this period. At one level, the landed and militaristic naiks rejected Golconda’s authority, in local tandem or in alliance with intermediaries. At another level, serious rifts developed between the Deccani and Afaqi factions at the Qutub Shahi court. Even as Mohammed Qutub Shah built the new city of Hyderabad, gathering some of the finest Telegu and Deccani poets, and Muslim architects around him, its foundations were being shaken by Telegu landlords, Muslim military commanders and Mughal invaders.

A section of the Golconda military elite under Mir Jumla Mohammed Saiyyad Ardistani were openly welcoming Mughal designs on south India by the 1630s. Perhaps they saw in these an opportunity for penetrating into the richer macro-regions to the east,

25 This and the three subsequent paragraphs are based on the works cited in the last footnote.
west and south of Golconda. Not only were the Mughals obviously superior in military terms, they were also sorely in need of local collaborators, whom they could be expected to reward handsomely. The activities of Ardistanî and his supporters did not go unresisted. Madanna, Akkanna and Neknam Khan tried to strengthen Golconda’s forces to counter the Mughals. But despite their openness to the new military technology, and invitations to mercenaries looking for new opportunities, they did not get very far. Perhaps it was a case of too little coming too late.

The Mughal penetration itself was neither swift nor productive of peace. It escalated both local and supra-local warfare in the Deccan by injecting a vast new military element into it, especially at the intermediary level. The consequences of this escalation were felt throughout the 18th century. The crisis and conflicts that brewed in Hyderabad in the last days of control by Delhi gathered further momentum as that control failed. Lack of funds, according to Richards, was not the reason for the Mughal collapse in Golconda. The Bijapur and Golconda territories yielded enough funds to put the Mughal administration on a secure basis if Delhi had intended it, but Aurangzeb preferred to commit his revenues to the costs of war with the Marathas and to extending the southern military frontier further. He also added more land to khalisa holdings, which already included the ‘choicest’ areas, at a time when Deccani nobles were clamouring for more jagirs. Nor was Aurangzeb able to make many secure alliances with the Maratha, Gond, Bedar and Telegu warrior chiefs who crossed the Mughal path. Pam Naik, the Bedar chief of Shorapur, was given rank and title after being warred down, but later alienated by the arrogance and hostility of the ‘Indo-Persian’ nobility in the Mughal camp. Other Bedar chiefs also lost confidence in the Mughals. They exploited their familiarity with the local terrain in opposing the Mughals. Padia Naik’s raids began in the Raichur Doab in the west and extended upto the Andhra coast in the east. Similar pressures were also exerted by Maratha, Gond and Telegu raiders in yet other parts of the Deccan. Pap Rai was a celebrated example in central Telangana. Mughal deputies responsible for administering the Deccan subas became increasingly isolated and vulnerable amidst such local hostility. Delhi did little to rescue them from their predicament, or to maintain them in steadfast loyalty.26

Mubâriz Khan, the subadar of Golconda between 1713 and 1724, sought to find the answer to his difficulties in coercive military tactics. He concentrated his attention on the area between the Godavari and the Krishna and hammered away at zamindari strongholds. Although able to coerce many zamindars into submission, he was unable to win their confidence or to disengage them, from their local bases, for the most part. His was, in effect, a military regime. The emphasis was not on ‘state building’, but on survival by accumulating forces of terror. It was difficult to counteract the hostility of local

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26 This and the first part of the subsequent paragraph are based on: Richards, Mughal Administration.
zamindars, however, without securing the support and loyalty of supra-local intermediary elements. But Mubariz Khan kept a jealous and watchful eye on them, too. The latter were unlikely to be won over while the centre tried to restrain on their independence. They were aware that it needed their support against zamindar hostility and expected a better bargain than what Mubariz Khan was willing to offer them. Nizam ul Mulk might have perceived this weakness in Mubariz Khan’s position when he returned from Delhi to reassert his authority in the Deccan in 1724. He certainly appears to have made more lucrative offers than his opponent to Deccani intermediary elements and to have attracted greater support among them. This enabled him to score a decisive victory over Mubariz Khan in the battle of Shakkarkheda.

The dilemma that Mubariz Khan faced in Hyderabad, - to what extent to submit to the demands of militaristic revenue farmers in the face of zamindar hostility, - was also faced by Poona, elsewhere in the Deccan. Maratha deshmukhs formed a hefty class of the rural elite here and the more powerful amongst them accumulated large inam-s, maintained private armies and built imposing fortresses. Fukuzawa characterizes these men as ‘rural aristocrats’ who were a serious threat to Poona’s authority. But the Peshwa was, unlike Mubariz Khan, willing to give greater power to his revenue farmers in order to try and impose control over the deshmukhs. The revenue farmers were supervised less and less as the 18th century wore on.

2.4 Supra-local Intermediaries

The foregoing account of the interactions between Hyderabad’s naiks and the Qutub Shahis and the Mughals suggests at least 17th century origins for some features of the 18th century political order in Hyderabad. Neither the Qutub Shahis nor the Mughals seem to have been able to consolidate a centralized bureaucratic and military fiscal administration, and the naiks seem to have been independent in their core areas. Supra-local military commanders appear to have been attached to the centre as military creditors and revenue farmers with financier backing. The implications and character of naik independence in the countryside for the 18th century political order have been discussed in the last chapter. The focus here is on revenue farming military creditors, who formed the supra-local factor in the region’s order. The Qutub Shahi kings of late sixteenth century Golconda had attempted to offset the rise of rebellious and independent minded Telegu naiks by responding favourably to the ambitions of mercenaries who had come to Hyderabad seeking prospects in military service and revenue farming. The Mughals had later given further encouragement to such intermediary elements by practically relying

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27 Eastwick, Kaizernama-i-Hind, Appendix.
28 CEHI, I, 193-203
upon them for effecting the Deccani conquest.\textsuperscript{30}

But if neither the Qutub Shahis in the 17th century nor the Mughals in the 18th century were able to develop a strong bureaucratic and military fiscal administration, then how were the supra-local elements able to exert their authority? How can we refer to them at the Golconda or the Asaf Jahi court as ‘nobles’ or members of ‘darbar factions’? The answer proposed here is that these men were independent or semi-independent military creditors and revenue farmers. They mediated between a weak centre and inter-regional foreign powers, as between the centre and local nawabs and zamindars involved in criss-cross alliances and conflicts.\textsuperscript{31} Since the centre that took recourse to their services was steeped in a ‘Mughal’ ethos and aspired to a Mughal style bureaucratic and military fiscal government, the military creditors and revenue farmers also received ‘Mughal’ titles and honours. But these can be deceptive.\textsuperscript{32} Hyderabad’s mansabdars and jagirdars did not have the qasbas or ‘rurban’ seats of power that their counterparts did in North India. They were in different places and assignments at different times, depending on how well or badly they interacted with the local, supra-local and inter-regional factors in the politics of the region. Furthermore, they became internally divided as the 18th century wore on by taking sides with local rivals and by mediating the rival interests of foreign powers in the Asaf Jahi darbar.\textsuperscript{33} Successive Nizams in the latter half of the 18th century may, indeed, be described as pawns in the hands of rival factions of revenue farming military creditors and of the foreign powers associated with them. The most powerful revenue farmers can be described as a ‘nobility’ to this extent. Nevertheless, to avoid the classic Mughal connotations of terms like nobility, jagirdar and mansabdar, it seems best to describe Hyderabad’s revenue farming military creditors as ‘supra-local intermediaries’.

Their routes to intermediary status were as varied as their origins. Some were descended from Deccani and Afaqī military commanders at the Qutub Shahi court.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{30} For a useful description of the numerous official titles and establishments of revenue farming military usurers in the period 1720-1748, see: Nayeem, \textit{Mughal Administration of Deccan}.

\textsuperscript{31} See discussion below.

\textsuperscript{32} See Nayeem, \textit{Mughal Administration of Deccan} for a detailed account of Mughal functions and titles in Hyderabad during the first Nizam’s time. For the earlier Mughal period, see Richards, \textit{Mughal Administration}.

\textsuperscript{33} See discussion below.

\textsuperscript{34} See Sherwani for details on the Deccanis and the Afaqīs.
Others were descendants of Mughal commanders, nobles, jagirdars and revenue farmers. Yet others came to Hyderabad in the 18th century. Still others were recruited by Hyderabad's diwan, Chandu Lal, or went there after the disbandment of Maratha armies, in the early 19th century. The linguistic and ethnic origins of Hyderabad's intermediaries can be traced to many places: eastern and northern Africa; western and central Asia; Afghanistan; and northern, western and central India. Some also came from Europe or were of mixed Eurasian descent. Only a handful of Hyderabad's intermediaries appear to have become established as hereditary noble lineages, with family titles and regular military and revenue assignments. The paigah family of Shams ul Umra, which maintained the Nizam's household troops against revenue assignments in northern and central Marathwada, was the best example.

There seems to have been no constant or fixed basis for the way in which supra-local intermediaries at the Asaf Jahi darbar combined into factions as far as ethnicity, religion, caste and sect are concerned. The main considerations seem to have been personal calculation and political expediency: which foreign power was the right one to associate with at any given time; which candidate of the Asaf Jahi family was the right one as Nizam; which configuration of local allies was the right one to support and which to oppose. Only in the case of some Pathans in the mid-18th century, and groups of Arabs, Rohillas and Sikhs in the mid-19th century, can one talk of factions being based on identifiable religious, sectarian or ethnic solidarities. Certainly the 'factionalism' of the Asaf Jahi darbar should not be confused with the 'factions' of 20th century Indian


36 See Chapters Three and Four below; see also: IOLR, H.Misc, H/707/2, Jenkins's History of Berar (c.1700-1820), 1826; R. Jenkins Collection, Ms Eur E 112, Translation of a History of the Bhonsles (c.1730-1818).


38 See, for example: IOLR, Mack Gen, 27/10; 41; Mack Unbound, VII/42; I/13, History of Kumool; Scott, [Ferishta's]History of Deccan, II; W. Kirkpatrick, Select Letters of Tipu Sultan, (London, 1811), Appendix, History of Pathans of Shahnur; Eastwick, Kalsamunumah-i-Hind, Appendix.

39 See Chapters Three and Four below; also: NAI, HRR, 791, Hindu-Muslim Disturbances in Berar, 1838; 776, Aurangabad Troubles, 1845; 87, Disturbances in Western Berar, 1850-1; 484, Hindu-Muslim Tensions in Berar, 1849-50; 93, Violence, 1855; For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, 61, 15 Mar 1838.

politics. The factions of the Mughal court are a much closer parallel.

2.4.1 Intermediaries in Early Asaf Jahi Hyderabad, c.1724-95

It was suggested in a previous section that the undoing of the last Mughal subdar of Golconda, Mubariz Khan, was to some extent precipitated by his attempts to curb the powers of supra-local intermediaries. His successful opponent, the first Nizam, was more prepared to come to terms with their independence. Their greater independence vis-a-vis the centre under the Nizams did not mean that the supra-local intermediaries became any more established locally and less militaristic in their strategies. On the contrary, one gets the impression of zamindars attempting further to build up their military capacity against intermediaries in the early Asaf Jahi period. The zamindar of Jatpole, one of the most powerful in the Khammamett Circar, for example, began to improve his defences after several encounters with amil-s and naib-s. In particular, he built a fort in Bolavaram and attempted to reorganize his forces with the assistance of a mercenary, Syed Ahmed, who had gained a considerable reputation in the region for his military skills. The Jatpole Zamindar’s eagerness to refurbish his defences was not misplaced. Mohammed Ameen Khan Arab, the revenue farmer of the district, was soon knocking at his gates to tell him that his military initiatives amounted to rebellion against Government and the new fort must be demolished without delay. The Jatpole Zamindar’s concern to fortify himself represented the general state of the feeling among Hyderabad zamindars. The Zamindar of Paluncha in Khammamett Circar relied heavily on the natural strength of his country to keep himself secure. The Bhongir Zamindar’s country offered no such natural defences, and Narayan Reddy resided, therefore, in a strong stone fort built on a solitary hill rising sheer from the plain. Some miles south of Bhongir, the zamindar of Kolapalli, Chinna Krishna Ankiah, lived in a similar stone fort. Zamindar Vasireddy of Guntur Circar defended himself from a fort on the South bank of the Krishna. Manoor Narsanna lived in Chilakallurpuram fort not far from Vasireddy. Moolraj Govind Rao also commanded a strong hill fort in the same region. Zamindari Sanjamma of Amrabad relied on the mountainous and woody nature of her terrain for security, and so did Saku Ram, a zamindar immediately to her south. Kistappa Naik of Deodrug lived in a strong hill fort in the more open Raichur Doab, and so did Venkat Naik of Shorapur. Man Mohan Rao Pinglia was so well fortified in Rudur, to the north west of Hyderabad, that the Nizam’s forces were five months on one occasion before their siege against him could succeed. Gopal Singh of Qandahar, north west of Rudur, also secured himself in a strong hill fort. The zamindar of Medak, Sadashiva Reddy, commanded several forts a short distance west of

41 Satish Chandra, Parties and Politics; Athar Ali, The Mughal Nobility.
42 APSA, DDI, Letter 2246, Nizam to Mohammed Amin Khan Arab, 24 Jamadi ul Awwal, 1211 A.H.
43 APSA, DDI, Letter 2248, Mohammed Amin Khan Arab to Jagannath Rao, a copy of the letter cited in the last footnote.
of Hyderabad, before his rebellion and defeat in 1795. Munga Rao of Chinnoor was a powerful zamindar to the north east of Hyderabad. He lived on a well fortified island in the Godavari, which enjoyed the added protection of jungle on both banks of the river.44

The zamindar of Anantagiri in the Nihal Kondapalli pargana of Khammam Circar built his strength to counteract threats from the qiladar of Khammam. His efforts received a boost on one occasion when the qiladar’s amil, Rajeshwara, having fallen out with his master, joined forces with him. The qiladar, Jafar Khan, was obliged to beat a retreat in the face of a powerful local combination. Hyderabad took a dim view of these developments, however, and sent additional contingents under two other intermediaries, Shujat ud Daula and Nadir Jang, to help restore Jafar Khan to his authority. But Nadir Jang wrote apologetically to Hyderabad that their forces, too, were unable to overcome the superior power of the local combination.45 What Nadir Jang experienced in the east, Sirajuddin, another intermediary, experienced to the north of Hyderabad. He had been sent to Deverkonda to collect the revenues of Fastli 1180-81, but found the strength of the local resistance difficult to overcome. The deshmukhs and deshpande-s had succeeded in mobilizing the villages by raising the cry of rusoom in danger. Sirajuddin urged Hyderabad to order reinforcements under Zafar ud Daula and Salabat Khan, the two most powerful jagirdars in the Deverconda region.46 Siddi Ambar Khan in 1786 similarly sent distress signals from the west and south of Hyderabad. He asked for reinforcements to help impose control over the zamindars of Koilkonda, Tandur and Suggur, who not only defied him in their own districts, but also undermined his authority in the neighbouring districts under his charge by attacking the qasbas and fortresses there.47

Fathullah Khan, a revenue farmer in the Khummum and Nalgonda districts, wrote to Hyderabad in 1195 A.H. that he was seriously troubled by the hostility of zamindars like Jagannath Rao, Vasireddy and Tirupati Rao. The three had carried out a particularly daring raid on the fort of Innaconda recently, even though it had been garrisoned by two quite respectable commandants, Hasan Beg and Faizullah Khan.48 Saif Jang’s rentership of several eastern districts in the 1780’s was also marked by a continual conflict with zamindars. He led a large force against Aswa Rao of Bhadrachalam on one occasion in the hope of emulating the jagirdar of Nirmal a few years earlier, when the jagirdar had brought Aswa Rao to his knees. But the zamindar had then got away by paying the Nizam a bribe of Rs 3 Lakhs and had since built up his military strength as well as his revenue arrears. Saif Jang was obliged to call off his campaign when he realised that its costs would outstrip its benefits. The revenue farmer knew from experience that subduing

44 IOLR, Mack Gen, 46/2.
45 APSA, DDI, Arzi, 5.488, n.d.
46 APSA, DDI, Arzi, 5.465, F 1180-1.
47 APSA, DDI, Arzi, 5.504, 1186 A.H.
48 APSA, DDI, Inayatnamah, 9 Jamadi us Sani 1195 A.H.
zamindars militarily was no guarantee of local co-operation or financial success. He had defeated and dispossessed Moolraj Govind Rao of Innaconda earlier, but had been forced to re-instate him after four years, upon realizing that keeping the zamindar in prison was financially a ‘ruinous measure’.\textsuperscript{49} Vasireddy of Chintapalli was another thorn in Saif Jang’s flesh. His 400 cavalry, 1000 infantry and 8000-10,000 tenants might not score outright victories, but they were certainly strong enough to make any campaign against them a risky and expensive affair.\textsuperscript{50} If troubled by some powerful zamindars, Saif Jang was more than a match for most others. He rented districts worth Rs. 52 lakhs from the Nizam and excessive coercion was the key to his operations in the countryside. The forces under his immediate command - 2400 cavalry, 6260 foot soldiers and 13 guns - were believed to be superior to the Nizam’s own household troops. Yet, Saif Jang’s methods were counter productive in the long run:

‘Syf Jang during eight years that he has rented it has committed unparalleled oppressions on all the inhabitants which has reduced their numbers greatly and in many parts put an entire stop to cultivation...’\textsuperscript{51}

Militaristic strategies were also in evidence in Nirmal in northern Telangana in the latter part of the 18th century. Ibrahim Beg Khan, jagirdar of several districts along the Godavari, was obliged to send for reinforcements from Hyderabad on one occasion while engaged against the zamindar of Gopalpet, Hanumanth Reddy. Though Hanumanth Reddy was forced to retreat, Aswa Rao of Bhadrachalam now came forward to continue the fight against Ibrahim Beg Khan. The fort of Zafargarh was wrested from his naib while the jagirdar was away in Nirmal. Ibrahim Beg Khan retaliated by laying seige to Aswa Rao’s stronghold. The seige succeeded after three months. Aswa Rao was taken prisoner and publicly paraded with a shaven head on the back of a donkey before being returned to Palunsha in disgrace. But the zamindar wasted no time in organizing a resistance to the jagirdar’s authority once again. This time Ibrahim Beg Khan’s younger brother went out against him, and the zamindar was again taken prisoner and publicly humiliated. But Aswa Rao’s second defeat and disgrace still did not wipe out local resistance in the region. Hanumanth Reddy of Gopalpeth was back in the fray by this time, and was mobilizing support against Ibrahim Beg Khan’s brother.

The conflict with Ibrahim Beg and his brother did demand its price from the zamindars. The zamindari of Dilipkonda was destroyed completely by Ibrahim Beg Khan, and he was also one of the principal parties instrumental in a thorough sacking of Surapur. In other parts of the Nirmal country, his coercive measures led to depopulation. Ibrahim Beg Khan’s son and successor, Ihtesham Jang, began his career by putting to

\textsuperscript{49} IOLR, Mack Gen, 46/2,4.
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid.
death on suspicion almost the entire population of a well settled quarter of Nirmal. Ihtesham Jang was forcibly removed in 1782 by an army personally led by the Nizam, and supported by many zamindars of the Nirmal countryside. A series of revenue farmers obtained charge of Nirmal after Ihtesham Jang’s removal. But they, too, proved to be given to excessively coercive measures by and large. The first revenue farmer after Ihtesham Jang, Narsing Rao, on one occasion rounded up most of the patels, patwaris, dukandar-s and artisans of the Nirmal fort district on suspicion that they were evading revenue payments. Most of the prisoners died from the tortures inflicted on them with a view to extract ‘truthful’ confessions. Nirmal’s inhabitants were reported to be migrating rapidly to places like Adilabad, Bori, Chanda and Nagpur by the close of Narsing Rao’s second year in the rentership. Some previously well settled tracts were fully abandoned by his fifth year. Shankar Naik became revenue farmer after Narsing Rao. He was a less grasping creature than his predecessor, but was still enough of one to force the deshmukh of Ankur pargana, Rama Reddy, for example, to take up arms against his revenue demands. Shankar Naik’s response to Rama Reddy’s act of ‘rebellion’ was to attack and kill him, as well as overrunning his zamindari from end to end. Langu Pandit succeeded Shankar Naik as renter of Nirmal. His initial concern was to reattract the settlers who had deserted in the time of his predecessors. But gradually he too became militarily embroiled in conflicts with the zamindars. Zamindami Antamma was one of the principal sufferers at his hands. The forts and pettas of Sumapalli, Koratpalli and Ramandag, all belonging to her, were completely destroyed. All the standing crops in her zamindari were razed. Badruddin Husain Khan took the rentership of Nirmal after Langu Pandit. His own charge was nominal; the real initiative lay with his naib, a Komti moneylender, with whom he was considerably in debt. The komti seems to have been determined to recover the sum he was owed directly from Badruddin’s revenue assignment. His visitations were thought to be worse than the famines that had occurred during the last two years of the rentership of the previous revenue farmer, Langu Pandit.\footnote{Imamuddin, Tarikh-i-Nirmal, pp. 76-112.}

The next two years were years of fightback by deshmukhs, patels and patwaris in various parts of Nirmal. The naibs of Mohd. Ali Khan Lohani, who was renter at this time, imprisoned at least 20 village headmen and zamindars, and were involved in warfare with many others. The initial leader of the rebellion against Lohani was the deshpande of Kusumath pargana. He was taken by Lohani after a prolonged encounter and put to death. The next leader of the rebels was a Maratha Brahman called Baba Phadkia, who raised a 7000 strong army with the help of patels and patwaris. Lohani was recalled to Hyderabad at this juncture. But he was reappointed to the Nirmal rentership only two years later, as the renter in the interim, Sharf ud Daula, had been unable to raise much revenue. Lohani’s naibs found many zamindars and village headmen still in a defiant mood upon
their return. Metpalli and Koratpalli were the principal seats of the resistance and zamindar Kona Rao was now their leader. The naibs’ answer to the resistance was along familiar lines: Balkonda, Bheemgal, Indur, Bodhan, Thukal, Khedgaon and several other places were completely destroyed.\footnote{Ibid.; see also: Ghulam Ahmed, Nizamabad-i-Dakkan, p. 24; Tajalli Ali, Tusak-i-Asafta, pp. 196-208, 296-303.}

Frykenberg’s findings for Guntur are also relevant on the subject of zamindar hostility and the militaristic approach of supra-local intermediaries in the Hyderabad countryside. The British interest in Guntur dated from 1759, but they were not able to introduce any direct control over the zamindars of the district until 1788. Militaristic Hyderabad intermediaries farmed the district’s revenues in the intervening period. The first of these, Husain Ali Khan, mostly relied on military fire power to effect revenue collections, between 1759 and 1768. The twelve years following Husain Ali Khan’s departure were ‘years of rapine, grasping renters, rebellious zamindars, bandits, and French agents and deserters’. Saif Jang became the revenue farmer of Guntur in 1782. The six years for which he held the assignment witnessed a series of military campaigns.\footnote{R.E. Frykenberg, Guntur District 1788-1848: a History of Local Influence and Central Authority in South India, (Oxford, 1965).}

When the Madras government finally began to administer Guntur directly from 1788, it, too, was confronted with opposition from local quarters. Village headmen practised evasion through the familiar techniques of falsifying accounts and exaggerating statements of customary expenses. Zamindars refused to acknowledge, or to pay up arrears from previous years, which were estimated at Rs.30 lakhs. The largest zamindar of Guntur, Vasireddy, offered armed opposition, though this form of resistance on the part of the zamindars became less frequent against the Company, most zamindars perhaps that the military strength of the British was an altogether different proposition from anything they had encountered from militaristic revenue farmers before. Zamindari defiance now usually took the form of corrupting British officers and their dubashes. Whilst administrative failures and local opposition affected Madras’ revenue collections adversely, the famine, tidal wave and drought that occurred between 1790 and 1793 compounded the adversity. The Madras government realised by 1802 that its prospects for recovering revenue arrears from earlier years were bleak. The permanent settlement that it now introduced cancelled earlier arrears and gave the zamindars easier terms of repayment than before. The latter had rarely enjoyed such good terms and proceeded to destroy themselves through over indulgence. Madras introduced ryotwari settlements in Guntur after the political demise of the zamindars. But the local bosses of ryotwar, too, were able to hold a weak central authority to ransom for several years.\footnote{Ibid.}

Administrative misfortune was not the unique experience of the British in 18th century Deccan. A framework of bureaucratic administration was not entirely absent in
Hyderabad. But, as Richards and Nayeem show, for the Mughal and early Asaf Jahi periods, respectively, this had to depart from the classic Mughal mould in order to meet the local exigencies of the Deccan.\textsuperscript{56} It is doubtful if the Mughal or the early Asaf Jahi administrations were stable or continuous throughout the area to which they nominally laid claim, for example. Quite apart from a direct Maratha presence in Berar and Marathwada, revenue farming and the recognition of zamindars and nawabs as tributary sovereigns, rather than as bureaucratic agents of the central government, were widespread practices. Revenue farming and \textit{peskashi} relationships were both sure signs of the absence of direct administrative control in ‘Mughal’ style government\textsuperscript{57} and in Hyderabad, too, they indicated that the core areas of local power and militaristic revenue farming intermediaries were not amenable to direct bureaucratic control.\textsuperscript{58} Even within those areas where the stamp of regular administrative control seems clear in 18th century Asaf Jahi documents, Asaf Jahi bureaucratic references could simply be a veneer, serving only as the officially preferred designations for core areas of local power where actual control was weak on the ground. The military vulnerability of zamindars and nawabs did not necessarily diminish their local political and social influence when it came to making revenue collections in their areas, and they continued to remain dominant here despite official fiction.\textsuperscript{59} Elsewhere, the growth of local resistance might oblige the centre to assign districts once under direct bureaucratic control now to revenue farmers, or to enter into \textit{peskashi} relationships with local nawabs and zamindars.

A corollary of the superior bargaining power that supra-local intermediaries enjoyed \textit{vis-a-vis} the centre in the face of zamindar hostility in Asaf Jahi Hyderabad was their strong influence on the shape and character of darbar politics. The Asaf Jahi darbar was an arena for the airing, adjustment and confrontation of their differences and quarrels. Like their counterparts in Delhi, Arcot and Poona, Hyderabad’s intermediaries were also prone to divisiveness. This can be traced to some extent to the nature of their involvement in the politics between the core areas of local power and between foreign powers.

Just as an identification of interest with one zamindar or a group of zamindars could lead a supra-local intermediary into warfare with a rival zamindar or group of zamindars, it could also lead him into conflict with intermediaries on the opposing side. Similarly, supra-local divisions could arise from identification with the interests of rival foreign powers. Yet another source of divisiveness was the clash of ethnic affinities. But neither the causes of divisiveness nor the composition of supra-local groupings were fixed. Both

\textsuperscript{56} Richards, \textit{Mughal Administration}; Nayeem, \textit{Mughal Administration of Deccan}.

\textsuperscript{57} CEHJ, I, 172-93; Wink, ‘Maratha Revenue Farming’.

\textsuperscript{58} Leonard, ‘The Hyderabad Political System’.

\textsuperscript{59} The distinction that Malik makes between primary and secondary zamindars in the Maratha Deccan could be relevant here. See also: Nayeem, ‘The Working of the Chauth and the Sardeshmukhi System’; Z. Malik, ‘Chauth Collecting in Hyderabad’; Richards, \textit{Mughal Administration}.  

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changed over time, according to circumstance, interest and conjuncture. One or two general factors might be said to have perpetuated the divisiveness. The absence of a strong central authority capable of dispossessing or destroying rebellious intermediary elements was one of these. Another was the absence of a centralized system of military and fiscal administration. Unlike in Mysore or Bengal, but as in Delhi or Poona, Hyderabad delegated its military and revenue requirements to intermediaries.

The peskhar of Nizam ul Mulk, Mansaram, observed that ‘great disorder’ had prevailed in Hyderabad when his master was away in Delhi in the period 1737-41, having left his son, Nasir Jang, in charge in Aurangabad.60 He was probably referring to the divided Asaf Jahi ranks and to the opposition they experienced from zamindars and nawabs. When the Nizam returned from Delhi in 1741, Nasir Jang himself confronted him in an open war, showing how the Hyderabad nobility were subject to divided loyalties. The Nizam’s conciliatory attitude towards Nasir Jang and and his partizans after his victory in the war may have been an attempt to minimise the risk of pushing a disloyal section of the nobility, recently beaten in open confrontation, into covert forms of resistance.61 His concern was understandable. Control over deputies south of the Tungabhadra was already tenuous. Moreover, these men were not always in full control of their own ranks. A contemporary of the Nawab of Carnatic, Safdar Ali, remarked in 1741-42, for example, that he was without money, troops or authority, as every ‘Muslim lord’ serving under him considered himself to be the master of his particular fort or bit of territory. The faujdar of Kurnool, Himmat Khan, would have been one such ‘Muslim lord’. He had refused to pay tribute to Nizam ul Mulk for several years when the subadar of Bijapur, Himmat Yar Khan, was appointed in 1742 to collect it from him by force. However, the subadar was routed and killed in the ensuing military encounter with the faujdar. The faujdar ‘begged [the Nizam] for forgiveness’ after this episode, pleading that his action against the late subadar had been an act of indiscretion, not disloyalty. The Nizam, too, accepted his apology ‘magnanimously’.62

If the Nizam was unable or unwilling to hand out retribution to supra-local rebels, it was probably because he accepted their power and divisiveness as facts of political life and tried to deal with these as cautiously and diplomatically as possible. There was another reason for settling leniently with revenue farmers. Conflict with mutually hostile ‘Muslim lords’ was only one aspect of Nizam ul Mulk’s troubles. He was also troubled by the unending hostility of zamindars and nawabs. The conflicts attending the last phase of Asaf Jahi intervention in Guntur as well as the subsequent efforts of the British in the district have already been alluded to. In the earlier period 1687-1752, too, Mughal and

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60 Pagdi, Eighteenth Century Deccan.
62 Khan, The First Nizam.
Asaf Jahi relations with zamindars had been marked by suspicion. Whenever ascendency was on the side of supra-local authority, this seems to have been achieved through coercive tactics. Rustam Khan built towers of skulls for seven years in Andhra. Nizam ul Mulk's own technique was to lead an army into one district, collect as much as was possible there, and then move into another district. When he remained in Aurangabad, he sent deputies on similar campaigns. Nasir Jang was sent 'to the south to collect tribute from the various zamindars' on more than one occasion after 1741. Even though 'every commander of a district had assumed the title of 'Nawab" in the Carnatic, the supra-local intermediaries were, still, the Nizam's most reliable allies in a generally hostile countryside. Nizam ul Mulk carried out an almost continuous military campaign against Carnatic zamindars in the years 1742-44 and negotiated peace settlements with numerous Carnatic revenue farmers in the same period. The diwan chiefly responsible for making these settlements was greatly honoured by him. He was again favourably referred to in Nizam ul Mulk's last testament, which praised him for raising more revenues than any of his predecessors. Nizam ul Mulk's final testament also advised his son and heir, Nasir Jang, to be constantly on the move if he wished to raise satisfactory revenues. He was always to carry his treasure with him. The troops were already three months in arrears of pay and the treasure would help diffuse tensions if they became mutinous. Nasir Jang was further advised to lock up 'the Brahmans', probably a reference to the many Brahman zamindars of the Hyderabad countryside. He was asked to be particularly careful of the two Maratha Brahmans Moru and Ramnath, who, though now in prison, could be expected to create disturbances once they were released after serving their sentences.

Nizam ul Mulk's fears about zamindar hostility in the 1740s continued to be valid at the time of Nizam Ali Khan in the 1790s. Disturbances occurred in the vicinity of Hyderabad in each of the three years 1791-93. Several zamindars of the Raichur Doab had to be coerced into submission in 1792 and Company troops were sent out to Raichur again in 1794. Troubles with 'refractory zamindars' also occurred in Ganjicotta, Kannagiri, Anagundi, Khammam and Cuddapah in the years 1794-96.

One also hears of 'disturbances' and 'insurrection' in northern Telangana and Berar in the 1790s. The Zamindar of Chinnoor, who had 'for some years plundered and

65 Khan, *The First Nizam*.
66 Fighting and bribing the Marathas had been a constant source of strain on Nizam ul Mulk throughout his career. He advised Nasir Jang to try and keep peace with them as much as much as possible, though not at the price of allowing them to make further territorial gains in the Deccan.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.

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depopulated the Nizam's districts to a considerable extent', was reported to be leading an open 'rebellion' in 1794. The most serious challenge in Marathwada came from the Zamindar of Sholapur, who openly defied Hyderabad's authority to demand tribute from him between 1795 and 1802, when at length Company troops were sent out to threaten him into a compromise.

Conflicts among Hyderabad intermediaries, and between them and the nawabs and zamindars; the inroads of the Marathas into Hyderabad revenues; the increasing recourse to military means that these factors entailed, and the accompanying squeeze on finances were all features present in Nizam ul Mulk's time. They received further impetus in the years after his death.

2.5 Foreign Powers in Early Asaf Jahi Hyderabad: mid-18th Century

Maratha intervention in Hyderabad's politics had been a constant affair in Nizam ul Mulk's time, though he might have consoled himself that he too could exploit Maratha divisiveness on occasion. Still other powers emerged in south India from the middle of the 18th century, - the French, the British and the Mysore Sultans, - who were also willing to interfere in Hyderabad's affairs to their own advantage. The French East India Company gained power in Hyderabad through the supply of troops in return for cash payments and revenue assignments. This occurred in the context of Hyderabad's supra-local rivalries and external wars. But the earliest French links in Hyderabad concerned the French trading Company's commercial interests. An acquaintance with courtly forms and etiquette, as well as friends at the court, were necessary for making successful applications for trading permits and concessions. The friends that it cultivated in the Nizam's court were also the principal partners of French commercial enterprise in Hyderabad. They invested private shares in the Company's trade. Only in Andhra did French factories actually organise local investment and manufacture for overseas trade. Ananda Ranga Pillai, the French governor's chief dubash, has left a record of the early links between Pondicherry and Hyderabad in his diary. These links were maintained through a man called Imam Saheb, who wielded some influence at the Nizam's court. Imam Saheb served the French interest at the Nawab of Arcot's court as well. While he was responsible for representing the French in Aurangabad and Arcot, Imam Saheb also appears to have helped channel the investments of some nobles of both those places into the French trade. His own investment activity was an example of this.

70 IOLR, H.Misc, H/563/1, pp. 87-9.
71 Pagdi, Eighteenth Century Deccan.
72 The chief dubash of Pondicherry records that he went to Porto Novo in January 1737 to load a ship with bales of cotton fabric belonging in part to the French deputy governor and in part to Imam Saheb. (The Private Diary of Ananda Ranga Pillai, 12 Vols, [Madras, 1904-28]; I, 11); see also: The Diary, I, 87, 406-7; III, 60.
Both Imam Saheb and the concessions he procured were received by Pondicherry with elaborate attention and ceremony in the early years. When a charter arrived from the Nawab of Arcot giving the French authority to coin their own money, for example, it was received with a 21-gun salute. *Nazar*-s of Rs.80,000, Rs. 25,000 and Rs. 15,000 were also sent to the Nawab, to darbar officials at Arcot and to Imam Saheb, respectively, on this occasion.73 Imam Saheb himself was received with a 21-gun salute when he paid his first visit to Pondicherry. He was escorted by Company merchants, in procession with dancers and musicians, to the council hall, where he was met by the governor and his council with great ceremony.74 But the reception accorded Imam Saheb was distinctly less elaborate, even low key, when he arrived in Pondicherry for a second time one year after his first visit.75 It seems as though the French were by now beginning to realise that their power in south India was equal to that of some local rulers. Pondicherry no longer felt the need to treat Imam Saheb as anything more than an ambassador dependant on their patronage.76 Imam Saheb was treated with even less ceremony later still and was expected, moreover, to perform his tasks as a paid go-between with maximum efficiency. On one occasion, he sent a copy of a letter he had persuaded the Nizam to write to the Nawab of Rajamundry to Pondicherry. The Nizam ordered the Nawab to desist from attacking the French factory at Yanam on the Andhra coast in this letter. Imam Saheb asked the French governor for a payment of Rs. 25,000 for procuring the letter. Dupleix gave a state reception to the Nizam’s letter, but privately did not believe that it was worth the sum his agent put on it. He sent a strongly worded reply to Imam Saheb. He would have to accept his payment in French broad cloth, the governor wrote, as Pondicherry could not spare such a large sum in cash at the moment. Besides, the worth of the order he had procured from the Nizam was questionable. The Nawab of Rajamundry could care but little for such orders, and if he did refrain from attacking Yanam, ‘He will do so... only for the love of God, and never through fear of the Nizam’. Dupleix also reminded Imam Saheb of a previous payment the services for which he had yet to carry out fully.77

The change in the French governor’s attitude towards Imam Saheb, as well as towards the Nizam, indirectly might be understood with reference to the overall change in the status of the French in the political affairs of south India in the late 1740s. They had by this time begun to assume a strong stance against their trading rivals, the British, and were willing to lend military support against them to one of the factions at the Arcot

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76 Presents sent to Pondicherry by the Nawab of Arcot and Nasir Jang, the Nizam’s son, in 1741, and by the Nizam himself in 1743 were given state receptions. (*The Diary*, I, 175-6, 234-8).
court. They were also willing to enter into advantageous bargains with local jagirdars and zamindars who were in need of military help against their rivals. Dupleix was, moreover, by 1747 in direct negotiation with Nasir Jang on the subject of the succession dispute in Arcot, and the French were giving open backing to the faction led by Chanda Saheb by 1748. The Arcot dispute eventually led back to the succession dispute in Hyderabad. This is how the French military and political intervention in Arcot later led to similar intervention in Hyderabad. The key figure in the latter exercise, Bussy, discovered that the Nizam was a pawn in the supra-local factional contests of the Hyderabad court and that these were open to foreign influence. His own French force was the best military outfit in Hyderabad, and as time passed he found that he could use it to gain influence in the Hyderabad darbar and revenue assignments in the Hyderabad countryside.

As with the French, the early British connection with Nizam ul Mulk’s court also took the form of merchant embassies seeking trading concessions on the Coromandel coast. Some nobles of the Aurangabad darbar also invested in the British trade. Though the British trade involved investment and manufacture in Andhra, it is doubtful if, as with the French, Hyderabad was a significant partner in its overall trading activity in south India. British appeals to the Nizam for the support of their trade amounted to a demand

78 Ibid., III, 108-9, 125, 137, 170, 174-7.
79 Ibid., III, 292-5; IV, ix-x; V, xv-xvi.
80 Ibid., V, xvi-xviii.
82 The Diary, IV, pp. x-xi.
84 Washbrook (‘Some Notes’) suggests that manufacture and markets connected with the export-import trade of Andhra declined in the period 1750-1800. Om Prakash (‘Foreign Merchants and Indian Mints in the 17th and the early 18th century’ [Unpublished Paper]) suggests for an earlier period that the south Indian system of minting coins on the Coromandel coast was ‘less conducive to the growth of trade’ than the Mughal system, ‘which was clearly more congenial for the growth of trade and commerce’. Company officials in the Andhra coastal districts asked to review the history of trade between their districts and the interior in the 18th century argued in 1799-1800 for a severe decline in the trade from the 1740s, including the complete ceasure of almost all its important sectors. (IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/80/1771).
for the support of their candidate in the Arcot succession dispute by the mid-1740s. Later still, the British, too, like the French, were able to consolidate links with the factional politics of the Hyderabad court, and these eventually developed into political and military intervention in return for cash payments and revenue assignments.

The Maratha and Mysorian ability to cream off Hyderabad’s revenues and gain influence in its darbar politics was also related to their ability to exploit the factionalism and divisiveness of Hyderabad’s supra-local intermediaries, through political and military intervention. They were also concerned, at the same time, to forestall their rivals from making revenue and territorial gains in Hyderabad at their expense. The weakness of Hyderabad’s central authority was a great help in their manoeuvres. Even though the Maratha house was a divided one throughout much of the 18th century, the Peshwas were able to invade most parts of India in the period 1713-60. But whereas they began to fail in other parts after 1760, they rarely fared ill in Hyderabad until almost the end of the century. The progressive break up of the Maratha ‘confederacy’ after c.1760, - which made the Marathas vulnerable to the Company in an all-India context, - was apparently no hinderance to Maratha fortunes in Hyderabad until 1795.77 Hyder Ali’s and Tipu Sultan’s Mysore was a much more compact and centralized kingdom than the Maratha power. The Sultans prevented the emergence of anything approaching the Maratha or Asaf

55 IOLR, Home Misc., H/128/10, ‘Qiledars, Poligars and Princes Subject to the Nizam, 1746-48’, pp. 581-669. The ambassador of the British at the court of Nizam ul Mulk, the Khaja merchant Nizamatullah Khan, pleaded with the man whose favour he enjoyed, the Nizam’s son Nasir Jang, that the British had ‘not only enriched this part of the country in particular, but the whole of the dominions of the Grand Mogul’. Nizamatullah’s colleague, another merchant, Haji Haji of Arcot, emphasised the point further by criticizing the activities of the French and their ally, Nawab Anwaruddin Khan of Arcot, which he projected as being in sharp contrast to those of the British: ‘The Nawab is but a renter, he does not much regard the distress of the people...The French are very generous in making presents of other people’s goods’. Nasir Jang was active in putting the British case to Nizam ul Mulk against the French. He described the British governor on the Coromandel coast, Commodore Griffin, in May 1747 as a ‘very obedient, serviceable and profitable person to the Circar’. He expected to be reimbursed by Commodore Griffin for his pains: ‘Now in consideration of these favours...you must...send me a most suitable reward that may encourage me to help you or recommend your affairs for the future’. The British agent who made payments to Nasir Jang’s agent, Khaja Dauran, was a man called Bundla Mutla. He complained on one occasion that the Rs.20,000 he had been allowed over a six month period to dispose great palms in the Aurangabad darbar were quite inadequate. He should be allowed another Rs. 60,000 or so: ‘It would take a large sum to make presents only to the officers and ministers of His Highness at the first visit’.


Jahi styles of nobility or systems of revenue farming. They also waged a constant war against poligar power in their attempts to build up a centralized military and fiscal system, and were, in this respect, the forerunners of later Company policies in south India.88

If conflicts in Hyderabad received a further impetus from the mid-18th century, this also had to do with the emergence of strong foreign powers, which were ever willing to exploit the divisiveness of its supra-local intermediaries. Though the foreign powers varied in character, they were all superior to Hyderabad in one crucial respect, military strength, and this was eventually what allowed them to become influential and successful here.

Much debate has taken place in the last twenty or thirty years about the nature of European expansion in India: whether this was a product of private trading and industrial or mercantilist interests, of political or commercial/economic interests, or of the man on the spot on the imperial frontier. It seems wise not to seek a single set of causes, or even a coherent imperial policy in the early period, c.1745-1845, in the light of the varying evidence for different regions, and at different levels of operation. If we were to generalize, however, the evidence for Hyderabad would suggest that the predominant motivation behind both French and British expansion here was similar to the motivation of indigenous powers like Mysore and the Marathas: military fiscalism, or hiring out troops for fiscal, territorial and political gains.89

2.6 The Character of Hyderabad's Regional Political Order

Nizam ul Mulk was unable to establish or consolidate his grip over many areas of which he was nominally master, thanks to ambitious intermediaries and hostile zamindars. This circumstance adversely affected his ability to restrain Maratha impositions, whether they took the form of chauth and sardeshmukhi or territorial expansion. What successes he enjoyed in his bluff and bluster diplomacy against them was mainly due to their own divisiveness and not due to his superior fire power. Nizam ul Mulk's successors not only inherited the problems of independent minded intermediaries, hostile zamindars and powerful Maratha neighbours, but also had to contend with a new set of mightier neighbours. All these factors had a role to play in the succession disputes after the death of the first Nizam.


