

The Adorned Palace

Narrating Ceremony and Relatedness

A book about households would be incomplete without analyzing the cultures of relatedness that make them possible and how these cultures shape politics. Historians of gender across the precolonial world have long confronted and overcome the challenge of deciphering highly structured literary texts in which we find depictions of relatedness, thereby helping us reconstruct familial and gendered pasts.¹ The dynastic household, in different empires across the Islamic world, is one site where gender's constitutive role in imperial politics and empire building has been examined.² Most recently, scholars have paid attention to bodily practices and ethical norms with a focus on men's experiences of courtly etiquette.³ For the eighteenth century, scholars have addressed questions of gender and slavery by moving beyond heterosocial relations and unearthing how slaves and slave self-hoods constituted political power in South Asia.⁴

Drawing on these studies, this chapter examines how relatedness was portrayed in peninsular India's literary traditions in the period before 1700. In it we continue to explore ghar through cultural representations. It focuses on the making of both dynastic and aristocratic marriages and how rituals of consumption, ceremony, and gifting on these occasions were portrayed in different texts. We find the concept of ghar at the center of literary representations that memorialized relatedness. Poets and participants in kinship ceremonies evoked the notion of ghar, an idealized space that could be built on the foundation of marriage, patronage, or fosterage. From Persian chronicles to Dakkani narrative poems and illustrated manuscripts, regional literati conceived of ghar as both a site of volatility and contention that disrupted monarchical power and concomitantly, as a space of celebration, consumption, and hospitality as new household lineages anchored



FIGURE 3. Nusrati, *tarji* 'band (poem with a return-tie) for Muhammad 'Adil Shah and Khadija Sultana's wedding (ca. 1630s), calligraphy of 'Ali ibn Naqi al-Din al-Husayni Damghani, fol. 2. OR. 13533 British Library, London.

themselves to kingly authority. How were cultures of relatedness represented and what do they tell us about these two contrasting notions of ghar or the home—how it came to be, and who belonged in it—in the period of Mughal suzerainty in peninsular India? This chapter answers this question by putting uncanonized manuscript materials in multiple languages at center stage. It treats different genres in a polyvocal and intermedia archive as embodied objects that do more than just narrate what happened in the historical past. Rather, these sources are a window into myriad social relations between lineages, genders, and ethnicities that underlay ways of belonging and contesting political power in the Mughal frontier.

In doing so, the chapter emphasizes the book's methodological intervention of cutting across literary and nonliterary archives for writing about relatedness and kinship in precolonial South Asia.

The image of the grand wedding portrayed in music, painting, film, and literature throughout South Asia's past and present commemorates the making of households through marriage, or what in kinship studies is called affinity. From writing about these things in devotional poetry to depicting them in the epics, scholars of South Asian literary traditions have argued that every ritual and ceremony associated with this major life event reinforces social norms and hierarchies.⁵ Weddings are volatile moments when norms are reinforced and transgressed. A sense of drama lies at the heart of this occasion, no matter where its cultural location is. From a brother taking offense at a marriage proposal for his sister to an aunt being disappointed by a gift from the groom's mother, unsaid frictions reveal the difficulties of creating relatedness between unrelated individuals. Prose, poetry, and material culture from the early modern Deccan turned to the canvas of the grand wedding to celebrate affinity, or what Persianate literati called *khusūr-dāmādī kardan* (to contract affinity by marriage), and other major life stages such as kingly births, circumcisions, and accessions to the throne.

Although such kinship portraits have long been dismissed as mere embellishments, addendums, or distractions from political history, I argue that the patronage bonds between those depicted and those who produced the representations, along with the narrative conventions and polysemic festivity portraits, embody the shifting relationship between monarchical and nonmonarchical power in peninsular India. As I argued in the introduction, kingly power occupies center stage in South Asia's history, especially under the Timurid Mughals of northern India, the subcontinent's largest and longest precolonial dynastic line. This book tells a different story of the Mughals, from the eyes of those who lay beyond the imperial realm. To do so, it must first investigate the valence of kingly power in the south—a region that had long been characterized by decentralized forms of sovereignty—and what happened to these patterns when the Mughals intervened in the region militarily and culturally. How was the relationship between kingship and kinship represented in texts during the period of imperial occupation?