89 For a further discussion of British expansion and hegemony in Hyderabad, see Chapters Three and Four below.

75
2.6.1 The Succession Struggles of 1748-62 in Perspective

The dispute between Nasir Jang and Muzaffar Jang seemed concluded when the latter surrendered himself to the former after the siege of Vaduvalur. But Nasir Jang’s victory quickly revealed itself to be a hollow one. His camp was torn by divisions among the nobility, from whom, moreover, he got contradictory advice. Some of them carried on secret negotiations with Chanda Saheb and Dupleix and others with Feroze Jang and his Maratha supporters. Nasir Jang was troubled by the uncertainty of his own situation and rival counsels did little to dissipate his fears and suspicions. When he finally arrived in Arcot after a month long vacillation at Vadavallur, his situation deteriorated further. Dissensions had become more pronounced in the camp and desertions now began to occur. These were fuelled further by the scarcity and epidemic that were experienced at Arcot. Whilst the camp thus disintegrated on its fringes, its centre was also cast in turmoil. Mohammed Ali, whose succession to the Arcot nawabi Nasir Jang had originally come to support, and his allies, the British, despaired of getting any decisive help from Nasir Jang. Their despair soon turned into alarm. Nasir Jang’s predicament, and its implications for Mohammed Ali and the British, had not been lost on their rivals, Chanda Saheb and Dupleix. Seeing their advantage, they struck back. Mohammed Ali and the British could defend themselves but poorly while Nasir Jang’s camp remained paralysed. When Nasir Jang finally did manage to scramble to his feet, it was too late. Dupleix was able to dictate terms to him. But even these were not enough to save Nasir Jang. A plot hatched by the Pathan nawabs of Kumool and Cuddapah, and the French commandant stationed near Arcot was already unfolding when Nasir Jang signed his treaty with Dupleix. The Nizam was taken by surprise and assasinated before either he or Dupleix realised what was going on behind their backs.90

The same combination of hostility and plotting that removed Nasir Jang also removed his successor, Muzaffar Jang. The problem of a divided nobility was compounded for Muzaffar Jang by his financial bankruptcy. He was obliged to borrow from Pondicherry in order to compose ‘disturbances arising from the non-payment of salaries’ to his troops. The borrowed sums were not enough to meet all their arrears, however, and the mutinies continued to occur. The influences of financial bankruptcy and mutinuous troops did not exceed the importance of supra-local intermediaries in deciding the outcome of Muzaffar’s battle of succession. He was killed in an open encounter with the Pathan nawabs barely a month after his coronation.91

Neither of the two original contenders for Nizam ul Mulk’s throne thus returned from their battles of succession, which were both conducted in the south, in the context of the Arcot succession dispute and Anglo-French rivalry. Salabat Jang returned, instead, almost

91 Regani, ibid.
three years after the death of Nizam ul Mulk, under the guardianship of Bussy. The road back to Aurangabad was not trouble free, however. Clashes took place with the nawabs of Kumool and Cuddapah south of the Tungabhadra. Balaji Baji Rao’s army waited in the Raichur Doab to press Maratha demands. Salabat Jang was forced to giving them a sum in ready cash and promises of more later. Past this hurdle, Salabat Jang discovered that not much had remained of Asaf Jahi authority above the Krishna. Bussy and he decided upon reaching Aurangabad that it might pay to launch an attack on Poona while the Marathas were distracted in north India. But the campaign against Poona turned out to be a disaster. Maratha soldiers and peasants retreating in the face of the Hyderabad army followed a policy of destroying crops and burning villages, and this caused near famine conditions in the Nizam’s camp. Salabat Jang was forced to turn back. Meanwhile, the Peshwa had returned from the north. He caught Salabat Jang on his return march and forced him to sign a most unfavourable peace agreement. The Nizam’s fortune took a further plunge near Bhalki. Mutinous troops killed his diwan, Raghunath Das, under the influence of Ram Chander Jadav, the jagirdar of Bhalki, who promised them alternative employment, food and regular pay. Hardly was this affair over and Salabat Jang had resumed his weary march back to Aurangabad, when news arrived that his brother, Feroze Jang, was marching from the north to stake his own claims to the Hyderabad throne. His claims were made the more ominous by the presence of a Maratha army behind Feroze Jang. Salabat Jang and Bussy changed direction and marched towards Hyderabad instead of Aurangabad. In Hyderabad, too, they were made unwelcome and had to enter by using force against the qiladar of Golconda. Feroze Jang died before reaching Hyderabad, but Salabat’s problems were still not all resolved. The treasury was nearly empty and the troops were six months in arrears of pay. Even the elite French contingent was without pay for two months. The Nizam felt obliged to take recourse to distress measures. An expensive loan was contracted with Hyderabad sahukar-s and the French were asked to help themselves to what they could raise directly from the countryside. The extortions that followed created havoc in the countryside and nor was Salabat Jang’s financial distress relieved.92

Splits began to occur among the top dogs of the Hyderabad darbar under such strains. Bussy and Syed Lashkar Khan, the diwan, turned against each other and a military encounter between them became a possibility in 1753. The diwan was finally outmatched and forced to resign. But his replacement, Shah Nawaz Khan, inherited his problems. Government posts were auctioned, and when this still failed to tide over the financial crisis, Bussy was given the Northern Circars in jagir. The drama of shifting loyalties and factionalism ranged itself around two groups for the next six years, one led by Bussy and

92 Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 51-78; IOLR, Mack Gen, 41; SJM, Syed Mohammed Ali al Husaini, Hist. Mss, Tarikh-i-Rahat Afsa, c.1770.
the other by Shah Nawaz Khan. It was Bussy who usually wielded the stronger influence, though this did not mean that he had no problems. He was, in fact, continually troubled by the hostility of the Marathas externally and of zamindars internally. Possessing a sanad for the Northern Circars was one thing but raising revenues from them quite another. The French found themselves competing with Jafar Ali Khan, who had been reenter here before them and refused to relinquish his position. Moreover, he gave support to the anti-French faction in the Aurangabad darbar. Meanwhile, both parties faced zamindar hostility in the Circars, particularly from the Rajas of Bobbili and Vijayanagaram. The court and the countryside thus continued to remain arenas of confrontation for the French and non-French factions.93

The French might well have emerged supreme after 1756 had Pondicherry’s adversities in the south not forced Bussy to withdraw from an advantageous position in Hyderabad. That position had been built up through a complicated round of diplomacy and warfare, much of it within Hyderabad. Bussy now felt confident enough to return to the Northern Circars and try his luck with the zamindars again. It was on this occasion that he inflicted the crushing defeat on the Raja of Bobbili that was to pass into Telegu ballads and, later still, into its literature and film. Whilst the victorious French party thus concentrated its efforts in the east, the non-French party, which had come out ill from its protracted engagement with the former, had gone west in disarray. Here its leader, Shah Nawaz Khan, was deposed by troops over twenty two months in arrears of pay, bands of whom dispersed into the countryside and turned to plunder and banditry. Encroaching Maratha forces did the same with even greater efficiency and ferocity. Earlier grain scarcities in the west were, in such circumstances, transformed into famine conditions.94

But the rising French fortunes in Hyderabad were dealt a fatal blow by developments in the Anglo-French rivalry in south India. The tide of war there had steadily been turning in favour of the British since March 1751. Chanda Saheb was dead by the end of that year and Dupleix’ other allies were not faring too well either. The famous French defeat of Wandiwash came in October 1752. The French continued to lose further ground through a series of unsuccessful local alliances. The British made peace with a beleagured Dupleix in December 1754, but this remained fragile and was shattered in 1757. The last stand that Pondicherry now offered against Madras required it to concentrate all the forces it could command. Bussy was pulled away from a potentially supreme position in Hyderabad. In Andhra, the zamindars fought back with British support. A crushing defeat was inflicted on a depleted French force at Masulipatnam in 1759. The French were never


able to regain their influence either in the Northern Circars or in Hyderabad after these events.

2.6.2 Nizam Ali Khan (1762-1803)

2.6.2.1 The Centre and Local and Supra-local Factors

The affairs of Salabat Jang’s camp in Bidar had, meanwhile, begun to witness a change in personal political fortunes. Salabat Jang’s brother, Nizam Ali Khan, began to take an upper hand in darbar affairs after returning from a successful military campaign against Poona in 1761. Even though this success was chiefly due to Maratha diversions in north India, it was still a rare one as far as Hyderabad was concerned, and Nizam Ali Khan gained status and influence, until he was finally able to depose Salabat Jang in 1762.\(^{95}\) However, Nizam Ali Khan’s reign brought no reduction in the supra-local divisiveness of Hyderabad’s intermediaries. He continued to be an uncertain master at the best of times. An important challenge came from Ihtesham Jang, the new Nawab of Nirmal, in 1782. Nirmal was one of the richest pockets of Telangana and Hyderabad could ill afford to lose its revenues completely. Ihtesham Jang’s father had already been irregular in his payments to the centre before him and had amassed a private fortune of Rs. 52 Lakhs. Now Ihtesham Jang threatened to withhold his peshkash payments altogether and defied the Nizam’s summons on several occasions. Nizam Ali Khan was eventually obliged to lead an army against the Nawab personally in 1782. Ihtesham Jang was removed from Nirmal after two encounters and given a smaller jagir in Ellichpur, in Berar. But Ihtesham Jang continued to be defiant, though now less overtly than before. He was suspected of conniving at Nagpur’s encroachments upon northern Berar, for instance. A succession of revenue farmers, - Narsing Rao, Langu Pandit, Mohammed Khan Lohani and Sharf ud Daula, - also continued to defy the Nizam’s authority in Nirmal after the removal of Ihtesham Jang and, like him, had to be chastened by force on several occasions.\(^{96}\)

Intermediaries associated with other parts of the Hyderabad countryside also continued to give trouble to the centre. The jagirdar of Adoni and Raichur, the Nizam’s nephew, Mahabat Jang, approached the British resident, Johnson, for a separate alliance against his uncle, the Nizam, in 1784. The Nizam imprisoned his brother Mughal Ali in 1792-3 for corresponding with Hashmat Jang, a jagirdar suspected of cultivating Maratha patronage. Hamid ud Daula, one of the Nizam’s grandsons, was reported to be organising resistance to his authority in Cuddapah in 1794 with a view to seizing the treasury there. Nizam Ali Khan wished in 1795 to remove Asad Ali Khan, revenue farmer of Cuddapah and

\(^{95}\) Regani, *Nizam-British Relations*, pp. 121-4; IOLR, Mack Gen, 41; 46.

Khammam, from his charge for failing to keep up regular revenue payments. But he was too frightened to attempt this himself and debated over whether to ask a French corps in his service, or another revenue farmer, Mohammed Ameen Khan Arab, to do it for him. Asad Ali Khan had, meanwhile, learnt of the Nizam’s intentions. He instructed his agents in Cuddapah and Khammam not to give up their control and himself hastened to Hyderabad to ‘solicit’ the Nizam not to transfer him from his districts. While he gave Asad Ali Khan evasive replies, the Nizam approached the British resident privately for help. He pleaded with the resident that the revenue farmer would heed his transfer order only if this was delivered to him by the resident on the Nizam’s behalf.  

There were other intermediaries whose attachment to Hyderabad was dictated more by the imperatives of survival than by notions of steadfast loyalty. The jagirdars of Kurnool, Cuddapah and Adoni realised, for example, that Hyderabad would not come to their rescue if they were threatened by Mysore or the Marathas. The jagirdar of Adoni, therefore, took more care to conciliate Mysore and the Marathas, than he did to conciliate the Nizam. Ranmast Khan of Cuddapah looked in vain for Hyderabad’s support when Tipu Sultan threatened to deprive him of his possessions, if he did not satisfy Mysore’s demands for tribute. The terror inspired by Tipu Sultan’s threat was so great that depopulation began to occur in Cuddapah and Ranmast Khan’s annual revenue collections fell rapidly from Rs. 22 Lakhs to Rs. 5 Lakhs annually. When Mahabat Jang, the jagirdar of Adoni, died in 1794, the Nizam first confirmed the deceased jagirdar’s son, Ghulam Husain, as his successor. But he later contemplated giving the jagir to another intermediary, Mustaqeem ud Dowla. A ‘strong sensation existed’ in Raichur, however, when the Nizam’s change of heart became known there. The protest ‘speedily grew into an open insurrection’ and was not arrested until the arrival of Company troops within striking distance of Raichur. But the chastening of Ghulam Husain still did not make Adoni and Raichur a trouble free jagir. For a while the diwan, Azam ul Umra, contemplated awarding it to himself, but he was discouraged at the prospect of becoming ‘immediately responsible to the Marathas’, whose claims of chauth from the districts gave them a direct interest in the affairs of Raichur and Adoni. Hyderabad eventually decided to farm out the jagir afresh by inviting new bids. No sooner was a new revenue farmer appointed that the Peshwa’s vakil reminded Nizam Ali Khan of Poona’s outstanding claims against the districts and warned him to ‘settle in a dignified manner’. The Nizam was bullied into conceding even more to the Marathas from Adoni and Raichur than before in the subsequent negotiations with the vakil, Govind Kishen.  

Perhaps the most powerful challenge that Nizam Ali Khan had to face from intermediaries and zamindars in the latter part of the 18th century was the one led by his
son Ali Jah in 1795. Ali Jah became associated with the plans of a powerful Telangana zamindar, Sadashiva Reddy of Medak, and also helped to focus the discontent of other zamindars and intermediaries. Contemporaries traced the beginnings of the discontent to 1791-92, when the Nizam had used a considerable force ‘in suppressing a rebellion which raged in the vicinity of Hyderabad’. The unrest once again came to a head in 1795. Nizam Ali Khan was at this time returning from a disastrous military encounter with the Marathas at Kharda on the western frontier of Hyderabad. He was obliged to set up camp in Sadashivpet in order to ‘settle the affairs of the disturbed district’. The zamindar, Sadashiva Reddy, was accused by the mutsaddi-s of the revenue department in Hyderabad of withholding Rs. 33 Lakhs from the centre. He initially evaded the Nizam’s summons under various pretexts, but finally declared that he would see him only after an agenda had first been agreed upon between his and the Nizam’s agents. Whilst the Nizam was represented by one of his high ranking courtiers, Sadashiva Reddy’s case was represented, suggestively, by no other than Poona’s vakil, Govind Kishen, in the preliminary negotiations that followed. This fact lent credence to the Nizam’s suspicion that Poona was encouraging the rebels in order to underline its message to him after the recent disaster at Kharda that it expected him to abide by the terms of the Kharda treaty, even if these were highly unfavourable to Hyderabad. Govind Kishen and the Nizam’s representative were able to agree on an agenda in due course.

The zamindar would pay Rs. 5 Lakhs as revenue arrears to Hyderabad and the latter would demand no more from him until the disputed revenue accounts had been re-examined to the satisfaction of both parties. The zamindar would also hold his fire while that re-examination was going on and offer his brother as a hostage to the Nizam as a proof of his good intentions. However, the truce lasted only seven weeks. Sadashiva Reddy resumed his posture of defiance, and was joined by the Nizam’s son and son-in-law, Ali Jah and Nizam ul Mulk, respectively. The latter raised ‘a large irregular force’ in the neighbourhood of Hyderabad. Support for the rebels also came from ‘chiefs and zamindars’ throughout the Hyderabad countryside. The garrison at Bidar declared in their favour and so did 1000 Rohillas in the fort of Udul. Mir Imam came to join them from a post south of the Krishna. He was beseiged on his way by the French troops at Jadcharla, but managed to fight his way out with a great show of skill and courage. He was ‘honourably received by the Prince’ when he arrived in Ali Jah’s camp. Ghulam Husain had recently been denied his late father’s jagir in Raichur and Adoni by the Nizam. He too declared in favour of Ali Jah, who responded by promising to restore him in the jagir after the rebels had won their victory over the Nizam. The garrison of Aurangabad fort defied its commandant’s orders to fight for the Nizam, against the rebels, and forced him to flee. Another body of soldiers arrived from Cuddapah to enlist with the rebels.\footnote{IOLR, H.Misc, H/563; H/563/1; H/570.}
The Nizam was alarmed by the progress that the rebels were making and ordered for a force to be mobilized against them. The French corps led by Raymond, other troops from Hyderabad led by Dilawar ud Daula, and the contingents of Ghazi Meah and Asad Ali Khan from the south formed the key elements in the loyal army that was raised. The rebels were forced to retreat towards the western frontier after a series of engagements and seiges. They offered to negotiate at Bidar. But Ali Jah asked for extravagant terms. He wished to have either the divani or independent control over a large number of Hyderabad districts. Hostilities were resumed and the two rebel leaders, Ali Jah and Sadashiva Reddy, were taken prisoner. Ali Jah died while being escorted back to Hyderabad. The general impression was that he died of a sudden malignant fever, but there were those who suspected poisoning, and others who suspected suicide. Sadashiva Reddy was deprived of his main districts upon arrival in Hyderabad and given a minor charge instead. Although the campaign against Ali Jah and Sadashiva Reddy was successful, their rebellion nevertheless dramatized the pervasive problems faced by Hyderabad. The Nizam himself admitted that his son had become the focus of many popular hopes and expectations.

Foreign commentators were more harsh in their judgement:

‘He (the Nizam) might be regarded as a useful instrument who would readily accord his sanction to another power, whom he would allow to act as long as outward appearances should be conceded to him. He preferred living at Hyderabad...with an extensive nominal authority to a more limited domain with absolute power...the Prince is in an eternal state of war with his subjects; there is no such predicament as absolute peace or quiet, external or internal. The revenues are collected at the point of the sword and troops are incessantly traversing the country...[As regards] external hostilities... much show is made...when little is intended; and great movements... from which little follows’.

The foregoing observation by the British resident was in line with what Tipu Sultan was thinking. He advised the Nizam in 1709 to wake up and attend seriously to the business of government, looking particularly into every aspect of his diwan, Azam ul Umra’s, administration. The Peshwa, too, expressed similar sentiments in 1794/95.

Yet more opposition to the Nizam’s authority came at the turn of the century. The Nawab of Kumool openly denied the Nizam’s right to collect any tribute, for example, and increased the strength of both his fort and his forces in case the Nizam should decide to retaliate by force. The Nizam’s ministers were, in fact, not at all confident that their forces could coerce the Nawab into submission. They pleaded with the resident for additional support to subdue the Nawab of Kumool, as well as several southern

100 Ibid.
101 IOLR, H.Misc, H/563/1.
102 Ibid.
zamindars, including those of Sholapur, Raichur, Pangal and Gadwal.\textsuperscript{103} Hostile zamindars and defiant intermediaries did nothing to give the Nizam strength. Yet it was the troops that they provided him, together with what forces his foreign allies of the moment leased, that formed the Nizam’s chief instrument of war. When he managed to put these together, they remained essentially a coalition of private armies, incapable of overcoming their conflicting loyalties. They were also often deficient in number, pay, equipment, training and discipline. Such forces as were more efficient, - the troops of Salabat Khan, who held a jagir in Berar, and Muzaffar ul Mulk, who held a jagir in Khammam and Cuddapah, - were as likely to obey the Nizam’s summons as to disobey them. When the latter was the case, it was not unusual for the Nizam to go through a tortuous round of diplomacy before a compromise was arrived at. If coercion was the path he chose, however, this was preceded by allurements, pleading or threats to other intermediaries who might usefully lend him military muscle against the original offender. Some of the intermediaries whose co-operation he sought might want an extension of their jagir, others a cancellation of revenue arrears, and yet others a release from disfavour or disgrace.

The supra-local intermediaries of Hyderabad were much divided by faction fighting and internal strife. Whilst such a state of affairs was in itself sufficient to prevent a strong centre from emerging in Hyderabad, the latter was put under added pressure by zamindar hostility and the conflicts between the zamindars and intermediary elements. Their militaristic strategies had not befriended Mughal intermediaries to the zamindars and nawabs of Hyderabad in the early part of the 18th century. The conduct of Asaf Jahi intermediaries in the remaining part of the 18th century did not take them any closer to the local bosses either. The threat of coercion remained the primary basis of the relationship between supra-local intermediaries and local bosses in the Asaf Jahi period. Though the story is still incomplete and the picture sketchy, there is enough evidence to cast serious doubts on some recent suggestions that a ‘decentralized successor state’ had emerged in Hyderabad in the last four decades of the 18th century. Yet though the divisions of Hyderabad’s intermediaries made them vulnerable to the hostility and power of the zamindars, they were never entirely rooted out of the region.

Stated at its simplest, this was because the zamindars were not united in their hostility and, furthermore, entered into temporary alliances of expediency with intermediaries in order to conduct their own local quarrels and wars. In Andhra, according to Frykenberg, zamindari rivalries, as well as zamindar conduct towards supra-local authority, could be traced to the manner in which zamindars traditionally controlled land. ‘Village systems of power’ were the primary units of land control. Each village was ruled by extended families of one or more of the elite castes. The complicated competitions that occurred among village level elites extended into extra-village level arenas, where zamindars

\textsuperscript{103} IOLR, Bengal Consultations, P/69, Resident to Gol, Letters, 24 Nov and 6 Dec 1799, 3 Jan and 3 Feb 1800.

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formed the ‘social cement’ between ‘opposed cultures’. The weakness of Hyderabad made zamindars powerful, but their handling of this power, and later the attempts of Company administrators to reach deeper into the system of land control and revenue management, first made them vulnerable to supra-local authority, and eventually caused their political demise. Increased zamindari power led to increased emphasis on traditional zamindari pastimes - mutual isolation, warfare, rapacity, ostentation and internal wrangling.\textsuperscript{104}

2.6.2.2 The Supra-local Factor

The alliances that neighbouring powers made in Hyderabad during the eighteenth century may be seen as resolutions of their particular interests into the factional conflicts of Hyderabad’s supra-local intermediaries, rather than as compacts with the Nizam at the head of a centrally unified government. When Nizam Ali Khan pleased with Madras in 1762 for example, for British military support to avenge a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Marathas, he represeted, in fact, only one of two rival Hyderabad factions courting the favours of the British. The Nizam offered Madras a cash payment of Rs. 1 Lakh and undisputed control over the Northern Circars in return for military support. But the rival offer of Husain Ali Khan, the faujdar of Rajamundry, was also a lucrative one as far as Madras was concerned. He offered Madras a share in the administration and revenues of the Northern Circars in return for 1000 troops, if they helped him make forced collections from hostile zamindars. Madras preferred Husain Ali Khan’s offer to Nizam Ali Khan’s in the event. The Nizam’s offer entailed getting militarily embroiled with Poona, something Madras definitely wished to avoid at this juncture. Husain Ali Khan’s offer, on the other hand, was less controversial. It did involve conflict with zamindars in the Northern Circars, but it steered clear of the Marathas. Despite the Nizam’s denunciation of the agreement that the British made with Husain Ali Khan, and the formal dismissal of the latter as the faujdar of Rajamundry, British troops did arrive to serve Husain Ali Khan, and he did make forced collections with their help.\textsuperscript{105} Only later did Madras agree to withdraw support from Husain Ali Khan and listen to Nizam Ali Khan’s proposals. But it still refused to let go of the hold over Rajamundry that Husain Ali Khan had allowed it. This was to force the Nizam’s hand. The Company had not received full payment for their services to Husain Ali Khan, as he was forced out of his rentership rather abruptly. Madras now argued that it had eventually served Hyderabad’s interest in serving Husain Ali Khan and the Nizam should, therefore, make up for the shortfall in Husain Ali Khan’s payments. Rajamundry would be the bargaining counter in the negotiation.

\textsuperscript{104} Frykemberg, Guntur; article in V.K. Bawa (ed.), Aspects of Deccan History, (Hyderabad, 1963).
\textsuperscript{105} IOLR, H.Misc, H/108, Intermediaries in the Revenue Administration of the Northern Circars, Madras Letter, 29 Jan 1773; H/335/1, J. Sullivan to Court of Directors, 3 Feb 1779; H/262/1, Madras Letter, Nov 1762; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 124-44; Sundaram, ‘Revenue Administration’. 

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However, Nizam Ali Khan was not convinced by Madras’ argument. He was also distracted by renewed Maratha attacks at this time on his western and northern frontiers. He demurred. But Madras construed his lack of response as an evasive tactic. It decided to give him a warning by renewing the alliance with the faujdar of Rajamundry, now a successor of Husain Ali Khan’s, Abdul Rahman. Whilst the British sold their support to his rival in the east, the Nizam was worsted by the Marathas in the west. Even though he was upset at their renewed alliance with the faujdar of Rajamundry, this defeat reduced him once again to begging the Company for support. But before Madras could respond to his second application, the Nizam was once again drawn away to war with the Marathas, this time against Nagpur forces on the northern front. He was still engaged against Nagpur when Madras launched an invasion into the Northern Circars in 1766, armed with a farman from the puppet king of Delhi. The Nizam found a faction led by his diwan, Rukun ud Daula, favourably disposed towards the British invasion and was forced to cede the Northern Circars to the Company. The Company promised him two detachments of its troops and recognition for his brother, Basalat Jang, as the jagirdar of Guntur for as long as he lived, in return. The British faction remained pre- eminent in Hyderabad for some time.  

It tried to keep its position secure by being conciliatory towards the powerful Maratha faction. The two even joined forces to make war against Mysore in 1767. But the honeymoon did not last. The British faction fell from grace as the Nizam prepared to attack Madras ‘persuaded by those of his courtiers friendly with Hyder Ali’. Hardly had this campaign begun, when the Rukun ud Daula lobby was once again able to prevail upon the Nizam. It persuaded him to renounce his connection with Hyder Ali and to conclude a new friendly alliance with Madras. But this too proved to be a temporary affair. Anti-Ruknud Daula groups had become active with Basalat Jang, the jagirdar of Guntur, as the chief instigator behind them. Basalat Jang was insecure in the belief that the British and the Rukun ud Daula faction were keen to drive him out of Guntur, and solicited Mysore’s support against them. Hyder Ali provided this in the shape of a corps of French troops in his service. The British faction in Hyderabad was thus in danger of being eclipsed in 1775, and Madras feared for the security of its possessions in the Northern Circars. But Basalat Jang himself presented them with a timely opportunity to bolster their weakening position. He was being threatened by the overbearing postures and exorbitant demands of Hyder Ali’s vakils in 1778. He offered to let the British have Guntur on contract if they would give him a battalion of troops to counteract the Mysore threat. News of the independent alliance between Basalat Jang and the British horrified the Nizam, and he now turned to the Maratha and Mysore factions for support. But

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Calcutta prevented an ominous combination against the British developing by a timely reversal of Madras’ alliance with Basalat Jang, and by making friendly overtures to the Nizam.\footnote{107}

The inroads that any neighbouring power could make into Hyderabad matched to some extent the rising and falling fortunes of particular combinations of individuals or factions among Hyderabad’s supra-local intermediaries. Foreign interventions were not determined by the invitations of Hyderabad factions alone, of course, but eager local collaborators did help the cause of ambitious neighbours. The typical path to influence that foreign powers followed in Hyderabad was first to make an alliance with a particular faction and then to bolster its position as much as possible. Hyderabad’s shifting alliances with various foreign powers also reflected to some extent the changing balance of power between the latter in the context of an all-India or south Indian rivalry.

Relations between the Company and Mysore deteriorated in the late 1780s and their factions in Hyderabad strained in opposite directions. The British appointed a resident to mobilise opinion against Tipu Sultan. The terms that Calcutta offered outmatched the terms that Shrirangapatnam could offer. An anti-Mysore alliance was also formed in Poona at the same time. The triple alliance that would inaugurate Tipu Sultan’s political demise was ready by 1790. But the diplomatic gains that the Company made in Hyderabad after the 1791 Mysore war were once again in danger of being lost after the battle of Kharda and Ali Jah’s rebellion in 1795. The resident had warned Azim ul Umra, the leader of the pro-British faction in Hyderabad, not to take his provocations against Poona so far as to provoke a military encounter, and oblige him to call upon his allies for assistance. Calcutta’s interest in the internal politics of Hyderabad was not independent of its wider strategic interests and policies in India as a whole. It might not be in a position to supply troops when the diwan asked for them. But Azam ul Umra had not restrained his provocations against Poona. He had consequently been obliged to make disastrous concessions, while the British stood by, and even gave himself up to Poona as hostage.\footnote{108}

The British faction was now hard put to defend its former strong position in Hyderabad. British battalions serving in Hyderabad were ordered to leave. The Maratha vakil, Govind Kishen, on the other hand, openly exerted himself to secure the important offices of the Hyderabad darbar, including the divani, for his own nominees. Another faction, headed by Rai Rayan, advocated a fresh alliance with Tipu Sultan. Timely developments saved the battalions from actual banishment, however, and also allowed the British to claw back the advantages they had gained in Hyderabad after 1792 but had been losing since 1794-95. Mir Alam’s strong stand by the Nizam during Ali Jah’s rebellion in 1795 brought Company troops back into service. The self-destructive conflicts

\footnote{107} See references cited in the last footnote and also: IOLR, H.Misc, H/140, pp. 89-108; H/219, pp. 173-229.

\footnote{108} References as in the last footnote.
of the Marathas, meanwhile, sapped their strength and also allowed Azam ul Umra to return to Hyderabad to a hero’s welcome in 1797. He had been able to exploit the internal divisions and turmoil of Poona through some astute diplomacy, and had regained revenues and territories lost at Kharda. Calcutta’s men were thus back in favour and influence at Hyderabad and helped revive flagging British fortunes dramatically. The position of British troops in Hyderabad was strengthened, and the French corps, of whom Calcutta disapproved strongly, was disbanded. These gains were further sealed in 1799, with the renewal of the combination against Tipu Sultan, which finally terminated his regional challenge and ambitions.109

But whilst the twilight of Mysore and the Marathas gave ascendancy to the British connection in Hyderabad after 1795, its security and benefits would ultimately have to depend upon how much, and what kind of, political control the British were able to establish in Hyderabad and the countryside. The main challenges in this connection were from insubordinate intermediary elements, hostile zamindars and the absence of a coherent system of administrative control reaching down from the centre into the villages.

2.7 Conclusion

There were three kinds of factors that went into the making of 18th century Hyderabad’s pre-colonial political order: the local, the supra-local and the inter-regional. The last chapter suggested that the economically vibrant core areas of the Hyderabad countryside were organized as zamindari and nawabi domains with well articulated political and social ‘communities’. The competitions between them for labour, resources and dominance resulted in a criss-cross pattern of alliances and conflicts. This chapter started with the assumption that supra-local intermediaries and inter-regional foreign powers were attracted to Hyderabad by the region’s economic and strategic potential. The intermediaries farmed out revenue and military assignments from a weak centre and sought to exploit the local alliances and conflicts of the nawabs and zamindars for profit. Foreign powers also indulged in military fiscalism at the supra-local level. They exploited the factionalism of the intermediaries to pursue their own rival fiscal and strategic interests in Hyderabad. Nizams and would-be-Nizams were pawns in the hands of influential darbar factions and the foreign powers associated with them. The long drawn struggle for succession after the death of the first Nizam, Nizam ul Mulk, was the most telling example of this process.

The British had emerged supreme in South India by the end of the 18th century. There was a corresponding decline in Maratha power. The Mysore sultanate was extinguished. This also meant that the British were now the supreme influence in the Asaf Jahi darbar. Control of the centre, however, did not imply control over all the intermediaries and

109 References as in the last but one footnote.
zamindars of Hyderabad. Centralization was espoused by British residents in Hyderabad in the next five or six decades, and it was inextricably linked with the emergence of a monopolistic brand of military fiscalism under British hegemony. The next three chapters examine the process and problems of centralization under the British regime.
3. UNDER THE BRITISH REGIME, 1798-1853

3.1 Introduction

Historians of 18th century Hyderabad have traditionally viewed foreign influence in it, as in other Indian ‘states’, as a sequential rather than a synchronic affair. That is to say, they have believed that only one power was predominantly influential at any one time. And when one foreign power was influential in Hyderabad, its alliances with other foreign powers were suspended temporarily, or superceded altogether. Such a view arises from imagining Hyderabad as a unitary state: the head of the state, the Nizam, could either be dominated by one power (or set of powers), or by another. That he was dominated by foreign powers at all was related to the fact he was a weak head, or the head of a weak state. The last two chapters, however, have questioned the notion of a unitary state in Hyderabad, and suggested instead that the framework of its political order can be seen as a criss-cross pattern of local, supra-local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts. The emergence of the British as the supreme political power in South India at the end of the 18th century did not imply, therefore, that Maratha, Mysorian and French influences in Hyderabad would now simply be substituted permanently by British influence. It implied also a change in the degree and quality of foreign intervention; and a significant change at any one level of Hyderabad’s traditional political order was likely to affect its other levels as well, and perhaps change its overall shape and character.

It was not just the absence of any effective foreign competitors that made British influence more powerful than before. The strength of British influence was also related to the nature of British expansion. The links between the nature of imperial expansion and the nature of imperial policy in Indian states have been the subject of renewed debate in recent years. The view taken here is that though the two processes were related, their specific dynamics could still be different. Whether or not it was ‘economic’ or ‘political’, private trader and industrialist or mercantilist factors that motivated imperial expansion is not what is discussed here. It is simply assumed that imperial expansion did occur, and that it was sought to be consolidated throughout the period under review, c.1798-1853. What is examined is the character and consolidation of British intervention in Hyderabad. Unlike in Awadh or Malabar, for example, it seems to have been dominated here by military fiscal interests.

One of the central concerns of British policy in India in the late 18th and early 19th centuries was to build up stable buffer states between British territory and foreign powers.

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1 See, for example: Regani, Nizam-British Relations.
hostile to it, such as the Marathas. This inevitably influenced the kind of intervention that went on in the concerned states. A related concern was to quell ‘banditti’ on British frontiers, and this also influenced the nature of intervention in the buffer states. In Hyderabad, the British strengthened their military presence, above all, in order to cope with the Marathas and the Pindarics, on the northern border, and with ‘banditti’ on the eastern and southern borders. But an injection of foreign strength of this sort inevitably implied a significant disturbance in the traditional operation of the Hyderabad political order, for it implied an unprecedented degree of military and fiscal centralization. The latter processes could have an adverse impact on the traditional independence, powers and privileges of the intermediaries and small kings. The British had even hitherto used their military skills to invest profitably in Hyderabad’s local and supra-local alliances and conflicts, just like other foreign powers, and had gained revenues and territory in return. But they had been restricted by their competitors. With those competitors effectively excluded or eliminated now, however, their military fiscalism intensified, becoming increasingly monopolistic. The presence of Maratha, French and Mysorian competitors, as well as Hyderabad’s own intermediaries, had perhaps also led to a ‘fair’ price for British military services in the past. Now, however, they enjoyed a monopoly, which they used to put their only remaining competitors, Hyderabad’s internal intermediaries, also out of business.

They did this for a time in league with an English banking house, Palmer and Company. The income that British troops generated from Hyderabad was probably no trifling matter when we consider the financial exhaustion that Calcutta faced in the early 19th century, from years of warfare and a deepening price depression in agriculture. The intervention of British residents into Hyderabad’s military and fiscal policies brought them into confrontation with intermediaries, whose own stakes in military and revenue farming conflicted with the financial objectives of the British, and with zamindars, whose traditional kingly local domains resisted military and fiscal centralism. Relationships with bankers in military and revenue farming came under increasing strain from the 1830s. For, Hyderabad itself was no stranger to financial problems in the early decades of the 19th century, and these ultimately operated as constraints upon how much it could accommodate its numerous creditors.

3.2 Early Attempts at Centralization, c.1798-1805

Various factors worked in favour of British expansion in India in Wellesley’s, Bentinck’s and Dalhousie’s time, whether we attribute them to ‘economic’, ‘political’, mercantilist, free trader or industrialist interests. Among these were anxieties arising from the French revolution and the loss of Britain’s American colonies; the related concern to make India politically safe and stable; the pressure from home to make the Indian
government pay for itself; and the quest for economic profits in India. Broadly, three strategies were used to achieve expansion in ‘native states’: outright annexation; assuming charge of their internal affairs, while leaving their ‘princes’ with royal titles and pensions; and giving native states subsidiary alliances in return for revenues, territory and varying degrees of control in their policies. Awadh, Hyderabad, Poona, Surat, Mysore, Tanjore and Carnatic were only some of the ‘states’ that were brought into the orbit of imperial rule in the opening years of the 19th century, in Wellesley’s time. Nevertheless, achieving expansion was one thing and sustaining it profitably quite another. Within a few years of introducing the subsidiary alliance system, and the policy of pensioning off indigenous rulers, for example, the Indian government came under severe criticism in Britain for having caused political and economic decay in the states it had effectively acquired. The debates concerning the merits and demerits of intervention in Indian states would continue well into the 19th century.3

This section is concerned merely with the dynamics of imperial intervention in Hyderabad. It has already been noted that among the key objectives of intervention here was the need to counter the Marathas and Pindaris, and the frontier ‘banditti’, and that these objectives implied a stronger military presence and, related to that, greater centralization, and an intensification of military fiscalism. Any significant attacks on the traditional powers and privileges of Hyderabad’s intermediaries and zamindars were likely to affect the overall shape and character of the region’s political order. The earliest areas that felt the impact of a stronger British presence were the centre, Berar and border districts of the Telangana-Rayalseema sub-region. The concern in the latter districts was with ‘bandit’ zamindars, who were thought to be a bad influence on the zamindars of the neighbouring Madras districts. The early 19th century, it must be remembered, was still a period when experiments were taking place in land tenure systems. The chief aims of agrarian policy were of course to maximize revenues and make rural society obedient to British authority. Hyderabad’s bandit zamindars were a bad influence on the British frontier precisely because they threatened to subvert the objectives of British agrarian policy in the Northern Circars in Madras. They carried on with their traditional criss-cross alliances and conflicts without respect to British boundaries, or reference to authorities. They also hurt the revenues, or the revenue producing potential, of British territory through warfare, cattle raiding, labour and resource attracting strategies. In Berar, where the need was felt for strengthening the frontier against the Marathas and Pindaris, the

threat was again felt to come from an old order of things. Berar’s leading intermediary was Mahipat Ram. He aspired to the diwani of the Asaf Jahi darbar in 18th century factional terms. His opponent was Mir Alam. Both candidates tried to win the resident’s support. But Mahipat Ram failed and, in desperation, turned to some Maratha capitals and Hyderabad intermediaries for help. Even though the British were practically sole foreign masters in Hyderabad by now, Mahipat Ram’s moves in Berar, Hyderabad and the Maratha capitals aroused their fears. Here, they reasoned, was a potential threat to Britain’s imperial ambitions, and it must be checked.

3.2.1 The Case of Mahipat Ram: from Darbar to Berar

Establishing control in Hyderabad meant consolidating a grip over the main darbar offices and exerting their authority on the military and revenue intermediaries, and zamindars. A grip over the main darbar offices traditionally implied the dominance of one foreign backed faction over the others. But in the changed context of the 1790s, when Mysore and the Marathas had declined and the British began to emerge as the only foreign power of any consequence in south India, control over the darbar offices became more than ever a question of subjecting the intermediaries to British domination. For, securing the centre was nothing if it was not linked to the penetration of traditional intermediary privileges and zamindari domains. The resident and the ministers made a simultaneous onslaught on the darbar and the countryside. This was a task of considerable magnitude, however, and they had to place priorities on which intermediaries and zamindars, and which areas, they wished to establish control over first. Their priorities were dictated to a large extent by Calcutta’s strategic considerations vis-a-vis the Marathas, and Madras’ administrative considerations on Hyderabad’s borders.

The ministers Azam ul Umra and Mir Alam had both complained about Hyderabad’s weak control over intermediaries from their first days in office. Mir Alam continued to impress upon the resident that ‘the public accounts of this Government...are in a most disordered state...; and will require a strong remedy...; nothing less than a reduction in the jageers,...from Raja Ragotim Rao downwards’ after Azam ul Umra’s death. He also wove into his proposals for increased control from Hyderabad, measures intended for private gain. Specifically, Mahipat Ram, who was governor of Berar, had begun to lobby for the post of diwan since returning from military service against the Marathas in the 1803-05 war. His success with the Nizam was almost immediate. He played on Sikandar Jah’s fears about the threat to the Nizam’s position from Mir Alam and his British friends; charmed the Nizam with extravagant flattery and bribes, and emphasised his own eligibility for the the office of diwan through the influential medium of the harem, with which he was well connected. Mahipat Ram also sought to win over the resident’s

4 NAI, For Sec, 9 Aug 1804, Letters, 76,92.
backing and he was enthusiastically supported by the Nizam in this project. But Mir Alam was himself interested in the diwan and viewed the initiatives of Mahipat Ram with growing alarm. He too tried to win over the resident to his candidature. He had the advantage here of a long and continuing association with the residency. He reminded the resident of his unflinching loyalty to the British in the past and made out that Mahipat Ram could never match him in this respect. The governor of Berar was too devoted to the Nizam, Mir Alam said, and Sikandar Jah was privately no friend of the British either. Mahipat Ram would play on the Nizam’s anti-British sentiments to such an extent if he was made diwan that the British alliance itself might be threatened. Henry Russell, the acting resident, was persuaded by Mir Alam’s arguments. He began to project Mahipat Ram as an enemy of the British alliance and, therefore, an unfit candidate for the diwan, in his letters to Calcutta. Russell’s successor as resident, Sydneham, left Calcutta under the influence of these letters. His prejudice against Mahipat Ram was reinforced when a messenger from the man tried to bribe him and his secretary while they were on their way to Hyderabad. He was alienated still further when Mahipat Ram tried to bribe him personally upon his arrival in Hyderabad. The resident now decided to give undisguised support to Mir Alam’s candidature. The two together pressurized Mahipat Ram into returning to Berar. The post of peshkar was also secured, meanwhile, for an British nominee, Chandu Lal.

Mahipat Ram returned to Berar in a resentful mood, though still harbouring hopes of winning the diwan. However, every step he now took was represented by the resident and his supporters as a conspiracy against both Hyderabad and the British. He was accused of being too big for his boots as governor of Berar. Meant to maintain 10,000 troops from territory annually worth Rs. 60 lakhs, he maintained not two-thirds of that number. Those he did were in poor discipline and in considerable arrears of pay. 35% of their salary was regularly withheld and other deductions were made periodically on a variety of pretexts. Mahipat Ram’s revenue accounts were few and far between and mostly fraudulent. He reserved 12 1/2% of the revenues as a private commission and still represented Hyderabad’s demands for authentic accounts as evidence of tyranny and oppression against himself.