This chapter taps into two very different kinds of texts that both have distinct relationships to "history" and "history-writing." Persian prose chronicles, a genre that necessitated the projection of absolute order and kingly authority, reported on each event of a royal marriage, listing the attendees with their official ranks and visitors who had come from neighboring polities, such as the Mughals and Safavids. Compositions in Dakkani, too, affirm an idealized hierarchy of kingly authority under which different kinds of household chiefs and their kin operated. These works emphasize aristocratic and military households as participants in and patrons of ceremony, spending resources on everyday rituals on par with the monarch. Dakkani poets, although less concerned with listing the names and roles

of court members, were also invested in capturing a wedding's sensory and performative canvas, which I reconstruct in the chapter's third part. The latter texts may cultivate a relationship with "historical" events and had different degrees of engagement with figures, dates, and events. But they were part of a larger literary ecology and shaped by concepts, metaphors, and images that constituted poetic craftsmanship.

In terms of sources where kinship narratives can be found, the Deccan offers both old and new textual genres to explore: snapshots of kings as sons and grooms, queens as mothers, daughters, brides, and kingmakers; patrons and elite male household chiefs as in-laws and paternal uncles; and slaves as trusted friends appear intermittently in a mosaic of texts. The cast of characters that occupies center stage in this chapter do not appear in a linear narrative or in chronological archival documents. Persian chroniclers reported on the king's marriages with stock images and *topoi*, common to this genre across Islamic courts.⁶ Beyond Persian prose, narrative poems composed in Dakkani, the panregional literary idiom, contain ceremonial portraits that celebrated the making of affinal bonds. Likewise, when trying to make sense of regional politics, the Portuguese and the Dutch commented on marriages, accessions, and friendships that cut across different lineages.

Literary works depict ceremonies that created relationships between lineages by listing who participated and describing the quality of the gifts, the variety of foods prepared, and itemizing the amount of money spent. The king, often put at the center of these portraits, served as a foil in the narrative, offset against other political actors who partook in and patronized texts that depicted ceremony and ritual. Courtly observers celebrated these occasions partly to allay anxieties about a prospective proposal or assuage fears about political instability and the social standing of different households, aristocratic and dynastic. In this chapter, I examine fraught moments in idealized representations of ceremony in Persianate and European texts, focusing on the tumultuous decades of the 1630s and 1640s, when the Deccan sultanates accepted imperial suzerainty under the Mughals, partially acceding their sovereignty to their northern overlords. Shortly thereafter, a cluster of marriages took place in the Deccan kingdoms of Bijapur and Golkonda, when Sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah (r. 1627–56) came to power after a succession dispute.⁷ Mughal suzerainty created pressures on the Deccan sultans, allowing more autonomy for the households of aristocratic, military, and hereditary rural chiefs. The extension of Mughal power over the region affected how the Deccan sultans could rule—the rising autonomy of high-status households was one outcome of imperial intervention. In chapter 2, we saw, through everyday documentary practices, how the military bureaucracies of Mughal India and the Deccan sultanates intersected, with provincial households exercising more control over war resources such as soldiers, horses, and weapons. In this moment of overlapping imperial-regional sovereignties, then, independent households engaged in interstate marital relations, not below but almost at the same level as dynastic lines, occasions that thereafter became the subjects of literary and visual representation.

From early modern Europe to the Ottoman, Mughal, and Safavid Empires of the Islamic world, scholars have examined different kinds of rituals, what emotions they engender in participants, and how they shape kingly power.⁸ Literary images of ceremonies that created relatedness may be read, as Kaya Şahin argues for the circumcision ceremony in the sixteenth-century Ottoman context, not merely as a sign of a sultan's absolute authority but as competing narratives signaling an underlying fragility and negotiation of power with other elite participants.⁹ Public ceremonies took on new significance in the context of interimperial rivalries across the early modern world, and the Mughal-Deccan was no exception to this pattern. Ceremonies that created and celebrated kinship became a moment to flaunt and perform, observe and be observed, receive and be received by visitors, emissaries, and travelers from across the globe.¹⁰ Themes as universal as kingship and as natural as kinship were subjects of textual production at a moment when their very contours looked uncertain and contentious. Contemporary observers mapped social status and relationships of affect and obligation through detailed descriptions of courtly ceremony, consumption, and festivity. Chronicles, poems, and the illuminated manuscripts that commemorated relationships of birth (descent) and marriage (affinity) were also objects that embodied alternative forms of relatedness. For example, the bond between the patrons represented in the texts and the courtly literati and artists who produced them—ties between the observer and the observed—remain implicit in these materials.