The resident and the ministers appointed two officers in order to exercise a surveillance on Mahipat Ram in Berar. Sheetal Das, a relation of Chandu Lal’s, was asked to see that his troops were paid regularly and Mir Abu Torab was asked to muster

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5 NAI, For Sec, 20 Feb 1806, Sydneham’s Letter, 63, 30 Jan 1806; 21 Nov 1805, Russell’s Letter, 37, 14 Oct 1805.
7 Ibid.; NAI, HRR, 345, Sydneham to Close, Letter, 8 Sept 1806; For Sec, 20 Feb 1806, Sydneham’s Letter, 63, 30 Jan 1806; 21 Nov 1805, Russell’s Letter, 37, 14 Oct 1805.
8 NAI, HRR, 345, Sydneham to Close, Letter, 8 Sept 1806; For Sec, 19 June 1806, Sydneham’s Letter, 70; see also: H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, 1, 33-55; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 187-213
them. When Mahipat Ram tried to prevent the two men from interfering in his affairs, - having first failed to forestall their appointment by lobbying the Nizam through friends, - the resident and the ministers got the Nizam to pass orders dismissing him from the governorship of Berar. He became even more suspect in his opponents eyes when they intercepted some of his secret correspondence with the Nizam. He complained bitterly in it of unfair treatment, - not only of himself, but also of nobles like Rao Rambha and Nurul Umra, who had both been dismissed for stirring mutiny among British troops in Hyderabad, - at the hands of the ministers.9 He hinted at plans for obtaining support in Indore and other Maratha capitals for the expulsion of the British:

‘On this account they are carrying off and selling off their effects in many towns in Hindustan...O Asylum of the World! Their expulsion is at hand... there are other circumstances of great importance which cannot be committed to writing and which I am anxious that my nephew, Sreeput Ram, should be ordered to the presence for the purpose of representing...You should not by any means suffer yourself to be prevailed upon by...the agents of the hat-wearers to diminish either the troops or the allowances of any person whatever’.10

In yet other letters Mahipat Ram cautioned the Nizam that if he gave up demanding peshkash for the Northern Circars, he would encourage the British to ask for more territory later. If he agreed to cede new Berar districts to Nagpur, under pressure from the resident, he would be opening up the road to the complete loss of Berar. If he allowed the British to negotiate the question of chauth with the Peshwa on his behalf, he should be ready for an increased revenue burden. If he gave in to their proposals for reforming the Berar cavalry, he would witness a complete eclipse of the old jagirdari establishments.11

It was not at all obvious to the Nizam why the resident and his principal collaborators, the ministers, should, as they claimed, be the best to know and safeguard Hyderabad’s true interests. Mahipat Ram’s arguments played on precisely such doubts. Furthermore, they offered Sikandar Jah a way out of the ignominy and humiliation he felt at the growing power of the resident. Mahipat Ram tried to win over Salabat Khan, the commander of the most efficient military establishment in Berar, as well as the Nizam. Though Salabat Khan rejected his overtures, the resident and the ministers were alarmed. Not only was Mahipat Ram a disobedient jagirdar, they protested, he was also a dangerous and crafty conspirator. This was used as the final excuse to order Mahipat Ram

10 NAI, For Sec, 23 Oct 1806, Enclosure with Sydneham to Gol, Letter, 105-A, 1 Oct 1806, Mahipat Ram to the Nizam, 105-B.
of the governorship of Berar.\textsuperscript{12}

Mahipat Ram’s fall from the governorship, an intermediary position of some prominence, represented more than a personal setback for himself. It also represented the dying stand of an old style of factional politics in the Hyderabad court. Mahipat Ram had begun as an aspirant to the diwani by winning over the Nizam to his candidature and had then turned to the resident for further support. Rebuffed by the resident, he had tried to raise support among fellow intermediaries, particularly those in Berar, and also in Indore and other Maratha capitals. Yet, Mughal style factionalism had no place in the Hyderabad of 1805, where the only powerful party was necessarily the one which had British backing. Nur ul Umra, Rao Rambha and Ismail Yar Jang all fell in much the same way as Mahipat Ram did, trying to play faction where monopoly had become the rule.\textsuperscript{13}

If the resident and the ministers put an alarmist construction on the activities of Mahipat Ram and his associates, they, too, did not fully appreciate that the days of old style factionalism were over in Hyderabad. Their alarms did help concentrate attention on the task of making intermediaries obedient to the centre’s will, however. Nor was the particular focus on Berar purely fortuitous. Berar’s importance derived from the experiences of British troops operating there in the 1803-05 war against the Marathas. They had found Berar to be terribly insecure. Wellesley had complained bitterly about the quality of the troops with which Hyderabad had supplied him. They were deficient in number, discipline, training, equipment and pay. Their commanders were factious and indifferent to British needs. They even looted the latter’s baggage on one occasion while the latter were engaged in an encounter with Maratha troops. Difficulties were also presented by intermediaries charged with the responsibility for auxiliary support, such as medical aid, and supplies of fodder and provision. Raja Shukradhar, the brother of the governor of Berar, evaded the requirements of British troops passing through his districts. The qiladars of Dharur and Daulatabad refused aid and shelter even to wounded British soldiers on the grounds that they had no express orders from Hyderabad to that purpose. The garrison of Badnapur actually fired on a passing detachment of British troops. Such experiences added a tone of urgency to the British desire for a strong and secure frontier against the Marathas in Berar in the early 19th century.\textsuperscript{14}

3.2.2 Frontier Banditti

The resident’s drive for greater control in Berar was part also of a concern among Madras’ officials to make Hyderabad a stable buffer between themselves and the Marathas. The absence in Hyderabad’s border districts of what they regarded as regular government had haunted district officers in the Northern Circars and the Carnatic from

their first days there. Local conflicts in the neighbouring Hyderabad districts, for example, offended against their conceptions of secure administrative control. Raja Rao of Gunnapuram was one of numerous Telangana zamindars whose rusoom politics overflowed into the Northern Circars. He attacked some Masulipatnam villages contesting his rusoom claims several times in 1798-99. British officials in Masulipatnam were indignant. They protested to the resident in Hyderabad that zamindars possessed of such daring independence represented a threat to ‘good government’ in their districts. Their protest turned to outrage when their enquiries revealed that Raja Rao had had the support of the amil of Khammamett and the jamadar of Gunnapuram as well. The resident replied that most of Hyderabad’s amils, naibs and jamadars were, in fact, subject to the centre only in name. In Khammamett, too, they served foremost the interests of the revenue farmer who employed them. The revenue farmer, of course, acted as his local interests deemed fit, now unleashing tyranny against zamindars, now making conciliatory bargains with them. He would, nevertheless, saddle the Hyderabad ministers with the responsibility for outrages committed by ‘government officers’. The Masulipatnam authorities could even lend him a useful hand in this task:

‘...any information tending to fix on the talookdar of Khummumait the charges of connivance with the refractory zamindars...may materially conduce to the suppression of these disorders’.

The Masulipatnam authorities felt encouraged by the resident’s response and took the liberty of sending a detachment of British troops ‘to the very village where it was represented...the naib of Gunnapuram usually resided’ in order to conduct further investigations.

Two other Khammamett zamindars, Timmannah and Sadashiva Reddy, were also under the surveillance of the Masulipatnam authorities at this time. They had temporarily joined up with Raja Rao, and the three were suspected of planning an attack on Jaggiahpet and other zamindari capitals in Masulipatnam. The collector of Masulipatnam wrote to the resident desiring Hyderabad’s assistance for a British detachment he was preparing ‘to terminate the devastating proceedings of the banditti’. Hyderabad was only too willing to co-operate. Timmannah was taken by the British troops and handed over to the Khammamett naib for execution. The Masulipatnam collector also clamoured for the execution of an associate of Timmannah’s, who was still in prison. He feared that this

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15 See, for example: IOLR, H.Misc, H/263, Member of Select Committee, Madras to Resident, Hyderabad, Letter, 26 June 1784; H/563, pp. 606-8; H/563/4, pp. 601-8; Board’s Collections, F/4/5/692; F/4/76/1665; Political and Secret Department, L/P & S/20/F.8; Munro Collection, Mss Eur 151/10, Munro’s Instructions to William Thackeray, 31 Dec 1800; Elliot Collection, Mss Eur F 47, Munro to Madras Board of Revenue, Letter, 20 March 1802.


17 Ibid.

18 Ibid., Hamilton to Kirkpatrick, Letter, 15 Oct 1799.

19 Ibid., Hamilton to Kirkpatrick, Letter, 10 Nov 1799; see also: IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/76/1665.
man, Maracula Alwarao, might get away if left too long in the custody of Zainulabiddin, a naib known for conferring liberal favours in return for bribes. Alwarao would almost certainly join up with his associates if he was released. The latter had been in a resentful mood since the execution of Timmannah, and might stir up considerable trouble. The resident was persuaded by the collector's arguments. He prevailed upon Azam ul Umra to pass orders for Alwarao's execution. He even took the precaution of posting witnesses 'of my own, who say they are acquainted with the person' to ensure that it was Alwarao, and none other, who was executed. The resident also promised Hyderabad's further co-operation 'to effect the apprehension of the two brothers of Maracula..., who are...concerned in similar predatory practices'.

The efforts of British troops and civilians to bring some sort of fear of centralizing authority among Khammamett naibs and zamindars might have gained weight from what the latter saw of British influence and authority in their own districts. A zamindar band from the British districts of Condapalli and Mungal raided the zamindari of Aswa Rao in Hyderabad in mid-1800, for example. The raiders had stolen a 'large number' of cattle from Singareni and were still at an intermediate station, Dacharum, within Hyderabad, when Aswa Rao's diwan, Venkat Rao Pandit, launched a counter attack and recovered some of the cattle. A few of the raiding party were also killed. Venkat Rao now proposed to march upon Mungal itself, in order to recover the remaining cattle and further to avenge the raid on Singareni. But the naib taluqdar of Khammamett, Dost Ali Khan, warned Venkat Rao that government authority was a real thing in British territory. It would be foolish and counterproductive to violate its authority. He would do much better to apply to the British resident in Hyderabad for justice. Dost Ali's words were not empty. Everyone had seen what had happened to Vasireddy of Guntur, for example, once one of the most defiant of zamindars in the whole of the Northern Circars. He had been repeatedly humiliated.

Dost Ali's were not empty words. Everyone had witnessed the recent chastening of Vasireddy of Guntur, once one of the most defiant of zamindars in the whole of the Northern Circars. Vasireddy had been humiliated repeatedly by British troops and now ate quietly out of the British authorities' hands. When they objected against his being allowed to farm some villages from Hyderabad, for instance, he accepted their decision with only

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21 To Hyderabad the naib wrote pleading for expeditious justice: '...the raja in question can collect a considerable force...If this matter be settled, it will be well; otherwise the raja's troops will take retaliation'. (NAI, For Pol, 27 March 1800)
a mild remonstrance. The ‘Madira Seema’ had been held by his ancestors for a long time, he pleaded. He would like to be given the first preference to farm it if the British should decide ever again to let their zamindars farm out villages from Hyderabad. The threat of coercion became constant for zamindars who tried to defy the resident or officials in the Northern Circars, as Timmanah’s brothers and sympathizers discovered to their cost. They had maintained a hostile posture after Timmanah’s execution, giving support to one of Masulipatnam’s most wanted men, Comadannah Venkata Rao. The resident sent out two detachments into the Nalgonda and Khammamett districts to deal with the rebels. The commanders of the detachments, Woodhouse and Nail, were asked to be on the lookout for other fugitives as well, such as Mungapati Deo of Polavaram and ‘a rebellious poligar of the ceded districts’. The naibs of Khammamett and Nalgonda, Dundar Khan and Zainulabiddin Khan respectively, were ordered to help the British detachments with one hundred horsemen each.

Communications between the resident and the civil and military authorities in the Madras districts on Hyderabad’s southern borders had also become frequent by the early 19th century. The district authorities here, too, were often after hostile Hyderabad zamindars. After an initial concession to form, they quickly gave up any pretence about obtaining the Nizam’s permission if they wanted to pursue offending zamindars into the Hyderabad countryside. A force was thus sent against Jagannath Rao of Jatpole in 1802 without consulting him, and a similar attack contemplated against the zamindar of Sholapur some time later. The British officials’ main concern was to co-ordinate their activities with the moves of the residency. They took the Nizam’s and the Hyderabad ministers’ support for granted. Intermediaries on the Hyderabad side soon became accustomed to having British troops conducting operations against hostile zamindars. The latter, of course, could hardly have misrecognized their enemies. The resident himself showed an increasing awareness of his position. He warned a naib accused of sheltering fugitive poligars from British districts, Ahsan Mean, on one occasion not to tangle with him or the government he supported:

‘...it is a matter of infinite regret that you should in the first instance have offered them an asylum and that you afterwards advance frivolous

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22 Zamindars who straddled borders, the British authorities held, could easily deceive both the central governments to whom in theory they paid allegiance. If one of the governments was displeased with the zamindars, - most usually this was due evasion of revenue payments, - they could leave its jurisdiction quite easily and legitimately and live in the other’s territory. By the time the first government had sought the permission of the second one to enter its territory and seize the fugitive by force, the offending zamindar might have fortified his local position already and set a bad example to others. Vasireddy had had some disastrous encounters with British troops in the past. A particularly bad one was when he had been forced out of his former capital, Chintapalli, and it had been garrisoned by British troops. He no longer had any apetite for getting embroiled with the British authorities or forces.

23 Ibid.; NAI, For Pol, 23 July 1801, 22.

24 NAI, For Pol, 5 Nov 1801, 5; 29 April 1802, 16.

25 IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/76/1665; NAI, For Pol, 19 March 1801, 20; 23 July 1801, 5; 29 April 1802, 16,17.
pretences in reply to demands which were made for their delivery... You should consider the performance of this duty as inseparably connected with your own advantage and as a source of gratification to... Azim ul Umra.  

On another occasion, he requested the Collector of Raiderg to remove a recalcitrant revenue farmer from a Hyderabad district. For revenue farmers who were loyal to the British dominated regime in Hyderabad he requested help from the British authorities. In the case of Cuddapah, for example, he urged Munro of the Ceded Districts 'to enable them to examine the accounts of the zamindars, poligars, deshpondia and other inferior revenue officers of that province', as the 'Rajah [Chandu Lal] will be exposed to considerable inconvenience, if not heavy expense', otherwise. British troops were active in northern Telangana, too, by the beginning of 1801:

'...certain zamindars have...for a long time past been in a state of rebellion against the government and now require...a considerable force to reduce them to subjection...[and] put a stop to their depredations'.

The naib of Yelgundel, Ranga Rao, was ordered by Azam ul Umra to assist British troops and regard himself as a subordinate of their commander, Hall. The resident was pleased and hopeful at these developments:

'[Subduing these zamindars] would not only be gratifying to this government but useful also to our own interests, these freebooters having more than once menaced the Rajamundry district, if their inroads have not actually extended further.'

Meena Rao and Kona Rao were the principal targets of British operations in Yelgundel. Kona Rao was based at Sirsilla, 'a small quadrangular gharrie with four bastions'. He was reported to command a force of 1,200 troops and to rely, additionally, on the natural strength of his terrain for his defence. His 'rebellious' activity consisted in the main of demanding rusoom from villages throughout Yelgundel, and from parts of the neighbouring districts of Ramgir and Warangal, too. Kona Rao's methods were reported to be feared by both the intermediaries and the zamindars:

'If the zamindars comply with his requisitions; it is well; but if not they [Kona Rao and his men] send a proportionate force against the village and waste and burn it so that the inhabitants of the different districts in Yelgundel are in great distress and perturbation. The talookdar... , Lashkar

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26 NAI, For Pol, 23 Nov 1802, 7.
27 The revenue farmer in question, Zainulabiddin Khan, had been resisting an unfair termination of his contract by the centre. (NAI, For Pol, 15 Jan 1801, Resident to Collector of Raiderg. Letter, 22 Dec 1800)
28 NAI, For Pol, 15 Jan 1801, Kirkpatrick to Munro, Letter, 36, 22 Dec 1800.
29 NAI, For Pol, 19 March 1801, Kirkpatrick to Hall, Letter, 31, 4 Feb 1801.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.; see also: IOLR, Elliot Collection, Ms Eur F 48, Account of Ramgir and Yelgundel Circars, 1798.

99
Jang, has sought refuge in Keshoputun, in the district of Ramgir'.

Hall captured Sirsilla, Govindvaseema and Devikunda Gutt within a month: ‘those zamindars [now] have neither strongholds nor posts of any strength [left] in their districts’.

Containing the Marathas and suppressing ‘banditti’ were objectives that the resident in Hyderabad shared with other residents, as well as with the governments of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. To realize these, he felt it necessary to secure control of the Asaf Jahi darbar, and to subject intermediaries and zamindars in the border areas to central control. It was not long before the latter process began to spill over inwards as well, and to affect other areas, as subsequent sections will suggest.

The position of the resident grew increasingly more powerful from the late 1790s. As that happened, he pushed for more centralization, especially the greater alignment of intermediaries with the centre’s purposes and priorities. Beneath the intermediary level, however, there was still little bureaucratic control. Coercion, on the contrary, was extended as the main technique of dealing with zamindars. Those intermediaries who would not sacrifice their traditional interests and privileges in the cause of Hyderabad’s new drive for centralization also found themselves confronted with coercive tactics. Hyderabad’s centralization drive not only conflicted against many of the traditional powers, interests and privileges of intermediaries, it also made new demands upon them. Above all, it expected them always to serve the centre’s policies loyally. But such an expectation was not exactly compatible with the prevailing political culture of Hyderabad and nor did the British dominated centre always succeed in adjusting the interests of intermediaries and zamindars to its own priorities in the period 1800-30.

3.3 The Origins of the Centre’s Reforms

The objectives of the subsidiary alliance, were not simply a matter of retaining the Northern Circars, charging Hyderabad a sum of Rs 2 Lakhs annually, and assuming charge of its ‘external’ affairs. Even the initial years, c.1798-1807, demonstrated that British residents were quite prepared to interfere in the internal affairs of the Asaf Jahi darbar and those of intermediaries and zamindars, if need be by taking recourse to coercive military measures. And the British dominated centre continued its attacks on intermediaries and zamindars throughout the first half of the 19th century. The motives behind such policies soon outstripped the limited objectives of the subsidiary alliance. They were provided, rather, by a steady intensification of military fiscalism, which was operated for a time in league with Palmer and Co, a private financial firm in which many British officers, including the governor-general of India himself and the resident in

33 NAI, For Pol, 19th March 1801, Kirkpatrick to Hall, Letter, 31, $ Feb 1801.
34 NAI, For Pol, 16 April 1801, Hall to Kirkpatrick, Letter.
Hyderabad, had a personal stake. British policies in Hyderabad, in the first half of the 19th century, boasted all the zeal of the 'Age of Reform' on the surface. Reform, though, was never seen even officially as being meant to 'educate' the subjects of British rule, or to bring the 'greatest good' to their 'greatest number'. Only one resident, Metcalfe, harboured grand visions, - bringing peace and prosperity to the Hyderabad countryside, and doing away as much as possible with intermediaries between the centre and the peasant. In practice, however, his vision came to nothing, and the talk of reform in Hyderabad was eventually a cloak for intensifying military fiscalism.

The various stages leading up to the formation of the subsidiary alliances may themselves be regarded as early developments in military fiscalism. First, the British took revenues and territories for providing military services in the context of local and supra-local rivalries. The only significant commercial treaty that they signed with Hyderabad in the early 19th century, on the other hand, that of 1802, remained a dead letter until it was revived in 1860, under rather different circumstances. In the period c.1807-50, a monopolistic brand of military fiscalism replaced the earlier competitive variety. The only competition that remained now, Hyderabad's own intermediaries, was suppressed by the coercive use of centralization. As centralization was extended, the military and revenue assignments of Hyderabad's traditional supra-local intermediaries were resumed and re-assigned to the British and their partners, Palmer and Co. Only a small proportion of the former intermediaries were retained to help finance new British military assignments. As the number of British troops increased. - at a time, ironically, when a military build-up was unnecessary from the purely defensive or strategic point of view, - Hyderabad got caught up in a vicious system of revenue farming and indebtedness. Such developments unleashed severe pressures on the countryside. These were compounded by the agricultural depression of the early 19th century, as well as by occasional droughts and epidemics. Facing severe criticism at home for bad management, looking for means to offset falling revenues in the territories it administered, and sorely in need of funds to finance administrative expenditure and imperial warfare, the Indian government encouraged the resident in Hyderabad to intensify his military fiscal strategies. Yet, Hyderabad too was a victim of the agricultural depression, and the related fiscal and financial problems. The resident's demands only deepened its distress. The core areas of its countryside, which had hitherto been the keys to Hyderabad's vibrant economic activity, suffered contraction and decline. Hyderabad, in fact, began to acquire the characteristics of what it came to be labelled as in later years, a classic backwater.

36 Military fiscalism gave way around this time to the industrial interest in developing Hyderabad as a primary producer and importer of British manufactured goods: see Chapter Four below.
3.3.1 Early Reforms: Berar

Govind Baksh, the brother of the pro-British diwan, Chandu Lal, was sent to replace the disgraced Mahipat Ram as the governor of Berar in 1807. The new governor was expected to introduce respect for the centre’s fiscal and military requirements among the intermediaries of this important border region. But Govind Baksh was confronted with a highly unpromising situation when he arrived in Berar and carried out his initial assessments. The intermediaries seemed to be carrying on with their older practice of intervening in the alliances and conflicts of local zamindars on an ad hoc basis for survival and profit. They seemed incapable of meeting the centre’s military and fiscal demands either in full or on a regular basis. The new governor of Berar reported finding every civil and military department weaker than he could ever have imagined. Far from being in a position to defy Hyderabad’s authority by force, the intermediaries presented the opposite danger of not being able to carry out the centre’s commands for lack of strength. They seemed beleagured, cowardly and corrupt in the face of the two major threats they faced, the Pindaris and the zamindars, and were given to making temporary alliances of expediency with the latter, when not engaged in tyrannizing over them. Govind Baksh traced the weakness of the intermediaries primarily to their inability to raise satisfactory revenues or to maintain sufficient numbers of troops in good condition. They were expected to maintain eleven battalions of 850 troops each, in theory, at a total monthly expense of Rs 15 lakhs raised from the revenues of Berar. In practice, they maintained not two-thirds of that number. Those they did were in poor discipline and heavy arrears of pay. Berar, furthermore, seemed nowhere capable of yielding anything approaching the centre’s estimates of its revenues.

Such was the context in which a reform of the intermediaries’ establishments was deemed an urgent necessity in Berar. It was believed, Hyderabad’s policies, would carry little meaning without this. Changes in the infantry would have to be ‘scarcely short of dismissing and reforming the whole corps’, as well as replacing corrupt mutsaddies in their financial management. The affairs of the cavalry were more messy still and reforming it would be nothing short of a monumental exercise. It seems doubtful, in the light of the state of affairs that Govind Baksh discovered in Berar, if Mahipat Ram was ever as powerful as he was made out to be in the days immediately prior to his dismissal. Nor could he have commanded such a strong base among Berar’s intermediaries as was attributed to him. His only other sources of local power could have been firm alliances with the Pindaris or the zamindars. But such alliances, too, he never made. What is probable is that it was his very weakness which, paradoxically, made Mahipat Ram

37 NAI, For Pol, 21 May 1807, Russell to Sydneham, Letter, 3, 5 March 1807; 28 Sept 1807, 35; 4 Jan 1808, 1,6,10,12.
38 See references cited in the last footnote.
39 NAI, For Pol, 21 May 1807, Russell to Sydneham, Letter, 3, 5 March 1807; also: For Pol, 28 Sept 1807, 35.

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disobey Hyderabad’s orders. If the resident and the ministers attributed his disobedience to his strength, they were the victims of their own ignorance and of his bluff.40

Two main considerations dominated the attempts that were begun in 1807 to bring Berar’s intermediary establishments closer to the purposes of the centre. The older methods of the intermediaries now stood condemned and their troops were expected to operate a credible system of defence along Berar’s northern border. A commandant of the British subsidiary forces in Berar, Dove ton, was assigned the task of ‘reforming’ Berar’s ‘irregular’ infantry. He was asked to take care that the troops were paid regularly. Europeans were recommended as new commandants, and pay and muster masters instead of the older mutsaddies.41 Dove ton’s attempts began on a small scale. He would ‘discipline’ the ‘irregular’ troops in batches of fifty, drilling them alongside British troops. These batches were then expected to return to their original battalions and ‘reform’ their remaining colleagues. Europeans were placed as commandants, and pay and muster masters at the head of the ‘reformed’ battalions. Whilst Dove ton thus transformed a proportion of Berar’s ‘irregulars’ into a ‘regular infantry’, they were still more ‘thoroughly reformed’ by Syd neham afterwards. 3000 Regulars were in action in Berar by 1811.42 1600 were assigned in two 800 strong battalions to the Jagirdar of Ellichpur, Salabat Khan, under an English commandant, Drew. The remaining regulars were assigned to other battalions, which were also commanded by European officers. Two new infantry regiments were also created in 1811.43 These again were officered, trained,

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40 If Mahipat Ram was a paper tiger, moreover, many other Hyderabad intermediaries must also have been the same. What was exposed in Berar, - weak intermediaries surviving through alliances with, or tyranny against, zamindars, - was also brought to light in Shorapur, where the resident and the ministers followed Mahipat Ram’s trail. The Raja of Shorapur, Pid Naik, was a revenue farming zamindar trapped between the ambitions of his diwan, Inkappah Naik, and Hyderabad’s demands for tribute. Pid Naik heard in 1807 that Hyderabad was about to despatch a force against him for evading revenue payments and for raiding the neighbouring districts of Gulbarga and Ferozabad. He was alarmed and sent urgent messages to the centre pleading he was not guilty. He claimed that he was a prisoner in the hands of his diwan, Inkappah Naik, who had forcibly ousted the previous diwan, Timmappah. Inkappah had achieved his object with the help of Mahipat Ram, Raza Ali Khan Sindhi and Nabi Yar Jang, mercenaries who had come to Shorapur after being forced out of Berar. Though successful in deposing Timmappah and making Pid Naik prisoner, Inkappah had run out of means with which to pay the mercenaries. He, therefore, withheld the peshkash due to Hyderabad and also encouraged the mercenaries to raid villages in Gulbarga and Ferozabad upon false claims of rusoom.

Fortunately for Pid Naik, it was the discredited Mahipat Ram and his associates who served Inkappah. Hyderabad sprang to the Shorapur zamindar’s aid. A negotiating party was first sent under Palmer to see if Inkappah Naik would come to terms peacefully. A detachment was sent on its heels under Gordon in case the negotiations failed and it became necessary to decide the issue by force. The negotiations did in fact break down. But Gordon’s forces were also unexpectedly routed by Inkappah Naik’s mercenaries. He and another British officer were taken prisoners, moreover, and tortured to death in captivity. The resident was livid when he learnt the murderers’ identity: Mahipat Ram and his nephew, Sripat Ram. He informed Calcutta that a new anti-British conspiracy was brewing in Hyderabad and despatched a strong British contingent to Shorapur by forced marches. Mahipat Ram and his companions took alarm at its approach and fled. They were pursued until they left Hyderabad on its north western border. They were never to return again. (NAI, HRMC, 30/1807, Resident to G-G, Letter, 22 Dec 1807; For Pol, 18 Jan 1808, 61-5; 29 Feb 1808, 57; 7 March 1808, 40; HRR, 345, Sydneham to Gordon, Letters, 4 Feb, 6 Feb 1808; Sydneham to Palmer, 6 Feb 1808; see also: IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4296, On Mahipat Ram’s rebellion and Hoikar’s rebellious chiefs.)

41 NAI, For Pol, 30 April 1807, 47; 21 May 1807, Russell to Sydneham, Letter, 3, 5 March 1807; 28 Sept 1807, 35.


43 One of the regiments was commanded by a man named Fraser and the other by a man named Beckett.
mustered and paid by Europeans. The whole of Berar's regular infantry was supplied with arms and ammunition purchased from British stores in Madras. The Russell Brigade, consisting of 2081 troops divided into two battalions, was formed in 1813. The Brigade was not only commanded by British officers and supplied with British stores, it was also paid from the residency treasury. The sums required for its maintenance were deducted from the peshkash that the British in theory still paid for the Northern Circars to Hyderabad.

Berar’s ‘irregular cavalry’ was brought under the scope of the ‘reforms’ in 1816. 2000 cavalry were reformed in the first instance. 1500 were assigned to Salabat Khan and the remaining to several other commandants, mostly British. 4000 more cavalry were reformed a short while afterwards and assigned to a British officer called Davies.

The whole of the Berar reformed troops, 7425 infantry and 6000 cavalry, were subjected to a single system of command in 1817. The resident was vested with the overall authority over them. Their operational responsibility lay with five military commanders. Pitman, Hom and Salabat Khan, assisted by Lyne, were appointed infantry commanders, with 3368, 2157 and 1900 troops, respectively. Each command was divided up into several battalions. Captain Davies, with 4000 men, and Salabat Khan, with 2000 men were appointed the commanders of cavalry. Each of the five commanders of infantry and cavalry was assisted by a host of European commandants, who were in turn assisted by five European staff officers each. The entire body of the reformed troops was collectively referred to as the ‘Hyderabad Contingent’. But the Hyderabad Contingent was Hyderabad’s only in name.

3.4 The Implications of Reform, c.1807-21

‘Reforming’ Berar’s ‘irregular’ troops into ‘regular’ troops under British commandants was much more than merely an exercise in military discipline in order to improve Hyderabad’s defences along the Maratha-Pindari frontier. In fact, reform was a means of making serious inroads into the traditional powers and privileges of Hyderabad’s intermediaries and, eventually, core areas. ‘Irregular’ troops were synonymous with the traditional military and revenue assignments of the intermediaries. When the British reformed the irregular troops into regulars, they took away military assignments from the

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44 See references in last footnote.
45 See the last footnote.
46 This was to ensure the regular payment of salaries.
47 In reality, it paid very little peshkash; for many years it paid none at all.
48 NAI, For Sec, 27 July 1816, Sydneham’s Letter, 5, 1 March 1813; 5 July 1817, Russell’s Letter, 7, 14 June 1817; also: Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 215-36; George, Hyderabad Contingent.
49 NAI, For Sec, 5 July 1817, Russell’s Letter, 7, 14 June 1817; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 215-36; George, Hyderabad Contingent. see also: H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 62-72.
50 NAI, For Pol, 21 May 1807, Russell to Sydneham, Letter, 3, 5 March 1807; For Sec, 27 July 1816, 3-8.
intermediaries and added these to their own forces. The intermediaries’ revenue assignments were also re-assigned to Palmer and Co, in the period c.1807-20. Reform thus lay at the heart of a monopolistic trend in military fiscalism. British officers were appointed to train and command the reformed troops and the latter were also supplied with arms, ammunition and equipment purchased from British military stores in Bombay and Madras. Both British officers and British supplies were more expensive than what Hyderabad had been used to with the former intermediary assignees. Moreover, reformed troops were in one sense not as 'productive' as the traditional irregulars had been.

Intermediaries had traditionally depended on intervening in the local alliances and conflicts between nawabs and zamindars for profit. They had kept the number of their irregular troops down to the essential minimum, - not bothering about officially stipulated quotas or frontier defence, - in order to make their fluctuating fiscal fortunes profitable. Their fiscal fortunes had fluctuated because the intermediaries had not exercised certain or lasting control over the core areas they were assigned. Another reason why intermediaries had been unable to collect the officially estimated revenues to their full extent was that 'Mughal' assessments were deliberately overpitched by at least one third, and often more. Intermediaries had traditionally, in other words, never been able to pressurize or destroy a large number of core areas simultaneously. If one set of core areas was under siege from them, then others continued to attract investment, labour and resources under the patronage and protection of their small kings. The regional economy as a whole remained dynamic. It was in this sense that the traditional assignments of Hyderabad's intermediaries had been 'productive' when compared to the reformed troops under the British in the early 19th century. When the British took over the intermediaries' military assignments, they also maintained these at full strength, and in such superior discipline as to be able to exert potentially destructive pressure on a wide range of economically vibrant core areas simultaneously, a situation rarely witnessed earlier. Another dimension to the destructive potential of British troops lay in the manner in which they were financed. The revenue assignments that were taken away from intermediaries when they were deprived of their military assignments were re-assigned to the officially favoured Palmer and Co. The latter's advance payments, or 'loans', to Hyderabad against these assignments were underwritten by British fire power in actual practice. Palmer and Co could call in the reformed troops to squeeze out revenues from

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51 See discussion below.
52 See, for example: IOLR, Mack Gen, 43, 44, Deccan Statistics; Nayeem, Mughal Administration of Deccan, pp. 97-207; NAI, HRMC, 31/1817-20, Resident to G-G, Letter, 22 Oct 1819.
53 This must surely have been one important reason why, as Richards points out, the Mughals did not decline because of declining revenues in Golconda, but for other reasons, unlike other parts of India in the same period.
54 See also: Chapter One above.
districts it was assigned if these did not match up to official estimates. Such occasions were hardly likely to be infrequent when neither the British nor Palmer and Co recognized that official revenue estimates were never meant to be taken at more than two thirds their face value, at the very most. The British maintained their reformed troops at full strength and also expected Palmer and Co to raise the officially assessed revenues in full. The Palmer firm rapidly increased the number of districts it was assigned, therefore, and the British began to batter core areas on an unprecedented scale. The adverse consequences of monopolistic military fiscalism were intensified by a prolonged agricultural depression in the early 19th century. The core areas of the Hyderabad countryside began to suffer and decline. The British were sooner or later bound to realize, that their reforms were not working. When they did so, however, they blamed the intermediaries, not themselves.

Berar's reformed troops gave a new meaning to the business of applying coercion against zamindars who could not pay up the revenues they were officially assessed for. But the centre failed to match its new ability to penetrate and destroy productive zamindari tracts with conciliatory terms to zamindars or ameliorative measures to agriculturists during years of depression. Intermediaries, too, had caused depopulation and decline through coercive measures in the past, but they had never commanded quite the same fire power as the British troops. They had always been obliged, therefore, to enter into expedient compromises with at least a few zamindars. The reformed troops, on the other hand, operated under a centre so committed to strengthening its defences against the Marathas and to military fiscalism that it did not dwell seriously on the destructive implications of its coercive power in the countryside.

3.4.1 Palmer and Co.

The Palmer house's dealings in Hyderabad can be divided into two phases, that of the 'old firm' and that of the 'new'. The old firm did business between 1811 and 1814, when the resident and members of his staff were among its investors. The firm's standard practice was to advance loans to Hyderabad at 25% annual interest against the security of revenue assignments. Collections from these assignments were deemed to be the responsibility of the concerned intermediaries. The latter were assisted or threatened by the reformed and British troops depending on how they responded to the firm's demands. They were liable to be coerced if their revenue payments became slack, even if this was due to unrealistically high assessments in poor agricultural seasons. Depopulation and contraction of the cultivated area could occur in such circumstances. Indeed, the firm's methods became so notorious by 1814 that the residency felt obliged to distance itself from its activities. In particular, the resident advised Palmer to investigate two specific charges of extortion. But his suggestion was brushed aside. Henry Russell, therefore, felt compelled to ask Palmer and Co to remove its offices from the residency's precincts. He
and his brother also withdrew their own private shares in the firm’s stock.\

However, Palmer had access to much higher patronage than the residency through his friend and partner, William Rumbold. He refused to be discouraged by Russell’s rebuff. Rumbold used his personal influence with the governor-general to obtain a new licence for the firm in 1818. This was ostensibly to develop a timber trade between Berar and the Andhra coast down the Godavari. The licence made no reference to the old firm, or to its financial dealings, which were illegal by the British parliamentary legislation of 1788. Not only did the Palmer house get a new licence, the governor general also spoke of discouraging any potential competitors. The resident resumed his private and public connections with Palmer and Co when he saw where support for it was coming from. He also helped the firm extend its financial dealings with Hyderabad.

Chandu Lal was encouraged to borrow more from the Palmer house. The old tyrannies of intermediaries were reinforced in the areas that came under the firm’s grip as securities. To tracts declining from the operations of the reformed and British troops were added those that were made to bear the costs of the loans contracted from the firm in order to keep the reform programme going. As the reforms in Berar grew in size and scope, so too, paradoxically, did the centre’s, and the firm’s, reliance on the irregulars and their condemned methods. 6000 cavalry were reformed besides the existing 7000-odd regular infantry on the eve of the Maratha war in 1817. A crucial feature of the reform was regular pay for the troops. The governor of Berar, Govind Baksh, was given responsibility for the regular payment of about 80% of them. The remainder were paid by means of a recurring monthly loan of Rs. 52,000 from the firm. The latter added the weight of its powerful official patronage to the benefits of its apparently extensive capital. It also utilized the backing of the reformed and British troops to pressurize intermediaries if they fell behind in their revenue payments. If districts still did not yield the amounts they were assessed for, the difference between assessment and collection was supplied from the firm’s stocks, and deemed as a further loan, for which Chandu Lal had to give fresh securities. Apart from an increasing number of European investors, Hyderabad Sahukars also found it preferable to lend to Palmer and Co at 12% interest, rather than directly to Chandu Lal at 25%.

Govind Baksh could not keep up regular payments for the reformed troops that were his responsibility during the 1817-18 war. Chandu Lal now appointed the Palmer firm as paymaster to all the reformed troops. The sums involved were Rs. 2 lakhs per month, on the usual terms. The idea that the firm be given such a role originated with the British political agent in Berar, George Sydneham, who had earlier been one of the chief architects of the military reform there. The financial transactions of the new firm far exceeded the scope of its 1814 licence and also ran counter to existing British legislation.

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56 This paragraph and the subsequent four paragraphs are based on the references cited in the last footnote.
on the subject of usurious moneylending by private European agencies to princely states in India. Rumbold's influence with the governor general took care of these transgressions, however. The new licence given to Palmer & Co awarded it special status vis-a-vis the legislation on financial transactions. Calcutta approved a 6-year loan of Rs 60 Lakhs to Hyderabad by the firm at an annual interest rate of 18% against the security of districts worth Rs 17 Lakhs. The firm was forbidden from entering directly into revenue collections, however. In practice, the 60 Lakh loan involved no new payments to Chandu Lal. It was merely a device for restructuring the the firm's outstanding credit to Hyderabad, which was not recognized or underwritten by the terms of the new licence. Hyderabad's debts on the old accounts amounted to Rs 52 Lakh. The firm added another 8 lakhs to this figure as a 'bonus' for charging only 18% interest on the 'new' loan, as opposed to the customary 25%, and for risking making advances to Chandu Lal while the firm's application for a new licence was still pending. The Court of Directors in London decided in 1820 that they could not approve of Calcutta's 1818 licence to Palmer & Co. But they felt obliged to play along with it, as it had in practice been operational for two years now.

The secret that the 60 Lakh loan by the new firm was merely a restatement of older loans was apparently a well kept one. The storm did not break until 1822, when Russell's successor in Hyderabad, Metcalfe, discovered the truth about it. The controversies following Metcalfe's revelations were long and bitter. But what they certainly confirmed was that the costs of military reform in Berar in 1807-19 helped the centre and Palmer and Co to consolidate their grip over irregulars and push them into intensifying their oppressive practices:

"They [Palmer & Co.] have contrived also to identify themselves with the British name and when I am in districts the pillage of which goes to their shop, people always talk as if our Government were a party concerned. Their chaprassis range the country with the double power of the Nizam's and the British Government, and one source of their profits is buying up at heavy discount debts which the rent creditors cannot, but which they can by means of these authoritative messengers."

3.4.2 The Impact on Berar

Berar was divided into two areas, Eastern and Western Berar, for the purposes of Russell's reforms. Eastern Berar was governed by a relation of Chandu Lal's, Raja Ram, and Western Berar by the minister's brother, Govind Baksh. The latter was also the governor for the whole of Berar. The districts under both Govind Baksh and Raja Ram went into absolute decline. Raja Ram's twenty two districts were described by Captain Hollis in 1820 as 'the most impoverished, depopulated...and least productive ones in the

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57 He had suspected collusion between Palmer and Company and members of the residency staff, as well as the Calcutta government, since his first days in Hyderabad.
58 Regani, Nizam-British Relations, p. 222.
dominions of...the Nizam'.\(^\text{59}\) Three of them, in the vicinity of Kaligaon, had been entirely deserted and several others approached this condition, possessing now no more than 1/6th to 1/8th of their original population. The districts on the Wurdha had lost about 80% of their population, despite their high natural fertility.\(^\text{60}\) Emigrations had become particularly rapid since c.1814. Among those who left were ‘many of the deshmukhs, deshpandes and patels, the greater part of the cultivators and banias, with the whole of the respectable population’.\(^\text{61}\) Metcalfe’s journey in 1821, - north to Nanded, Hingoli, Bassim, Karinja and Ellichpur; north west to Akola, Lakanwadi, Jafirabad Aurangabad, and south to Mungipatan, Beed, Kullum, Ousa, Bhalki and Bidar, - left him with unhappy impressions. The whole country ‘exhibited the most striking features of decay and depopulation’.\(^\text{62}\) His assistant, Wells’ closer study of 50 districts in western Berar and northern Marathwada supported his findings, though Wells found a variability in the decline, and some rare pockets of prosperity. The naturally fertile Maiker taluq, - comprising the districts of Lonar, Maiker, Wakad, Ghat Bori, Malkapur, Pangarh, Shakkarkheda, Matergaon and Sindkhed, - produced only 1/3rd of its assessed revenue. Jafirabad taluq - comprising the parganas of Jafirabad, Chandole, Dhar, Dhawerah, Seonah, Amrapur, Saindurwada and Bokurdhan - also presented a grim spectacle of depopulation and falling revenues. The latter were at least 45% down on the assessed amount everywhere and still lower in some pockets. In the Rohangarh taluq, conditions were grim except in the small jagirs of Bande Ali and Nasir, whose expansive cultivation made the remainder of the taluq look ‘comparatively a waste’. Inhabited villages were few and far between in the Hirsool, Aurangabad, Satara, Takli, Larsangiri, Khandala and Saindurwada parganas. These were in a condition of ‘the extremest poverty’. The parganas’ contractor, a moneylending graintrader, advanced seed to the cultivators at 24% interest at sowing time and bought back grain from them at well below the prevailing market prices at the time of harvest.\(^\text{63}\)

If the intermediaries’ extortions destroyed agriculture, they did not leave manufacture and trade untouched. Jalna and Patan declined during Govind Baksh’s tenure as the taluqdar of Western Berar and northern Marathwada. Patan’s famed exports, - gold brocades, silks and muslins, - were once reputed to have yielded ‘several lakhs of rupees’ annually in revenue. Most of its shroffs, dealers and manufactures were gone in 1821.\(^\text{64}\)

Eastern Berar was not in a much better condition than Western Berar or northern Marathwada. About two-thirds of the villages in the Manikgarh, Sirpur, Woon and Mahur districts bore the marks of recent desertion. Successive contractors between Fasli 1222

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\(^{59}\) NAI, HRR, 686, Captain Hollis’s Report on Berar, April 1820.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) Ibid.

\(^{62}\) NAI, For Pol, 8 Dec 1821, Metcalfe’s Letter, 63, Nov 1821.

\(^{63}\) NAI, HRR, 690, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821.

\(^{64}\) NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, Wells’s Review, 99, 1821-5.
and 1230, - Govind Baksh, Khairullah Khan, Raja Ram, Mani Lal, Jwala Pershad and Palmer and Co. - had ravaged the districts in order to meet the centre’s demands. The revenue paying capacity of Balconda district had fallen by more than 30% in a space of 5 years under Manik Ram, for example. When Hyderabad removed him for poor remittances, his replacement, Qarar Nawaz Khan, complained of extensive evidence of depopulation. As the enormity of the problem in Berar registered with the centre, Govind Baksh was recalled and Chandu Lal proposed to attend to the Western Berar districts himself with the aid of a new set of trustworthy taluqdars. Raja Ram was also recalled from Eastern Berar. Some of his districts were given to Salabat Khan, the jagirdar of Ellichpur, and others to Chandu Lal’s son, Bala Pershad, who was to be assisted by an old and trusted favourite of the diwan’s, Venkat Rao.65

3.4.3 From Berar to Marathwada and Telangana

Yet a change of personnel was hardly likely to sustain by itself regular payments for the reformed troops, while also servicing the diwan’s mounting debts. Attempts were made, therefore, to extend the costs of the reformed troops, and the burden of the centre’s debt, from Berar to districts adjacent to it. This was done under the guise of ‘further reforms’. The main technique was to charge the intermediaries of the new districts with serious irregularities and proclaim a desire to ‘reform’ them. The first areas thus affected were northern Marathwada and Telangana. The initial casualties among the intermediaries subjected to the ‘further reforms’ were Rafat ul Mulk and Shams ul Umra. Both had enjoyed considerable influence in Hyderabad’s supra-local politics in former days. Rafat ul Mulk was now accused of scandalous mismanagement. The supposed collaboration of his naibs with ‘gangs of local robbers’ was cited as evidence. His military and revenue assignments were resumed, and his personal jagir and property were also impounded. The latter, he was warned, would not be returned to him until he had answered the charges against himself satisfactorily. Nirmal from amongst his former districts was farmed out to a loyal risaladar of the reformed Berar cavalry, Bhuchar Mal, who had distinguished himself during the 1818 war. Manik Ram, already the taluqdar of Balconda and Medak, was given the Mudgal, Binola and Bhainsa districts. Shiv Pershad was appointed to the districts of Sarbar, Digbur, Warwal and Kaulass. Nanded went to Qarar Nawaz Khan, ‘an officer of credit and respectability and of tried attachment to the British Government’. Rajaura, Polam, Ambaji and Dhokay were given to Ismail Yar Jang.66

Rafat ul Mulk had been the second most important jagirdar and taluqdar in Hyderabad until his removal, in terms of both family influence and the extent of his military and

66 NAI, HRMC, 34/1819-20, Russell’s Letter, 1 Sept 1820.
revenue assignments. The most important jagirdar, Shams ul Umra, was also given a taste of the 'further reforms'. He was accused of having left his irregular troops in heavy arrears of pay, and of seriously injuring the population and productivity of his districts since inheriting them from his father four years earlier. Chandu Lal himself was at first hesitant to touch Shams ul Umra. Not only was the latter's jagir specifically assigned for the upkeep of the Nizam's household troops, the paigah, he was also married to a sister of the Nizam's. Besides, he owed Chandu Lal 'a large' sum of money on personal account. But Russell's open support for the measure gave Chandu Lal the courage to resume Shams ul Umra's jagir and to assimilate it to the centre's new strategy for financing the reformed troops in Berar and for servicing Hyderabad's debt. The paigah districts were carved up into seven distinct charges. Chandu Lal appointed handpicked taluqdar to each one of them.

Another influential jagirdari family who went the same way as Rafat ul Mulk and Shams ul Umra were the Lohanis. Shakir Khan and other Lohanis had commanded one of the largest bodies of irregulars in Hyderabad. They were now deprived of most of their assignments on the charge of assisting 'gangs of robbers'. Anand Rao and Muluk Chand, the amils of Sitoonda and Jafirabad, respectively, were also removed for such collaboration. Nur ul Umra was similarly replaced in Warangal and Manik Rao appointed in his stead.