The mere fact of documenting these events had a dual effect. That the Persian chronicle form recorded the king's marriages is not at all unsurprising. At the same time, other literary forms, such as the Dakkanī narrative poem, were deployed to memorialize the forging of affinal ties with independent aristocratic-military households, a fact that is noteworthy in and of itself. The words composed by poets about wedding rituals were then adorned by multiple calligraphers and paper-makers in luxury ateliers. And yet, twentieth-century scholars, replicating Orientalist interpretations of ceremonial description as either pompous or hyperbolic distractions from the political interpret such occasions as merely symptomatic of the sultan's absolute power or the old problem of court factionalism in peninsular Indian polities.¹¹ I argue, by contrast, that images of ceremonies commemorating ties between individuals from different social backgrounds unveil the elasticity of monarchical as opposed to nonmonarchical forms of power that marks the seventeenth century, not just in the Deccan but across the early modern world.¹² Examining different kinds of objects enables us to reconstruct a history of relatedness and affinity, at times ungoverned by kings and their consanguine households, a tendency that has defined Mughal studies.¹³ Alternate forms of relatedness in different textual genres reveal what Marshall Sahlins calls "mutuality of beings," not created by affinity (marriage) and descent (birth) but by the exchange of gifts, sharing food or commensality, friendship, adoption, patron-client, and teacher-discipleship.¹⁴

One aim of this chapter is to blur the line between dynastic and family histories, a construct that is as old as the subcontinent itself, a dichotomy handed down by

colonial historians and the distinct social settings in which such pasts have been produced.¹⁵ South Asian literary traditions have long offered dual portraits of kingship and kinship that often collapse the difference between household and dynastic power, rejecting distinctions between the political and the familial.¹⁶ Not only is this binary indiscernible in precolonial history-writing, it also appears alien to contemporary observers—poets, chroniclers, bards, and their courtly audiences—who recorded, memorialized, and participated in rituals of relatedness. Literary portraits of the grand royal wedding encompassed a series of rituals: *khwāstegārī* or the proposal, *nāmzadī* or engagement, *nikāh/kat khudāī* or the wedding, *jalwa* or the face-showing ceremony, and *widā* ‘or farewell. Historians in the twentieth century exorcised these scenes, interpreting them as forms of alliance-building and factionalism, or they dismissed the language as decadent literary tangents from a more central political narrative embedded in each text.¹⁷ And yet, edifying images of relatedness were not just pointless distractions. They functioned within the narrative structure and ideological imperatives of chronicles, eulogies, and narrative poems. They reveal a terrain of affect on which maternal, filial, affinal, consanguine, master-slave, and patron-client ties were negotiated; they are therefore central to the political, not transgressions from it.

Apart from relations of affinity, how do we go beyond kings and queens to understand other forms of relatedness in the subcontinent before 1700? Evidence for nonkingly historical actors, especially women, slave-poets, and high-ranking servants in the period before 1700 is few and far between. I cull together clues about types of relations between individuals from different social backgrounds from veteran Bijapuri poets like Hasan Shauqi, the rising poet Nusrati, and the renowned Abyssinian slave-poet-emissary, Malik Khushnud. Relationships between master-slave and patron-client are often embedded within ceremonial portraits about members of the royal household. An array of materials offers insight into unlikely affective ties between individuals from different ethnicities, descent, status, and language. Literary representations of optative forms of relatedness reveal how institutional and personal differentiation of service to a ghar overlapped with the boundaries and ties of birth and marriage.

A DISPUTED ACCESSION

We may begin here in the 1620s, a decade when a succession dispute unfolded in Bijapur, after the death of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II (d. 1627). On the eve of the Mughal conquest, the Deccan sultanates were hardly united; nor were they bereft of internal divisions in order to be able to successfully oppose their northern overlords. At the age of seventeen, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah came to the throne at the behest of Mustafa Khan or Mullah Muhammad Amin Lari (whom we encountered in the previous chapter) and Daulat Khan or Khawas Khan, two men who would serve as regents for nine years before a conflict that resulted in the latter being

put to death in 1636—an event that has long captured the imagination of political historians.¹⁸ Aside from male household chiefs of different backgrounds, competition between women members of the royal household appears to have played a role in this crisis. The details of Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s accession come from an oft-cited Portuguese document from 1629 that sheds light on Bijapur’s tense relations with both the Mughals and the neighboring sultanate of Ahmadnagar.¹⁹ This document appears to be the most detailed Portuguese attempt to make sense of Bijapur’s court politics in the 1630s and informs us about the relative ranks of different members within the royal household:

Ibramo Idalxa died some three years ago, and as he was not on friendly terms at the time of his death with the principal queen called Muluco Jahum [Malik Jahan], the daughter of King Cutubuxa of Telangana; he ordered the putting out of the eyes of the heir called Darmes Pataxaa [Darvez Padshah], the oldest and the legitimate son of the said king and of Queen Muluco Jahú, and left the kingdom to a bastard son by the name of Soltão Mamede, the son of Queen Tage Soltão [Taj Sultan] who had been a lady-in-waiting [*dama do paço*] in the palace, and this Soltão Mamede is [now] in his court in Vizapor, and he is fifteen or sixteen years of age, and he governs through a Persian called Mamedeamym, and now he has given him the title of Mostafacão, and he serves as *Canamaluco* [*‘Ain-ul-mulk*], which is the post of secretary of state of the king, and he is of the Persian nation, and at the time that Fernão d’Albuquerque was governor [1619–22], this Mostafacão was captain of Ponda and the Concão; and inside the palace, a certain Dolatacão has been placed, who always accompanies the king. He is of the oilmen caste; he was a musician at the time of the father of this King, and today he seems to be more the favorite [*valido*]. He has the king’s kitchen in his hands, and the kingdom of this Idalxaa is full of Persians, who are enemies of this *Estado*.

The anonymous Portuguese observer comments here on a rivalry between the two queens of Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah—“the principal Queen,” Malik Jahan of the neighboring dynastic house of the Qutb shahs, and Taj Sultan (d. 1633), of more humble social origins, who was a high-ranking servant. His observation reflects preexisting anxieties about women consorts and the roles of their extended kin in court politics, a phenomenon not unfamiliar in the Iberian and Catholic context.²⁰ The young sultan Muhammad’s mother, identified as a lady-in-waiting (*dama do paço*) or a so-called “women above stairs,” presided over a rival household and successfully bade for her son to become king. What at first appears as a standard Orientalist framing as a succession dispute between a legitimate and illegitimate heir holds within it an anxiety about high-ranking women consorts forging parallel networks with the potential to undercut kingly authority.

This description of stratification between queens and high-ranking women servants is then supplemented with a comment on what appears to be a power-sharing arrangement between male household chiefs of different social backgrounds: Mustafa Khan, a Persian initially in charge of maritime affairs on the Konkan coast,

and Daulat Khan, a low-born former musician of the oil-presser caste who held the position of *valido* (akin to the Duke of Lerma or the Count-Duke of Olivares in a contemporary Habsburg context).²¹ The anonymous author gives more complex details both about the court and about relations with the problematic neighbor to the north, the Mughals. Noting competition between the households of the Indo-African Ikhlas Khan and that of the émigré Mustafa Khan, the anonymous observer stresses the relative unimportance of the king to the sultanate's growing control over the coastal areas around Portuguese Goa. The Mughal ambassador arrived in the middle of this succession crisis, further complicating Bijapur's internal political dynamics. The anonymous reporter notes the following about the reception of the Mughal envoy, Shaykh Muhyi-ud-Din:

this ambassador oppresses them a great deal, and each time he asks for whatever he wants, and he [the 'Adil shah] is now very tired of being a tributary, for the entire kingdom of the Idalxa can sustain some fifty thousand horse, but he does not actually have that many, and he is a neighbor of this court [Goa], and the entire seafront belongs to him, up to the fortress of Danda, which fortress of Danda is four leagues from our fort of Chaul. According to the peace treaty, this Idalxa is obliged to maintain an official ambassador and entourage in this court, as he in fact does. However, the person who holds the position of ambassador is a Persian and does not carry out his functions correctly.