Parts of Telangana also displayed the same symptoms of decline as Berar and northern Marathwada as a result of the pressure for increased revenues to service the military reforms and the debts connected with them. In Khammam taluq, the naib taluqdar himself led a band of Banjara cattle raiders, apart from causing depopulation through exorbitant demands and cruel methods. Warangal, too, suffered under similar pressures, until 1819 from Dhokal Singh and thereafter under Nanak Ram, who extended Dhokal Singh's methods. When some zamindars tried to petition Hyderabad's diwan against a 100% increase in revenue assessments imposed by Nanak Ram, 'they were threatened with imprisonment, much abused...and a sweeper was introduced to alarm them with the threat of personal indignity'. Nanak Ram placated Chandu Lal with a nazrana, on the other hand. Patwaris flying from Hannamkonda district complained that one of Nanak Ram's naibs, Ahmad Ali, had seized their grain forcibly. Some of them bore marks of brutal torture on their bodies. Not even 'the better classes' of rural society were left untouched by Nanak Ram, according to one of Metcalfe's assistants, Ralph, who was superintendent

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67 He had held territory estimated at Rs. 20 lakhs annually.
68 Shams ul Umra's districts were estimated at Rs 30 Lakhs annually.
69 Ibid.
70 The Lohanis had, indeed, collaborated with rebellious Bhil Naiks. See Chapter Four below.
The intermediary's agents pillaged their homes, sold their property and 'enforced [revenue demands through] confinement, threats and by torture'. The famine of 1821 only added to the prevailing distress:

'I have seen villagers with the slightest covering of rags digging into the woods to satisfy the cravings of hunger. Poorness of diet engenders loathsome and incurable diseases, and it destroys the younger children'.

The poorest inhabitants were 'tenfold' more vulnerable in these conditions. Large numbers were wiped out. Some survivors borrowed telling motifs from memory to describe their tragedy:

'When the pindarrahns came they took our clothes and vessels which we could replace. They stayed two days and since that year have not returned. The amils are pindarrahns every day of the year, and take what the others could not remove. They take our cattle and corn!' More exceptionally, an attempt was made in the name of the further reforms to conciliate one or two Telangana zamindars. Kona Rao of Yelgundel had been battered into submission in 1819, but his districts had remained unprofitable so long as he had been kept out of them forcibly. They had witnessed large scale desertion and the few pockets that had remained inhabited had remained loyal to Kona Rao. The centre's revenue collections in Yelgundel had become more paltry than ever before in consequence. It had grudgingly come to admit that the subjection of Kona Rao, and his forcible exclusion from Yelgundel, had not been worth the candle. It proposed to withdraw its taluqdars and forces from the district if Kona Rao agreed to disband his forces and to take his zamindari back on contract. Kona Rao agreed. He reportedly gave each of his disbanding men a pair of bullocks and some seed to resume agriculture.

3.4.4 Intermediaries Blamed

Hyderabad had begun to recognize even before Metcalfe's revelations from c.1820 onwards that many areas that had borne the costs of the reforms in Berar had witnessed unprecedented decline. It had become deeply worried and had looked for explanations. But it did not recognize its own responsibility; that its pressure on the intermediaries, - whether directly or through revenue assignments to its creditors, - was what had driven the latter to increased coercion. The unreformed intermediaries themselves were blamed

72 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; see also: For Pol, 19 July 1822, 8; 21 Oct 1825, 98.
73 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822.
74 Ibid.
75 It was a measure of the new coercive power at the disposal of the centre that Pitman achieved this object in a space of about thirty days, whereas Kona Rao had successfully held Hyderabad's authority at bay for thirty years previously. (NAI, HRMC, 31/1817-19, Resident to G-G, 5 April 1819)
76 Ibid.; NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 99; HRMC, 34/1819-20, Russell's Letter, 1 Sept 1820; Chaudhuri, British Relations with Hyderabad.
for having become too oppressive and rapacious. Russell advocated a change of personnel among the serishtadar-s and taluqdar-s as a remedy.

The earliest British critics of Berar’s irregulars had sought to explain their corruption and tyranny through curious tautologies. He had put down the unacceptable standards of the irregulars to poor pay, indiscipline and factious pride. Doveton complained that irregulars did not meet Govind Baksh’s requisitions and would delay matters interminably. They even remained inactive while Pindaris plundered within attacking range. He attributed such misconduct to poor pay, training and discipline, as well as to jealousy and divisiveness:

“[They] disclaim each other’s authority and control; and seldom…comply with the requisitions on the part of the manager of Govind Baksh, which they generally contrive to shift from one to the other.”77

Govind Baksh was induced to undertake a tour of Northern Berar in order to gauge the extent of the malaise among the irregulars. He held that they were in such a bad state because they stood in need of reform.78 Russell had initially blamed the ills of the intermediaries, likewise, on ‘the disorders of the Nizam’s government,…the inefficiency of the local establishments…[and] the pernicious system of local government’. He reported no improvement when he reviewed the situation in 1811:

‘…it is against the disorders of the Nizam’s government and the inefficiency of his military establishments…that our measures must be immediately directed’.79

But he had also hinted at a different kind of analysis now, suggesting that it was the contract system in military and revenue affairs that perpetuated the older evils of the intermediaries.80

Sydneham developed this argument further in 1813, showing how the problems of the irregulars were really those of revenue farming as a whole. However, he, too, failed to understand why revenue farming should not only continue to prevail, but even become more exploitative in the very period when a reform was being attempted in some of Berar’s intermediary establishments. Yet his indictment of 1813 was comprehensive and perceptive. He tried to understand why the irregulars were still prone to certain ills, rather than simply reiterating with disapproval how they had learnt nothing from their reformed colleagues. Berar’s irregular cavalry was maintained in two kinds of establishment, sarkari and jagirdari. The sarkari establishments were farmed out by the centre to serishtadars, all of whom, except for the governor of Berar, Govind Baksh, usually

77 NAI, For Pol, 4 Jan 1808, 1,6,10,12.  
78 Ibid.  
79 Ibid.  
80 Ibid.
resided in Hyderabad. They ran their establishments indirectly from here, through peshkars posted at the principal stations of their troops. The peshkars, in turn, delegated responsibility for detachments serving away from the main bodies to mutsaddies. The mutsaddies were usually the same persons as the jamadars and sardars, or commandants, of the detachments. They entertained two kinds of horseman in their service, silladar-s and bargir-s. The silladars owned their horses while the bargirs were supplied theirs by the mutsaddies, though their equipment was their own. The mutsaddies were expected to employ only silladars. In practice, more than half their horsemen were bargirs who were usually drawn from among the ranks of their own servants and relations.81

An important aspect of the chain of command in the sarkari cavalry was that it was co-equal with the chain of revenue contractors. The revenues of particular districts were earmarked for the payment of particular establishments of the sarkari cavalry. Serishtadars were taluqdas, peshkars naib taluqdas and jamadars jaidaddar-s in the districts thus earmarked. In theory, the horsemen of the sarkari establishments received regular monthly cash salaries from the revenues of these districts. In practice, they remained in arrears of pay for months and also perpetually indebted to their jamadars. The latter gave them loans at 48% annual interest, often in kind, instead of their regular salaries. Their salaries disappeared in paying for the various commissions and cuts charged by Hyderabad’s diwan and the whole chain of the military/revenue command. The minister took a fortnight’s pay and the serishtadar a month’s pay as routine annual commissions, for example. They also levied periodic nazranas. The serishtadar thus had to be propitiated when he attended darbar; when a child was born in his house; when he recovered from an illness; when he conducted a wedding feast or religious ceremony, or when he appointed a new peshkar or jamadar.82

A muster master appointed by Hyderabad was supposed to check precisely such abuses. But, in practice, he and his assistants connived with the military and revenue contractors. Rather than carry out surprise checks on the intermediaries’ establishments, they rarely moved out of their headquarters in Aurangabad, and helped play havoc with standards and statistics, in return for bribes, when mustering took place once every three to six months. The affairs of Berar’s jagirdari cavalry found a close parallel in those of the sarkari cavalry, except perhaps in the establishment of Salabat Khan. But the next best establishment after Salabat Khan’s, that of Subhan Khan, was maintained at only about 50% of its stipulated strength. His horsemen were more than one year in arrears of pay, as well as being indebted and impoverished.83 Such factors, not surprisingly, made Berar’s irregular cavalry quite incapable of defending Hyderabad’s northern border against the

81 NAI, For Sec, 27 July 1816, Sydneham’s Letter, 5, 1 March 1813.
82 Ibid..
83 Ibid..
Maratha threat. Besides, the contractors and sub-contractors could ill afford to distract their troops from revenue collection duties. No firm consensus obtained between Hyderabad's zamindars and intermediaries on political authority or revenue appropriation. Their relationships consisted, rather, of temporary alliances of expediency, which were shaped by the particular configuration of local rivalries in a particular locality at any given point of time. The intermediaries could hardly be expected to take their troops away from their revenue assignments in such circumstances. Had they done so, this would have amounted to political and financial suicide.

It was impossible to make enquiries into the condition of Berar's irregular cavalry, according to Sydneham, 'without creating jealousies and suspicions'. He felt obliged to conduct them, therefore, 'through indirect channels [and] with such caution and circumspection as to elude observation from the principal authorities of Berar'.84 Saddled with the responsibility of paying for the reforms, and financing the maintenance and the campaigns of the reformed troops, the unreformed intermediaries of Berar not only extended and intensified their condemned old methods, they also became averse to any suggestion of 'reform' in their own establishments. For, such reform would have threatened their ability to meet the increased demands upon them. They would have had to take their troops away from their revenue assignments, for one thing, in the interests of a system of frontier defence upon which their immediate survival did not turn. Their revenue collections, upon which their survival did turn, would have suffered seriously from a diminished coercive capability, on the other hand. Another drawback of reforms in their establishments would have been that stern European pay and muster masters would not have recognized that numbers and standards were a time honoured legal fiction in Hyderabad. The intermediaries would have found it impossible, in these circumstances, to meet the increased demands upon them. Resistance to the reforms was, not surprisingly, therefore, pervasive among those who bore the costs, of reforming and maintaining some of their colleagues.

3.5 Village Settlements vs. Military Fiscalism, c.1821-38

The centre resumed intermediary assignments and penetrated zamindari domains in the early 19th century. But as a combination of centralization, monopolistic military fiscalism and agricultural depression85 tore apart the old political order of Hyderabad, the core areas began to lose population and decline economically, and the centre became financially indebted. Intermediaries and zamindars were either assimilated to the new regime or became involved in political protest.86 Metcalfe, who was resident in the period 1820-29,

84 Ibid...
86 See Chapter Four below.
commented on these tendencies with perspicacity. He also hoped to be able to reverse them. The principal aims of his ‘village settlements’ were to restore peace and prosperity to the countryside, to weaken the hold of military fiscal intermediaries in it, and to boost the revenues and improve the finances of the centre. There was, however, in practice a contradiction between Metcalfe’s vision of reform and his continued adherence to military fiscalism. On the one hand, he criticized the manifestations of military fiscalism, - an overpressed countryside and a highly indebted centre, - and those whom he regarded as its chief agents, - Hyderabad’s diwan and revenue farmers, - and, on the other, he continued to demand that British troops be paid regularly, and that the number of ‘irregulars’ be decreased. Moreover, he gave top priority to making the Hyderabad countryside pay for the British military presence when it came to the crunch. The latter was by Metcalfe’s time much more than a mere device for defending the Maratha border and suppressing frontier banditti: these threats had in any case receded in the 1820s and 1830s. The British military presence was in fact a tool for centralization and coercion, and a source of military fiscal profit.

Metcalfe made concerted efforts to disassociate the residency and Calcutta from the cruel legacies of Russell’s reforms. In particular, he launched a crusade that would finally end Palmer & Co’s financial transactions with Hyderabad and curtail its dealings with private parties as well. But paying off the Palmer debts still cost Hyderabad the permanent loss of the Northern Circars. The centre, moreover, still had to continue to find means for paying the reformed and British troops regularly, and for maintaining other priority establishments, such as the Nizam’s household. Hyderabad continued to face a serious financial crisis, notwithstanding the scaling down and settlement of the Palmer debt through the intervention of Calcutta, which offered Hyderabad a low interest distress loan in return for the cession of the Northern Circars.

Metcalfe might well talk of agricultural expansion, protection for the ryot and peace in the country, but all this meant little to Chandu Lal as long as it did not solve the problem of how best to meet his short term financial needs. The resident himself admitted that Hyderabad might lose revenues if Chandu Lal instructed his taluqdas and zamindars to abide by the village settlements faithfully. Yet, on the other hand, Chandu Lal was held responsible for maintaining the Nizam’s household, paying the British and the reformed troops, servicing the centre’s debts, and running other priority establishments regularly. What measures he took to execute one responsibility seemed to interfere with his other

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87 See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 8 Dec 1821, Resident to Gol, 63, Nov 1821; 19 July 1822, 8; Chaudhuri, British Relations with Hyderabad; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 237-50.
90 Regani, Nizam-British Relations, p. 234; NAI, For Pol, 19 July 1822, 8; 4 July 1823, 40; 30 June 1825, 84; HRMC, 37/1823-24, Metcalfe’s Letter, 20 Nov 1823.
priorities. When he reduced the ministers commission on revenue collections, for example, he felt forced to compensate for this by raising new public loans. Chandu Lal’s dilemma was compounded by the fact that, in the first years of Metcalfe’s tenure, the governor-general himself listened more to Hyderabad’s main creditor, Palmer and Co, than to the resident. Chandu Lal was thus forced, on the one hand, to press the short term methods that the Palmer house and its powerful friend favoured and, on the other, to attempt to satisfy Metcalfe, who advocated long term causes. Governor-general Hastings’ invocation of legalistic minutiae in his directive to the resident to reduce unwarranted ‘interference’ in the ‘internal affairs’ of Hyderabad was, in fact, designed to give Chandu Lal more room to pursue his short term strategies.91

Increasing financial pressures led Chandu Lal to intensify the only methods he knew in the situation: farming out more districts to intermediaries and raising new loans against further, even concurrent, revenue assignments. The removal of oppressive and corrupt taludars that Metcalfe sometimes forced upon him ironically gave Chandu Lal greater room for manoeuvre in this respect. He strengthened his hold on the contractors by threatening them with the stick of British displeasure and manipulated them into offering him even higher bids and nazranas than before. Yet, there were limits to innovations within revenue farming. They could depress indebtedness, for example. Though Chandu Lal could not, on his own admission, offer anything like a comprehensive review of Hyderabad’s financial assets and liabilities at any given point of time, he was certain that Hyderabad had suffered a budgetary deficit of Rs 7 Lakhs to Rs 10 Lakhs each year between 1807 and 1830. One result of this was that sahukars were no longer willing to give him loans at the usual rates of interest, unless these were guaranteed by the resident. But Metcalfe generally did not interest himself in Chandu Lal’s quest for cheap loans after the Palmer and Co scandal. His successor, Martin, too, remained uninterested, except on the one or two rare occasions when he mediated between the minister and the sahukars.92

Metcalfe and Wells had visited some areas of Berar, Marathwada and Telangana in 1821 and had found nothing favourable to report on Russell’s reforms.93 In 1823, after the village settlements had come into operation, Metcalfe told an even sorrier tale than before. Tracts ‘once filled with flourishing villages, having become depopulated by the natural


93 NAI, HRR, 690, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821; For Pol, 8 Dec 1821, Resident to Gol, 63, Nov 1821.
operation of tyranny, have latterly been appropriated by wild beasts". What worried the resident most was the way in which intermediaries and the centre used the reformed troops to extend their coercive measures:

‘the dissolution of this force would be, I conceive, a necessary preliminary, for otherwise we would give British science, skill and heroism for purposes of uncontrolled tyranny and oppression’.

A good example of the new source of tyranny was a risala of Sikh troops cherished by Chandu Lal.

Superintendents soon began to discover that their village settlements were at considerable variance with the needs and priorities of the intermediaries. This was mainly due to the nature of the centre’s demands upon the latter. The British themselves had a considerable, if indirect, stake in these demands. Taluqdars in eastern and northern Telangana, - in the taluqs of Bhongir, Nalgonda, Deverkonda, Paluncha, Khammam, Ramgir, Medak, Nirmal and Balconda, among others, - for example, were widely observed to be unsympathetic to the village settlements. The revenue estimates of the settlements were invariably lower than those in the contracts which Chandu Lal had given to the zamindars of these areas and which he expected the taluqdars he had appointed to collect. Moreover, it was only anything extra, over and above the, estimates in the contracts, that constituted the taluqdars profits. Where the zamindari contracts did not restrain them, village settlements had even less meaning for taluqdars. Nizam Yar Jang of Khammam taluq, for example, showed such total disregard for both contracts and the village settlements that his districts soon began to show signs of the depopulation and a contraction in the cultivated area. In one district, Kannagiri, revenues fell by as much as 70%. Yet Chandu Lal was reluctant to remove Nizam Yar Jang from his charge. The latter was the Nizam’s brother-in-law and enjoyed some influence in Hyderabad. It was only upon Metcalfe’s insistence that the diwan agreed to deprive Nizam Yar Jang of his taluqdari. But he still appeased the taluqdar by allowing him to retain the most valuable of his districts, Kondapalli, as a jagir.

The taluqdar of Paluncha, too, was supposed to collect the revenues stipulated in Chandu Lal’s contracts with the zamindars. In practice, he also pushed for more than what was stipulated. His extortions drove several zamindars into hill and jungle retreats, from where some, like Bhupati Naik, operated as rebels and bandits. Some Warangal taluqdars were farmed out their districts directly by the centre, unlike their counterparts in

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94 A Patel had come back to obtain a fresh lease on the site of one former village when he learnt that the residency staff had shot six tigers there. The former villagers were now all dispersed, he said, but he would make attempts to bring them back together. (NAI, For Pol, 4 July 1823, 40.)
95 NAI, For Pol, 4 July 1823, 40.
96 The diwan repeatedly ignored the resident’s advice to disband the risala. (NAI, For Pol, 4 July 1823, 40.)
97 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, 29 Aug 1822; For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98,99.
Khammam and Paluncha, who only made collections on contracts Chandu Lal signed directly with the zamindars. They reserved to themselves the right, therefore, of determining what individual zamindars or villages would pay as revenue. Such taluqdars tended to be more powerful than their counterparts and usually maintained more extensive establishments for revenue collection.98

The Ramgir taluqdar was served by a force of Sikhs and Arabs, who succeeded in driving away most of the taluq’s zamindars by their coercive methods. The reduced revenues they now collected in consequence were all consumed in their own upkeep. The Nirmal taluqdar, Rai Bhuchar Mal, was believed to respect the principle of the village settlements; nevertheless, in practice, his naib, Rukun Lal, caused widespread depopulation in the taluq. Manik Ram and Venkat Ram resumed qauls awarded by the residency’s superintendent in the Medak district. Medak’s revenue yielding capacity fell by Rs. 1 Lakh in the short time, no more than two seasons, that they served there. They were removed thereafter by Chandu Lal on Metcalfe’s insistence.

There was scarcely a village in the Bhongir, Deverkonda and Nalgonda taluqs where intermediaries had not disregarded the village settlements, Wells reported in 1824. Metcalfe extended this characterisation to all taluqs in 1825.99

The ‘only check’ on the intermediaries were the superintendents. But they were too few and far between to be able ‘to restrain the most outrageous misrule’ by naibs, who were usually, it was held, ill paid men of ‘lower degree’. The taluqdars offered high bids and nazranas to Chandu Lal for their contracts, but enjoyed no corresponding security of tenure in return. They sought to make as much as they could from their districts, therefore, in as short a time as possible.100 If the taluqdars sabotaged the village settlements in the districts administered by the diwan, jagir holdings did not even come within the purview of the settlements. Extending agriculture, population, peace and conciliation in the countryside seemed remote from the jagirdars immediate objectives, except in rare cases.101

Little cause was found for consolation or congratulation as late as 1825, when most of the three year settlements had expired and many five year ones had not much longer to run. Intermediaries continued to be out of sympathy with Metcalfe’s vision of reform.

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98 Typically, a peshkar headed the military and revenue wings of their establishment. He was assisted by a havaldar for every five to six villages and, under him, a mahsuldar for every one or two. The mahsuldar usually presented himself to villagers with a detachment of troops at harvest time. If the crops had suffered due to bad weather, or had already been mortgaged to the local moneylender or graintrader, he expected the cultivators to pay their rents by contracting a new loan if necessary. A bakshi disbursed the salaries of the taluqdar’s establishment. These were paid every three or six months, or whenever the taluqdar felt his collections permitted them. A khazanchi, who was usually the principal moneylender and merchant of the taluqdar, conveyed the taluqdar’s remittances to the centre through his shop. A fotedar, usually a locally prominent goldsmith or graindealer, assayed the coins collected by the taluqdar’s agents. (NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98)

99 NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98; HRR, 582, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824.

100 Metcalfe found only two taluqdars in the whole of Hyderabad, Rai Chottan Lal and Qarar Nawaz Khan, both in the Western districts, worthy of praise.

101 NAI, For Pol, 30 June 1825, 84.
Manik Ram plundered his charge, Ramgir and Yelgundel, comprehensively, but Chandu Lal agreed to remove him only under the greatest pressure, for example. The superintendent for the Northern Division, Campbell, complained that Manik Ram’s successor, Kona Rao, pushed his predecessor’s extortions even further. The superintendent of eastern Berar, Sayer, likewise, reported heavy population losses in his districts. Revenue farmers promised to abide by the village settlements in the sowing season but broke their word when it came to harvest time. In Nalgonda, Gadwal, Gangawati, Kopal, Tawurugiri and other southern Telangana and Rayalseema districts, ‘the population is manifestly greatly inferior to what it has been in all the districts; the appearance of houses abandoned and villages deserted is sure proof’. Manufactures were in a ‘languishing state’ as a result of agrarian misfortune. Weavers were heavily taxed and liable to have their goods seized on the slightest pretext, like all other artisans, and merchants as well. The taluqdar of Tawurugiri, Amir Beg, had to be removed forcibly when he imprisoned a desai, Swami Rao, and a nargauda, Shivashankar Rao. Both had been resisting his illegal demands for extra payments. Other taluqdas sabotaged village settlements by less overt means. They sub-rented their districts unofficially for sums higher than those mentioned in the village qauls, for example. Chandu Lal was usually willing to condone such practices provided he received suitable nazranas in return.102

The Khammam and Warangal taluqdas compounded the effects of a severe drought by refusing rent remissions to cultivators. This seemed to follow directly from Chandu Lal’s refusal to allow them any revenue remissions either. At least one taluqdar, Mirza Mohsin Khan, and several naibs, - Burhanuddin Khan of Warangal, Munnu Lal of Warangal, and Venkat Ram Pandit of Kutkur, Nizamabad and Vampalli, - were removed on the charge of exacerbating the effects of drought and famine. Kona Rao and other revenue farming zamindars of Yelgundel and Ramgir were also removed and imprisoned on similar charges. Yet others, like Jagga Rao, remained at large, however, either as fugitives or as men who had bought their freedom by paying large bribes to Chandu Lal. Rama Reddy of Pohunpet; Chandra Reddy and Bulliah of Deverkonda, and Vira Reddy and Narsaiah of Warangal figured among the latter category. They were all alleged to have murdered at least one deshmukh or deshpande each. Still other revenue farmers were reduced themselves to poverty or resistance.103

Manik Ram, the amaldar of Medak, and his naibs acquired a fearful reputation for placing boulders on the chests of cultivators; applying screws to their ears, noses and fingers; scalding them with hot oil; burning them with torches, and setting fire to their fingers after wrapping them up in oil-soaked cloths. Campbell was ‘distinctly [able] to prove’ that Manik Ram had collected at least Rs 80,000 in excess of the value of the

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102 NAI, For Pol, 30 June 1825, 84; 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99.
103 NAI, 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99.
village qauls by such methods. That he shared his infamous gains with Chandu Lal he himself admitted. Medak, not surprisingly, witnessed widespread depopulation and decline outside the pockets where a fierce local resistance had been built up to Manik Ram. There were yet other ways of making contracts pay under conditions of financial squeeze. The intermediaries traditionally negotiated *taqqavi* with the centre during poor agricultural seasons. They were supposed to use it to help alleviate the distress of the cultivators. But, in practice, they used it now to advance loane to stricken cultivators at usurious rates of interest. Famaish, or official grain procurement orders from Hyderabad, were also used by intermediaries to buy grain cheaply from the villages and sell at a profit to the centre. Manipulation of currencies, especially their intrinsic value and exchange rate, in league with grain dealers and sahukars, was another means by which intermediaries fleeced cultivators. Transit duties on raw materials and manufactures provided yet another means of extortion. These were applied more frequently and at higher rates than was officially excused.

An example of the destruction of manufacture and trade through crippling taxes was presented by the decline of Homnabad, once a leading export centre of Marathwada. Two rival groups of merchants had outbid each other continually for the revenue contract of Homnabad since the days of Azam ul Umra’s diwani in the late 18th century. Whichever group held the contract did its best to recover the large nazrans it had paid to the minister for obtaining it from the shops of its rivals. Chandu Lal actively encouraged this vicious cycle of high bids and exploitation when he was diwan. When the contracting party in 1828 complained that it was losing heavily on account of the increases in revenues and nazrans imposed by Chandu Lal, he told them they had only themselves to blame for their divisions and jealousies, which he was exploiting. Two of the twelve man contracting party went completely bankrupt. The remainder took to exacting heavy fines from their rivals’ shops on the slightest pretexts. Homnabad began to witness large scale desertion and was soon in rapid decline.

The opposition that came to the village settlements from intermediaries was linked to the increasing pressure they faced from the centre. If they did not sympathize with Metcalfe’s efforts, it was because these evaded entirely their most pressing problem: how to find cash for the official and unofficial demands of Chandu Lal. Chandu Lal himself felt unable to reconcile the short term pressures of Hyderabad’s mounting debts, and the high costs of running priority establishments like the reformed and British troops, with the

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104 The usual rate was 25% per annum. The cultivators often had no option but to borrow from the tahqadors at such rates, as they had pressing arrears to clear or needed to buy seed to sow in the coming agricultural season.

105 NAI, 21 Oct 1825, 96, 99.

106 For more on trading centres, see: Chapter One above.

107 The origin of their rivalry was attributed to ‘a quarrel arising from some jealousy regarding a point of caste’.

108 He demanded Rs 30,000 annually, whereas the going rate had been less than Rs 24,000 since c.1816.

109 NAI, HRR, 597, Colvin’s Report, 27 April 1829.
necessarily long term objectives of Metcalfe’s reforms - expanding agriculture and introducing peace and conciliation in the countryside. Metcalfe was himself, in fact, careful to reiterate after his first forays into the countryside that increasing Hyderabad’s revenues or solving its financial problems had never been the top priorities of his village settlements. Chandu Lal was in practice confronted with the dilemma of having to balance the pretence of implementing the village settlements with the search for real revenues. The solution he found was to try and work his short term needs through the settlements themselves, which he could not of course bypass without endangering his own position as diwan.

Thus, while Metcalfe’s team undertook their first round of survey and settlement in the Berar and Aurangabad region, Chandu Lal offered to emulate their principles in the Telangana districts on his own. But when Metcalfe’s assistant, Wells, came to Telangana to review how Chandu Lal had gone about interpreting Metcalfe’s principles, he was deeply dismayed. The diwan had concluded 10-year contracts with the zamindars, not three or five year settlements with village patels. The contracts made no mention of the specific sums individual villages were required to pay. The minister had, in fact, only marginally modified the older system of revenue farming. Chandu Lal clearly expected that the taluqdars whom he had appointed to supervize the contracts and collect revenue from the zamindars would collect in excess of the amounts mentioned in the contracts. For, there was no provision for their renumeration and profit otherwise. When challenged by the resident, the diwan professed he was averse to interfering in the details of district management so long as the taluqdars kept their terms with him and that this was the traditionally accepted practice.110

Already by the end of the first year of his experiment, Metcalfe was beginning to adopt a weary and resigned tone with regard to how much co-operation he might expect from Chandu Lal. He urged Calcutta to consider extending the number and the powers of the British superintendents he had appointed in the Hyderabad countryside. He suggested that the old evils of revenue farming would continue without their supervision and surveillance. It was in vain to hope for anything good from Chandu Lal, who would neither curb his demands nor make concessions for poor seasons or depressed prices unless pressurized heavily. Despite the most obvious signs of price depression, for example, he insisted that the real reason for non-payment of revenues was the formation of corrupt combinations between taluqdars and zamindars or patels. There were, besides, ‘still abundant symptoms of his preferring clandestine acquisitions to the acknowledged revenue’. It was, moreover, useless to persuade the diwan to keep regular accounts. The few that he kept were completely unreliable. Nor did he respond positively to the suggestion for creating a regular treasury. The reformed troops would long since have

fallen into arrears of pay had it not been for the resident’s ceaseless vigilance. He had been obliged, even so, to advance loans to Chandu Lal from the residency treasury and to negotiate more loans for him from Hyderabad sahukars on a few occasions. Yet, the prospects for timely repayment were grim. The minister would not listen to talk of retrenchment. For example, the advice to disband his notorious risala of Sikh troops had fallen on deaf ears. Such a mentality was difficult, if not impossible, to change. Nor was it suited to attaining the objectives of the village settlements.\(^{111}\)

The bitter and despairing tone in which the resident was writing by the end of 1823 suggested to Calcutta that Metcalfe was perhaps proposing Chandu Lal’s removal from the office of diwan. He reiterated his poor opinion of Chandu Lal when queried. But he also suggested that the alternatives to Chandu Lal were gloomier still. Metcalfe advised Calcutta, in fact, not to implicate the British in the mess that Hyderabad was in any further, but instead to write a strong letter to the Nizam urging him to put his house in order.\(^{112}\)

The letter was sent and Chandu Lal took warning. Yet, there was ultimately little room for a reconciliation between his own short term requirements and Metcalfe’s long term objectives. The resident was writing once again in a year’s time about Chandu Lal’s misdeeds. The diwan, he wrote, demanded a large nazrana and an advance payment of the contracted revenue whenever he appointed a new taluqdar, and if, after a while, he felt that the taluqdar had enriched himself sufficiently, he demanded another nazrana or, as was more usual, dismissed and replaced him. ‘Without our interference’, Metcalfe claimed, ‘the country would be openly sold into the hands of the highest bidder’. In eastern and southern Telangana, where Chandu Lal dealt directly with zamindars and taluqdars, he was open to bribes from both parties. As far the taluqdars were concerned, the amounts allowed them as collection and policing charges were so small that, it was assumed they would raise extra revenues for their own profit. It was not surprising, therefore, that the taluqdars who pleased the minister most were those who were implicated in the most number of murders of deshmukhs and patels.\(^{113}\)

Chandu Lal’s short term methods did not, of course, resolve Hyderabad’s long term financial problems. But they did ensure the regular maintenance of priority establishments, as well as his personal survival. They allowed him, for example, to meet the impulsive demands that the Nizam occasionally made. Nasir ud Daula had a passion for adding new recruits to his household troops from time to time. Though the new recruits added to the centre’s already heavy financial burden, Chandu Lal felt it impolitic to oppose the Nizam’s fancies on points ‘relating to the splendour of his court and the regulation of his

\(^{111}\) NAI, HRMC, 37/1823-24, Metcalfe’s Letter, 20 Nov 1823; For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 83.

\(^{112}\) NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 83.

\(^{113}\) NAI, For Pol, 30 June 1825, 84.
personal establishments'\textsuperscript{114} It was equally impolitic, of course, to let the British or the reformed troops to fall into arrears.

3.5.1 British Preconceptions and Prejudices

Some of Metcalfe's own measures whilst resident also contributed to the undermining of the professed objectives of the village settlements. How his support for Chandu Lal against rapacious contractors strengthened the minister's ability to manipulate the latter has already been alluded to. His willingness to back the minister's, or the taluqdars' and naibs', coercive measures against zamindars, and his severe condemnation or outright rejection of any compromises with them, were also contributory factors. Chandu Lal had entered into direct contracts with zamindars, - leaving them to distribute their demands in the villages according to their own lights, - in most Telangana districts. This was in contrast to the practice in other parts of Hyderabad. When Metcalfe's men took a closer view of the situation, they complained of a deliberate subversion and distortion of rytowari principles by the minister. Their criticism was voiced on the assumption that zamindars were the most dangerous, oppressive and corrupt class in the countryside, who ought not to be be pampered or indulged. Accordingly, they attempted to undo Chandu Lal's zamindari contracts. This exercise naturally met with resistance from those who were threatened or adversely affected. The zamindar of Bhongir, for example, at first refused to have anything to do with Wells' village settlements and later, when he was persuaded by threats to assemble all his patels so that Wells might be able to conduct settlements with them, 'by a concocted plan', none of the patels had brought his account books with him\textsuperscript{115}

There were sixty-five contractor zamindars in the Circars of Bhongir and Deverkonda. Each had a network of relations reaching down into the villages, where the zamindars almost invariably claimed sir and rusoom rights in the choicest bits of land. This was in addition to the 7.5\% commission they were allowed on revenue collections. The zamindars, furthermore, exercised some freedom in the conferment of agraharams on Brahmans and temples provided they paid suitable nazranas to Chandu Lal or the concerned taluqdar. The situation in Khammam was quite similar to that in Bhongir or Deverkonda. Resistance to the village settlements was pervasive and the zamindars' hold on their villages strong. At least two zamindars relied on their networks of 40 to 50 relations each to extort grain and money from the villages. The office of patel had been assimilated to that of zamindar in many parts of Telangana by purchase or by force. The zamindars usually settled their relatives or followers into the patelki-s they had acquired. This also helped them to undermine the authority of the only other village official of

\textsuperscript{114} NAI, For Pol, 5 Feb 1830, Martin to GoI, 42, 16 Jan 1830.

\textsuperscript{115} NAI, For Pol, 8 Dec 1821, 63; 19 July 1822, 8; 4 July 1823, 40; 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99; HRR, 690, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821; 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; 582, Wells's Report, 6 May 1824.
some consequence, the kamam or the patwari. Not only did the Telangana zamindars reject the village settlements, Metcalfe discovered, even the village officials did not like them. Where the patels or patwaris did not belong to the zamindar’s camp, the latter sometimes tried to win them over by the offer of rent free lands and other personal concessions.\textsuperscript{116}

Chandu Lal tried to align the traditional powers of the Telangana zamindars with his short term objectives as practically as possible.\textsuperscript{117} The resident, on the other hand, did everything to undermine zamindari power. In particular, he backed the centre and the intermediaries when they clashed with zamindars, thus adding to the tensions and conflicts of the countryside. The ministers and taluqdas were ‘government’ in the eyes of the resident. Any opposition to ‘government’ was by definition ‘rebellion’. Rebellion must, of course, always be crushed in the interests of government. The resident’s reasoning had a practical side to it, too. It was the centre and a section of the intermediaries, not zamindars or patels, who were the direct collaborators of British rule in Hyderabad. The control and authority of the centre and the intermediaries \textit{vis-a-vis} the zamindars was always sought to be extended and consolidated, therefore. Were it to weaken, it was feared, British rule itself might be threatened. And if this were allowed to happen in Hyderabad, might not British rule be shaken elsewhere in India?\textsuperscript{118}

Wherever the initial forays of Metcalfe’s men into the Hyderabad countryside revealed areas either only marginally touched by Hyderabad’s authority, or completely innocent of it, the resident promised ‘British guidance’, usually a euphemism for the reformed or British troops. Such guidance had also preoccupied his predecessor, Russell. Its outstanding example during his time had been the war against Bhil, Gond and other naiks in 1819- 20. Metcalfe continued the war in 1820-21. He was also firmly on the side of ‘government’ when taluqdas clashed with zamindars in northern Telangana in 1822-23. Detachments of the Hyderabad Contingent warred down and captured such influential zamindars as Kona Rao and Jagannath Rao, who were both committed to prison in Hyderabad, where they eventually died. In districts where the situation did not assume the same proportions as in parts of northern Telangana, Metcalfe, and later his successor, Martin, quite simply ignored the zamindars’ claims in implementing the village settlements.\textsuperscript{119}

Such refusal to recognize zamindari authority did not always yield happy results. Martin was aghast to find that village headmen supported zamindars who were in rebellion because the settlement makers had bypassed their claims:

\textsuperscript{116} NAI, For Pol, 30 June 1825, 84; 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99; H.R.R, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; 582, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824.

\textsuperscript{117} See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99.

\textsuperscript{118} NAI, For Pol, 19 July 1822, 8; 4 July 1823, 40; 30 June 1825, 84; 21 Oct 1825, 98, 99; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 108-18; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 237-50; George, Hyderabad Contingent.

\textsuperscript{119} See references cited in the last footnote.
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119 See references cited in the last footnote.
‘So extensive is the hereditary influence which they possess over the minds of the cultivators that the temporary alienation of his perquisites and even the suspension of his agency in the collection of Government dues, instead of weakening his ascendancy, seems only to strengthen the opinion of his right to the contribution of the ryots, whose earnings are proportionately taxed for his support’.  

Martin, however, refused to learn the lesson suggested by such evidence. He continued instead to push for the further dispossession of zamindars. This inevitably led to an extension of conflict in the countryside, as well as to a contraction in the population, agriculture and revenues. Although Kona Rao was removed and imprisoned:

‘[The measure] has proved prejudicial to its [Hyderabad’s] own authority, which has in consequence never been properly established, and the present system of shocking mismanagement which prevails in the district holds out but a poor prospect for the future’.

Kona Rao’s supporters in the villages terrorized the taludars and naibs appointed in his place:

‘The district officers [zamindars] had for some time maintained a most determined opposition to the authority of the Government, extending even to the entertainment of a considerable force of foot expressly for the purpose of resisting all demands of revenue’.

The taluqdar of Ramgir was at length forced to give up his contest with the zamindars. On the one occasion that his forces routed the enemy, they consumed all they had raised by way of revenue and booty in their own upkeep. Superiority of arms was not always a guarantee of profit.

There was yet another dimension to the conflicts and pressures unleashed in the countryside under ‘British guidance’. Plundered and exhausted zamindars sometimes turned upon their own villages. Chinnoo district was totally depopulated by such activity in 1822. Jagannath Rao’s troops had fallen into heavy arrears, detached themselves from his control in some cases and wandered in search of subsistence. Whole villages were abandoned on their approach. Wells came across a family that had been horribly tortured by Jagannath Rao.

To Chando Lal’s and the intermediaries’ ability to work their short term needs through Metcalfe’s reforms, and to the resident’s own support for some of their measures in the name of ‘government’, must be added another factor that compromised the village settlements: the misconceptions and failures of the settlement officers. The settlements

120 NAI, HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin to GoI, 26 Jan 1827.
121 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Ibid.
showed a complete inability to cope with price fluctuations and seasonal variations. They led to a rapid expansion of the cultivated area in some Marathwada districts in 1822-23, aided by an increase in the number of agriculturists and a sense of security on the part of the cultivators. But the expansion also coincided with good harvests in the adjoining Poona districts in the same season and a serious crisis of overproduction occurred. Transport costs in Hyderabad were still too high and tariffs on inland trade too frequent and arbitrary to allow for the profitable export of grain from areas of surplus to areas of scarcity, such as Berar and Hyderabad and its vicinity. Grain prices in the Western districts crashed, consequently, in some cases by as much as 66%. Yet, the village settlements were based on earlier, and much higher, price estimates and were, moreover, fixed for three to five year terms. They became extremely oppressive now. However, Chandu Lal would not hear of revenue remissions and Metcalfe found it too embarrassing to press him strongly on the point, as this would have involved making the galling admission that the settlements were fundamentally flawed. The governor general himself, besides, was still unsympathetic to the settlements.

What happened in the Western districts on account of overproduction happened in Berar for the opposite reason, extensive crop failures due to floods and blight. The situation became critical in 1823-25. Several northern and north eastern districts were almost completely deserted by 1824-25. The emigrants mostly went into the Nagpur country in search of more favourable conditions. Similar tendencies also operated in the Eastern and Southern, particularly trans-Krishna, districts:

"...many of the inhabitants, with their cattle, have left their villages in search of more favoured spots, where provisions were cheaper, and water and forage might be procured." 

It was in such conditions that Metcalfe's team first began to represent, to save face, that increasing Hyderabad's revenues had never been a primary object of the village settlements.

The problem of seasonal failures in the rice growing districts of Telangana was compounded by the fact that even the original settlements had been based on very erroneous estimates:

"And indeed I think it is obvious that we have struck above the root of...

125 In consequence of the recent disbandment of Maratha armies, and a severe decline of manufacturing which attended the latter process. Former soldiers and artisans invested in agriculture taking advantage of the security that village quails offered. (NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98,99; 31/1817-18, Resident to G-O, 25 Sept 1818; IOLR, H.Misc, H/707/2, Jenkins's History of Berar, 1826; M. Elphinstone, Report on the Territories Conquered from the Peshwa, [Calcutta, 1821].)

126 NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98,99; For a further account of the agricultural depression, see: Guha, 'The Agrarian Economy'; Chaudhari, British Relations with Hyderabad; Thomas and Natarajan, 'Depression'; IOLR, H.Misc, H/707/2, Jenkins's History of Berar, 1826; For a further account of seasonal failures, see: Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, VII, 17-27; NAI, For Pol, 4 July 1823, 40; 21 Oct 1825, 99, 99.

the evil in these districts and perhaps we shall never quite hit the root without either a better minister or more extended power of interference'.

The 25% remission that Chandu Lal agreed to grant under great pressure from the resident after two years of severe drought still did little to cushion the farmers’ losses in Khammam, for example. Wells warned, alarmed by the grim conditions, that the settlements had been totally ill conceived in the rice growing districts of Telangana and to persist with them might result in more serious tragedy still. He condemned particularly the failure of the settlement officers to include the variability of the monsoons and of water levels in the reservoirs in their original calculations while making the settlements. The traditional method of assessment that indigenous surveyors had followed prior to the introduction of the village settlements took both factors into account, by contrast.

The further reforms of Russell in 1819-20 sought to redirect the legacies of his earlier reforms, agricultural decline and financial crises, to newer areas outside Berar. Russell’s successor, Metcalfe, had a clear idea of the disastrous effects of his predecessor’s reforms and further reforms, as well as a vision for wiping out their legacies. He was unable to win over either Chandu Lal or Hyderabad’s intermediaries to his objectives and methods, however. For, the village settlements did not address themselves to their crucial problem, that of generating short term revenues for the reformed and British troops, for the Nizam’s household and for paying off or servicing the centre’s mounting debt. Revenue farming successfully infiltrated and transformed the village settlements. Metcalfe himself aided this process, in so far as he provided unstinting military support to the centre and to the intermediaries whenever they clashed with zamindars and patels, in the name of government. The failure to provide in the village settlements for the vagaries of the monsoon, variations in production and fluctuations in prices also worked against them, and a crisis of overproduction or scarcity could rapidly assume devastating proportions.

The gains that the settlements made were largely initial, and these were limited to a handful of districts. Woon district on the Wardha was seen recovering from ‘a state of almost entire waste’ at the end of the first year of the settlements. The number of ploughs was thought to have trebled, as cultivators drifted back from the Nagpur country across the Wardha, where they had earlier fled. The best, and almost the only other, gains were made in some Aurangabad districts along the Godavari. Many hundreds of farmers who had deserted during the days of Rafat ul Mulk and Lakshmi Ram returned to the villages. In the Raichur doab too a few villages, including Kotadapalli and Palmari, witnessed the return of emigrants, though the general trend was still in the opposite direction. Growth

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128 Ibid...

129 NAI, HRR, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824; For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 99, 99. Two years later, in 1827, Martin would advocate consultation with patels, who knew how to adjust assessments to water levels in the tanks/reservoirs and would also provide for variations in rainfall even if patels be in many cases the collaborators much of distrusted zamindars. (NAI, HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin to GoI, 26 Jan 1827)
was also reported in the Kulupgur district north east of Hyderabad. But the euphoria that small pockets of success aroused at the end of the first year disappeared with the misfortunes of the subsequent seasons. The formal withdrawal of village settlements only served to underline the triumph of short term requirements and methods. These made progress through, and in spite of, the village settlements, and ultimately brought almost the whole of the Hyderabad countryside under their sway. 130

Though unable to restrain the growth of revenue farming, - in some areas even patels and zamindars were systematically absorbed into it in the period 1821-29 - Metcalfe and his men had, nevertheless, put checks on its open operation. This had necessitated the adoption of tediously covert methods on the part of Chandu Lal and the revenue farmers. Superintendents took a particularly dim view of the use of torture by contractors and their agents and insisted on the removal of those whom they could conclusively implicate. Though it is a moot point how many instances of torture British superintendents, necessarily far removed from the scene of the rural interior, could in fact detect, and though Chandu Lal more often than not used the superintendents' displeasure against revenue farmers further to tighten his grip over them, the superintendents' interventions did still embarrass the open functioning of revenue farming. After 1829, that embarrassment was largely over.