This report connects stratifications within the house of Bijapur to the oppressive nature of the relationship with the Mughals. By the early 1630s, pressure from the Mughals had increased, leaving the 'Adil shahs militarily weakened. The document implies, however, that the Bijapur rulers had one continued source of strength, their control over several important ports. What rendered matters even more difficult for the Bijapur sultan was a cross-border interference emanating from the rump state of Ahmadnagar, ruled by Burhan Nizam Shah (r. 1610–31), and an ongoing disagreement among household chiefs about what to do with the “bastard son” and heir apparent, Muhammad:

Between King Idalxa and Nizamoxa [Nizam Shah], who is the Melique, differences remain on account of the fact that they raised up the bastard son [Muhammad], when there was the legitimate one who is the brother-in-law of this Melique, and the brother of his wife the queen, and she has pleaded with her husband on behalf of her brother Darves, the legitimate son to whom the kingdom belonged, saying that her father Ibramo Idalxa had done many unreasonable acts against all the laws in putting out the eyes of her brother Darves Patxah, which he did though he was the true king, and that all that Ibraemo Idalxa had done was on the advice of Mamede Mostafacão, and of Doltacão, and so in any event these two should be expelled from the said kingdom, and that their place should be given to Ecalascão; and that a son of Darves Pataxa should be raised up as king, for he has one who is six years old, and another who is four. But it was never possible to implement this, and after this there was an exchange of ambassadors on the two sides, and things calmed down, and it was

decided that these two kings should be friends, and that the Idalxa would give his help to the Nizamoxa against the Mogores, as they had always done, of fifteen thousand horses for the entire time that the war with the Mogores would endure; and to settle this, another ambassador of the king Nizamoxa came to swear this peace treaty, who was a Persian called Mirza Abulfata, [and] who said that with this his king was content, and that Mamedeamy and Dolatação should be expelled from his [the 'Adil shah's] kingdom, and that Ecalesção should be given his post of financial intendant of the state as before, and that the Nababo Agaraia [Aqa Raza] should be freed, and that he should be given his place as secretary of state, and when this contract was done, both kings could be friends as they had been before. And all this was for the best, and all the other captains, and regents were content, but as the affair was aimed against these two, Mamedeamym and Dolatocão, they did not let them advance, and as the king is new and incompetent, everything is in a mess.²²

As the anonymous report makes clear, political alliances did not line up neatly according to ethno-linguistic differences. Its author constructs the category of "Persians" dispersed across two regions of the Indian Ocean in contradictory ways. On the one hand, his dislike for the "Persians" in the 1630s was informed, likely, by the recent Portuguese loss of Hormuz in the 1620s, when various alliances between the Safavids and the English and Dutch East India Companies diminished their hold over the Persian Gulf region.²³ At the same time, however, the presence of Central Asian émigrés in peninsular Indian sultanates was neither homogenous nor uniform; nor did they speak from a single standpoint vis-à-vis other social groups. As the observer notes, the Persian ambassador of the neighboring Nizam shahs, Abu'l Fath, had refused to condone the actions of the émigré Mustafa Khan, urging that he be expelled along with his ally, Daulat Khan, a courtier of the "oilman caste," of more modest background, who would later be executed.

The narrative shift here from examining rivalries between a hierarchy of queens within the palace to commenting on the sultan's dependency on these multiethnic elite households is corroborated by Persianate texts, albeit with a markedly different attitude toward revealing internal hierarchies in the royal household. We may compare the Portuguese report to Zuhur ibn Zuhuri's chronicle *Muhammadnāma* (The book of Muhammad); he was a close friend of the aforementioned Persian Mustafa Khan, a figure to whom he and several other mid-seventeenth-century chroniclers dedicated their work and who, along with queen Taj Sultan, steered the accession of Muhammad 'Adil Shah.²⁴ Unlike the anonymous Portuguese reporter, Zuhur muted the hierarchies among the competing queens, adhering to the genre's standard king-centered and providential framework.

Simultaneously echoing and contradicting the anonymous report, Zuhur recounted the role of palace women in this succession dispute as propitious and inevitable. But he chose not to mention the rank nor the pleas of the disaffected queen Malik Jahan and her blinded son, Prince Darvish. Instead, he devotes considerable care and attention to elevating the status of the queen mother Taj Sultan

(whom the Portuguese identified as a high-ranking servant), describing her as the chaste and virtuous matron (*tāj ul-mukhaddarāt*), who presided over a great retinue within the palace in the final years of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah's reign.²⁵ Zuhur borrows the overarching frame to explain Muhammad 'Adil Shah's birth, the selection of wet nurses, and the accession to the throne by borrowing a narrative template from Abu'l-Fazl's Mughal chronicle, *Akbarnāma*.²⁶ Zuhur begins by recounting the queen mother Taj Sultan's astonishment at her infant son's miraculous refusal to take to the breast of many wet nurses and his eventually selecting a certain Jiji Man as his nurse, a woman who came from a reputed family that had long served the house of Bijapur.²⁷ He edifies the queen mother and the head wet nurse, reaffirming the bid to make Muhammad heir to the throne, disregarding the claim of the elder son of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah.²⁸ In another narrative echoing the Portuguese report, in the same chapter Zuhur then turned to his patron, the Persian Mustafa Khan or "Khan Baba," and how he shared duties with the aforementioned Daulat Khan/Khawas Khan. Despite acknowledging Daulat Khan's skills in managing state affairs, he derogatively calls him *ghulam ghul* or a demon servant, being far less generous toward him than the anonymous Portuguese observer had been.²⁹ Declaring his allegiance to Mustafa Khan, Zuhur recounts changes after Ibrahim 'Adil Shah's death, including the often-discussed civil war that followed and that necessitated that the young Muhammad hand over all important matters of governance to the Persian prime minister.³⁰

Persianate and European observers commented on kinship and stratification within the Deccan courts and its elite households and how these hierarchies shaped moments like kingly birth, accession, and marriage. These different textual traditions generated histories that at once echoed each other and diverged from each other in their concerns. Persian chroniclers and European observers made sense of status differences between queens, sons, and courtly elites in different ways. To Portuguese and Dutch observers, household stratification appeared familiar, as they drew analogies with equivalent positions and familial norms in their own contexts. They invented a vocabulary for comprehending indigenous forms of relatedness with great specificity and at other times, flattened out status differences by measuring indigenous households against European modes of the familial. Chroniclers also made strategic choices in naming relatives and the status of particular actors—such descriptive choices often reveal the chronicler's own affinities to particular patrons in court.

The anonymous Portuguese report (ca. 1620) and Zuhur's *Muhammadnāma* unveil three overarching themes that would characterize the relationship between rulers and elites in the Deccan courts in the seventeenth century. First, pressure from the northern imperial overlords transformed the already tenuous grip of monarchs in the south. Courtly elites, whether male office-holding elites or high-ranking women in the royal household, determined how, when, and who would be king. Second, marriage within and outside dynastic lines would anchor elite

households into monarchical authority. Third, the focus of this chapter's subsequent sections are representations of these events that unveil contestations, disputes, and disagreements between household and monarchical state forms while also shedding light on other forms of relatedness, such as those between patrons and poets and those between the adopted and the enslaved.

A PRINCESS AND HER POETIC CIRCUIT

Within the longer context of his disputed accession to the throne in the 1620s, Muhammad 'Adil Shah came of age just as his closest advisors negotiated suzerainty under the Mughals in the 1630s. A series of weddings took place between 1631 and 1633.³¹ These affinal ties did not merely align the Deccan kingdoms with each other; they also augmented the autonomy of semi-independent households vis-à-vis kingly power. Sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah's marriages to the sister of a neighboring sultan, on the one hand, and to elite women from courtly families, on the other, suggest that the seventh Bijapuri ruler succeeded in making alliances and consolidating power. But differing narrations of these events suggest otherwise. Conflicting accounts of the marriage events reveal the fragility of affinal ties and the uncertain grounds on which kingly authority stood.

The most notable of these tied the 'Adil shahs of Bijapur and the Qutb shahs of Golkonda, the Deccan's dynastic houses, to each other for the last time in the seventeenth century. Out of a total of four marriages of sultan Muhammad 'Adil Shah mentioned by contemporary chroniclers, three were with the daughters of aristocratic households. The one marriage into a royal household, with Princess Khadija Sultana, the sister of the Golkonda Sultan, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah, is the most well recorded of these events. Muhammad 'Adil Shah married the daughter of his maternal uncle, Sayyid 'Abd al-Rahman Husayni³² and he married the daughter of another courtier; this was celebrated in the Dakkanī poem, *Mezbanīnāma* (The book of hospitality), a festive narrative poem examined in this chapter's last section. Shortly after negotiating peace with the Mughals, the Bijapur sultan married Taj Jahan Begam, the daughter of Mustafa Khan (d. 1648), the aforementioned Persian prime minister who helped broker the peace deal with the Mughals. This wedding was a celebrated affair that sealed the new arrangement of imperial suzerainty negotiated by Nawab Khan Baba, such that on the wedding day, ambassadors from Iran and Hindustan rode in front of the groom, the Bijapur king.³³ To make sense of the politics of affinity, I analyze these unevenly distributed, idealized, and conflicting narrative sources about these weddings. Despite the king being placed at the center of the wedding narratives, I show how chroniclers expressed the subordination of monarchical authority by signaling how the king became a son-in-law (*ba takht-i dāmādī girafte*) to an ever-increasing number of nonroyal households.³⁴ As scholars have suggested, the Persian chronicle form and its narrative conventions, as convincing as they may be, must be read for their conspicuous