An intensification of military fiscalism in the early 19th century in a context of agricultural depression unleashed severe pressures on the Hyderabad countryside. The military and revenue assignments of the intermediaries and the core areas of zamindars were penetrated. But whilst the old political order was torn apart and centralisation emerged as the new organizing principle, both the centre and countryside faced serious economic crisis. The core areas began to lose population, production, investment and trade. The intermediaries and the zamindars that remained were usually either assimilated to the regime of military fiscalism, mainly as revenue farmers, or became the leaders of rural protest organized around rebel communal domains. 131 Forced to bear the costs of the reformed regular British troops and of increasing revenue assignments to Palmer and Co, the centre also became financially indebted. Resident Metcalfe laid bare the legacies of military fiscalism from the time of his predecessor, Russell. He also tried to alleviate some of its features and effects. Thus he aimed at restoring peace and prosperity to the Hyderabad countryside, curbing the power of revenue farmers and boosting the revenues of the centre. To this extent, Metcalfe was a 'reformist' in the 'Age of Reform'. However, he was also a man caught up in contradictions. While he advocated the abandonment of military fiscalism, in practice he also connived with Chandu Lal and the government of India in maintaining it. The latter policy won in the end.

130 NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98,99.
131 See Chapter Four below.
There was less pretence about working the village settlements in both Hyderabad and Calcutta once Metcalfe left the residency in 1825. Martin, and later Stewart, usually did not renew settlements that had expired. Where they had been renewed already before his arrival, Martin instructed the superintendents to reduce their ‘interference’ to the bare minimum. They might, at best, press taluqdas to revise their practices through the agency of Chandu Lal. Martin’s ill disguised lack of enthusiasm for the village settlements led him into acrimonious disagreements with some of the superintendents.132

Thereafter, ex-superintendents who remained at their former posts to watch over the termination of village settlements theoretically not yet expired, and British military officers stationed at various posts in the countryside, noticed a return to the open operation of revenue farming. The taluqdar of Hingoli, Jagat Singh, remained in Hyderabad, for instance, whilst a whole chain of intermediaries operated freely on his farm. Many who had earlier fallen foul of British superintendents for extraordinary cruelty were again to be found amongst them, and ‘no check to extortion prevails’. The situation in Berar was similar. Harbaji Pandit was rehabilitated as the naib of Umardkh and Gomani Ram as that of Timbonia. Village qauls, though theoretically still in operation in some places, were openly set aside. Reports to similar effect also came from Nirmal, Hingoli, Ellichpur, Aurangabad, Mominabad, Bidar and Hannamkonda, or, in short, from the North, West and East alike.133

In the east, the familiar methods of revenue farmers apparently held uninhibited sway once again, as Johnston observed in 1833:

‘...all the zamindars of the Nalgondah and Deorcondah, talooqahs have been placed in confinement and kept in chains for upwards of a twelve month, I have every reason to believe, unjustly’.134

Every one of the prisoners was reported to have paid the naib more than the full value of his contract and they all clamoured for release and justice. Chandu Lal would not, however, interfere in the affairs of taluqas as long as taluqdas paid him a ‘fixed revenues’. A taluqdar, his naibs and the latter’s establishment were ‘deemed loyal or disloyal in proportion to their punctuality in paying the revenue’.135

Outside of the taluqas of Harjivan Das, Ameen Nawaz Jang and Husain Dost Khan, the grim aspects of revenue farming continued to dominate. In Nizam Yar Jang’s districts in the neighbourhood of Hingoli, including Nirmal, widespread coercion and depopulation

132 NAI, HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin to GOL, Letter, 26 Jan 1827; 42/1830-31, Martin to Chandu Lal, Letter, 3 Dec 1831; For Pol, 5 Feb 1830, Martin to Gol, Letter, 42, 16 Jan 1830; Chaudhari, British Relations with Hyderabad. 133 NAI, HRMC, 42/1830-31, Martin to Gol, Letter, 3 Nov 1830; For Pol, 19 March 1832, 66; 10 Oct 1832, 80; HRR, 71, Stewart’s Review, 11 July 1834; 550, Reviews, 1834-38.
134 NAI, HRR, 372, Johnston’s Despatch, Aug 1833.
135 Ibid..
One of his smaller districts, Sirsilla, initially escaped such a fate under its benign naib, Shaikh Mohammad Ali, and registered a rise in revenue-paying capacity from Rs. 11,000 in 1830 to Rs. 16,500 in 1838. But its prosperity attracted Nizam Yar Jang’s violent and devastating attentions once he had exhausted his other districts. Conditions in the neighbouring jagir of Rafat ul Mulk matched those in Nizam Yar Jang’s districts.¹³⁶

The taluqdar of Anantagiri in Telangana wasted large portions of his districts by similar rapacity. Two taluqs, comprising cis and trans-Krishna districts saw three changes of taluqdar and ten of naibs within a space of three years. Each man who left bequeathed to his successor a smaller population and cultivated area than what he had inherited himself, thanks chiefly to Chandu Lal’s relentless drive for nazranas and revenues. Two particularly dreaded taluqdar were Gulab Singh of Narayanpet and Gurmuktal and Naga Rao of Maktal. Gulab Singh was in the habit of riding about his districts with a gun, which he used liberally on anyone who dared to refuse his demands. A 25% drop in population and 33% drop in cultivation was reported in both men’s taluqs. When Gulab Singh was at length removed by the centre for poor remittances, his successor, Husain Ali Khan, was a long time persuading a small proportion of deserters to return. In another celebrated case, the diwan of the revenue fanning zamindar of Shorapur caused the flight of 1100 farmers into neighbouring British districts on a single occasion. A common method for raising extra sums adopted by Doab revenue farmers was to levy heavy patti-s, or special demands for special occasions. Bhiku Mean’s patti, to raise Rs. 1 lakh for his son’s marriage, called upon the landholders of Raichur, Gullug and Sindur districts to pay an additional 10% on the usual assessment. Others were exhorted to contribute as much as possible. Another of Bhiku Mean’s usual devices was to deprive poligars of sir and rusoom and faqir-s, Gosains and other religious establishments of their customary allowances by force and threats. Raichur doab made a poor comparison with neighbouring British districts, where the population was a third and higher cultivation twice as great as in the doab. The contrast between Adoni and Raichur was symbolic. Adoni boomed into a prosperous town after passing from Hyderabad into British control, while Raichur, once a flourishing qasba, lost three-quarters of its population and almost all of its manufacture and trade under Hyderabad’s jurisdiction. Nalgonda and Deverkonda witnessed a total breakdown of relations between the intermediate establishment and zamindars and patels in the early 1830s as a result of Zainulabiddin Khan’s tyrannies. A detachment of British troops was attacked while passing through Narkalpalli, not fifty miles from Hyderabad. Upon enquiry it turned out that the assailants were farmers from the neighbourhood who were going in an armed body to recover grain from a depot in Narkalpalli. They had mistaken the British detachment for one of Zainulabiddin’s, who, they alleged, had made

¹³⁶ NAI, HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38.
forced collections of grain from them.\textsuperscript{137}

An impressionistic survey by the residency in 1838 suggested that apart from the districts of Harjivan Das, none had made net gains in population and cultivation between 1829 and 1838. Even the cotton and wheat growing districts of Azim Nawaz Jang and Husain Dost Khan had suffered severely from a downturn in prices in the mid-1830s. For the rest, it was status quo, slow decline or repaid decay, though conditions varied, sometimes considerably, from one part to another.\textsuperscript{138}

3.6. The Price of Reform, c.1840-53

Previous sections have explored the methods and implications of monopolistic military fiscalism and centralization under the British in the period c.1798-1838. The broadest result was that Hyderabad’s old political economy was torn apart, and began to decline. This happened partly because of the demands of military fiscalism and centralization, and partly because they coincided with a period of agricultural depression, as well as seasons of epidemic and drought. The same trend continued in the period c.1840-53. But this was also a period when military fiscalism threatened to fall apart under the pressures it had itself in part generated. Tensions began to appear between its erstwhile partners, the British and some indigenous intermediaries and revenue farmers. The centre fell into heavier debt and the reformed troops were threatened with non-payment.

3.6.1 The Centre under Financial Pressure

Calcutta threatened in 1840, in the throes of financial crisis, to withdraw its small contribution towards the maintenance of British troops in Hyderabad and to raise that sum from Hyderabad itself. The resident reminded Calcutta that Hyderabad already gave Rs 38 Lakhs to the British annually. The critical state of its finances would not permit any more:

"The army is always four months in arrears; and even in this way they pay it with so much difficulty that any additional expense might be expected to become the subject of serious remonstrance, more especially when this...is merely to be incurred as a measure of relief to Company finances.\textsuperscript{139}"

The resident proposed a long term plan for nursing Hyderabad’s finances back to health. A loan of one million pounds sterling at 6% annual interest would clear Hyderabad’s debts to its Arab and Rohilla military creditors, he suggested, and thus get rid of a recurring annual expenditure of Rs 10 Lakhs. But Calcutta dismissed his suggestion as

\textsuperscript{137} NAI, HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38; For Pol, 11 May 1835, Resident to Gol, Letter, 52, 24 April 1835; 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838.

\textsuperscript{138} NAI, For Pol, 5 Feb 1838, Stewart’s Letter, 21; HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38.

\textsuperscript{139} Regani, Nizam-British Relations, p. 261.
fanciful.\textsuperscript{140}

The Arabs were in fact owed a sum of Rs 22 Lakhs over and above the annual sum of Rs 10 Lakhs. Other creditors claimed as much as the Arabs. Chandu Lal complained in 1842 that Hyderabad’s sahukars took advantage of the centre’s financial distress to dictate terms to him whenever he approached them for loans now. They had formed a league, which was headed by the five principal bankers, the \textit{panj bhai}. The head of the panj bhai, Puran Mal, claimed that Chandu Lal owed him Rs 61 lakhs. Chandu Lal, on the contrary, claimed that the Puran Mal owed him Rs 23 Lakhs. The two men eventually arrived at a settlement. Chandu Lal conceded that the panj bhai Rs 31 lakhs, and granted them the taluqs of Argaon and Akote in addition to their existing revenue assignments. When the resident expressed his strong disapproval, the minister pleaded that this was only a ploy to raise from the panj bhai the Rs. 1 crore that they in reality owed Hyderabad. A conciliated Puran Mal might help recover at least 50% of that sum. Fraser was not convinced and deplored Chandu Lal’s practice ‘regarding the employment generally of sahuccars as the Governors of Provinces, and the affairs of Sahooar Puran Mal, in particular’. He was even more dismayed when the Nizam paid a personal visit to Puran Mal on 2 August 1842 to gain his favour and confidence.\textsuperscript{141}

Chandu Lal’s tactics with Puran Mal and other sahukar’s did not succeed, however, and an unprecedented financial crisis in the first half of 1843 led to his downfall.\textsuperscript{142} The bankrupt minister had asked for a loan of Rs. 1 crore at 5% annual interest from Calcutta as a distress measure. He was willing to grant the British districts worth Rs. 17 lakhs annually in return. But even before Calcutta could respond to his proposal, he deemed his position untenable and resigned. His position would not have improved had he waited for Calcutta’s reply. Calcutta wrote that it could offer the loan only on condition that the resident took over the administration of Hyderabad, until such time as the loan was repaid and the regular payment of British troops was guaranteed. The Nizam was frightened by the Government of India’s reply. He fetched money, - a crore, it was said, - from his private treasury in Golconda to placate Calcutta and to meet the centre’s immediate distress. But much of this money was snapped up by the sahukar combine led by Puran Mal before the inexperienced Nizam could find his feet. It was alleged that Chandu Lal was also now in league with Puran Mal. Fraser complained that no good had come to the British from the Nizam’s overhasty and amateurish measures. Calcutta wrote a threatening letter to the Nizam again and advised Fraser also to give him a scare by refusing him military assistance against rebel zamindars. The Nizam raised another distress loan and agreed to serve the British first this time, and only then the other creditors.

\textsuperscript{140} Regani, \textit{Nizam-British Relations}, pp. 261-2; NAI, For Pol, 18 Nov 1843, Correspondence of April-May 1843, 73-6.

\textsuperscript{141} NAI, HRMC, 54/1842, Resident to Gol, Letters, 3 June, 5 July, 26 July and 3 Aug 1842.

\textsuperscript{142} Chandu Lal resigned on 6 Sept 1843. (HRMC, 55/1842-43, Resident to Gol, Letter, 6 Sept 1843)
That the costs of British troops far exceeded Hyderabad’s means became more obvious than ever by 1848. 9000 British soldiers and 90 British officers consumed about Rs. 42 lakhs annually. High placed British officials, including the assistant resident in Hyderabad, Low, themselves admitted that if British troops had to be maintained at Hyderabad’s own expense, a much smaller body would easily meet its security and defence requirements:

‘In the course of 28 years, [c.1819-48], we have actually drawn from the Nizam’s treaty (not reckoning forty-two lakhs now due for advances to the contingent) the enormous sum of eleven crores and twenty lakhs of Hyderabad rupees, of which a large portion has gone out of the Nizam’s territory for ever...so that this huge drain not only exhausts the Nizam’s treasury, but tends to impoverish his people by diminishing the amount of specie in his dominions...Under all these circumstances...a contingent costing twenty lakhs rupees per annum would be to the full as useful to the Nizam as the present one costing forty one lakhs...And if I could get a cession of territory for the payment of the contingent,... I would be quite satisfied with lands that yielded seventeen or eighteen lakhs only, making a contingent of corresponding strength. This would put an end to the continual pressure upon the Durbar for money..."give, give and give more" is the word perpetually in the resident’s mouth here...'.

The resident admitted that he was pressurizing the Nizam into taking short term measures which were ultimately hopeless. From 1843-53, diwans and peshkars were juggled about continually by the British, and the Nizam took heavy nazrans from various quarters, as well as borrowing from sahukars against revenue assignments Hyderabad could ill afford. The peshkar, Ram Baksh, asked for the help of British troops in 1849/50 to remove the taluqdar of Narsi in Berar, Saleh Mohammed Khan, ostensibly for ‘opposing Government’. The resident, however, suggested that the real reason for his request was rather different. Saleh Mohammed Khan had four years previously given an advance of Rs 3,20,000 to the centre at 12% annual interest. The centre also owed him money on other accounts. The intermediary had paid a nazrana of Rs 30,000 to secure his military and revenue assignments. He now clamoured for the repayment of his loan. Meanwhile, he had unleashed a reign of terror in his district. Ram Baksh sought to use the latter fact as an excuse for removing Saleh Mohammed Khan. The resident was, likewise, hesitant about lending British troops to remove certain Arab taluqdar, against whom, too, Ram Baksh made serious charges. Much was owed to them by the centre and their forcible removal, without their accounts being settled, might lead to chaos and bloodshed.\textsuperscript{144}

\textsuperscript{143} NAI, For Pol, 18 Nov 1843, Correspondence of April-May 1843, 73-6, Resident to GoI, Letter, 78, July 1843; 3 Feb 1844, Fraser to Gol, letter, 182, 24 Oct 1843, 186, 189; 25 Nov 1848, 41-3, 46-8; 3 Feb 1844, 182-5, 194-6; 0 Dec 1848, Resident to G-G, Letters, 48, 11 Nov 1848, 52, 20 Nov 1848, 54, 23 Nov 1848, 63, 2 Dec 1848; HRMC, 55/1842-43, Resident to Gol, Letter, Sept 1843; Regani, \textit{Nizam-British Relations}, p. 274.

Ram Baksh also complained that the Nizam obstructed any measures he took for improving Hyderabad’s finances. A taluqdar he had removed, Rung Rao, was reinstated by the Nizam, ‘who accompanied that act...by the most insulting and degrading expressions towards the peshkar’ in full darbar. The Nizam was under the spell of two influential daftardar-s in the revenue department, Ghulam Hyder Khan and Balmukund, who together spearheaded a creditor lobby, whose interest clashed with the British financial interest in Hyderabad. It was rumoured that the daftardars had offered the Nizam a nazrana of Rs 40 Lakhs if he would elevate them to the offices of diwan and peshkar respectively. Ram Baksh pleaded he was as helpless as his predecessor, Shams ul Umra, in such circumstances: ‘the Nizam is continuing the system of annoyance and exaction with which he has pursued that respectable nobleman, Shams ul Umra, ever since his removal from the office of diwan’. The centre was desperate for funds, and the Nizam, the diwan, the daftardars and the British were divided as to which of the numerous competing creditor interests to serve first.

3.6.2 Tensions between Rival Revenue Farmers and the British

The British tried to exert greater pressure on the centre, on the one hand, and launched war on rival military creditors, on the other. But they were not uniformly successful. The resident’s suggestion in 1840 that Chandu Lal investigate Puran Mal’s complicated and controversial accounts thoroughly fell quite flat. Puran Mal was in fact given even more extensive revenue assignments than before. Chandu Lal pleaded that the Nizam had ordered him to give Puran Mal taluqs worth Rs 2 1/2 lakhs annually under the influence of creditors other than the British. Puran Mal was believed to be operating through the daftardars in the central revenue establishment, Ghulam Hyder Khan and Balmukund. He was said to have given the former a bribe of Rs 2 lakhs and a considerable sum to the Nizam as well. The British also felt threatened by other groups of revenue farmers and creditors: the Arabs and the Pathans. Fraser protested at Calcutta’s reluctance to sanction the destruction of all forts not in the hands of ‘government’ troops, and the expulsion of all Arab jamadars and troops from Hyderabad. He also complained that Chandu Lal’s inability to clear off the Arabs’ debts hampered his military plans for their removal:

"The Arabs may be considered to be in possession of the city of Hyderabad, and of the persons of the Nizam and the Minister, and besides this they have the administration of the districts to the amount of more than ten lacs of rupees per annum".

145 Shams ul Umra and his sons were believed to be contemplating armed resistance to the threatened confiscation of their jagir.
146 See references cited in the last footnote.
147 See, for example: NAI, HRMC, 54/1842, Resident to Gol, Letters, 3 June, 5 July, 26 July and 8 Aug 1842; Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 259-99.
149 Ibid.
Besides their claims on the centre, the Arabs had numerous and substantial claims on private parties. The resident thought that some of the latter claims were fictitious. He suspected that the Arabs’ victims were too terrified by their creditors’ violent methods and military strength to protest. Not only would all the Arab military creditors be thrown out on Fraser’s plans, all Arab revenue farmers would also be removed, as they might offer dispossessed jamadars and irregulars employment otherwise.150

The first serious encounter of British troops with the Arabs took place in 1841.151 1844 saw another encounter. A groom of the British cavalry’s detachment in Gulbarga was seriously wounded by an Arab irregular serving at the same station. The resident insisted that the assailant be found and punished publicly. When the Arab party refused to give up the offender, they were collectively charged with conspiring against the state disbanded, and expelled from Hyderabad.152 The British also began to put pressure on the centre to expel Rohilla military creditors after a minimal settlement of their claims. There was considerable discrepancy between official estimates and the claims of the chief Rohilla jamadar in Hyderabad, Hasanuddin Khan, regarding the number of Rohilla irregulars and the size of their debts and arrears. The centre claimed that there were 1800 Rohillas in Hyderabad city and its suburbs, Hasanuddin Khan asserted, on the contrary, that there were only about 300. He also asserted that he alone was owed Rs. 13,60,000 by the centre and by private parties. It was necessary to recover this sum, for he owed his Arab creditors Rs. 5 lakhs in turn. The resident suggested that Hasanuddin Khan’s claims were grossly exaggerated and the latter himself agreed to the deletion of several items from his accounts. He had calculated interest at annual rates of between 40 and 60%, for example. These were brought down to a standard 12%. The resident also insisted that the Rohillas release all their debtors, whom they held in private prisons in Hyderabad. One debtor who owed the Rohillas Rs. 1,44,000 had been in ‘strict and severe’ confinement for 11 months. Hasanuddin Khan agreed to release his private prisoners on condition that his Arab creditors were also made to release some of his own relatives from their prisons. 1500 Rohillas were on their way out of Hyderabad by August 1846.153

A battalion of irregulars, who were popularly called the ‘linewalas’, mutinied in Hyderabad in April 1847, demanding action on heavy arrears of pay. The diwan, Siraj ul Mulk, turned to the resident for help when the linewalas refused to take their discharge. Fraser called in British troops and forced the linewalas to lay down their arms. All the linewalas in the city - there were 10,000 - were then paid their arrears and discharged. Another 10,000 linewalas were distributed throughout the Hyderabad countryside. Fraser

152 NAI, For Pol, 16 May 1845, 91-4.
153 NAI, HRR, 82, Resident’s Letters, July-August 1846; see also: HRR, 85, Resident’s Letters, March-April 1849.

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drew up plans for their discharge as well, arguing that all linewalas were inherently mutinous and their dismissal would eliminate an 'unnecessary' item of expenditure from the centre's budget. Even Calcutta found the case Fraser made out against all linewalas in consequence of a mutiny by just one of their battalions, and that under heavy arrears, rather thin.\textsuperscript{154}

The British attack on rival military creditors in Hyderabad was, nevertheless, extended further. 'Several thousand' irregulars were discharged in 1847. This was believed to effect a reduction of about Rs. 41 lakhs in the centre's annual expenditure. Furthermore, taluqs worth Rs. 22 lakhs were resumed from Afghans and Arabs and plans were made for yet other resumptions. Proclamations were issued banning the employment of 'foreign mercenaries' by zamindars, intermediaries, revenue farmers and sahukars. A ban was also introduced on the assignment of revenue to sahukars. A loan of Rs. 50 lakhs that the centre raised from sahukars carried guarantees against the treasury. Were not given revenue assignments. Proposals were also drawn up for the recall or release of all revenue farmers and their replacement by salaried taluqdars and naibs, who would be obliged to reside in the districts they were appointed to.\textsuperscript{155} Yet, increasingly frank recognition that the British themselves were mainly responsible for Hyderabad's critical finances, sometimes led to the observation that the much belaboured rival military creditors were not always the villains:

"The Rohillas who engage in these disturbances do not do so in the professed character of gang robbers or marauders,...but usually, if not invariably, are taken into the service of talookdars, zamindars, jageerdars or other officers of the Nizam's Government itself, in support of their quarrels with each other".\textsuperscript{156}

Of course, it did not follow from such perspicacity that the British military fiscal interest in Hyderabad would be sacrificed in the cause of justice for rival military creditors. The terms in which Hyderabad issued a proclamation to taluqdars, zamindars and jamadars in 1848/49 under the resident's pressure was suggestive:

'In these times the tribes of Rohillas having banded themselves together have taken to plunder and rebellion, and in the districts of the Nizam's territories rob, plunder, commit highway robbery, rape of the women of the cultivators, and plunder the houses of merchants and the peasants, from which the whole of the taluqs are devastated'.\textsuperscript{157}

An Englishman, Dighton, who had once served as a superintendent of village settlements

\textsuperscript{154} Regani, \textit{Nizam-British Relations}, pp. 259-99; NAI, For Pol, 12 June 1847, Resident to Gol, Letter, 97, 14 May 1847.


\textsuperscript{156} NAI, HRR, 85, Resident's Letters, March-May 1849.

\textsuperscript{157} \textit{Ibid}.
drew up plans for their discharge as well, arguing that all linewalas were inherently mutinous and their dismissal would eliminate an ‘unnecessary’ item of expenditure from the centre’s budget. Even Calcutta found the case Fraser made out against all linewalas in consequence of a mutiny by just one of their battalions, and that under heavy arrears, rather thin.\textsuperscript{154} The British attack on rival military creditors in Hyderabad was, nevertheless, extended further. ‘Several thousand’ irregulars were discharged in 1847. This was believed to effect a reduction of about Rs. 41 lakhs in the centre’s annual expenditure. Furthermore, taluqs worth Rs. 22 lakhs were resumed from Afghans and Arabs and plans were made for yet other resumptions. Proclamations were issued banning the employment of ‘foreign mercenaries’ by zamindars, intermediaries, revenue farmers and sahukars. A ban was also introduced on the assignment of revenue to sahukars. A loan of Rs. 50 lakhs that the centre raised from sahukars carried guarantees against the central treasury. They were not given revenue assignments. Proposals were also drawn up for the recall or release of all revenue farmers and their replacement by salaried taluqdars and naibs, who would be obliged to reside in the districts they were appointed to.\textsuperscript{155} Yet, increasingly frank recognition that the British themselves were mainly responsible for Hyderabad’s critical finances, sometimes led to the observation that the much belaboured rival military creditors were not always the villains:

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\textsuperscript{156} NAI, HRR, 85, Resident’s Letters, March-May 1849.

\textsuperscript{157} Ibid..
under Metcalfe, persuaded some Hyderabad sahukars in the 1840s to join him in forming a bank to take advantage of the opportunity of a distress offer from the Nizam. The resident remained silent on this project in his correspondence with Calcutta. But when Calcutta eventually learnt of it, it was horrified. It was thought that rival creditors were ganging up against the British to capture the Nizam and to commande the centre’s finances in their own private interests. Dalhousie threatened to prosecute Dighton and the bank under British legislation, and the project was abandoned.\(^{158}\)

There was, again, talk of appointing committees under British supervision to conduct a comprehensive investigation into Hyderabad’s finances:

> ‘I propose the accounts to be investigated...to as distant a date as possible...I consider it indispensably necessary that each committee be superintended by an European Officer. I do not anticipate that the... investigations will occupy...more than 2 or 3 years...’\(^{159}\)

The pro-British minister complained that indigenous revenue farmers and military creditors claimed upto Rs 60 Lakh annually for irregular troops they did not maintain and Rs 40,60,000 for those they did, but kept in poor discipline and arrears of pay. Their accounts were in a ‘state of falsified confusion’. He pleaded that such circumstances tied his hands as far as servicing British troops was concerned, and in particular he urged the removal of Arabs and Pathans who controlled territory worth Rs 70 Lakhs annually.

The resident spoke in sympathetic tones about the minister’s difficulties and laid the blame for a crisis in British military fiscal interests in Hyderabad at the door of the Nizam and the daftardars Ghulam Husain Khan and Balmukund. The latter were accused of doing little to tighten up the administration, of demanding nazranas unceasingly, and of giving revenue assignments to sahukars in return for crippling loans.\(^{160}\) They were also accused of delivering up Hyderabad to Arab military creditors and seriously endangering British interests thus:

> ‘...the Nizam is no longer ruler at Hyderabad, the Arab mercenaries are paramount in the State and His Highness completely under their control’.\(^{161}\)

The hatred that the Arabs harboured against the British was well known, according to the resident. It would be a good thing, he suggested, if all persons of Arab descent, numbering about 17,000, could be banished from Hyderabad for ever. It was a great pity that Hyderabad’s minister should have recruited a band of 300 Arabs into the Nizam’s guard recently. One Arab jamadar alone held revenue assignments worth Rs 20 Lakhs.

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\(^{161}\) NAI, HRR, 648, Resident’s Letter, Sept 1853.
Other Arab jamadars controlled further territory, which was also worth Rs 20 Lakhs annually. It was tragic that the Arabs could not be expelled without an investigation into their accounts and a satisfactory settlement of their claims, even though most of their claims, on government as well as private parties, were fictitious.\(^{162}\)

### 3.6.3 British Interests Threatened

British troops remained unpaid between January and June 1843, and the Nizam’s allowance, too, was first staggered and then discontinued completely during that period. By the middle of 1850, British claims on Hyderabad for arrears and debts had mounted to Rs 60 Lakhs. Calcutta adopted a threatening posture. The diwan, Shams ul Umra had promised at the time of his appointment early in 1850 that he would pay Rs 17 Lakhs every quarter towards clearing the British claims. He began to plead now that the centre’s bankruptcy and heavy indebtedness would not permit him to pay any more than Rs 5 Lakhs annually. It would be eleven years at this rate before the arrears and the loans of the British were fully repaid. Even this proposal seemed doubtful of realization by the end of 1850. Calcutta therefore replaced Shams ul Umra with Ram Baksh as diwan. It warned the latter of serious consequences if the British debt was not serviced regularly and attempts were not made to repay the principal as soon as possible.\(^{163}\)

Yet British pressure on the centre and war against rival creditors did not significantly enhance Hyderabad’s ability to repay them. The amount the latter were owed increased to Rs 75 Lakhs by mid-1851. Calcutta despatched a letter to the Nizam loaded with warning and insult: ‘the Government of India, whose power can make you as dust underfoot, and leave you neither....name.... nor trace’, would be compelled to adopt severe measures if Hyderabad’s finances were not improved; British troops not paid regularly; and British loans not serviced and repaid. The Nizam felt obliged to send all the money he could raise, Rs. 38 lakhs, to the residency treasury and promise that he would repay the remaining debt, Rs 36 Lakhs, by the last quarter of 1851. But he could not redeem his promise, and Rs 30 Lakhs were still owed after the deadline. The Nizam now offered his jewels as security if the diwan would raise money against them from sahukars.

Meanwhile, the resident instructed his commanding officers to raise loans from sahukars to pay the salaries of British troops. Calcutta, however, was not pleased with what it thought were unsatisfactory expedients. Dalhousie also clamoured for territory. Payment for British troops was only one consideration behind the demand for Berar, cotton was another. Fraser sought to point out to Calcutta that its proposals smacked of expansionist motives. He was sacked for his pains. This was in 1853. The new resident, Low, set about giving effect to Calcutta’s proposals. Both cotton and credit were secured by the

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\(^{162}\) Ibid.; also: NAI, HRR, 88, 91.

\(^{163}\) NAI, For Pol, 18 Nov 1843, Resident’s Letter, 78, Sept 1843; HRMC, 62/1850, Resident’s Letters, Jan-March 1850; 61/1849, Resident’s Letters, May-Dec, 1849; Regani, *Nizam-British Relations*. 

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cession of Berar. However, the centre’s financial problems were not all resolved by any means yet; nor did political protest against its activities cease in the Hyderabad countryside.¹⁰⁴

3.7. Conclusion

British intervention in 18th-century Hyderabad had taken the form of competitive military fiscalism in the context of a political order characterized by an interplay of local, supra-local and inter-regional alliances and conflicts. But the British had emerged as the supreme political power in South India by the end of the 18th century and had put foreign competition to an end. Their intervention amounted to a steady intensification of a monopolistic brand of military fiscalism from now on. It co-incided at first with the objectives of the subsidiary alliance, - keeping the Marathas contained and suppressing frontier ‘banditti’, - but it was not long before military fiscalism outstripped purely military considerations. The British regime’s vast military overkill was used to perpetuate and intensify military fiscalism, which became as much a means as an end. But military fiscalism became oppressive in the context of the agricultural depression of the early 19th century. The traditional core domains of the Hyderabad countryside were ravaged and the centre fell into a debt trap. Centralization and military fiscalism also transformed Hyderabad’s pre-colonial political order. What replaced it was still in a somewhat fluid state, but one or two of its features were already quite mature by the 1830s. These were, a powerful, coercive and revenue hungry British ruled centre, and, correspondingly, weaker zamindars and intermediaries. On the unstable side, however, there was still pervasive protest to centralization and military fiscalism. The next chapter deals with the protest in dealing with the indigenous responses to the latter processes.

¹⁰⁴ Regani, Nizam-British Relations. See Chapter Four below on protest.
4. COLLaboration, PROTEST AND EPILOGUE, c.1807-65

4.1 Introduction

The last chapter suggested that centralization and military fiscalism in the context of agricultural depression and seasonal failures ravaged core areas; weakened or dispossessed intermediaries and zamindars; and finally recoiled on the centre itself in the first half of the 19th century. This chapter attempts, among other things, to gauge the effects of these developments on social and political relationships within indigenous society. Although the main beneficiaries of British policies in Hyderabad were the British themselves, they could hardly have been effective without some degree of local collaboration. It is suggested here that some intermediaries and zamindars were assimilated to military fiscalism. Although the collaborators were usually deprived of their military assignments, they continued to be farmed out revenues as revenue farmers. This was primarily to help raise money to maintain a burgeoning contingent of British troops. The revenue contracts were given out either directly by the centre or indirectly through Palmer and Co. The revenue farmers who collaborated with the centre were naturally perceived as oppressive elements in the core areas they destroyed. Perhaps the most telling evidence of this was the distress migration they caused as they pushed for more revenues. There is also evidence for new types and levels of coercion and cruelty in revenue collection methods from the 1830s.1

Another dimension to the collaborators' activities was that they were confirmed as the holders of fixed hereditary and proprietary rights and other privileges in areas where there had traditionally been some flux and fluidity in these matters. This change was of great significance.2 When there had been flux and fluidity, and competition and contest, no local king or intermediary was fully secure, and incumbents were always aware that their opponents might turn the tables upon them by negotiating superior local and supra-local alliances. There had been constraints, therefore, on the nature of their local conduct: they could not afford to alienate all the powerful elements in their communities, or all their neighbours, simultaneously. They had to be friends with at least some at any given time, and also had to be careful not to compromise their image locally as divinely blessed royal patrons and protectors. This situation was altered when the British regime bestowed fixed rights, privileges and tenures on those it favoured, at the expense of their traditional local or supra-local rivals. The centre was also prepared to use its superior coercive powers in favour of its nominees, against any local or supra-local challengers. Where there had been flux in the control of land and resources before, the position now of some caste or

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1 See discussion in subsection on the subject below.
2 For the pre-colonial situation, see Chapter One above.
religious groupings was consolidated, and others were permanently marginalized or dispossessed. What were the social implications of such change? The evidence for some areas suggests that those groups whose position was undermined were no longer seen as ‘equal’ or ‘respectable’ by those whose position was consolidated. The latter were backed by the centre’s superior fire power and perhaps no longer feared their opponents as before. They were also prepared to take their traditional conflicts against their rivals beyond the traditional constraints. In this process lay to some extent the ‘pre-history’ or long term origins of the ‘landlord-peasant conflicts’, ‘casteism’ and ‘communalism’ so familiar to historians of a later period. The rival communities of zamindari and nawabi domains in the 18th century had been multi-caste and multi-sect/religion, and not fixed either in their social composition or in their control of resources. Although inter-communal hostilities could coincide with caste or religious hostilities, these did not become fixed primarily as caste or religious conflicts. The community might, in other words, be dominated by one or another caste or religious grouping, but, in relation to the wider world, it was above a particular caste or religion. Indeed, its caste and religious composition could change over time, owing to the flux and flow of population and resources between core areas. However, the community seems to have become more and more fixed in terms of caste, religion or sect from the early 19th century, at least as far as landholding and other proprietary rights and privileges were concerned. Those who were marginalized or dispossessed also became increasingly confirmed in their caste or religious identity. The hostilities between powerful and dispossessed, or marginal, communities not only transgressed old limits, they also became overtly ‘casteist’ or ‘communalist’ in their character.

The second theme in this chapter is about protest against the British regime and its collaborators, and what they stood for in indigenous society. Not all intermediaries and zamindars of the old order had turned into the centre’s collaborators. The traditional, pre-colonial communities of the core areas had been internally bound through the shared culture of legitimation rituals, consensus building devices and incorporating legends. Motifs and themes from this culture informed the articulation of 19th century resistance and protest. However, there was also a crucial new dimension to the protest. The old animosities between small kings and communal domains were submerged in some areas, and instead a common front was built up against a common enemy. The links between protest based on reconstituted rebel communal domains and the Mujahiddin movement of the 1830s, as well as with mutinies among British troops in the period c.1810-1859, form the third theme in this chapter. The shared quest for an alternative political order was an important factor here, apart from the sharing of a common enemy.
4.2 Collaboration

4.2.1 Intermediaries

One of the key concerns of the centre throughout the period c.1798-1853 was to reduce the traditional intermediaries of Hyderabad to its will. This involved dispossessing or downgrading the larger intermediaries and bringing them, in line with the centre’s new policies. The centre’s efforts seem to have attracted the support of some smaller intermediaries who had in the past suffered at the hands of their bigger rivals. When British troops expelled Mahipat Ram, first from Berar and then from Hyderabad, for example, his rivals3 helped the resident. Later on, they tried to appropriate the position and assignments that Mahipat Ram had vacated. Chandu Lal managed to have his brother, Govind Baksh, appointed to the governorship of Berar, and Salabat Khan and Subhan Khan added to their existing military and revenue assignments.4 Nevertheless, the collaborators of the British were tied to a new kind of centralizing military fiscal regime and could not hope to match Mahipat Ram’s former independence.5

The resident observed in 1817 that:

‘The great families [of Hyderabad’s intermediaries]...are almost all extinct, and even the few that remain have dwindled into absolute insignificance. The only efficient authority that exists...derives from office; and all offices are now conferred, if not directly by us, at least by the minister who is under our total and immediate control’.6

Some ‘great families’ of intermediaries still survived after 1817, however, and the centre continued its efforts to dispossess them. The assignments of Shams ul Umra, Rafat ul Mulk and the Lohani family were severely reduced in 1820, thus, and a further round of resumptions was carried out against the surviving large jagirdars in 1829.7

A new breed of smaller revenue farmers was by now in the ascendant in Hyderabad, and had virtually replaced the larger ones as the new intermediary elite by the mid-1830s. If the latter were more amenable to control by the centre, they also operated a more oppressive regime than before, thanks to the centre’s increased coercive power and revenue demands, in the context of agricultural depression and seasonal failures:

‘Every talookdaree may justly be termed an independancy in its interior administration, without any dread or awe of the minister, as long as he [the taluqdar] pays the fixed revenue; and his naibs and his petty

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3 Darbar rivals included men like the pro-British ministers, Mir Alam and Chandu Lal, and local rivals included Berar intermediaries like Salabat Khan and Subhan Khan. (See Chapter Three above)
4 See Chapter Three above.
5 Govind Baksh spared no effort to make a fortune privately, however. He attempted to maintain the same system of regular commissions and periodic nazranas that Mahipat Ram had successfully operated before him. (See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 30 Sept 1820, 46-50; 21 Oct 1825, 98-9; HRR, 690, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821; 304, pp. 361-70, 473-4. See also: Chapter Three above.)
6 NAI, For Sec, 5 July 1817, Russell’s Letter, 7, 14 June 1817.
7 NAI, HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin’s Letter, 28 Oct 1829.
agents are equally without restraint and deemed loyal or disloyal in proportion to their punctuality in paying the revenue'.

There were a handful of taluqdars and jagirdars in the mid-1830s who were not extortionist in their approach. The resident pointed towards men like Harjivan Das, the taluqdar of the Khammam, Warangal and Yelgundel districts, for example, whose population and cultivation had ‘increased very considerably’. But these were exceptional cases.

4.2.2 Zamindars

Unlike the new breed of taluqdars, British policies do not seem to have attracted the support of many zamindars, except in Telangana for a short period. Chandu Lal was able to assimilate the zamindars here to the centre’s revenue farming system in the early 1820s. But his arrangements had broken down by the late 1820s. Many of the bigger zamindars of the Hyderabad countryside had already been reduced or dispossessed by the centre in the last years of the 18th or the opening years of the 19th century. The remaining ones, relatively small, continued to feel the centre’s coercive measures thereafter. The new taluqdars that the British ‘reforms’ created and troops supported were, from the zamindars’ point of view, even more oppressive than their larger predecessors. In such circumstances, any support from zamindars was enthusiastically welcomed by Hyderabad in the first half of the 19th century. When Capt. Davies discovered two patels who had attacked small parties of Bhils in the course of his operations against Bhil naiks in Berar in 1819-20, for example, his response was almost overgenerous:

‘For these services, and with a view to encourage the inhabitants to oppose the Bhils, I have deemed it necessary to present each of the patels with a khillat’.

4.2.3 Bankers

Bankers had long been involved with revenue farming. With the decline of the ‘great families’ of intermediaries and the rise of a smaller class of revenue farmers, they found their clients easier to handle, provided that they themselves had the backing of the centre. Bankers increased their involvement in districts assigned to them as securities from the second decade of the 19th century. They were now more willing to take direct charge of the districts if their clients, or those responsible for collecting revenues on the latter’s behalf defaulted. Revenue farmers farmed their districts directly against loans from bankers by the 1830s. Revenue farming zamindars in Telangana became heavily

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8 NAI, HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38.
9 NAI, HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38. See also: Chapter Three above.
10 See Chapter Three above.
11 NAI, HRR, 686, Captain Davies to Captain Plowden, 27 Dec 1819.
12 NAI, For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838; see also: Chapter Three above.
dependent on the advances of bankers and moneylending grain merchants. Many new families of Marwadis seem to have arrived and settled in Hyderabad in the late 1820s and in the 1830s. The entire process of increasing saukari involvement in revenue farming was typified by the leading Hyderabad banker, Puran Mal, who negotiated directly with Hyderabad's diwan, Chaudhul Lal, on behalf of his clients, as well as his banker colleagues.

4.3 Revenue Farming and the Communities of the Core Domains

4.3.1 Constructive Revenue Farming

Historians of late-Mughal and 18th century-India until recently tended to view revenue farming predominantly in negative terms. It was supposed to have occurred in areas where the state was at its weakest and was associated, therefore, with instability or rebellion. Revenue farmers themselves were regarded as a mercenary breed, whose chief concern was with short term profit. If the state entertained them at all, it was because they, nevertheless, managed to keep powerful zamindars at bay. The areas that came under revenue farming declined sooner or later. Such a starkly negative picture of revenue farming has been qualified for some areas in recent years. Some historians of western and central India, for example, distinguish between destructive and constructive revenue farming in the 18th century. At least some revenue farmers were actively interested in promoting economic expansion and political peace in their areas. Such a characterization would also suit revenue farming in some parts of 18th century Hyderabad. The nawabs of Kurnool regularly employed revenue farmers to develop their core areas, for instance. Given the nawabs' interest in providing protection and patronage to their domains and communities, it is highly unlikely that they would have encouraged revenue farmers inimical to these basic concerns. There is also other evidence for the developmental activities of revenue farmers. Indeed, all of Hyderabad's intermediaries were revenue farmers in one sense: they held their military assignments against revenue contracts. Yet, they never destroyed the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside in the same way as the

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13 Presumably to cash in on the opportunity of being able to advance loans to revenue farmers and cultivators, to the latter at 24% interest per annum. (NAI, For Pol, 5 Feb 1838, Stewart's Report, 21)
14 See, for example: NAI, HRMC, 54/1842, Resident's Letters, 3 June, 5 July, 26 July and 3 Aug 1842; 55/1842-43, Resident's Letters, 4-6 Sept 1843; For Pol, 3 Feb 1844, 182; Leonard, 'Bankers in Politics'; also: Chapter Three above.
15 See, for example: D. Singh, 'Ijarah System in Eastern Rajasthan, 1750-1800', Proceedings of the Rajasthan History Congress, 6(1973), pp. 60-9; Wink, 'Maratha Revenue Farming'.
16 Wink, 'Maratha Revenue Farming'.
British and their collaborators did after superceding the former in the early 19th century. Even in the 1820s and 1830 some revenue farmers resisted the destructive pressures of military fiscalism, agricultural depression and poor seasons. One Telangana revenue farmer saw the scarcity of 1832/33 coming, and bought up grain with which to subsist his cultivators during the ensuing famine. Even if the measure was out of self-interest, - to prevent distress migration or the total annihilation of a labour force, - it was in sharp contrast to what happened in neighbouring British districts in the same season. Cultivators here were unable to fend for themselves and lay dying in their thousands. Indeed, the fortunate ones were those who managed to seek refuge in Hyderabad under public or private charity. The deputy revenue farmer Warangal, Yelgundel and Khammamett, Mohammed Azim Ali, was also seen ‘to be very active in moving about and relieving the distress and in giving kowls on low terms to the ryots’. Many cultivators who came seeking famine relief to Azim Ali’s districts from Masulipatnam ‘have remained’. Azim Ali was singled out for praise for other reasons as well. The resident at this time, Martin, felt there were some positive aspects to revenue farming if it were left to function according to local custom, and without coercive intervention by the centre. For example, the lands of zamindars, patels or cultivators under restraint for real or alleged arrears were rarely sold. Azim Ali had thus brought peace and conciliation to his charge, and cultivation and population in them had ‘increased very considerably’. He apparently demanded no more than the value of their contracts from zamindars, and left intact the 5% commission allowed to deshmukhs and 2 1/2% allowed to deshpandes. Also, he respected their sir and rusoom rights in the villages. Another revenue farmer who received praise like Azim Ali was Ameen Nawaz Jang, the revenue farmer of Beed, Mominabad, Kullum and the upper Manjira valley in Marathwada. His districts were reported to be in a high state of cultivation. In a similar state were the districts of Husain Dost Khan north of Bidar. The district of Sirsilla in northern Telangana, likewise, registered a rise in revenue-paying capacity from Rs. 11,000 in 1830 to Rs. 16,500 in 1838 under its benign deputy revenue farmer, Shaikh Mohammed Ali.

4.3.2 Destructive Revenue Farming

Nevertheless, most revenue farmers who collaborated with the centre’s military fiscal policies in Hyderabad in the early 19th century began to display unprecedented levels of cruelty and destructiveness in their methods of revenue collection. These new levels of cruelty and coercion in revenue collection methods had two kinds of implications. They led to the destruction of core areas and to a deterioration in the traditional relationships in the communal domains. Official records and folklore from this period both, comment on

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18 See references cited in the last footnote and Chapters One and Three above.
19 NAI, HRR, 71, Stewart’s Letter, 11 July 1834; 550, Reviews, 1834-38; For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838; 5 Feb 1838, Stewart’s Report, 21, 1837-38.
these phenomena in their different ways. Kona Rao transferred the revenue burden to which he had opened himself by entering into a contract with the centre in 1819 onto rival and lesser zamindars with a vengeance in Yelgundel. If the zamindars attempted to seek redress by petitioning Hyderabad, Kona Rao 'will devise their ruin which he openly threatens to effect'. His revenue collections and levies for nazrana, which he claimed Chandu Lal demanded from him frequently, also became ruthless. In Berar, the severe effects of the drought of 1804 were compounded by the practices of Govind Baksh's deputies and sub-contractors, particularly men like Mokum Chand, the naib from c.1818/19 - 1828/29, whose 'name [was] remembered with horror by the cultivators in that part of the country'. The naib in Fasli 1228-29, Abdul Hasan Chisti, utilized the sums allowed him as revenue collection expenses to maintain a body of troops with which he plundered the districts openly. Chisti's successor, Bholanath, was free to raise as much revenue as he liked, and by whatever means he chose, provided he met the terms of his contract with Govind Baksh. Bholanath was locally regarded, as the khas naukar of Govind Baksh. The latter always maintained him on a monthly salary of Rs. 1000, whether or not he held a revenue contract then. Bholanath's style of operation was reflected in the endless 'complaints of helpless cultivators being confined, whipped, maimed, earlocked, pressed between stones, placed in a position in which boiling water was poured down their backs...'.

Govind Baksh not only winked at the tyrannies of the taluqdras and naibs of Berar and northern Marathwada, he even participated in these directly. If the districts he farmed out became a 'wilderness', those he administered himself were 'prostrate from the rapacious and atrocious government of Govind Baksh'. The local stories about him and his naibs were usually about their cruelty. It was related that when a woman once refused to give up her grain to one of his naibs, Gopal Hari of Patri, he ordered his agents to soak her sari in oil and set it on fire. But Govind Baksh's most notorious agent by far was Mulook Chand, and the Governor of Berar was himself accused of conniving at this man's sadistic tortures. When a patel once came to Govind Baksh to complain against Mulook Chand's excesses, which included forcing men to stand on red hot irons and burning their fingers, Govind Baksh threatened him with more of the same treatment. Nor was this exceptional, apparently:

'Govind Baksh...was accustomed to sit by, smoking his hookah in complacency, while human life was made to ebb out after the slowest and most agonising inventions'.

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20 Phoolmari taluq, - comprising the districts of Phoolmari, Antoor, Seoli, Jantoo, Chartana and Dubhari, - was held by a banker called Raghunath Das. Complaints against him, - 'and some of them of a very horrid kind', - were frequent. He was accused of excessive cruelty 'whether for the most important purposes, or to gain the merest trifle'. (NAI, HRR, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821; also: HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, 29 Aug 1822.)

21 NAI, For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98-9; also: HRR, 690, Wells to Metcalfe, Letter, 15 Nov 1821; For Pol, 30 June 1825, 84-92.
Where zamindars and patels were assimilated to the business of revenue farming, they were willing to compromise their role as protectors and patrons. Contractor zamindars presented a recognizable contrast to both contemporary naiks and the over idealized patrons of tradition. Once the zamindar of Yelgundel, Kona Rao, had accepted his own former districts on contract from the centre in 1819, for example; he was seen less and less by his community as the hero who had for decades defied the domain’s enemies. His raiyyat in fact petitioned the British superintendent for their area, Ralph, for help when Kona Rao began to effect merciless revenue and nazrana collections in order to satisfy the centre. The Ramgir zamindar’s story was similar. Not just zamindars, even karnams who had accepted their villages on contract, or assisted contractors in return for special favours, became alienated from their former communities, according to Wells writing in 1822.22

Where zamindars, patels and patwaris were not assimilated to revenue farming, they got embroiled in local wars with contractors: Metcalfe noticed in 1822 that the oppressions of zamindars in northern Telangana ‘have no doubt been aggravated by recent misgovernment’.23 His assistant wrote a year later that in Bhongir and Deverkonda zamindars terrorized and tortured village headmen with a hitherto unknown abandon and ferocity. Some of the most poignant instances of zamindars abandoning their traditional role of protector and patron for that of the ruthless contractor were to be found in Medak, Warangal, Khammam, Ramgir and Yelgundel during the severe drought of 1824/25.24 Zamindars led, or commissioned, armed bands to plunder and murder in their own villages. Old men borrowed telling motifs from memory to describe the situation:

‘When the pindarrah came they took our clothes and vessels which we could replace. They stayed two days and since that year have not returned. The amils are pindarrah every day of the year, and take what the others could not remove. They take our cattle and corn!’25

A serious consequence of a breakdown of relations within the core domains was the decay of reservoirs and irrigation networks. Such decay could lead to long term damage to agriculture, especially in rice growing areas.26 The increased rapacity of zamindars and patels that was noticed between 1822 and 1825 in Telangana was noticed elsewhere, too, particularly in Berar and parts of Marathwada. The villages of North Eastern Berar, Sayer noticed, were almost completely deserted, while less total emigrations were taking place from most other Berar districts into Nagpur or Bombay.

22 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98.
23 NAI, For Pol, 19 July 1822, 8.
24 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; also: For Pol, 21 Oct 1825, 98-9; HRR, 582, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824.
25 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; HRR, 582, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824.
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25 NAI, HRR, 126, Ralph to Metcalfe, Letter, 29 Aug 1822; HRR, 582, Wells’s Report, 6 May 1824.
The surveyor of Warangal observed about the district's deshpandes in 1844 that:

'These functionaries...are, especially the Brahmins, objects of much merited odium... To squeeze out as much of the ryots as they can and to defraud the Government are the great end and aim of their existence'.

He also noted that the special levies that the zamindars of this region pressed fell 'exclusively on the cultivators and artisans', and that 'when extracted by an unpopular zamindar are hateful'. He recorded a story of recent invention in this connection. The prototype of a cruel and oppressive revenue farming zamindar is clearly present in the story. A 'wicked raja' devised a patti of a new kind: 'The breasts of the women were to be measured and the measure was to be filled with coins'. The raja's collectors visited the house of a dhobi while he was away on business and proceeded to execute their orders on his wife. When the humiliated woman managed to struggle out of their grasp, she rushed to the dhobi's washing stone, dashed out the brains of her infant child on it and then ended her own life in the same way. Before dying, however, she laid a curse on the wicked raja's house. His family was destroyed not long after and his capital became a wilderness.

We do not know how much of the testimony of officialdom to take at face value, but their clear message of deteriorating relationships between contractor zamindars and their subjects does seem to accord with the economic realities of military fiscalism in a period of severe financial difficulties. In this process may also lie some of the long term origins of the 'landlord-peasant conflicts' that became so familiar in the area in the 20th century.

Yet another kind of social change can be associated with the activities of the revenue farming collaborators of the centre's military fiscal policies in the early 19th century. The domain of the small king had been traditionally sustained significantly by the notion of the 'community', which was elaborated through legitimation rituals, consensus building devices and incorporating legends. The emphasis on the 'community', rather than a particular caste, religion or sect, was of obvious practical value in a situation where the social composition of communities was rarely fixed. The communities were embedded in the political-economic realities of the Deccani landscape: post-Vijayanagara small kings competing for scarce labour and resources. Although the rhetoric of the community could sometimes sound suspiciously like the rhetoric of the dominant caste or sectarian grouping within the community, the community was still above a particular caste or sect by and large.

28 Ibid.
30 See Chapter One above.
The military fiscal interventions of a powerful and coercive centre under British hegemony transformed the workings of the old order in fundamental and critically important ways, however, in areas such as Berar and Telangana. The granting of fixed proprietary and hereditary rights, tenures, offices and privileges to some at the expense of others, in the old core areas was buttressed by the centre’s coercive power. Those who lost out from these developments did resist their marginalization or dispossession of course. But they were pitted against a far stronger enemy.\textsuperscript{31} As the ‘community’ lost its former flexibility, it also lost supra-caste or multi-caste or sect appeal, and tended to crystallize now around the dominant caste or sectarian grouping, on the one hand, and the marginal one, on the other. ‘Communal’ religious conflicts, also grew around some traditional core areas where the older flux and rivalries over rights and resources had been definitively ‘settled’ by the British regime. For example, a party of Arabs were confirmed in their revenue assignments in Nanded in 1830, whereas they had earlier been contesting these with a Sikh religious establishment for many years. Bloody conflict now erupted in Nanded, as the Sikhs responded to what they perceived to be a critical threat. The conflict was re-enacted on Hyderabad’s streets in 1831, when armed parties of Sikhs and Arabs clashed, and 200 Sikhs and 100 Arabs were killed. In parts of Berar, too, such as Akola and Akote, intermediary assignments and land control had been disputed between Hindu and Muslim lineages for a long time past. When the British regime began to settle the rights of some lineages and dispossess other lineages in the 1830s, however, a new kind of ‘communal’ conflict began to develop between them.\textsuperscript{32} It is perhaps possible to see in such developments some of the long term origins of the ‘communal’ conflicts of the nineteenth and, more especially, twentieth centuries.

4.4 Protest

Alongside collaboration, and the new sorts of tensions that it began to generate in indigenous society, the early decades of the 19th century also witnessed the emergence of widespread protest against the British dominated centre in Hyderabad and its policies. The centre did not hesitate to unleash the full power of its superior coercive capability as the protest gained in scope, strength and momentum. It launched full scale military campaigns in 1818 against Bhi naiks in Berar, for example.\textsuperscript{33} The shared experience of a common enemy could only be the starting point of protest in the face of such reaction. Its organization and sustenance also required resources, mobilization, courage and commitment. The following sections explore some of the organizational and sustaining aspects of protest in Hyderabad in the period c.1805-59. They give primary importance to

\textsuperscript{31} See discussion above and below within this chapter, and Chapter Three above.

\textsuperscript{32} See, for example: NAI, HRR, 791, Commanding Officer, Ellichpur to Resident, Hyderabad, Letters, June-July 1838; 776, Commanding Officer, Aurangabad to Resident, Hyderabad, Letter, 3 May 1845.

\textsuperscript{33} NAI, HRR, 685, 686; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 87-116.
the cultural legacies of the pre-colonial communal domains in the articulation and ideology of protest. They also consider links between the protest of the ‘rebel communal domains’ that were formed and the Mujahiddin movement, as well as mutinies among British troops.

4.4.1 Early Intermediary Protests

The *Freedom Struggle in Hyderabad* series represents the anti-British sentiments of the Nizam and some of his courtiers in the opening years of the nineteenth century as the beginnings of a 150-year long struggle for freedom. That they shared some common sentiments and aspirations is regarded as adequate evidence to unite a whole range of protests and their participants over a long period into a single ‘connected’ account of the freedom struggle. The analysis here finds it more plausible to locate the various protests in nineteenth century Hyderabad within the response of intermediaries, zamindars and other dislocated groups to military fiscalism and centralization, in the context of agricultural depression and poor seasons.

Mahipat Ram typified the resistance of intermediaries in the earliest phase of centralization. Intermediaries had entered into alliances with each other, with foreign powers and with small kings in the pre-colonial order of Hyderabad in the quest for military and revenue assignments, and profit and influence in the Asaf Jahi darbar. The most prestigious office in the darbar was that of diwan, followed by that of the peshkar. Mahipat Ram launched a bid for the diwani 1805. His main opponents were Mir Alam and Chandu Lal and their supporters. Both factions tried to win over the British resident to their cause. When Mahipat Ram and his supporters failed in this endeavour, they looked for support to other quarters: neighbouring Maratha capitals and intermediaries in Berar. The resident perceived these moves as a threat to the British interest in Hyderabad, however, and his fears were reinforced by his collaborators at the centre, Mir Alam and Chandu Lal. The centre tried to investigate, supervise and control the activities of Mahipat Ram. When the latter resisted such treatment, he was represented as an enemy of the state and the subsidiary alliance.

The earliest hero figure of nationalist historians in Hyderabad is Mahipat Ram, the intermediary who was forced to give up his charge in Berar and then fly from Hyderabad in 1807. Mahipat Ram did not retire without an attempt to resist his expulsion. He tried to mobilize opinion against the resident and his supporters in the Hyderabad darbar and in Berar. The centre threatened Mahipat Ram by launching an investigation into his military and revenue accounts. Mahipat Ram perceived that such close scrutiny by the centre posed a threat not only to himself but also to many other intermediaries. Intermediaries in

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34 H.S.C., *Freedom Struggle.*

35 See Chapters Two and Three above.
Hyderabad quite commonly did not maintain their full quota of troops or raise the official estimates of revenues to the full. Such men had much to fear from a British centre which equated shortfalls in revenues and troops with corruption. Mahipat Ram played on these fears. He wooed Salabat Khan, the most powerful intermediary in Berar next to himself, in the hope that his example would induce many smaller intermediaries also to lend him their support. But while he did not succeed with Salabat Khan, who had long been a local enemy, Mahipat Ram did manage to win over several others, who signed an iqrarnama, or deed of solidarity, with him.\(^{36}\)

Mahipat Ram and his supporters relied on being able to bring off a ministerial coup in the Hyderabad darbar. Once he was banished from Hyderabad, they hoped that friends there, such as Ismail Yar Jang and his associates, would be able to achieve this end. What gave the efforts of Ismail Yar Jang and his associates teeth was the support they were able to mobilize among British troops in Hyderabad.\(^{37}\) The sensitivity of Indian troops to any intrusion of their religious beliefs or practices through military regulations has long been commented upon by scholars. But an appeal to ‘religious causes’ for explaining mutinies can become so general as to become meaningless. What sorts of specific concerns were represented through the currency of religious issues and symbols? Why did religion surface prominently in relation to certain concerns and not others? Why did they bind different communities together at certain times and not at others? These are all difficult though important questions. The attempt to deal with them here is only tentative.

When a soldier took offence at being asked not to wear a certain kind of beard or moustache, or to discard or modify other aspects of his traditional attire, in favour of a uniform, he was probably taking offence at the invasion of what one may describe as his traditional status or identity in the community. Such a crisis of status could also become a crisis of communal, personal, caste or religious identity.\(^{38}\) It is interesting that the foreigner’s alienness was recognized with respect to with the uniformity of his attire: he was a wearer of hats and jackets; and with respect to his religion: he was Christian. But why did a soldier who felt his status threatened or violated turn to men like Ismail Yar Jang, Narsing Rao, Noor ul Umra, Digambar Rao and Rao Rambha in Hyderabad?\(^{39}\) Perhaps he perceived that these men and their associates, too, were disturbed by the invasion of their status. For, Hyderabad’s policies under British domination did affect their status and privileges perceptibly, as well as their economic and political bases.\(^{40}\)

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\(^{36}\) See Chapter Three above; also: H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 18-55.

\(^{37}\) Ibid.

\(^{38}\) See discussion of communal domains in Chapter One and of the crisis of their invasion in the early 19th century in this chapter and in Chapter Three above.


\(^{40}\) See discussion below within this chapter, and Chapter Three above; also: Rajayyan, South Indian Rebellion, pp. 42-73, 96, 120-2, 131; IOLR, Board’s Collections, F/4/52/1143, Guntur Mutiny, Sept-Oct 1797.
Put together, the aspirations and efforts of soldiers and intermediaries appeared to the British as a religiously inspired military and diplomatic campaign to bring back an old order.\textsuperscript{41} Events of this nature occurred in Vellore, Hyderabad, Berar, Bellary, Bangalore, Nandidrug and several other places in 1806.\textsuperscript{42} Although the principal protagonists of 1806 were identified and punished, not all rebels could be identified, and sporadic protests continued well into the following year, 1807. An impression was said to persist among many intermediaries in Berar, for example, that Mahipat Ram would return and capture the diwani yet.\textsuperscript{43} An infantry battalion which was being reformed mutinied in Aurangabad in July 1807. Its commandant, an Englishman called Charles Freeman, suggested one reason for the mutiny was that the troops had been left unpaid for two months.\textsuperscript{44} But financial distress was only one aspect of the soldiers’ discontent. They also rejected British military forms and usages and reverted back to the French ones they had learnt from Raymond and Perron, the French commandants whom their original master, Mahipat Ram, had employed:

‘in the discipline etc. they carry on in French ... they do not like in their heart ... the English’.

The troops also kept up contact with a mutsaddi, Asaram, in the nearby fort of Daulatabad. Asaram was related to Mahipat Ram by marriage and was in secret correspondence with him.\textsuperscript{45} Freeman complained, furthermore that the Aurangabad battalion’s mutiny was the fifth occasion of ‘their misbehaviour in this respect’, and he now advised their disbandment. His suggestion was accepted.\textsuperscript{46}

The main weakness of the protests of 1806-7 was their limited reach. Although they covered long distances, from Berar to Vellore, the protestors communications were geared to propaganda in a small number of military centres. Also, participation in these protests was limited to intermediaries and troops affected adversely by centralization and military reform. While the crises of communal identity and personal status might have had a more widespread effect, the 1806-07 protests were still in the early days of the British regime and it would be a few years before the centre’s new policies affected more areas and groups with equal intensity. The centre was able to suppress the mutinies through superior


\textsuperscript{42} H.S.C., \textit{Freedom Struggle,} I, 18-55; NAI, HRR, 258.

\textsuperscript{43} He would also, it was said, upon coming back punish those who had deserted him in the face of official persecution. (NAI, For Pol, 21 May 1807, Russell to Sydneham, Letter, 3, 5 March 1807, pp. 8-18)

\textsuperscript{44} The mutinous troops themselves claimed that their pay had been held back for five months. (NAI, For Pol, Freeman to Doveton, 30 July 1807)

\textsuperscript{45} The resident believed that Asaram was one among several men who propagated the belief that Mahipat Ram still retained the favour of the Nizam and would some day return to the exercise of his power.

\textsuperscript{46} NAI, For Pol, 7 Dec 1807, 39.
fire power, in the event with the help of loyalists like Salabat Khan in Berar and Mir Alam and Chandu Lal in Hyderabad.

4.5 The Expansion of Protest

The period c.1807-50 saw the expansion of monopolistic military fiscalism and centralization. This co-incided to some extent with agricultural depression and poor seasons. An increasing number of intermediaries lost their traditional assignments, and more core areas were also ravaged.\(^{47}\) While the earliest protest against the centre had been confined to a limited number of intermediaries and troops, an ever increasing number of intermediaries and small kings were being affected now. There were several strands to their protest. One was the use of communal motifs in the style of the pre-colonial communal domains. Another was the incorporation of Mujahiddin propaganda, and a third was the further growth of links with mutinous discontent among British troops.

As military fiscalism and centralization penetrated the small kingdoms of the Hyderabad countryside, in the context of agricultural depression and poor seasons, the economies of the core areas declined.\(^{48}\) Their communities were forced to migrate in distress. The migration occurred broadly in two directions. One was into neighbouring territories like Nagpur, Poona, Bombay and Madras.\(^{49}\) But these territories were themselves hit by the depression and could not absorb all of Hyderabad’s distress migrants despite their relative political stability.\(^{50}\) The other direction of distress migration was towards rebel communal domains within Hyderabad itself.\(^{51}\) The latter migration faced a major constraint. The migrants had only a limited number of tracts to go to as long as the rebels could not defend themselves against the superior military power of the centre over a broader area. This induced an expansion of the core areas within the rebel communal domains, as from c.1810.

Naik led rural protest was widely inclusive in character, involving groups like the Bhils and the Gonds, as well as agriculturists. All these groups had shared the adverse consequences of the centre’s military fiscal policies, and sought to reconstitute their communities in rebel communal domains.\(^{52}\) The naiks were the leaders of the rebel domains; they had usually experienced ‘oppression from the government’: ‘Every

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\(^{47}\) See Chapter Three above.

\(^{48}\) See Chapter Three above.

\(^{49}\) See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 8 Dec 1821, Metcalfe’s Report, 63, Nov 1821; 19 July 1822, 8; 4 July 1823, 40; 21 Oct 1825, 98-9; HRR, Reviews, 1834-38.

\(^{50}\) See, for example: Guha, ‘The Agrarian Economy’; Elphinstone, Report; IOLR, H/707/2, Jenkins’s History of Berar, 1826; Thomas and Natarajan, ‘Depression’.

\(^{51}\) See discussion within this chapter below.

\(^{52}\) Berar was for strategic reasons the first area where the British dominated centre had tried to implement its new military and fiscal policies. It was here, too, that their severe effects were first felt. Protests occurred first among intermediaries and troops, in 1806-07. By c.1810, zamindars, peasants and other elements in the countryside also began to protest.
zamindar who ... has reason to complain of the Government becomes a Naik ...53 In the early period of the protest, naiks were found throughout Berar, and in the Marathwada district adjoining it, Nanded. Their strongholds were most numerous in the districts of Mahur, Tamsa, Ninsee, Parbhani and those surrounding Bassim. These were all well fortified and usually located in naturally strong terrain. The inhabitants of the rebel communal domains were excellent agriculturists and soldiers: contemporaries remarked that their villages were ‘the most flourishing in the province’ and that ‘all the inhabitants of them are soldiers’. But naik strongholds were constantly under pressure from British troops and revenue farmers, and had to be abandoned and reconstituted time and again:

‘The difficulty does not consist so much in destroying their power in the first instance, as in preventing them from recovering it afterwards’.54

Of the numerous naiks to be found throughout Berar and Nanded in mid-1811, about twenty five were particularly powerful. They were, Shivaram Naik of Esapur, with 2000 men and territory worth Rs. 3 lakhs; Lakshman Naik of Wanrho, with 1000 men and territory worth Rs. 2 lakhs; Baggaji Naik of Dangar Talab, with 500 men and territory worth Rs. 50 thousand; Jaswant Rao Naik of Jam; Nausaji Naik of Nausa, and twenty other naiks dispersed throughout Berar, each commanding between 200 and 400 men and territory worth Rs. 25 to 50 thousand. All the naiks attracted distress migrants:

‘any of the inhabitants who suffer oppression have an asylum held out to them, where they are sure to find protection, and where they probably live in greater affluence and security than under their lawful governors.’55

The inhabitants of the rebel domains were thus mostly cultivator-soldiers who ‘at different times had been driven from their habitations, or been tempted to abandon them by the same cause [as the naiks].’56

The rebel domains tended to be flexible in their social composition, thanks to the conditions in which they were created and maintained. Naiks, for example, were drawn from among erstwhile Maratha, Bhil and Gond zamindars, and the cultivator-soldiers from an even wider cross section of rural, pastoral and forest communities, as well as dislocated Arab and Pathan intermediaries.57 Whether settled in strongholds or on the move, naik led bands looked for increasing co-operation from villagers, zamindars and

53 NAI, HRR, 44, Russell’s Report, 10 July 1811.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid..
56 Ibid.
intermediaries against the centre. Protests based on rebel communal domains had spread from Berar to Marathwada, Telangana and Rayalseema by 1818, as the latter areas also began to experience the severe effects of the centre’s military and revenue policies, which were heightened by agricultural depression and poor seasons.  

A full scale campaign was launched by British troops against naik Dharmaji Pratap Rao of Beed district in Marathwada in July 1818. When his stronghold was captured, it was discovered that Dharmaji’s garrison was composed chiefly of Banjaras. A campaign was also launched against Nausaji Naik six months later. Judging from the length and breath of this campaign, Nausaji enjoyed extensive support. His own community, the Hatkars; Maratha peasant groups; and Arab intermediaries who had lost from the new revenue and military policies in Hyderabad, Poona and Madras were among the principal participants in Nausaji’s rebel domain. He also enjoyed the support of other naiks, such as his brother, Hansaji; of neighbouring intermediaries; and of numerous villages throughout Nanded and south western Berar. The Hatkars had opposed the centre since the late eighteenth century. They were able to incorporate various other groups into their protest in the early nineteenth century. The creation of a rebel communal domain thus, together with Nausaji’s links with other naiks, also meant that protest in the Hyderabad countryside now carried greater geographical reach and social depth than ever before. British troops campaigning against Nausaji confronted his camps, strongholds and sympathizers over a wide area, which was marked by centres as far apart as Wardha and Nanded north to south, and Hingoli and Parbhani east to west. To its north and west, furthermore, Nausaji’s area of influence overlapped with that of other naiks, whose protests at their farthest limits extended deep into Khandesh, Gujarat and Central India. To the east, Nausaji’s area merged with that of Lakshmaji Naik’s, which linked up in turn with the efforts of Kona Rao, Aswa Rao and others in northern and eastern Telangana.

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58 See Chapter Three above.
60 The leading rebels, Dharmaji and his brother, were taken prisoner.
61 The Banjaras were yet another group of people who had experienced considerable dislocation and marginalization in the early nineteenth century. In contrast, they had earlier occupied an important position in the political economy of the Deccan and enjoyed a corresponding status with zamindars, intermediaries, kings, traders and even European powers. They had played a decisive role as traders and transport agents. They had also enjoyed flattering recognition from various powers wishing to penetrate the Deccan from Hindustan, or further south from the Deccan. They had, for example, been honoured by Aurangzeb in the late seventeenth century, and by Hyderabad, Poona and Madras in the late eighteenth. But the early nineteenth century disruption of zamindari capitals, which had served as centres of trade in quieter times, put capital to flight from these areas and sent the Banjaras’ status giving clientele into decline. Another reason for their adversity lay in their displacement from military carriage by the British military establishment, which, unlike earlier, now serviced itself and its allies and dispensed with Banjara services. Besides making severe inroads into their traditional means of livelihood, a British dominated regime now viewed the Banjaras as thieves and vagabonds. In such a situation, the latter, not surprisingly, towards naiks like Dharmaji Pratap Rao much in the same manner as did zamindars, patels, peasants and intermediaries. (This brief review is based on: H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 87-9; IOLR, H.Misc, H/253, Nizam’s Agreement with the Banjaras, 1791; Board’s Collections, F/4/53/1201, Organizing Transport Bullocks during the War with Tipu Sultan, 1791-9; F/4/80/1771, On the Banjaras as Agents of Transport and Traders from the Hyderabad and Central Indian Interior to the East Coast during the 18th Century; J. Briggs, ‘Account of the Origin, History and Manners of the Race of Men called Banjaras’, Bombay Transactions, 1(1819), pp. 159-83; E. Balfour, ‘On the Migratory Tribes of Natives in Central India’, JRAS, 13, 1(1844), pp. 1-23; see also: Chapter One above).
The British campaign against Nausaji was conducted under the overall command of Major Robert Pitman. Among his detachment commandants were Captains Sayer and Davies. Captain Sayer met with naik strongholds or pro-naik villages throughout the Umarkhed region. He complained that the deshmukh of Umarkhed, Trimbak Rao, had given a band of 500 men led by Nausaji shelter and provisions while Sayer was pursuing it. Captain Davies also noticed village level support for Nausaji and his men. When he arrived at a village called Kirka in pursuit of a rebel party under a man named Ghulam Ali, the patel, offering to help him, 'conducted me into the jungle, where I lost all trace of them'. When Davies returned to Kirka realizing he had been tricked, he found the patel and the inhabitants of the village had already fled. Heavy concentrations of British troops continued their campaign against Nausaji despite local set backs. Their principal engagement with him occurred at Nowah. Pitman besieged the fort in which Nausaji was quartered with 2000 cavalry and 2863 infantry and artillery. The fort was garrisoned by about 620 Arabs. When they refused to surrender, Pitman gave orders for the fort to be stormed. Being heavily outnumbered, the Arabs suffered serious losses: about 439 of them were killed and another 80 were seriously wounded. Some rebel posts in the vicinity of Nowah were demoralized by its capture and gave in quietly to Pitman. But the story of the seige and of the storming was re-worked into incorporating legends and propaganda of rebel communal domains further afield as one of heroics and martyrdom on the part of Nausaji and his associates. Nausaji’s legend occupied a central place, for instance, in the propaganda that prevailed in the domain of Lakshmaj Naik. The naik in fact received support in the name of Nausaji. The Gond naiks Goma and Pykoo were also similarly seen as Nausaji’s lieutenants by their supporters in districts on the Wardha in Berar. Lakshmaj’s influence extended over parts of Berar and northern Marathwada. His extensive village level support became evident to those who conducted military operations.


63 H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 89-100; HRMC, 31/1817-20, 22 Nov 1819.

64 Nausaji’s life story was celebrated as an account of constant opposition to Hyderabad. Nowah was said to have been taken by the Hatkar brothers, Nausaji and Hansaji, from the chief of a local enemy community, the Kachargars, who had ‘originally constructed… [it] …as a stronghold [after they had] amassed much wealth’. Thereafter, the brothers strengthened it and took into their service 400 Arab soldiers, with whose assistance they raided deep into Hyderabad and Nagpur country. ‘People tolerated their high handedness in the hope that they may build a Hindu Raj’. But the Nizam was not happy and the tension between Hyderabad and the Hatkars’ growing domain was constant. Yet, despite the tension, the old order did give honourable recognition to the small king: ‘The legends bring out … the story … [that] … situated to the north of the [Nowah] ghurry there lay buried a large treasure and he he was able to unearth it was to be rewarded with Nowah as a permanent jagir. This announcement was made by the then Asaf Jah. Nausaji and Hansaji succeeded in discovering this treasure and therefore Nowah was granted to them as jagir.’ The rise of British influence in Hyderabad put an end to the centre’s recognition of the Hatkar brothers, however: ‘On intimation from the Nizam, the British contingents marched to Nowah …’. (H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 97-9).

65 Captain Hollis, who conducted military operations against Goma and Pykoo in January 1820, noted that most of the Wardha districts had been deserted on account of oppressive revenue demands by revenue farmers and their agents. But where villages retained their inhabitants, they supplied Gonds, Dheds and Kunbis to the ranks of the naiks. (NAI, HRR, 686, Letters, Sept 1819-April 1820).
against him. Captain Sayer arrested the deshmukh of Hingoli, Raghují, as well as an ‘influential’ associate of his, Anandi Rao, in September 1819 on the charge of conducting suspiciously close dealings with Lakshmaji. Captain Locker arrested Reswaiji, the patel of a village in Berar’s Chartana pargana, Lohari, for supplying Lakshmaji’s party with provisions while they were being pursued by British troops. Frustrated commandants were complaining bitterly about widespread support for naiks throughout Berar, northern Marathwada and northern Telangana by early 1820. Sayer recommended to the resident in Hyderabad that he should get the diwan, Chandu Lal, to send express written warnings to all the patels, deshmukhs and deshpandes of the parganas of Seoli, Chartana, Jentoor, Bamuri, Narsi, Vakut, Amrapur, Maiker, Malkapur, Panjra and Shakkarkheda that anyone discovered supporting naiks ran the risk of incurring the maximum penalty for treason, death. He also recommended that the warning be accompanied by an offer of rewards for those who helped British troops. Letters giving effect to both of Sayer’s recommendations were sent out, but they were largely ignored. Lakshmaji and his associates continued to gain support in Berar and Marathwada, and zamindars like Kona Rao and Aswa Rao began to organize resistance in northern Telangana.\textsuperscript{66}

A campaign was launched against Kona Rao in the districts of Yelgundel and Ramgir in 1819. British troops captured most of the rebel’s strongholds and forced Kona Rao to make terms with Hyderabad. He agreed to disband his troops and to take full responsibility for paying the revenues of his districts to the centre in future. In return, Hyderabad agreed to withdraw its own forces and revenue farmers. Hyderabad had been forced to negotiate with Kona Rao when it realised that military ascendancy alone was no guarantee of satisfactory revenue collections. Influential local collaborators were also a necessity.\textsuperscript{67} The agreement with Kona Rao failed quite soon, however, as Kona Rao found the centre’s revenue demands becoming heavier in the context of agricultural depression, poor seasons, distress migration and declining core areas. British troops were sent out against him again, and this time he was brought prisoner to Hyderabad, where he eventually died in the dungeons of Golconda. But the removal of Kona Rao still did not dampen protest in Yelgundel and Ramgir:

‘as he has not been permitted to exercise his influence in the zamindaree which is always calculated to inflame the minds of the inhabitants against the government, it has proved prejudicial to its authority, which has in consequence never been properly established ...’ 68

The patels of Yelgundel and Ramgir had been staunch partisans of Kona Rao. He had rewarded them with patelkis and \textit{watan-s} for helping him carve out a small kingdom and

\textsuperscript{66} NAI, HRR, 686, Letters, Sept 1819-April 1820.
\textsuperscript{68} NAI, HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin to GoI, Letter, 26 Jan 1829.
communal domain from local and supra-local wars. They continued to be a 'turbulent set' after his removal and it was said to be within their power to paralyse the operations of any revenue farmer.69 East of Yelgundel and Ramgir, in Bhadrachalam and Palunsha, too, the centre's revenue demands drove some of the most powerful zamindars, such as Aswa Rao, into determined resistance. Most of them retreated into the hills and jungles that were abundant in this region and from there carried out raids on revenue farmers whom the centre had appointed in their place.70 A force 'consisting of a battalion of the Russell Brigade, two 12-pounder and two 6-pounder guns, ... two howitzers, ... a party of pioneers, ... 500 Berar Infantry and 200 Reformed Horse' managed to capture the rebel strongholds of Sironcha and Mahadevpur in 1823. Newer naiks had emerged in Telangana by 1825, nevertheless, and continued to organise protest in districts such as Warangal, Khammam, Nalgonda and Deverkonda.71

Parts of Rayalseema had also turned into seedbeds of protest by this time. One indication of this was the rise in crisis related migration:

'The population is manifestly greatly inferior to what it has been in all the districts; the appearance of houses abandoned and villages deserted is sure proof'.72

Opposition to revenue farmers was also widespread. Some zamindars and patels, such as Desai Swami Rao and Nargauda Shiva Shankar Rao of Tawurugiri, languished in the prisons of revenue farmers like Amir Baig of Kannagiri. Others fled across the Tungabhadra into Madras Presidency. But yet others attempted to create and defend rebel communal domains. The larger zamindars, such as those of Gadwal, Kopal and Raichur, were more visible in this respect. Some of them had already been in confrontations with British troops in earlier years. Virappa, the zamindar of Kopal, had reoccupied a fort that had been taken from him by the centre's troops in 1819, for example. But Hyderabad had sent out a strong force against him once again and had re-taken Kopal,73 and Virappa himself had been captured this time. The protest of the Doab spilled over into north western Rayalseema, south western Telangana and southern Marathwada in the 1820s.74 Several naiks, - Shivalingappa Deshmukh, Tirumal Rao Deshmukh, Meghasham Deshmukh, Malji Kalkia and Lakshman Reddy Desai, - were active in Bidar for example.

69 Ibid.

70 One of the rebel naiks, Bhupati, was barely out of his teens. He had been dispossessed of hereditary deshmukhi rights by the harsh regime of the early nineteenth century and looked to avenge his injury and to regain his status through bandit like activity.


73 The Hyderabad force consisted of 1100 cavalry, 2 companies and 5 battalions of infantry, four 6-pounder and two 12-pounder guns, and yet another detachment of cavalry; all to besiege a garrison that was only 500 strong and poorly supplied by comparison.

British forces were sent against them and succeeded in reducing or destroying several of their forts.\footnote{Udgir, which had been seized and garrisoned by Shivalingappa and Malji Kalkia, was taken and the latter was killed in the action. Gaujigaon, Meghasham’s stronghold, was destroyed, as were several other forts. Tirumal Rao was driven out of Krishnapur, from where he had ‘for three years been committing depredations and ... refused to pay the revenues due to Government’, and Lakshman Reddy from Bhawanipet.}

Although broad based, inclusive protest was no longer confined to Berar and Marathwada after c. 1818, the most serious developments that the centre encountered in the 1820s were still in these regions. The domains of the Bhil naiks, who were the chief worry, drew upon increasing support from distress migrants, peasants, zamindars and intermediaries. Bhil naiks were also active farther afield, in Poona, Nagpur and Bombay. As far as Hyderabad was concerned, their main strongholds were in and around the Ajanta and Gaotala hills. At least thirty two naiks were believed to be active in 1819. The leading one was Chil Naik, who was eventually taken and hanged. Jhandula, Jakira and Hiria emerged as the leading Bhil naiks after him. The centre conducted campaigns against them throughout the period 1819-24. Jhandula, Jakira and 1200 other Bhils were forced to surrender to a British force, which drew a one hundred mile long cordon around the base of the Ajanta hills, in 1821. Yet, six new engagements were fought in the following year, at Kingaon, Kanhar, Kanam, Despur, Ajanta and Nandgaon. 1823 saw British troops campaigning in the districts of Byzapur, Kandalla, Kanam and Nagapur. At least one serious encounter took place in 1824. A cessation of hostilities occurred for about three years from 1824, as the British tried a policy of ‘pacification’. But outright warfare erupted once again in 1827, and was to continue, on and off, until c.1860.\footnote{H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 111-15.}

The commanders of detachments sent out against Bhil naiks noticed extensive support for them, in much the same way as those sent out against Lakshmaji had done earlier. Although their own strongholds were principally in and around the Ajanta and Gaotala hills, Bhil naiks commanded influence and respect over a much wider area, including Berar, northern Marathwada and northern Telangana in Hyderabad. The Gond naiks Goma and Pykoo of Berar; Lakshmaji of Marathwada; and numerous deshmukhs and patels of both these areas, as well as of northern Telangana, actively assisted Bhil naiks by providing them intelligence, provisions, shelter and fighting men against British forces. The geographical extent of the Bhil resistance was not the only thing about it that worried Hyderabad. The latter was also worried by the expanding support the Bhils seemed to be receiving from rebellious intermediaries and revenue farmers.\footnote{NAI, HRR, 686, Letters, Sept 1819-April 1820.} Captain Davies reported:

‘The connexion of the principal officers of the Nizam’s Government, of the jagirdars, and of the whole population of the country, with the Bhils is clearly established...and no measures can be pursued against these robbers unless an immediate stop is put to the protection and assistance afforded
them, from different motives, by all ranks of the inhabitants." 78

There were several aspects to the intermediaries’ support for the Bhils. Taluqdar or their naiks in districts at the base of the Ajanta hills permitted Bhils to take up positions in strategically located villages. This enabled them to gather intelligence about enemy troop movements, to collect provisions, and to market their plunder. In Sirsiilla, the jagirdar’s brother, Mir Nasir Ali, himself bought up the booty Bhils had gathered from the districts of taluqdars unsympathetic to their efforts and sent it off to distant markets to avoid suspicion. In Sitoonda, the amaldar, Anand Rao, claimed a share in whatever booty the Bhils raised from plundering in the neighbouring British administered Khandesh. Mulook Chand of Jaffirabad laid similar claims on the Bhil naiks of his district. 79 Both Anand Rao and Mulook Chand were eventually arrested, charged and convicted by the British authorities. But their conduct was not exceptional among the intermediaries of Berar. A captured Bhil claimed that all the amaldars of the Ajanta range connived at Bhil raids and took fifty per cent of their booty in return. 80

Collaboration between intermediaries and Bhil chiefs was by itself nothing new, but persistent alliances in the face of British opposition implied a new rebellious solidarity. Some traditional symbols of status were given a new emphasis in the alliances between the intermediaries and Bhil naiks. The amaldar of Ausa, Chatar Singh, for example, began ritually to honour Bhil naiks by presenting them with expensive and fine turbans, well known symbols of status. 81 The extensive forging of bonds between the resistance of intermediaries and that of Bhil naiks distinguished the protests of the 1820s from earlier ones in one important respect. The protests of Mahipat Ram and his associates in 1806-07 had been limited in their social and geographical reach and were easily overcome by the centre. Those of naiks like Nausaji, Lakshmaiji, Kona Rao and Aswa Rao in the period 1810-20 had been much more broad based and had enjoyed the support of intermediaries to some extent, but many revenue farmers had still remained indifferent or hostile to them, making them vulnerable to British forces. The Bhil protests of the 1820s, however, were based on much more widely dispersed and more firmly interlocking rebel communal domains than ever before. They also enjoyed more extensive and sustained support from intermediaries.

It had been a common concern of rebels from Mahipat Ram to Lakshmaiji and Aswa Rao to reject a foreign power that seemed to deprive them of their traditional bases, status privileges, and to disturb, dislocate and invade their communal domains. The rejection had also implied a demand for the restoration or preservation of their status and domains. But

78 NAI, HRR, 686, Davies to Briggs, Letter, 9 Dec 1819.
79 Anand Rao had also sold the patelkis of three strategically located villages in the Sitoonda district to Bhil naiks.
81 NAI, HRR, 686, Davies to Plowden, Letter, 27 Dec 1819.
not before c.1818-19 had such a demand begun to acquire the character of a movement for an alternative political order. From this period one begins to encounter the rebels articulating an explicit demand for the restoration of such figures as the Peshwa of Poona and the Raja of Nagpur, and attempting to forge links with the Mujahiddin movement and mutinous British troops. 

4.6 The Quest for an Alternative Order

4.6.1 Background

The period c.1810-19 began to see the growth and expansion of protest against the centre’s policies beyond a limited number of intermediaries and troops into the Hyderabad countryside. The naik led protest was based on rebel communal domains, which supplied it with ideology, resources and organization. The rebel domains tried to re-create the sense of community that had lain at the heart of the small kingdom in the pre-colonial order. There was an important new dimension to it as well. One naik’s community was no longer mobilized to fight against another naik’s, but against the common enemies of both, the centre and its collaborators. The rebel communal domains were also socially more flexible and inclusive than the community of the 18th century small king. When one rebel community was forced to disband or to migrate under pressure from British troops, it was quickly reassimilated together with its naik, by another rebel community. The incorporating legend of Nausaji describes this process well. When Nausaji died, his leadership passed on to other naiks, who were now perceived as his lieutenants. The community of his rebel domain also migrated and rallied behind new naiks like Lakshmaji, Goma and Pykoo.

As the protest based on rebel communal domains grew, it also began to take on the coherence of a movement, thanks to the links between various rebel communities, naiks, intermediaries and, later on, the Mujahiddin and mutinous British troops. It began to project its overall aim, furthermore, as the creation of an alternative political order to the British regime. The alternative order that was envisaged essentially re-created the small kingdom of the 18th century, albeit on a larger scale, embracing not just more core areas, but the Hyderabad region as a whole, and perhaps an even wider territory. The Peshwa, the Raja of Nagpur, or Satara, and the Mughal Emperor were at different times in different places projected as the kings of the new order. The protest with an alternative order as its aim continued to gather momentum in the 1830s. Newer groups and areas

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82 The British had recently displaced Baji Rao in Poona, begun to administer directly there and had assumed all but direct control in Nagpur. The Bhil led demand for the restoration of either ruler amounted against such a background to an order changing demand.

became linked with it in this period. Among them were such revenue farmers, military creditors and bankers as had benefitted from being associated with the centre’s military fiscal policies until recently, but were no longer favoured now, in the context of economic decline and creditor warfare.

4.6.2 Context

The British gave greatest importance to their own interests when they found that Hyderabad could not accommodate their financial demands as well as those of other military creditors in the first half of the 19th century.84 When the Nizam asked Chandu Lal in 1834, for instance, if it would not be desirable to ask the British to withdraw their highly paid troops and officers from Hyderabad altogether, the recognized the influence of rival creditor lobbies behind this demand. Failures in the last two agricultural seasons had generated famine conditions in many parts of Hyderabad and aggravated the centre’s financial crisis.85 Hyderabad’s debts were mounting, on the one hand, and its core areas declining, on the other.86 The expensive military overkill of the British was bound to be visible in such circumstances.87 The resident preferred to concentrate his attack on the ‘irregulars’ still employed in Hyderabad, however, when Chandu Lal expressed doubts about the enormous cost of the British military establishment.88 Yet though Stewart might condemn irregular troops as ‘worse than useless’ and ‘instruments of oppression [rather] than...preservers of peace or protectors of the people’, it was impossible for Chandu Lal to dismiss them without settling their enormous arrears first.89

The residency’s condemnation of irregulars acquired a new urgency as nearly thirty years of military fiscalism began to turn into a scramble for repayments among Hyderabad’s creditors.90 Were not the renegade military creditors’ and revenue farmers’ ‘conspiracies’ in the country and ‘civil strife’ in the capital, preliminary signs, the resident reasoned?91 Chandu Lal’s attempts to conceal the true extent of his debts, and claim that

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84 See Chapter Three above for the crisis in military fiscalism and the origins of creditor warfare.
85 NAI, For Sec, 1 Feb 1834, 5.
86 See Chapter Three above.
87 In the resident’s words:’Whether we look to the extent of His Highness’ dominions or to the amount of his revenues, the number of troops maintained must appear disproportionately great.’ (NAI, For Pol, 23 March 1835, 45-53.).
88 ‘The regular troops alone’, he argued, ‘with the aid of an effective body of sebundees are quite sufficient to maintain internal tranquility, and it is much to be regretted that the minister should persist in urging a reduction in the expense of the regular troops, instead of reducing a part of the host of irregulars that are maintained.’ (NAI, For Pol, 23 March 1835, 45-53.).
89 In a small number of cases, irregulars were retained because the Nizam fancied them as part of his darbar or household establishment. A risâla of Arabs recently discharged from service in Shorapur, for example, was recommended by him for employment in his household establishment, as it had won his heart by offering him a graceful salute while he was on an excursion in the outskirts of Hyderabad in 1833. (NAI, For Pol, 23 March 1835, 45-53)
90 See Chapter Three above.
he was unable to offer any accurate picture of Hyderabad’s finances, were not reassuring either. At the same time, he continued, to rely on short term methods and ad hoc expedients. He protested that he saw no other alternative. When the Aurangabad adalat under Azim Khan attempted to expose the pervasive oppressiveness of revenue farming in the 1830s, for example, Chandu Lal used his discretionary powers as diwan to overturn its recommendations. Stewart was, by 1837, telling Calcutta that the regular maintenance of British troops in Hyderabad was threatened. Calcutta responded with the suggestion that he might explore the possibility of having Hyderabad reserve the revenues of a certain number of districts exclusively for the payment of the British military establishment.

British criticism of Chandu Lal was mingled with sympathy for his difficulties, though Taluqdars charged at least eighteen per cent interest on their advances to an already overpressed minister, and he lost more revenue when forced to lower assessments on districts they had pillaged. In many instances, taluqdars were themselves indebted to sahukars, whose agents effectively controlled their assignments and also made a side business of advancing loans at twenty four per cent annual interest to distressed cultivators. Core areas were thus destroyed and the centre’s finances also made critical. No fundamental improvement could come about in this situation, the resident insisted in the late 1830s, until the minister curtailed the ‘extravagant’ expenses, which had ‘almost thrown the government into the hands of ‘sahukars’. Yet, from Chandu Lal’s point of view, no retrenchments could be made until he was able to pay off their enormous arrears, an object which he felt he could not achieve in the prevailing circumstances except by contracting further loans.

The British, therefore, began to explore a political way of effecting financial retrenchments, at least small ones, at the expense of their rivals. As conflicts developed at


93 The resident felt that Chandu Lal accepted bribes from revenue farmers whom Azim Khan’s findings had put under a cloud in order to overturn the latter’s recommendations. Chandu Lal’s usual arguments against the adalat’s findings were that these were not based on sufficiently conclusive evidence and that they ignored the time honoured principle that a revenue farmer’s doings were largely his own affair as long as he met his contractual obligations with the government. (NAI, HRR, 550, Reviews, 1834-38; also: HRMC, 40/1827-29, Martin to Gol, Letter, 26 Jan 1827; For Pol, 19 March 1832, Garstin’s Letter, 66)

94 Regani, Nizam-British Relations, pp. 260-1; see also: NAI, HRMC, 62/1850, Correspondence, June 1852.

95 NAI, HRR, 71, Stewart to Gol, Letter, 11 July 1834; For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838; 5 Feb 1838, 21.

96 The ‘very considerable taluqs’ farmed out to Pestonjee upon the latter’s arrival from Bombay in 1838 were formerly said to have been ‘in the hands of the most wealthy and grasping sahukar here’, a man called Paran Mal. (NAI, For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838; see also: Tajalli Ali, Gulsar-i-Asafya, pp. 624-5.)

97 ‘He is extremely lavish in money things, particularly in supporting a host of useless retainers. As he has ever been disliked by the Musselmen gentlemen about the court, immense sums were formerly expended to maintain popularity...’ (NAI, For Pol, 11 April 1838, Cameron to Gol, Letter, 61, 15 March 1838)
the heart of the revenue farming system, some elements who had hitherto been integrated into the latter now began to be displaced. Amongst those who experienced severe dislocation were numerous bands of Hindustani, Sikh, Sindhi, Afghan, Rohilla, Pathan, Arab and other intermediaries: revenue farmers, military creditors and irregulars. Their numbers were augmented by the large scale disbandments of Maratha armies by the British after 1817. The latter came to Hyderabad looking for new opportunities, and were quite willing to lend money and muscle to zamindars and patels impoverished by the last season’s extortions and desperate to find cover against the pressures of the coming season. The dislocated military creditors wished for their capital and skills to be gainfully employed, and their troops looked for means with which to repay their debts to their jamadars and make ends meet. The employment of military creditors in the Hyderabad countryside was not in itself a new phenomenon, but the context in which it was resorted to in the 1830s gave it a new direction and import. Numerous bands of Arabs and Rohillas, for example, began to get involved with the naiks, and their quest for an alternative political order. The naiks only gained further ground with the additional support that came from groups of Arabs and Pathans displaced from a revenue farming system in crisis.

4.6.3 Intermediaries Join Protest

The fort and town of Badami in British territory across Hyderabad’s southwestern border were taken in 1841 by a body of troops under Narsing Rao, the zamindar of Deodrug, and Koharan, an Arab jamadar from Hyderabad. Investigations after the recapture of Badami by British troops revealed that the force of Narsing Rao and Koharan had been made up of parties of military creditor jamadars and irregulars, whose clientele had included Kartippah Naik and Somappa Naik of Gurgunta, Yenkappah Naik of Deodrug and other zamindars and naibs in Sholapur, Badami, Shorapur and other districts. In some cases, Narsing Rao and Koheran’s force had served for only a few days before moving on. Several of the jamadars taken at Badami were executed and most of the remaining were imprisoned along with their men on the charge of assisting anti-British activity among zamindars.

Their anti-British activity consisted of supporting the recently deposed step brother of the ruler of Satara, Pratap Singh, against the British backed ruler, through the former’s partisans among the jagirdars of southern Maharashtra. The jagirdars had rejected the British backed Raja and were supported by several zamindars of neighbouring Hyderabad, who, too, wished to see the end of a British regime. The zamindars of Deodrug and Gurgunta were prominent among Hyderabad’s rebel zamindars, and it was the former that

98 See discussion above within this chapter and in Chapter Three above.
99 See discussion below within this chapter.
 Koheran and his troops had served in Badami.\textsuperscript{101}

Another ‘conspiracy’ was detected, this time in Berar, not long after Badami. It was located around the claims to the Nagpur gaddi of a man who styled himself as the deposed raja of Nagpur, Appa Saheb. Appa Saheb attracted the support of deshmukhs, deshpandes and patels in many Berar districts, - among them Mahur, Karinja, Manikegadh, Woon and Wardha, - and of Shujat Ali Khan and Nursing Rao, respectively the taluqdar and peshkar of Mahur and Woon. After British troops had forced him to fly from Hyderabad, Appa Saheb’s military establishment, - his chief appeal in Berar was for soldiers, - was discovered to have consisted mostly of bodies of Arab, Sikh and Rohilla soldiers. It seems the deshmukhs, deshpandes, patels and contractors who supported him supplied Appa Saheb with the services of their military creditors, partly in the hope of repaying the latter’s loans. Certainly some captured jamadars made such claims in their defence.\textsuperscript{102}

Yet another ‘conspiracy’ in Berar, that of Mukat Rao in 1841-42, bore a resemblance to Appa Saheb’s endeavours, and one source suggests that the two names belonged to the same person. Mukat Rao had been active in Berar at least since 1839. His initial campaigns had suffered from a severe lack of funds. But he found increasing support among zamindars and patels in Mahur, Adilabad, Akote, Jalgaon and several other Berar districts. They gave him support, according to officials, partly on account of their ‘disaffection to the existing Government’ and partly because of ‘the frequent changes of taluqkars’ and ‘the ruin of the country and...want of confidence’. But there was still another reason why they supported Mukat Rao: ‘there are numerous jamadars of Mohammadans and Rajpoots who when they cannot get employment under Government seek for it under any pretext’. Military creditors, in other words, were employed by zamindars and patels who wished to keep Hyderabad’s revenue farmers and creditors at bay. The irregulars who served the military creditors were ‘unemployed soldiers who took even two pice each to subsist on, in the hopes of receiving eventually either pay or plunder’. The zamindars and patels offered the services of their military creditors and irregulars to Mukat Rao in the hope of being able to raise funds to pay them. Sometimes the debtors pushed their creditors into Mukat Rao’s camp and sometimes the creditors pulled zamindars and patels in their train. Some weighty jamadars ‘offered to join him [Mukat Rao] with three hundred men, engaging...to place some of the thanas in this quarter in his possession’, for example.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{101} See references cited in the last footnote and NAI, For Pol, 27 July 1842, 172-4. For an account of the Southern Maratha Jagirdars, see: IOLR, Mack Gen, Memorandum on the Southern Maratha Rajas, Sardars and Jagirdars, 1802/3; Munro Collection, Ms Eur F 151/126, Memorandum on Kittoor, c.1818.
\textsuperscript{103} See references cited in the last footnote and NAI, For Pol, 17 Jan 1842, 45-7.
The Pathan jamadar Yusuf Khan claimed, when tried for rebellion, that he had been pushed into Mukat Rao's camp by his purely mercenary association with the Burroda jagir:104

'I lent to Gopeeka Bai 2,200 Rupees...She wished me to take Burroda in pawn but I declined. But I engaged that if employment were given to some of my unemployed men and a mutsaddi, I would arrange matters...When Raja Ram took the jageer in pawn he...gave me a sowcar's draft that the original sum and the pay...should be paid in one month'.105

Raja Ram was unable to keep his terms, according to Yusuf Khan, but saw some prospect of clearing his principal, interest and pay arrears by lending the services of the Pathan and his troops to Mukat Rao for a price. Raja Ram, however, claimed that the jamadar and his men had obtained a stranglehold over Burroda jagir and the real reason behind their support for Mukat Rao lay elsewhere. They had hoped, like other 'mercenaries' operating in the region, to get to 'the wealth of the rich towns of Berar', and the possession of the strategic forts of Gawilgarh and Namala.106

Similar controversy surrounded an incident that occurred in Marched, to the southwest of Hyderabad, in the same year, 1842. A band of Arabs shut themselves up in the Marched fort after an attack on Joolahidigi, a village farmed out by Hyderabad to the raja of Shorapur. The residency had been wont to represent any defiance of revenue farmers by 'mercenaries' as a conspiracy against Hyderabad and the British since the incident at Badami in 1841. The jamadar of the Arabs, Siddi Yaqut, was now asked to surrender and when he refused, was forced out of the fort by British troops. Siddi Yaqut pleaded not guilty to the charge of rebellion, arguing that he had only desired the repayment of a loan of Rs 13,000 he had advanced to the zamindar of Marched. Raghunath Rao's vikil, Shambhunath, had invited him to plunder the villages of the raja of Shorapur against his will. Siddi Yaqut's explanation was rejected and he was executed along with another Arab jamadar, as well as Shambhunath. Nine other Arabs were sentenced to seven years' rigorous imprisonment.107

The British commanding officer in Ellichpur wrote a threatening letter on another occasion to the naib of Amravati, Radha Kishan, for evading orders for the dismissal of 15 Rohilla mercenaries from the services of his jamadar, Sheikh Nunneh. Radha Kishen pleaded that Sheikh Nunneh was unable to dismiss them as he owed them Rs. 1300. He had borrowed the money from the Rohilla party to pay his troops, as the centre and the

104 He had gone to Burroda in 1838/39 after being relieved as the naib of Kowtal in the Raichur Doab. The assignment for Kowtal had been resumed by the diwan in Hyderabad under pressure from the British resident. (NAI, HRR, Letters, Dec 1841-Jan 1842)
105 NAI, HRR, 801, Letters, Dec 1841-Jan 1842
106 Ibid.
taluqdar had not made any salary disbursements for several months. The Rohillas were encouraged to recover their loan and their pay directly from villages. A Kunbi of Urgaon complained that they had seized his grain and put his brother in irons. Yet, these devices did not help Sheikh Nunneh clear his debt. He protested that the taluqdar, Jaswant Ram, still owed him Rs. 14,886 and it would be impossible for him to meet his financial obligations and dismiss the Rohillas until that sum was paid up. The Rohillas had earlier served with the deshmukhni of Amravati. They were on their way to Bhopal after the termination of service, when the needy Nunneh had enlisted them. The naib of the deshmukhni of Amravati, Omar Daraz, had still other Rohillas in his service. They too were accused of serious misdeeds, including an attack on a village called Mandla where, ‘...they committed great excesses, plundering the place and ravishing the wife of the deshmukh, Kowraji’.108

When the naib of Malkapur was warned for not dismissing Rohilla troops from his taluq, he pleaded that it was not he but the muqaddam of Barkheda who employed them. His own troops were finding it difficult to dislodge the muqaddam’s men from his ghadi. When the muqaddam’s jamadar, Shah Khan, became aware that the commanding officer at Ellichpur was demanding his removal, he pleaded that the muqaddam owed him Rs. 500 and interest on the sum. The sum included the balance on a loan he had made to the muqaddam, and arrears of pay. The muqaddam had recently been taken prisoner by the naib of Malkapur, however, for attacking a village to alleviate his financial distress: ‘...although I have done all I could to make him pay the Rohillas, he has not a cowrie to do it with. Moreover, he has not werewithall to feed himself’.109

The deshmukh of Karinja in Berar, Jaggu Meah, employed a band of about 300 Rohillas and Arabs to defend himself from the extortions of the revenue farmer Narsing Rao, or to pass on the revenue farmer’s demands to the villages. His military creditors plundered three villages on one occasion and also carried away the muqaddam of Bhuree with them. On another occasion, the Arabs sender Jafar Sultan surrounded the katchahari of the revenue farmer and made naib their prisoner, while the Rohillas rounded up patels and patwaris in the villages of Dharva. Another Rohilla band served with the revenue farmer of Balapur. When the British commanding officer of Berar ordered them to leave, they pleaded that they were owed eight months’ pay. The revenue farmer admitted the truth of their claim, but attempted to shift the responsibility of payment onto the deshmukh of Khemgarn, Rambaji. The deshmukh absconded from his village complaining that this was an attempt on the revenue farmer’s part to win the sympathy of the commanding officer. When various Rohilla parties operating in Malkapur, Amravati and Karinja were finally expelled by British troops in 1847, not all their claims of outstanding

109 Ibid..
loans and arrears of pay had been met:

‘Many of the Rohillas have scarcely rags to cover them, [and] I have issued them pieces of coarse cloth and cumbles, as I did to ...[a]...former party’.110

The involvement of Arab and Pathan irregulars in the protest gave the British a much needed lever against them. If they could be identified with rebel zamindars, they could be expelled from Hyderabad without being paid their dues. Thus the forcible removal from c.1836 onwards of Arabs and Pathans from Hyderabad was in part a financial problem solving exercise.111 The use of cheap expulsions was fraught with dangers, however. It could lead to the collapse of credit and to increased creditor warfare. More commonly, the resident found opportunities of charging bands of Arabs and Pathans with supporting conspiracies hatched by rebellious zamindars and demanding an end to their stake in revenue farming. These opportunities were also used for not compensating them fully for their arrears or debts. It they protested at this, force was threatened.112

Severe measures against them by the centre diminished the numbers of Arabs and Pathans and also depleted their finances. But these measures still could not suppress their involvement with the protests of the naiks, which continued into the 1850s and 1860s. Expelled groups sometimes returned from neighbouring territories, and sometimes altogether new ones also came from here. For example, a ‘heavy influx’ of Rohillas was reported into Western Berar in January 1851. Their total number in the region was estimated at between 2000 and 3000 at this point. 1500 of them were reported to be serving the jagirdar of Ellichpur, Ghulam Husain Khan, to help him resist the demands of the centre. The elusiveness of the Rohillas was put down to their practice of retiring beyond the Hyderabad border for temporary periods after a raid upon learning that British troops were on their way to oppose them.113

Ramoo Naik roamed the country between Dhulia and Karinja, and Nagpur and Poona in 1852. His force of more than 200 men comprised ‘well armed men, chiefly landless and desperate Rajpoots, who in all probability have been ruined by the wolves who grind and devour the unhappy ryots’. Whilst the revenue farmer of Ellichpur, Mir Adil, applied for the support of British troops against Ramoo Naik, the revenue farmer of Amravati, Mir Mohd. Husain, gave him asylum, receiving and marketing his plunder and preventing

110 Ibid.


113 NAI, HRR, 87, Resident’s Letters, Jan 1851.
his discovery and arrest. Mir Mohd. Husain was earlier reported to have connived at Ramoo Naik’s escape from Amravati fort, where he had been imprisoned on the only occasion that Hyderabad had managed to apprehend him.¹¹⁴

British troops were fired upon in their rear from the ramparts of Aurangabad by a party of Arabs in September 1853. They were leaving that station to conduct operations against the neighbouring raja of Dewalgaon, where another encounter took place. Enquiries revealed that all the Arabs, excepting three, had belonged to a military creditor party serving the raja in question. The three who did not serve him, - Sabit Chaush, Shaikh Omar and Omar, - were their associates, however, and served with the zamindar of Jaswantpura in similar capacity.¹¹⁵ Rohillas were reported to be entering Berar in the service of Mukat Rao throughout the period December 1852 to mid-1853. Mukat Rao had been active in Berar once before in the cause of restoring the ex-Raja of Nagpur, Appa Saheb. Detachments of British troops were sent out on several occasions to counter this movement. Major operations were conducted against the combined forces of Rohillas, intermediaries and naiks in Nanded and Kaulass in November-December 1854, and in Indur-Bodhan in November 1855-January 1856.¹¹⁶

4.6.4 The Mujahiddin Movement

Protest based on the rebel communal domains of the naiks incorporated displaced revenue farmers, military creditors and their ‘irregular’ troops into its organization and aims throughout the period c.1820-56. The alternative political order that the rebels envisaged re-created some elements of the pre-colonial small kingdom on a larger scale. Their aims were symbolized in the call for the restoration of such figures as the Rajas of Satara or Nagpur, the Peshwa, or the Mughal emperor. Another type of protest also grew in Hyderabad alongside the rebel communal domains: the Mujahiddin movement.¹¹⁷ The naiks’ rebel communal domains were able to establish some links with the political of the Mujahiddin leadership. Concerned with purifying and unifying Islam, the Mujahiddin inevitably debated the nature of their links with other religious communities. The concern here, however, is neither with the internal debates of the Mujahiddin on their links with other religions, nor with the extent to which they succeeded in reforming Islam. It is simply to explore the political protest that the Mujahiddin tried to organize against the British and their collaborators in Hyderabad in the late 1830s.

¹¹⁴ NAI, HRR, 794.
¹¹⁵ NAI, HRR, 648, Resident to Gol, Letter, Sept 1853; 91, Resident’s Letters, March-May, 1854; For Pol, 2 Dec 1853, 292-335; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 191-3. An incorporating legend of resistance grew out of the Aurangabad affair. It was commissioned originally by the Raja of Dewalgaon, and justified his military encounter with the British in terms of the injury and dislocation he and the Arabs had suffered at the hands of their regime. (OLR, Ms. Hindi D 1, Bhikari’s ballad-poem on the Aurangabad encounter, 1853, fol. 414-17).
¹¹⁶ NAI, For Pol, 17 Feb 1854, 54-7; 5 Jan 1855, 94-110; 23 May 1856, 69-72.
¹¹⁷ This paragraph and the remainder of this sub-section on the Mujahiddin movement are based on: NAI, HRR, 380; 385; 386; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 125-80; Regani, Nizam-British Relations.
If one element in the Mujahiddin leadership came from within the all-India Mujahiddin ulama, the other element came from among local Muslim elites. Centralization and monopolistic military fiscalism, in the context of agricultural depression and poor seasons, and then a collapsing revenue farming system, had led to the resumption of the military and revenue assignments of many Muslim intermediaries in Hyderabad, and had also ravaged the core domains of Muslim nawabs. It was from among these two groups that the political (or non-clerical) leadership of the Hyderabad Mujahiddin emerged. To this extent, the Mujahiddin movement in Hyderabad was sympathetic to the concerns of the naiks. Like the latter, the Mujahiddin aspired to create an alternative political order, which was symbolized by their call for the restoration of the Mughal emperor, as well as other pre-colonial kings whom the British had weakened or displaced. The leading political figures among the Hyderabad Mujahiddin, as identified in the ‘Wahabi Trials’ of 1838-39, were Mubarak ud Daula, the Nizam’s brother, Ghulam Rasool Khan, the Nawab of Kunool; Abbas Ali Khan, the Jagirdar of Annammasamudram; Rahmatullah Khan, the kotwal of Husain Sagar and several others. Some of the principal political figures elsewhere in India with whom they communicated were the Nawabs of Rampur, Tonk and Bhopal; the Rajas of Jodhpur, Satara and Punjab; the Gaikwad of Baroda; princes in Madras and Bundelkhand, and the Shah of Iran. It appears from the evidence gathered by the commission set up to investigate and try Mujahiddin prisoners in Hyderabad that one of the Mujahiddin’s objectives was to mobilize the forces of various Indian rulers enable them to launch a simultaneous onslaught against the British on several fronts, the effort so timed as to co-incide with the invasion of India by the Shah of Iran. It was envisaged that once the British power had been removed thus, various old order figures would be restored, and would in turn rehabilitate the local and supra-local elites whom the British had marginalized or displaced.118

The efforts of Mubarak ud Daula and his associates drew upon the support of dislocated or threatened nawabs, intermediaries, revenue farmers, military creditors and irregulars. They also showed a capacity for assimilating to their ideological fabric the

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118 The correspondence, and the brother, of the jagirdar of Udaigiri in Telangana revealed that he had feared the British would prevent his son’s succession to the jagir, and believed that the Mujahiddin’s success would ensure the continuance of the jagir. For, according to the Mujahiddin plan, which the jagirdar had actively supported, rebel troops would have attacked and captured Nellore and Hyderabad simultaneously, the two main centres of British power nearest Udaigiri. Abbas Ali Khan had agreed to let the Mujahiddin use Udaigiri fort as a military base, and had helped them build up stocks of grain, fodder, arms and ammunition. His efforts were paralleled by those of the Nawab of Kunool, who was also convicted by the British for supporting the ‘Wahabi Conspiracy’. Investigations after the capture of Kunool by British troops in 1839 revealed that most of the Rohilla garrison there had been recruited by the Mujahiddin and had arrived there only recently. These men had earlier been military creditors and irregular troops, and had been disbanded because their employers had suffered financially as a result of the centre’s policies. They sympathized with the Mujahiddin’s efforts, which gave hope and employment.

A Rohilla sardar, Shah Wali Khan, who died defending Kunool fort, had daringly written to Mubarak ud Daula upon hearing that the latter had been arrested and imprisoned in Hyderabad: ‘...300 Rohillas, his personal followers, are with your slave...A mansabdar came to this place [Kunool] and...acquainted...that your slave should come quickly with whatever Rohillas may be in readiness to the number of one or two thousand...If the orders of my lord are now issued, your slave will bring with him followers and attend on you...’ (NAI, HRR, 385, pp. 13-25, 131-50, 393-425; 386, pp. 181-5, 278; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 132-54, 158-80.).
concerns of the naiks, who were interested in achieving an alternative political order as well through the restoration of such figures as the Rajas of Satara and Nagpur, the Peshwa of Poona, and the Mughal emperor.\(^{119}\) Nevertheless, Mujahiddin inspiration also came from the Mujahiddin ulama. If there was a willingness to analyse local political realities and suggest alternatives, there was also a heavy pan-Islamic content in the aims of the Hyderabad Mujahiddin.

Mujahiddin propaganda made a direct connection between the dominance of the foreigner, the loss of power and status, and the experience of religious and moral crisis, for example. The head of the Mujahiddin in 1838/39, Maulvi Nasiruddin, was based in Sindh, from where he presided over an all-India network of pirs and khalifa-s, or leaders, and their murid-s, or followers and disciples. The khalifas were ranked according to the exemplary nature of their spiritual, moral and religious conduct. The most prominent among them were Maulvi Mushiruddin of Sindh and Maulvi Syed Mohammed Ali of Calcutta. Whilst the maulvi-s Nasiruddin, Mushiruddin and Syed Mohammed Ali may together be regarded as the central authority figures of the all-India Mujahiddin, regional khalifas were responsible for directing their followers in their particular areas. The chief pir in Hyderabad was Maulvi Salim. He and Maulvi Vilayat Ali had originally been sent there by the celebrated Syed Ahmed Barelwi himself. Maulvi Salim’s principal murid, and patron, was Mubariz ud Daula, the Nizam’s brother, in the madrasa of whose kotla he had his headquarters. Maulvi Salim had a direct influence not only on Mubariz ud Daula, but on several other leading political figures among the Hyderabad Mujahiddin as well, among them Husain Ali Khan, the kotwal of Hyderabad, Shams ul Umra and the sons of the leading nobles Munir ul Mulk and Ghazi Miyan. Maulvi Salim’s close circle also consisted of a number of spiritual associates and followers, such as the maulvis Abdul Haji, Faqir Saheb, Ahmad Saheb, Pir Mohammad, Abbas, Mir Qasim, Qazi Yusuf, Syed Abbas, Mohammad Asif, Elahi Baksh, Abd ur Razzaq, Faizullah, Imam Khan, Shaikh Abdullah, Mohammad Abdullah and Shujauddin.

The Hyderabad group operated as a regional command and sought to organise sub-regional centres of Mujahiddin activity in the qasbas and towns of the Deccan as well as in places further south, such as Madras. They also maintained contact with the all-India headquarters, Sindh, and with other regional Mujahiddin centres, such as Peshawar, Lahore, Delhi, Banda, Gwalior and Calcutta. The principal sub-regional centres that the Hyderabad group established were, Nellore, Ongole, Udaigiri, Kurnool and Sholapur. In Udaigiri, the jagirdar was won over by Maulvi Ahmed Saheb. In Nellore, Mujahiddin maulvis directed their efforts at the Muslim population in general, and in particular of

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\(^{119}\) A Sikh was arrested disguised as a faqir in Nellore in November 1838 for spreading anti-British propaganda. He revealed that he had been sent south by the Raja of Jodhpur, who wished to see all Indian rulers unite against the British. He claimed that several princes he had met were in favour of the plan, among them Mubariz ud Daula. Several letters, documents and other papers discovered on his person lent credence to the Sikh’s claims. (H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 134-6; NAI, HRR, 386, pp. 77-135).
Muslim troops in British service. One of the members of the sub-regional group in Nellore was Mohammad Ali. He had attended Maulvi Salim’s madrasa in Hyderabad from 1836 to 1838 and had then decided to interrupt his studies in favour of a more active role. He went to Sindh with two dozen other Mujahiddin in 1838 and there found his inspiration growing stronger. He communicated this back to Nellore in his correspondence, before returning there himself. One of the principal members of the Ongole group was Maulvi Ansur Khan, the elder brother of one of the closest spiritual companions of Maulvi Salim, Maulvi Abdul Haji. The latter kept up a regular correspondence with him, sending him material to read and advertise in his mosque. One of the important items they sent him was a poem called the Jihadnama, which was given wide currency by Mujahiddin activists wherever they went. On another occasion they wrote to him that Mubariz ud Daula was preparing a jihad and that whoever supported him would receive a high salary. When the correspondence was publicized in Ongole, some youths enrolled in Mubariz ud Daula’s service in Hyderabad. Qazi Yusuf, a member of the Hyderabad group took credit for organising the Mujahiddin in Sholapur. He made his chief murid in Sholapur, Pangool Husain, the local khalifa and in time the two were able to win over several locally influential Muslims, such as Munshi Aminullah, a teacher in the British cavalry lines, Mohammed Husain, a qazi also in the lines, Mohammad Husain, the custodian of a mosque, the mufti of the Sholapur adalat and Qazi Yusuf’s host in Sholapur, Ameen Khan Chauduri. The qazi also took up subscriptions on behalf of the Mujahiddin in Sholapur on at least two occasions, and announced happy results on both. He was also able to attract volunteer activists each time.

Mubariz ud Daula’s effort had extensive potential rather than the immediate strength for creating an alternative order, when the centre discovered and suppressed it. The Mujahiddin had not yet overcome doctrinal resistance from influential sections of the Deccani ulama, for example, despite the vigorous efforts of their pir-murid type networks. Maulvi Salim contrasted the situation in the Deccan with that in Bengal,

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120 He wrote to his cousin, Abdun Nabi, in Nellore from Sindh: ‘It is contrary to the Faith to assist these infidels [the British and the Sikhs] in their wars... I therefore abandoned my studies and I and Lal Khan have collected together twenty five persons and are going to the leader of the Musalmans [Maulvi Nasiruddin]’. (NAI, HRR, 380, pp. 473-8)

121 Mohammad Ali’s letter to his cousin in Nellore was clearly intended to be more than a mere personal communication. It contained an account of the Mujahiddin movement, which it exhorted all Muslims to join. To reinforce the latter message, he sent another letter from his spiritual companion at the time, who was probably his pir as well and a man clearly of some celebrity, Maulvi Haji. The latter too voiced a strong plea on behalf of the Mujahiddin. These letters were read publicly in the local mosque, and the imam who read them commended Mohammad Ali’s example and the Mujahiddin cause to everyone who came to pray. The Hyderabad group was quick to sense sympathy in Nellore and followed up Mohammad Ali’s distant first effort with concerted activity on the ground. Within a year’s time, almost every mosque and bazaar in Nellore buzzed with Mujahiddin propaganda. (NAI, HRR, 380, pp. 473-8; 385, pp. 155-61; 386, pp. 25-31; H.S.C., Freedom Struggle, I, 134-42, 161.)

122 He was able to get together an impressive collection of money, arms and horses. (NAI, HRR, 380, pp. 411-56)

123 Maulvi Salim wrote to one of his associates in Sindh, Maulvi Nurul Khuda, sometime in 1838 that he experienced a great deal of doctrinal resistance in Hyderabad and the neighbouring territories. (NAI, HRR, 386, PP. 136-50)
Hindustan and the Northwest, where he felt, the Mujahiddin, had found more fertile
ground. Maulvi Halim of Bombay gave detail to Maulvi Salim’s picture by describing
Mujahiddin maulvis in the south as ‘persecuted fugitives’. Maulvi Syed Mohammad Ali
of Calcutta, one of the two all-India khilifas, and holder of the distinguished title of ‘Rais
ul Muslimeen’, supported this view. He could speak from the personal experience of
hostile receptions, for him as well as his associates, in Madras and Hyderabad.124 Indeed,
so persecuted did the Hyderabad group feel that at one stage they even contemplated
retiring from there altogether and going to Sindh. The Mujahiddin had neither overcome
Muslim resistance entirely nor made more than initial contact with the naiks when they
were suppressed.

4.6.5 The Mutiny

The resistance led by Bhil naiks in the 1820s was the first move towards an alternative
political order by dislocated local and supra-local elements in Hyderabad. Mubariz ud
Daula’s efforts of 1838-39 drew upon Mujahiddin propaganda and ideology, while also
making contact with the naiks. The distinguishing feature of the 1857-59 Mutiny in
Hyderabad was a firmer link between Mujahiddin-type propaganda and naik organization,
more than ever before. There were three main phases in the 1857-59 protests. The first,
June 1857, was marked by Mujahiddin-type efforts. The second, c. November 1857 - mid-
1858, saw heightened naik activity. The third, January-February 1859, witnessed a
combination of Mujahiddin-type efforts and naik activity. The main centres of protest in
June 1857 were Hyderabad itself, where the residency was attacked, and various military
stations, where British troops mutinied.125 Mujahiddin-type activists played a role in the
attack on the residency and in the mutinies. The mutiny of the 7th Madras Cavalry in
Bowanpalli was typical of the Mujahiddin-type efforts. Activists spread their propaganda
through cantonment mosques and bazar-s, and used meetings, khutba-s and hand-written
circulars as their main media. The economic, social and political dislocation that so many
groups had suffered under the British were represented as things that could be overcome.
Soldiers and civilians were exhorted to conduct ‘Jihad against the infidel’ and to restore
the authority of the Mughal badshah of Delhi. Examples of courageous conduct and
success from Hindustan were offered as inspiration to the people of the Deccan, and as
evidence of what was possible. Those who collaborated with the enemy were taunted and
mocked. In a proclamation accompanying one khutba, the Nizam, Asaf ud Daula, was

124 One of his associates described the experiences angrily thus: ‘Certain of the heretic hypocrites, under the
influence of envy and jealousy...by slanderous accusations excited some of the Faithful so that disturbance and
riot was created. The respected Maulana [Syed Mohammad Ali]...retired from the persecution and returned to
Calcutta... The flame that was raised at Madras by degrees extended to Hyderabad and burst into full blaze and
excited many, both high and low, of our opponents, who spread rumors without end throughout the city - but by
the aid of the All Powerfull we suffered nothing.’ (NAI, HRR, 386, PP. 136-50; see also: HRR, 320; 380; IOLK,
Hindustani Vernacular Tracts, 105, Rawaj al-Islam, (Madras, 1848) (Dakkani).


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urged to 'wear bangles and sit at home' if he could not support a cause that God and His Prophet themselves espoused. A maulvi who preached loyalty to the British, Sharfu Mian, was invited to 'become a Chirstain and go to Hell'. Pacifist pirs were treated with impatience. Abuse was accompanied with threats. Afzal ud Daula and Salar Jang, his diwan, were warned to expect ignominy once the rebels had won. Others who worked against the rebels were also threatened with divine retribution: on the Hindu, there would be the 'oath of the cow', and on the Muslim, the 'oath of the swine'. Maulvis who refused to give fatwa-s in the name of the Emperor of Delhi and to propagate jihad were told they would find themselves and their families 'cursed and repudiated for seven generations'. The 7th Madras Cavalry in Bowanpalli and the 1st Hyderabad Contingent Cavalry in Aurangabad were receptive to such propaganda and mutinied. In Hyderabad, the residency was attacked by a crowd of between 1200 and 2000 men, and was led by a displaced Pathan irregular, Turra Baz Khan.

November 1857 saw the heightening of naik activity in Berar, Marathwada and Rayalseema. For example, Bheem Rao, Madan Gowda, Desai Saheb and a fourth unnammed man were identified by the centre as the principal naiks in Rayalseema and southern Marathwada. Bheem Rao had captured the forts of Kopal and Raichur and had to be dislodged by British troops. There was also support for restoring the Peshwa. Arab and Pathan groups were seen joining their strength with naiks by early 1859. An Arab-Rohilla party spearheading an attack on British troops in Dharaseo received widespread local support, including that of a pirzada, the sajjda nashin of Jwala. Another party attacking Nelinga also received extensive local support. About 140 Rohillas were killed in two separate encounters with British troops at Risood and Chilkamba in Berar. The most important rebel action outside Berar and Marathwada was an attack by a Rohilla force from Rayalseema on Dupad taluq in the British district of Kumool in Madras. It occurred in January 1859 and received the support of several zamindars, patels and holy men of Rayalseema, as well as of the two leading Arab military creditors in Hyderabad, Omar bin Awad and Abdulla bin Ali.

A plot against the Nizam, his minister and the resident was uncovered in Hyderabad in March-April 1862. Its leader was suspected to be a Maratha Brahman with several

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126 The Nizam's 'title will be cursed', went one warning, and the diwan's 'rank and pedigree will be repudiated'. Both men, furthermore, 'will have to work on the roads'. (NAI, HRMC, 68/1854-57, Letters, June 1857)


128 NAI, For Pol, 6 Aug 1858, 132-9; 8 April 1859, 378-9; Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, III, 216-19; see also: NAI, For Pol, 4 June 1858, 32-6.

129 One of the proclamations issued in the Peshwa's name, under the seal of 'Raja Pant Pradhan' announced the imminent arrival of his force and contained an exhortation for local co-operation and support. (NAI, HRMC, 73/1858-59).

130 NAI, For Pol, 4 March 1859, 513; 6 May 1859, 15-19; HRR, 102, pp. 44-9; 98, pp. 128-33, 148-51; see also NAI, For Pol, 4 June 1858, 32-6; 14 Jan 1859, 120-38 and For. Sept 1864, 81-2, Genl-A on the circulation of symbolic arrows and chapati-s in Berar, and possibly Marathwada.
aliases\textsuperscript{131} who had escaped from Ujjain in 1857, with ten followers, when his rebel force of 5000 had been besieged by a larger British force. The Brahman was thought to have spent some time in Baroda, Poona and Sholapur, and it was from the latter place that he and his associates were now believed to have arrived in Hyderabad, in March 1861, disguised as mendicants. The plotters hoped to recruit a rebel force from among unemployed Arab, Rohilla and other irregular troops in Hyderabad and, when the party was large enough, to depose the Nizam, assassinate his minister, attack the British residency and cantonment, and, finally, proclaim Nana Saheb as the Peshwa and ruler of Hyderabad. News of their activities got out, however, and the authorities launched an investigation into the matter. The leader fled, but thirty nine of his associates were arrested, tried and convicted. The resident believed that still more men could be charged. He suspected several sahukars, policemen, pujaris and at least one sajda nashin of having connived with ‘Rao Saheb’. The latter and his followers could not have lived publicy for as long as they did, according to the resident, without some degree of local knowledge and connivance.\textsuperscript{132} Salar Jang, the diwan, and the kotwal of Hyderabad, however, argued that the mere fact that the plotters had lived in certain localities could not be used as sufficient evidence against the men whom the resident suspected. The accused might indeed, argue that they had never suspected Rao Saheb and his companions of being anything other than mendicants precisely because they had lived so openly. Though the resident could not counter to Salar Jang’s arguments, he wrote to Calcutta on several occasions that Hyderabad’s populace were generally hostile to the British.\textsuperscript{133}

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has suggested broadly two types of response to centralization and monopolistic military fiscalism in the context of agricultural depression, poor seasons and a collapsing revenue farming system: collaboration and protest. Only a minority of Hyderabad’s intermediaries and zamindars appear to have collaborated with the centre’s policies in the period c.1805-59, as the evidence of a declining economy and widespread political protest suggest. A declining economy could not have accommodated them all and the protest would not have been necessary if they had all been accommodated. Nevertheless, what collaboration did occur gave the centre’s policies teeth. Not only were Hyderabad’s core areas invaded and ravaged, but new types and levels of social tension and hostility were also introduced into some of them. One may seek the long term origins of 20th century ‘communal’ and ‘landlord-peasant’ conflicts in these processes to some extent. One may also seek in them at least one kind of catalyst for the consolidation of

\textsuperscript{131} The three most common ones were thought to be ‘Raghunath Rao’, ‘Rao Saheb’ and ‘Ram Rao’.

\textsuperscript{132} The localities in question were Begum Bazar, Karwan, Lakshman Bagh, Seeta Ram Bagh and Husain Shah Wall’s dargah.

\textsuperscript{133} NAI, HRR, 106, pp. 26-30, 47-122, 149-63, 247-8.
'caste' or 'religious' identities as a basis for social conflict, instead of the more inclusive and flexible 'communities' of the pre-colonial period. The second and quite different type of response to the British regime was political and socio-cultural protest. It was initially limited to some some areas and particular groups. But it began to embrace a much broader base as distress migrants and naiks began to create rebel communal domains, and to aim at replacing the present regime with an alternative political order. The rebel domains received further support from the 1830s, as new groups of revenue farmers, military creditors and 'irregular' troops began to be squeezed out of a collapsing revenue farming system. They were also able to establish links with the Mujahiddin movement. If the latter was primarily concerned with reforming Islam, it was also concerned with replacing the regime of the foreigner with an indigenous order, given the strong political element in its leadership in Hyderabad. The 'Mutiny' of 1857-59 represented the coming together of the propaganda and mobilization of the naiks, and Mujahiddin type elements, and, of course, discontented British troops.

**EPILOUGE**

However, the protest movements of c.1810-59 failed to dislodge the British regime and create an alternative political order. The British regime was still in a 'pre-pacification' stage in Hyderabad in the middle of the 19th century, whereas it had achieved pacification in Bengal and some other parts of India up to half a century earlier. Monopolistic military fiscalism had also become counter-productive. The centre fell deeper into debt as core areas were destroyed. Hyderabad threatened to cease to become a source of profit to the British empire. The boom in cotton, grain and other cash crops in the mid-nineteenth century, and in the wake of the civil war in America later, helped provide a bridge between a collapse of revenue farming and the growth of a new kind of economic policy in Hyderabad, however. Organizing Hyderabad as a producer of food grains and raw materials and a consumer of British manufactures also meant changes in its administration. The changes that occurred in the 1850s and 1860s gave the basic framework to the familiar 'Princely State'.

4.8 Perspective

The fortunes of 18th century Nizams turned on an interplay of local, supra-local and regional factors over which they themselves had little control. Local conflicts between zamindars and nawabs allowed supra-local intermediaries to maintain footholds in the countryside and to invest their military skills and capital profitably. But if the intermediaries exploited local rivalries, the internal divisions among them were exacerbated by their taking sides with mutually hostile zamindars or nawabs. The divisions were only reinforced by the rivalries of the foreign powers to whom the
intermediaries attached themselves. The Nizam was usually a creature of one or another of the intermediary factions and, through it, of one or another of the foreign powers.

When the British emerged supreme from their contests in south India, their resident found himself in the driving seat in Hyderabad. But the profitability of the new acquisition depended on how successfully he could develop a powerful and stable central administration in Hyderabad. The mainspring of centralization in the period c.1798-1850 was a heavy military superiority over intermediaries and zamindars. An unprecedented degree of centralization was achieved under British hegemony. But the centre’s political and financial expectations were still not fulfilled at the end of the period. Intermediaries and zamindars in many areas had resisted its policies.

This had been the result mainly of the emergence of a monopolistic brand of military fiscalism. Although the British had found some collaborators among the intermediaries, bankers and zamindars for their military fiscal policies, they had also alienated large numbers of them, as their policies were destructive in the context of depression poor seasons. Later, when the revenue farming system had begun to collapse, the centre’s financial and political problems had intensified. The British had held fast in the face of such setbacks, but Hyderabad threatened to become an unprofitable territory.

The period c.1850-65, however, witnessed some fundamental transformations taking place, which gave fresh direction and impetus to British interest in Hyderabad. Revenue farming was abandoned. It clearly did not serve British interests any more. On the one hand, it destroyed the core areas of Hyderabad’s economy to such an extent that military fiscalism was no longer viable. On the other hand, it led to such widespread protest and, from the British-dominated centre’s point of view, disorder that it was not even a handy tool for aligning Hyderabad with the emerging colonial policy of developing India as a supplier of food grains and raw materials, and an importer of manufactured goods. If the state could develop a bureaucratic framework for administering land, law and order, and economic policy, instead, Hyderabad might yet be developed as a supplier of primary goods and a consumer of British manufactures. The disaffected financiers and bankers of revenue farming would, at the same time, find new room for investment. Such change would succeed in fuelling an expansion in agriculture, and widespread rural protest would give way to a new agrarian-economic order and stable political economy.

4.9. Recovery from Depression

Guha points to a severe agricultural depression in the Western Deccan in the period c.1821-46. There were some stray years of high prices in between, but these were due to extensive crop failures. Recovery did not come about until the 1850s. The extension of agricultural between c.1850-70 was as much as 67%. Population also increased by about 59% in the same period. The years 1861-73 were the years of the ‘American civil war
boom'. The impressionistic evidence for Hyderabad also suggests that recovery here did not come about until the 1850s. The 1850s marked a turning point in the policy of military fiscalism and political protest as well. The centre gave up the revenue farming system and turned its attention to introducing administrative changes that would be compatible with organizing Hyderabad as an exporter of raw materials, food grains and cash crops, and an importer of British manufactures. At the same time, political protest dampened. 'Boom' bankers and merchants turned away from naiks and military creditors and collaborated with the centre's policies, this time not to extend military fiscalism but to develop Hyderabad as an export-import economy. The impact of the 1857-59 protests was not, in fact, as widespread in Hyderabad as it was in other parts of India, or, indeed, even as widespread as the earlier protests within Hyderabad itself, especially in the period c.1819-45. Merchants and bankers sided with the British regime during the 'Mutiny', especially in Berar, which had earlier been a key area of protest.

The origins of the cotton boom went back to the late 1830s and 1840s. According to Guha, while this was a period when the all-India trade surplus was falling, that of the Bombay region showed an opposite trend, with rising exports and bullion imports. Although Malwa opium was the most important factor here, cotton too played a part. One element in the cotton export was Berar cotton. In a 'good year' in the 1840s, Berar accounted for c.15% of the cotton exported from Bombay's ports. But the real boom can be dated only from the 1850s. Even when that happened, though it is worth bearing in mind a caution that Guha recommends: the 'boom' had its weaknesses. Land use was reaching its limits, the cattle population was declining, and rural indebtedness was increasing. The main beneficiaries of the 'boom' were the larger proprietor landlords, merchants, bankers and the state. For labour, the boom led to no increase in real wages and, in the context of an increasing population, even led to an increase in bonded labour. For small farmers and tenants, it meant severe and lasting indebtedness. The telling and tragic culmination of these various trends and factors was seen in the devastating famine of 1876-78.

Major dislocations were caused within the process of banker backed revenue farming in the 1840s and 1850s, as rival lobbies of creditors competed with each other to settle

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137 Guha, 'The Agrarian Economy'.
138 See, for example: Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, II, 201, 697-729; III, 157-84; IV, 372-3; VIII, 1-30; Fraser, Our Faithful Ally, pp. 351-76; M. Taylor, 'Sketch of the Topography of East and West Berar, in reference to the Production of Cotton', JRAS, 20(1863), pp. 1-21; NAI, For Pol, 15 May 1857, 36-48; 14 Nov 1856, 47-92; HRMC, 82/1864-70, Resident to Gol, 10 Dec 1867.
139 The firms of Pe斯顿ji, Hari Das Kishen Das and Surat Ram Govind Ram were examples of this process. (Leonard, 'Banking Firms in Hyderabad Politics').
140 See, for example: NAI, For Sec, 23 Oct 1857.
their claims with a financially distressed centre.

Groups of Arab and Pathan financiers came worst off from these tussles. Alienated by the British domination of the centre, many of them began to serve zamindars involved in political protest, and became as such the targets of the centre’s reprisals. Other financiers continued to deal with the centre, however, and tried to organize their own lobbies to counter the resident’s influence. Residents complained about such lobbies throughout the 1840s and early 1850s, especially when they saw that the diwan or the daftardars of the revenue department making concessions to them.\(^{142}\)

But some developments in Hyderabad’s political economy from the late 1840s began to provide means for the resident and the sahukars to begin to see eye to eye again. While the sahukars were pressurized not to lend to revenue farmers, or to acquire stakes in revenue assignments, they were encouraged to make advances to landlords and cultivators growing export oriented crops, and to invest in the import of British manufactures. Hyderabad, in other words, was beginning to be organised as a primary producer for British industry and a potential market for British goods.\(^{143}\) The British tried to assimilate Hyderabadi cotton, grain and opium farmers; traders and bankers, and administrative elite all in to this process.\(^{144}\) One of the main priorities of the centre was to reform the administration to serve such needs. It is against this background that the celebrated mid-century ‘reforms’ of Salar Jang, and Hyderabad’s subsequent investments in cash crops, railways and mining, can be best appreciated as efforts in a new direction; which would eventually make Hyderabad the familiar ‘princely state’ within Britain’s Indian Empire.

The resident had been able to persuade the centre to employ salaried taluqdars, called zilladar-s, instead of the older revenue farmers in some areas by the late 1840s. Later, he worked to effect a reform in the customs administration, so that it would favour the growth of an export-import trade through Bombay.\(^{145}\) Yet other factors also drew Hyderabad’s sahukars and merchants towards financing cash crops, and a trade in Hyderabad’s primary produce and Britain’s manufactures. The traditional demand for local goods and services in Hyderabad’s zamindari capitals and among its intermediaries had decreased with the decline of the zamindars and the intermediaries.\(^{146}\) Merchants and capital were now re-directed towards a trade in British long cloth, and Hyderabadi cotton,

\(^{142}\) See discussion above within this chapter and in Chapter Three above; also: Leonard, ‘Banking Firms in Politics’.

\(^{143}\) See discussion above within this chapter and in Chapter Three above; also: Mahdi Ali, Hyderabadi Affairs, I, 882-93; NAI, HRR, 394, Survey Reports of the Daulatabad, Warangal and Nalgonda Circars, 1848.

\(^{144}\) See discussion within this chapter below.

\(^{145}\) NAI, For Pol, 12 June 1847, 97; 25 Nov 1848, 41-8; HRMC, 68/1854-57, Resident to GoI, Letter, 21 Sept 1854; 81/1862-64.

\(^{146}\) See discussion above within this chapter and in Chapters Three and One above.
opium and grain.\textsuperscript{147}

\textbf{4.10 The Direction of Change}

\textbf{4.10.1 Cotton}

We do not know of the early history of export oriented cotton cultivation in Berar, except that its origins lay somewhere in the late 1830s and 1840s.\textsuperscript{148} What we do know is that Berar was acquired under false pretences in Dalhousie’s time in order to organize and expand such production.\textsuperscript{149} The British interest in Berar's cotton cultivation was so considerable by the mid-1850s that they now demanded Hyderabad co-operate with them in an attempt to open up the Godavari for navigation, which, if achieved, could enable the cheaper transportation of cotton to Britain. A navigable Godavari was also expected to help supply cheap timber for ship building in the Madras presidency. The chief engineer of Madras' Godavari Division, who led the navigation experiment on the river, was convinced 'that the cheap carriage of [Berar] cotton to Manchester is at the present time the greatest of commercial desiderata'. He was enthusiastic about the potential of the Godavari navigation project. Berar was capable of producing 200\% more cotton than what it exported to Britain in 1854:\textsuperscript{150} ‘It may be said with safety that Manchester’s independence of America depends upon our activity here...’\textsuperscript{151} The British government in Madras and the resident in Hyderabad represented to Calcutta in 1859 that developing the Godavari for transport and trade would benefit from the acquisition from Hyderabad of a 210-mile long and 12-mile broad stretch of land along the river’s, and its tributary, the Pranhita’s, northern banks. Calcutta authorized the resident to make a formal proposal to this effect in 1860.\textsuperscript{152} While ceding the northern banks of the rivers Hyderabad also appointed special officers on the southern banks to administer the areas adjacent to the navigation project’s work sites. The goods that workmen at these sites received were

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] The main trading centres of the Daulatabad region (such as Aurangabad), for example, had traditionally been known for an inter district and export trade in their famed cloth manufactures, besides dry grains, fruit and cattle. But cloth, fruit and cattle had declined as articles of export by 1848, and grain now occupied the prominent position in this respect. It was sent mainly to Bombay for export abroad. The principal imports into the Daulatabad region, on the other hand, now included cotton cloth, besides the traditional salt, and iron and copper vessels. In another region, Warangal, also formerly noted for its cloth and carpet manufactures, a surveyor noticed in the 1840s that most of the local cloth was now produced only for home consumption. British long cloth had replaced the local cloth in the bazaars. It would not be long, the surveyor speculated, before the local sari-s were also replaced by Manchester ones: 'Indian manufactures are doomed'. (NAI, HRR, 394, Survey Report of the Daulatabad, Warangal and Nalgonda Circars, 1848.).


\item[149] Hyderabad ceded Berar under duress. It was facing bankruptcy at the time, and some of its intermediaries and bankers were beginning to join the ranks of zamindar led political protest. It felt it could not refuse the British demand without inviting dire consequences. (Regani, \textit{Nizam-British Relations}, pp. 259-300; also: discussion within this chapter above).

\item[150] A rough estimate in Sept. 1854 suggested that the trade of Berar employed a capital of Rs 20 Lakhs annually and that about 75\% of this was devoted to cotton. The latter element was expected to witness a ‘vast increase’ in the near future.


\item[152] In exchange, the Nizam was offered back Dharaseo and some other districts which he earlier been required to cede to the British. (NAI, HRMC, 77/1860; Taylor, 'Production of Cotton').
\end{footnotes}
exempted from import duties, furthermore, and Hyderabad also agreed to survey for feeder roads from its interior to the work sites.\textsuperscript{153} 

A Hyderabad Exhibition was organised by the residency in 1856 to ‘inaugurate, as it were, a revival of the industries of the country’. The main message of the exhibition’s organizers to the government and merchants of Hyderabad was to develop the country as a raw material producing zone:

‘A country possessing great capabilities and resources, its mountains of iron ore [are] neglected, its fertile valleys uncultivated, its roads unrep pair ed...its encouragements few, its discouragements many...’\textsuperscript{154}

The organizers offered a coast to coast blue print for the attainment of this objective.\textsuperscript{155} Hyderabad’s attention to projects connected with Berar’s cotton trade fitted in with the blue print.

4.1.62 Opium

So, too, did its efforts to organise and develop an opium trade. Hyderabad had not been reckoned as a serious opium producer when India’s opium production and exports had first begun to be organised as a British monopoly. But it was obvious by 1853 that Hyderabad’s opium was also finding its way into ships from Bombay bound for China. Since the smuggling deprived the British of duties, efforts were made to gauge the extent of the opium produced in Hyderabad. Though the investigations led to no definitive quantitative estimates, ‘much’ opium was said to be grown in Berar and Marathwada. The chief investigator, Taylor, recommended that it would be best to recognize and develop Hyderabad’s opium production and trade officially. Ineffective bans would only result in revenue losses through smuggling. The quality of Hyderabad’s opium could also be controlled to suit the requirements of the China market. Official notifications inviting traders to tender for opium contracts were out in Taylor’s districts in Marathwada by July 1854. The terms of these contracts were similar to those offered in Malwa and Gujrat; a duty of Rs 400 was levied on every chest weighing 140 lbs. Marwari and Gujrati traders were soon involved in the opium trade and made advances to cultivators at the beginning of the agricultural season. Taylor’s experiment in Marathwada was extended to opium producing districts in Berar by 1868. The duties charged on Berar opium were 16-20% higher than those on Malwa or Gujrat opium, however. All the opium produced in

\textsuperscript{153} The principal lines were Warangal to Mungapet, a distance of thirty five miles, and Yelgundel to Mahadeopet, a distance of fifty seven miles. (NAI, HRMC, 78/1860-61).

\textsuperscript{154} NAI, For Pol, 15 May 1857, 36-48; See also: Report of the Akola Exhibition, 1868 (NAI, For, March 68, 34-36, Genl.-A).

\textsuperscript{155} It envisaged in a short time new roads from Berar to Bombay and from the Raichur Doab to the West coast, and a navigable route down the Godavari. These developments were welcomed as providing land locked Hyderabad with an opportunity to export its potentially valuable raw materials. The blue print also exhorted Hyderabad’s administration to make life and property secure; to maintain peace, and law and order; to encourage irrigation and agriculture; to repair old roads; and to spread education. (NAI, For Pol, 15 May 1857, 36-48.).

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Hyderabad was allowed access to the China market through Bombay by the mid-1870s. But it had to be weighed and packed under the residency’s supervision, and covered by passes issued by it, first.\textsuperscript{156}

4.13 Customs and Tariffs
The British felt that Hyderabad’s import-export trade through Bombay would also benefit from custom and tariff reforms. The first measure that the residency effected in this connection in mid-century was the abolition of internal transit duties on British goods and traders. The abolition had in fact been agreed to as long ago as 1802, but had never been implemented effectively. It was still not easy to implement in the 1850s. Duties charged by taluqdars and zamindars as part of their customary rights could not be eliminated without revamping the whole of the customs administration itself.

A start was made where it was easiest to implement. Some \textit{sarf-i-khas} lands, or personal estates of the Nizam, were locked within the Berar districts that Hyderabad had ceded to the British in 1853. When the authorities here abolished internal transit duties, replacing them with a single consolidated tariff collected at frontier posts, they abolished them in the \textit{sarf-i-khas} lands as well.\textsuperscript{157}

Another tract where frequent and arbitrary transit duties were felt to inhibit an increase in the import-export trade was the 210-mile stretch on the northern banks of the Godavari and the Pranhita which the British had acquired from Hyderabad in connection with the Godavari navigation project. Madras engineers engaged in exploring the tract complained of influential taluqdar and zamindars exacting heavy duties from river traffic. Their combined duties raised the prices of goods by at least 35%, it was alleged, in contrast to the 3 to 5% duties charged by the Madras government. Such duties had already killed off most of the small traffic on the river, in salt, fish, tobacco, cotton cloth, thread and coconuts. Timber traffic, the only substantial one that remained, - it could not abandon the river except at a very high cost, - was also threatened now. This situation was attributed to rivalries between various zamindars and taluqdar of the river front. For example, ongoing warfare was reported between the zamindar of Bhadrachalam and the taluqdar of Raipur. When the taluqdar had carried away 2000 heads of cattle from the zamindar’s territory recently, the latter had retaliated by burning several Raipur villages. He had also responded similarly to a ‘sword and fire’ raid by the Cherla raja, joining forces with a friendly naib taluqdar and burning every Cherla village along a ten mile stretch of the river front. Local warfare of this nature put financial strain on the zamindars and taluqdars involved and they turned to the river traffic passing through their districts for compensation: agriculture of course was limited in this wooded and hilly country, and

\textsuperscript{156} NAI, For Pol, 29 July 1853, 46; 11 Aug 1854, 42-55; For, Feb 1879, 4-7, Rev B; May 1868, 29-33, Rev A.

\textsuperscript{157} NAI, HRMC, 68/1854-57, Resident to Gol, Letter, 21 Sept 1854.

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contributed only a small proportion to its revenues.

The British subjected the northern banks to their own administrators. Simultaneously, the resident pressed Salar Jang to reorganize Hyderabad’s customs administration on the southern banks. A mansabdar was appointed to collect a single consolidated duty from river traffic at a single point on the Madras frontier. He was also expected to prevent taluqdar and zamindars on the river front from levying local transit duties. He was assisted by several specially appointed officers to meet the transport, labour, and provision requirements of Madras’ Godavari navigation project at various points along the river.¹⁵⁸

Customs reforms were also introduced by Hyderabad’s diwan to cover the export trade in food grains and raw materials, such as oil seeds and cotton, from the early 1860s. This, once again, was under pressure from the resident. The Bombay government had been protest against Hyderabad’s internal transit duties and the delays that Bombay’s traders and goods experienced, and in particular, launched a vigorous campaign against a ban on the export of grain that Hyderabad introduced in September 1862. Salar Jang defended the ban on the ground that Hyderabad was experiencing a severe grain scarcity at the time. The resident initially informed Bombay that he accepted Salar Jang’s reasoning. But Bombay remained adamant, demanding that the logic of prices should remain the sole criterion for determining the flows of trade. It reiterated its call for the withdrawal of the ban, as well as for the removal of arbitrary impositions by Hyderabad’s taluqdar and zamindars on internal transit. The resident now forced Hyderabad to lift its ban partially. Salar Jang was also instructed to launch an enquiry with a view to abolishing internal transit duties and establishing a single consolidated tariff at frontier posts instead.¹⁵⁹

The diwan spoke of clamping down on grain exports once again in 1863. Hyderabad was facing widespread rain failure for the second successive year and the possibility of grain riots. Grain traders found Bombay’s export prices more lucrative, nevertheless, and threatened to advise the farmers to whom they had made cash advances to abandon grain cultivation in favour of commodities on which there was no export ban, such as cotton and oil seeds. The Bombay government also protested furiously at the news of Salar Jang’s renewed embargo. Calcutta once again directed the resident to advise Salar Jang to lift the ban on grain exports completely. Salar Jang felt he had no choice but to acquiesce. He decided to increase his revenue demands on agricultural produce indirectly, however, as he saw no other short term method for making up the revenues lost by the abolition of internal transit duties. He instituted a new 5% *ad valorem* duty on agricultural produce, which was to be collected at source. The resident was not pleased, - he represented the *ad valorem* duty as a transit duty in disguise, - and had the duty


¹⁵⁹ NAI, HRMC, 81/1862-64, Letters, April-Dec 1862; see also: HRR, 820, pp. 219-21; 655, pp. 62-71.
withdrawn. At the same time, he warned Salar Jang that the latter would do well to remember that Hyderabad, like the rest of India, had no future except as an exporter of food grains and raw materials to Britain:

'Situated as His Highness' Dominions are in the middle of the British Dominions, he must either keep peace with the freedom of trade enjoyed in the British Provinces, or see his country continue to deteriorate'.

The resident condemned even low or nominal duties on grain as not being designed 'to remove the very strong feeling among all the influential classes against the permission to export grain'; and Hyderabad had 'little else to export'.

4.4 Communications

Another important item on the food grains and raw materials agenda, besides customs reorganization, was communications. Hyderabad was included in the Government of India's railway development plan in 1861. It was asked to invest in railway lines from Bombay to Madras passing through its districts. The Bombay government pressed Calcutta for the cession of land by Hyderabad along a proposed railway route between Bombay and Cuddapah via Sholapur, Gulbarga, Hyderabad and Kurnool. It also wanted magisterial powers within the railway fences, as well as duty free passage for goods in transit. The route via Hyderabad had been chosen in preference to another one, which was originally proposed, and also went from Bombay to Cuddapah, but through Mudgal and Bellary instead of Gulbarga and Hyderabad. One of the main reasons for the choice of the latter route had been the desire to consolidate a trade link with Hyderabad. The resident had felt that it would be useful to tap the trading potential of one of the largest cities and cantonments of India.

His rough estimates suggested that the total value of imports into the twin cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad was c. Rs 14 million annually. Imports from British territories, mainly Bombay, accounted for c. Rs 32 Lakh, or 32% of this trade. The Nizam's court, which received and spent 'a large part of the revenues of the country', was expected to add to the purchasing power of a civilian population of 0.41 million, besides a 'large' military population. The Hyderabad countryside was also expected to hold great potential. As for exports, although these were 'trifling' from the city of Hyderabad itself, 'from the country they are very considerable, consisting of cotton, sugar, oilseeds etc., and when the crops are good grain'. Gulbarga, through which the proposed railway would pass, had a population of c. 20,000 and was 'a place of considerable trade'. It sent grain to Hyderabad, and cotton, linseed, pepper, sugar, oil, ghee and a few

161 NAI, HRMC, 82/1864-70, Letter, Dec 1864.
162 Ibid.
other items of agricultural and dairy produce to Bombay via Sholapur. Tandur, a trading centre on the Hyderabad-Sholapur sector of the proposed railway, was similar to Gulbarga in character, though it had a smaller population, c.8000. There were several other trading centres, with up to 600 houses each, on the route. Only the Hyderabad-Kurnool sector of the proposed route could be said to be ‘by no means so populous or cultivated as the other portion’.

The Nizam’s State Railway was established as a state owned company in 1872. The resident exercised final powers in it on behalf of the Government of India. The actual construction of the railway line was delegated to Bombay’s Great Indian Peninsular Railway. As the initial surveys were completed and blue prints for the lines formulated, the Government of India advised the resident to urge upon Hyderabad that its budgetary allocations for expenditure in areas touched by the proposed railway ‘cannot be better applied than by the formation of railway feeders’. Hyderabad’s first feeder road, between Sadashivpet and Nanapur, was completed in Jan. 1874, ‘at [such] a heavy cost’, though, that the resident himself was reluctant to press for more expenditure on feeders soon afterwards: ‘[A]t present the provision of funds for the construction of the main line of the Railway is pressing so heavily on the State...’ Salar Jang raised an ‘expensive’ loan on the London stock exchange to finance the Hyderabad railway in 1875. When he needed to raise another loan in 1877, he looked for cheaper means. By his own admission, the Hyderabad railway had been constructed at an unnecessarily high cost, and with no real commercial benefit to Hyderabad itself. He wished to forestall any further criticism of his handling of the railway’s finances, which were being openly construed as being deliberately favourable to British, rather than Hyderabadi or Indian, interests. The controversies that began to surround the Hyderabad government’s measures to develop the state as a supplier of primary goods and importer of manufactures within the nexus of Britain’s Empire in the 1870s would continue well into the next century.

4.4.5 Trends

Meanwhile, mid-century Hyderabad continued to be organized as a primary producer. The opportunities for indigenous merchants and bankers in this process seem to have helped diffuse the tensions and conflicts of revenue farming in the 1840s. Some Hyderabadi traders and bankers were already beginning to concentrate on an export oriented bulk trade in grain by the late 1840s. By the 1850s and 1860s, their involvement with cotton, opium, linseed and other export trades was also considerable. During the period 1857-59, when political protest was pervasive in several parts of India, the resident

163 NAI, HRMC, 81/1862-64, Letters, May 1862-June 1864; For, Feb 1865, 16-18, Genl A; Nov 69, 33, Genl A.
164 See references cited in the last footnote and also: NAI, HRPB, F.10/1873; For, June 1872, 18-20, Genl A; For Pol, Nov 1873, 7-8, Genl A; Jan 1874, 6-8, Genl A; For, Sept 1876, 7-13, Genl A; Dec 1876, 9-11, Genl A; Feb 1878, 18-21, Genl A; Sept 1878, 1-10, Genl A.
observed that the merchant classes of the Deccan had generally supported the British. When Delhi fell to British forces in Oct. 1857, for example, sahukars Ramraj and Ratanchand of Aurangabad, ‘members of one of the most wealthy firms in the Deccan’, gave an entertainment to the officers of the Deccan Field Force, which was stationed in Aurangabad at the time.\textsuperscript{165} Successive residents also spoke of heavy investments in the cotton and grain ‘revolution’ of Berar by merchants and bankers from Hyderabad, Bombay and elsewhere throughout the 1860s and 1870s. They also cited heavy pressure from the same elements behind the Government of Bombay’s advocacy of customs and tariff reforms in Hyderabad, and its campaign against embargoes on grain exports. Bankers also invested in railway and mining projects, as well as in an import trade in British manufactures, in subsequent decades.

4.11. Salar Jang’s Reforms

Hyderabad’s administrators, traders and bankers gave its political economy a new direction in co-operation with the resident from the mid-19th century. Investments in the production and trade of commodities like cotton, grain and opium; the reorganization of tariff policies and the customs administration; and the launching of a road and railway development programme formed the economic dimension of this process. Its political dimension consisted chiefly of a new approach to the administration of land revenue and law and order.

4.11.1 The Legacies of the Assigned Districts

The residency had developed certain attitudes as to how to make the administration in these areas compatible with the aim of organizing them as exporters of primary produce and importers of British manufactures in the course of administering the territories that Hyderabad had ceded to the British in 1853. The same attitudes were regarded as being relevant to the advice that the resident could give to Hyderabad in the context of the changes that were being demanded there in the mid-19th century. Since the resident’s influence was quite great in practice, it seems worthwhile to dwell briefly on the British experience of administering the ceded districts of Berar and the Raichur Doab, which were together referred to as the Assigned Districts.

One of the top priorities in the administration of the Assigned Districts was land revenue. Not only was it the chief source of the government’s income, but greater commercial investment in agriculture was also seen as a necessary part of developing the country as an exporter of food grains and raw materials. It was felt from the start that direct dealings with individual ‘peasant proprietors’ were preferable to village settlements, or reliance on zamindars or revenue farming, for revenue collection. At the heart of this

\textsuperscript{165} NAI, For Sec, 23 Oct 1857, 294.
notion lay a conviction that private property in land could be authenticated with reference to ancient Hindu tradition; and that it was possible to implement this in practice. Conversely, there was a feeling that the rights, privileges, and shares that zamindars, jagirdars, and all manner of other intermediaries had acquired in land and revenue were dubious, and ought to be reduced or done away with altogether.\(^{166}\) The Assigned Districts administration began to claim some success in its land revenue policy within three years of its inception.\(^{167}\) By the fourth and fifth years, it had penetrated into the functions and powers of village level patels and patwaris. Patwaris were no longer allowed to collect money and were restricted to keeping accounts. The traditional rights of the patels to a share in the revenues were severely curtailed. The heads of *khel*-s were identified as the proprietors of land.\(^{168}\)

Patels and patwaris were deemed to be the heads of *khels*, or village communities. They were expected to help with the assessment of lands and the collection of rents.\(^{169}\) But although the patels and patwaris were identified as leaders of *khels*, many of their traditional privileges were reduced or done away with altogether, in order to obtain higher revenues and to exert more control than before. The former settlements of zamindars and revenue farmers with the patels and patwaris were felt to have left the latter officials with too much power in distributing the burden of rents within villages. They could exploit some cultivators and indulge others. The new administration aimed at assessing each *khel* directly, however, and reducing the traditional powers of patels and patwaris. The latter were also now appointed on fixed salaries paid by the revenue department. Each individual rent assesse was charged 6.25\% of his produce on this account. The patels' and patwaris' traditional levies on villages, - whether to renumerate themselves, or to support village artisans, shrines or festivals, - were abolished.\(^{170}\)

By 1857, even the remaining functions and powers of patwaris had come under attack. Their traditional training in survey methods was deemed unsuitable for the 'professional' and cost effective surveys that were now needed. Many patwaris were consequently laid off or pensioned off, and the salaries of others were reduced. Traditional allowances to deshmukhs and deshpandes also began to come under attack. The Assigned Districts

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\(^{167}\) The resident in Hyderabad wrote to the governor-general in April 1856 that, although the administration of the Assigned Districts was in transition and information on land revenue and tenures was still incomplete, 1,40,789 proprietors were already paying their revenues directly to Government. (NAI, HRR, 506, pp. 256-61).

\(^{168}\) NAI, For Pol, 14 Nov 1856, 47-92.

\(^{169}\) The proprietor was taken to be identical with the head of a 'khel', or 'proprietary sub-division' of the land attached to a village. The principal 'khel' holder, or proprietor, was taken to be the village patel. Khels were thought to have been the original basis of landed lineages and kinship groups: the heads of all the khels in any particular area were also the heads of the branches of a single regionally dominant *divernant*, or, roughly, sub-caste or kinship group. (NAI, For, Feb 1868, 5-6, Polt A; HRR, 822, pp. 37-42; For Pol, 14 Nov 1856, 47-92.).

\(^{170}\) NAI, For Pol, 16 Dec 1853, 64-7; 14 Nov 1856, 47-92; 1 Oct 1858, 69-70; 31 Dec 1858, 427-8, 517, 529; 5 Aug 1859, 163; For, Feb 1868, 5-6, Polt A; HRR, 506, pp. 256-61; 820, pp. 32-4; 821; 822, pp. 37-42; 831, pp. 147-60; Taylor, 'Production of Cotton'.

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administration claimed that, whereas these various officials had siphoned off up to 51 per cent of the gross revenues in the past, they could now take no more than 16 per cent.\textsuperscript{171} Not surprisingly, heavy increases began to be reported in the revenues of the Assigned Districts from 1856.\textsuperscript{172}

If the administration viewed some of the traditional privileges of patels and patwaris with grave suspicion, it took an even less charitable view of zamindars, jagirdars and their privileges. The revenue department had assumed direct responsibility for assessing the khels and collecting revenues. It felt justified in abolishing the traditional benefits that zamindars and jagirdars had enjoyed, - such as fixed shares in the revenue collections and inam-s, - for the performance of the same functions. If they were allowed to retain any traditional privileges at all, it was for political, rather than administrative or economic, reasons. Even so, the burden of proof rested with the zamindars and jagirdars. Deshmukhs and deshpandes had to produce sanads or similar documents which proved that they had enjoyed their benefits continuously during the preceding thirty five to fifty years before their claims were considered. Many were unable to do this, - claiming that their rights had always been self-evident, - and were dispossessed. Those who could substantiate their claims were still not confirmed in all their traditional privileges, on the argument that they were no longer required to perform their traditional duties.

A distinction was made between the right to a share in the revenue and a right to a share in the land in the case of jagirdars and they, too, were required to produce evidence for the prolonged enjoyment of their privileges before their claims were considered. Many fell by the wayside under such severe scrutiny, and a great proportion of the rights and rent free lands of others were resumed. So severe were the regulations of the Assigned Districts administration devised in 1864 on zamindars and the jagirdars that, on the administration’s own reckoning in 1872, they ‘were too favourable to the interests of the revenue of the province and too hard on those whom they immediately affected’. It was decided therefore to make the latter some concessions now, though only ‘as a matter of grace...and not as a matter of right on their part’, to head off discontent and buy loyalty cheap. Zamindars and jagirdars were allowed small proportions of their former privileges as ‘pensions’. Their children, furthermore, were recommended for favours ‘through the educational and other channels’ so that they might aspire to ‘something like the good positions to which they and their ancestors attained - though often by very questionable means - under former orders of things’.\textsuperscript{173}

Retrenchments and reforms in the revenue administration were matched by similar changes in the other priority department of the Assigned Districts, the police and justice

\textsuperscript{171} NAI, For Pol, 31 Dec 1858, 3381.
\textsuperscript{172} NAI, For Pol, 14 Nov 1856, 47-92; 31 Dec 1858, 3381; 5 Aug 1859, 163.
\textsuperscript{173} NAI, For Pol, 31 Dec 1858, 427-8, 517, 529; For, Feb 1865, 190-2, Rev A; Feb 1868, 5-6, Poltl A; HRR, 822, pp. 37-42; 829, pp. 149-72.
department. Traditional practices were condemned here, too. The lands and privileges of old ‘law and order’ officers, like the shetsundi-s, naikwar-s, kavilkar-s and maqtawala-s, were seen as corrupt and dubious accretions to the power of zamindars in the time of a weak central government. Traditional personnel and privileges were now revamped and centralized in the police and justice department as in the revenue department. The shetsundis of Raichur Doab were in theory supposed to help their patwaris keep the law; to assist them in land revenue collections; to keep an eye on the bunds and tanks; and to work sluices. In practice, their loyalties often lay with zamindars, who rewarded them with service lands in return for help with their local wars. Naikwaris acted as heads of groups of shetsundis and, like the latter, enjoyed rent free hereditary service lands from zamindars. They were particularly influential in the Bhunnur district of the Raichur Doab. Village level watchmen under them were styled talari-s here instead of the usual shetsundis. Kavilkar-s, a category of extra-village police, were also influential in the same way as the naikwaris.174

The commissioners of the Assigned Districts reduced the numbers of the various categories of police. Those who were discharged lost their service lands as well. Those who were assimilated to the centralized police and justice department had their powers curbed and duties redefined. Their service lands were also reduced and brought under assessment. The lands, moreover, comprised only one part of their salary structure now. A cash wage and a local contribution in grain made up the rest of their salary. Such a system of remuneration was expected to keep the police loyal at once to the local community and the administration. The justice side of the law and order department was also reformed. Clear cut powers of trial in civil cases were vested in a magisterial hierarchy comprising the commissioner, deputy assistant commissioner, extra assistant commissioner, tahsildar and police patel, from top to bottom. A parallel hierarchy of courts was established to deal with the more serious civil cases and all but the pettiest of criminal cases.175

While the administration of the Assigned Districts was not entirely happy with its record on law and order, - which it attributed to poor budget allocations, 176 it did succeed in boosting up revenues177 and, except in the period c.1853-59, presiding over a period of relative political control and calm. Taking such factors together with achievements in tariff reforms, road and railway building projects, and agricultural expansion, the administration congratulated itself on preparing the districts for a ‘cotton

175 NAI, For Pol, 14 Nov 1856, 47-92; 31 Dec 1858, 331/3381; 5 Aug 1859, 163; For, Feb 1868, 5-6, Poli A.
176 NAI, For Pol, 30 Dec 1859, 182-3; For, April 1862, 17-18, Finl A; Aug 1864, 30-32, Genl A; Sept 1864, 1-4, Judcl A; HRR, 820, pp. 259-88, 340-59.
177 See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 14 Nov 1856, 47-92; 28 March 1856, 490-2; 5 Aug 1859, 163; 30 Dec 1859, 182-3; For, April 1862, 17-18, Finl A; Aug 1864, 30-2, Genl A; Feb 1868, 5-6, Poli A; HRR, 821, 1864-66; Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, II, 201; Fraser, Our Faithful Ally, pp. 351-76.
and grain revolution'.

4.11.2 The Lessons for Hyderabad

Even as the resident pressed Salar Jang to introduce tariff reforms and invest in roads and railways in Hyderabad, he also recommended comprehensive administrative reorganization. Hyderabad's recently formed fourteen zillas were parcelled into five regional circles. Each circle was headed by a sadar taluqdar. The zillas accounted for about three-quarters of Hyderabad's territory. The remaining consisted of the sarf i khas and paigah estates, which were managed separately. The privileges and functions of the deshmukhs, deshpandes, inamddars, jagirdars, patels and patwaris were investigated and reorganized in the zillas under the resident's supervision. The chief concern, - as in the Assigned Districts, - was to achieve greater control by the centre and higher revenues.

Changes were also introduced into the administration of law and order. The zilla taluqddars were vested with standardized legal and policing powers. They were supervised by a central court, which was established in Hyderabad. In the districts, they were assisted by superintendents. The principal targets of Hyderabad's reformed law and order agencies initially were groups of Arabs and Pathans who had fallen foul of the British dominated centre during the financial crises of the 1840s and 1850s, and had subsequently become involved in the political protest of naiks. The campaign against the Arabs and Pathans was indirect at first, appearing only as a reform with general applicability. The executive order of July 1868, for instance, restricted the carrying of weapons to government servants and warned 'unemployed persons and tradesmen' not to flout the order. However, the proclamation of Aug. 1872 was more direct. It withdrew from the Arabs the right to opt for trial by their own jamadars or panchayats, instead of the usual criminal courts, in cases of crime. It also extended the scope of criminal offences to cover, among other things, the use of force in transactions with debtors and the illegal acquisition of their property. The latter clauses were, as the resident observed in private, designed specially to curb the influence and activities of Arab and Pathan creditors.

Changes in the civil and criminal regulations were reinforced by a clearer definition of the duties and responsibilities of the entire administrative hierarchy. The old central departments were reconstituted as four new departments. These were presided over by a

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178 See, for example: NAI, For Pol, 16 Nov 1855, 68.
179 The five circle capitals were Aurangabad, Yelgunjel, Khammam, Bidar and Sholapur/Raichur. (NAI, HRMC, 82/1864-70, Resident to Gol, Letter, 10 Dec 1867).
181 NAI, HRMC, 82/1864-70, Resident to Gol, 10 Dec 1867; For, Sept 1868, 100-4, Poltt A; Dec 1879, 323-60, Secret; Jan 1873, 88-90, Poltt A; April 1876, 1-17, Poltt A; HRR, 825, pp. 267-5; APSA, Persian/Urdu Manuscripts, 111, Urdu Manuscript of the Taluqddari Administration in the Zilla of Aurangabad, Late 19th Century. See also: Grible, History of the Deccan, II, 245-69; Mahdi Ali, Hyderabad Affairs, III, 157-84; Bilgrami and Wilnott, Historical and Descriptive Sketches, II, 110-20.
central board with four members. Each departmental head was chosen by the resident and the diwan together. The opportunity provided by the need for appointing a regent to the minor Nizam upon the death of his father in 1869, was used further to tighten the central administration. A co-regency was established. Although it wielded sweeping powers, it drew ‘its authority entirely from the British Government’. [Emphasis original]. Salar Jang’s favourite nephew, Mukarram ud Daula, was groomed for higher office. Mukarram ud Daula was already the head of a central department and a member of the central board. Although it was Salar Jang’s co-regent, Shams ul Umra, and temporary replacement, Bashir ud Daula, who were nominally the men in charge, Mukarram ud Daula effectively handled the administration under the resident’s supervision when Salar Jang himself was away on a 15-week tour of Europe in 1876. As for the minor Nizam, he was being tutored meanwhile to grow up as a loyal ‘Prince’ of the British Empire.182

4.12. Conclusion

The changes that occurred in Hyderabad in the period c.1850-65 were to give it the framework that it retained until the final collapse of the Princely State in the middle of the 20th century. Two sorts of factors brought about these changes. The first was the ‘boom’ in agriculture, which despite its ‘weaknesses’ contributed to the collapse of political protest in the countryside, the abandonment of revenue farming, and the expansion of population and agriculture. The context for the creation of naiks and distress migrants was, as it were, removed. Military creditors were also marginalized, and the bankers of protest were transformed into the financiers of boom. Distress migrants and naiks were also re-absorbed into an expanding agriculture. ‘Pacification’ was achieved at last. The second sort of factor related to the way in which the boom was harnessed to changes in the priorities of imperial intervention and policy. Military fiscalism clearly took a back seat now. Developing Hyderabad as an import-export economy within the nexus of the imperial system became the top priority. This meant that political uncertainty and conflict in the countryside had to be put to an end. Boom conditions were used to advantage in this connection. As revenue farming was abandoned, some erstwhile taluqdaris were appointed to administrative and magisterial duties on fixed salaries. The central government was also restructured. The bankers behind revenue farming were provided with opportunities to invest in the production and trade of food grains and raw materials. The customs administration was reorganized to suit the new priorities. Railways, roads and communications were also developed to similar purpose. The administration of land revenue and law and order also received attention. Zamindars, jagirdars, patels and patwaris were appointed as the salaried functionaries of centralized government departments when they were not removed altogether or pensioned off. What

182 See references cited in the last footnote
remained of their traditional rights and privileges was scrutinized and resumed, or brought under revenue assessment. Hyderabad acquired the contours of the familiar princely state and was to retain that basic structure until the end of imperial rule in the mid-20th century.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has attempted to fill in a gap in the historiography of India in the transition from the pre-colonial to the colonial period. The Hyderabad region was chosen for two main reasons. It had long been regarded as an important frontier region between north and south India, for colonial and pre-colonial powers, but little research had been conducted into it in modern historiography. Even the preliminary forays of this enquiry suggested that the region defied characterization in terms of the two prevailing paradigms for the 18th century. It was not a 'successor state', on the one hand, and, on the other, it was not a region of political and social disorder, or economic decline, despite evidence of pervasive conflict. This thesis provides an alternative conception of transition for the region. Although its focus is on Hyderabad, it might also provide a starting point for the analysis of other areas which have in the past usually been consigned to the category of the conflictive, chaotic and declining.

The Hyderabad region could be divided into four sub-regions in the pre-colonial period: Telangana-Rayalseema, Andhra, Marathwada and Berar. They were distinguished principally by the differential dispersal within them of economically and ecologically favourable core areas. The differential embodied different levels of population and resources, and agricultural, manufacturing and trading activity. Hyderabad's core areas were ruled by small kings, who tried to project themselves as benevolent patrons and capable protectors. Kingship was also articulated with reference to the nature of the community that the king ruled. Legitimation rituals, consensus building devices and incorporating legends were all an integral part of this process. The manner in which they were used, however, precipitated rivalries between various small kings, which were reinforced by competition over scarce labour and resources. Such a situation led to the concentration of labour and resources in core areas of vibrant economic activity, and to a criss cross pattern of alliances and conflicts among the small kings. Such a pattern also reproduced scarcity in the economy and inhibited potential for further growth and development.

Hyderabad's fiscal potential attracted a number of foreign elements to the region in the 18th century. These included the Asaf Jahis, a variety of supra-local intermediaries, traders and bankers. The Asaf Jahis and the intermediaries soon built up what looked like a Mughal style state on the surface. But beneath the surface, the reality was still different: supra-local intermediaries were drawn into alliances and conflicts with local small kings and inter-regional foreign powers, who too were attracted to Hyderabad by its fiscal and strategic potential. The modus operandi of the supra-local intermediaries and the inter-regional foreign powers was military fiscalism: providing their clients with military
services in return for revenues or territories. The Marathas had thus succeeded in taking parts of Marathwada and Berar, and the French and the British in taking Andhra, by the end of the 18th century. The Nizams were ultimately pawns in the hands of dominant combinations of foreign powers and intermediaries.

The pre-colonial order began to be effected in significant ways with the emergence of the British as the only inter-regional power of any consequence by the end of the 18th century. Their most effective military fiscal competitors disappeared with the annihilation, or decline, of the Mysore Sultans, the French and the Marathas. They now proceeded to launch a programme of centralization. This process can be explained only partially with reference to the imperatives of the subsidiary alliance, the concern to pen the Marathas, or the need for suppressing frontier banditti. Its mainspring lay in the deliberate monopolization and intensification of military fiscalism. Military fiscalism under the British not only encroached upon the traditional independence, powers and privileges of the intermediaries and zamindars during the first half of the 19th century; in the context of agricultural depression and poor seasons, it also began to destroy the core areas of the Hyderabad countryside. Matters reached a crisis point when military fiscalism itself began to fall apart against the backdrop of rising central indebtedness, open creditor conflict and widespread political protest, by the 1830s and 40s. In these processes also lay the seeds of the latter-day ‘communalism’, ‘casteism’ and ‘landlord-peasant conflict’ of the Hyderabad region.

Protest took the form of marginalized or dispossessed local and supra-local groups, and discontented troops, led by naiks and the Mujahiddin attempting to restore figures like the Mughal Emperor and the Peshwa, and to create an alternative political order. The protest against British domination did not succeed, however. But nor did the fortunes of imperial military fiscalism look good by the mid-19th century. The way out was found by harnessing Hyderabad to industrial Britain’s imperial economy. Developing Hyderabad as an exporter of food grains and raw materials, and an importer of British manufactures was matched by parallel efforts at administrative reorganization. These processes together helped establish the basic framework of the Princely State.

There are one or two general sets of considerations which also arise from this thesis. There has been a tendency in Indian historiography to think of the ‘state’ as the basic framework for social co-operation, political stability and economic growth. Conversely, evidence of pervasive political conflict has been taken to indicate decline. The Hyderabad case, however, raises doubts about such notions. It seems wiser in cases such as these to give primacy to the interplay of forces of collaboration and conflict at various levels, rather than to think only of a state or its negation. Another tendency in the historiography has been to give overriding importance to the power of regional centres, as opposed to the power of small kings and neighbouring foreign powers. Here again the Hyderabad
case raises questions about the traditional wisdom. The criss cross pattern of alliances and conflicts between Hyderabad’s small kings crucially affected the fortunes of its supra-local intermediaries and centre. The latter were also affected by the inter-regional rivalries of foreign powers, which point raises another issue. European powers did not always penetrate into the interior of the Indian sub-continent as commercial, mercantile or trading powers, as is generally thought. They could also do so, like their Indian counterparts in the 18th century, the Marathas for example, as military fiscal powers.

Another kind of consideration that arises from the Hyderabad case relates to the conventional use of certain socio-political and socio-cultural categories in the historiography. The term ‘zamindar’, for example, lays a misplaced emphasis on bureaucratic functions and does not capture the full reality of the ‘small king’. On the other hand, terms like ‘jagirdar’, ‘mansabdar’ and ‘the nobility’ overstate the bureaucratic power, settled character and internal cohesiveness of ‘supra-local intermediaries’. Furthermore, the use of caste and religious terms as the basic categories of social or political identity and co-operation does not do justice to the importance of the ‘community’ in many situations. This thesis has tried to trace the changing character of the community over time, and also to reinterpret the changing relevance of caste and sect.

Finally, some older notions about the periodization of Indian history may stand in need of revision for at least some parts of the sub-continent. For Hyderabad, the period c.1600-1800 seems to display some common underlying pre-colonial themes, - a vibrant economy, and a criss cross pattern of alliances and conflicts at several levels, - and seems more suitable, therefore, than the Mughal dates 1526-1707. Thereafter, the period c.1800-50 may be regarded as a period of transition, rather than the conventional c.1707-57. The period from the middle of the 19th century to the middle of the 20th century corresponded with the time of the Princely State, and the high period of colonial rule. To describe this last period as ‘modern’ in comparison to the pre-transition period in anything other than a simple chronological sense is to overlook the dynamism of the pre-colonial order and the stagnation and decline of the colonial period.
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