gaps and silences.³⁵ The celebratory wedding image in this genre, long dismissed as mere pomp and hyperbole, leaves much unsaid. These elisions sit uncomfortably around the obviously observable evidence of unequivocal kingly authority. The portrait of the king becoming a son-in-law is just as much about the cast of characters who sought to control the king and, if possible, unseat him altogether through new affinal bonds.

Before turning to narrations of Khadija Sultana's wedding to Muhammad 'Adil Shah, we may ask who was this queen, bride, and sister to reigning Decan kings? And what do the multisited journeys of this elite Shi'i woman tell us about her bonds with a wider circuit of friends, servants, and slaves? Khadija Sultana, also known as Haji Bari Sahiba, wielded considerable influence in regional politics and effectively ruled Bijapur as regent between 1646 and 1656. Persian chroniclers often crystallize depictions of high-ranking women like Khadija Sultana, creating virtuous portraits of them as beholden to fraternal and affinal ties to elite men, husbands, brothers, or fathers who were king. Present-day scholars (and the Persian chroniclers they follow) emphasize Khadija's role as a sister and a bride to two competing and tenuously allied regional kings.³⁶ However, contemporary observers commented on this young bride's interventions in political decisions soon after her marriage to the Bijapur sultan. After arriving in Bijapur, the Golkonda chronicler Nizamuddin Ahmad observed Khadija's role in counseling her husband, Muhammad 'Adil Shah, and sealing the fate of the aforementioned Khawas Khan:

After coming to the 'Adil Shahi palace, the queen turned her attention towards the behaviors and actions of that court and saw that the conditions were not to her own taste and disposition [*mutawajjih auzā'i wa atwār-i ān bārgah shud wa tarz-i ānjā rā muwāfiq-i tab'i 'ālī-i khud nadideh*], the 'Adil shahs should take control of the kingdom by removing those who were disobedient [*ahl-i tasallut wa tughyān rā dafa' numāyad*]. The queen reported back the news of that court to her brother ['Abdullah Qutb Shah] with the hope that he would help remove these rebellious ministers.³⁷

In Ahmed's account of this affair, Khadija Sultana served as adviser to her husband, counseling him throughout on how to remove enemies within the household (*dushman-i khānegī*) and how to manage affairs through good politics (*tadbīr*). Ahmed suggests that Khawas Khan accused Mustafa Khan of being pro-Mughal. Although he does not clarify whether Queen Khadija Sultana also favored a compromise with the imperial overlords, he does reveal that the queen's goals converged with those of the Persian Mustafa Khan. A nested power arrangement under the Mughals allowed for more autonomy for courtly elites while ensuring that the sultanates reached their largest territorial extent by expanding into the Karnatak region.

Apart from being instrumental in the power struggle of the 1630s, Khadija Sultana's long career as a patron of a polyvocal literary circuit remains less known, as do her bonds with male literati whose verses would memorialize her wedding to

the Bijapur sultan. While mediating relations with the Mughals and Europeans, Khadija Sultana patronized a circuit of regional poets who traveled with her in 1633 as part of her wedding party and journeyed with her in 1661 across the Indian Ocean to Mocha when she departed for the hajj. We find clues about her abiding interest in retellings and translations from Persian into Dakkani. One poet, Kamal Khan Rustami, who composed the *Khāvarnāma* (ca. 1649), cited Khadija's wish to translate the renowned Persian masnavī (ca. 1426) of Ibn Husam, on the battles of Imam 'Ali and his companions, into Dakkani.³⁸

Her most enduring friendship and bond was with the celebrated Indo-African Sunni Muslim poet, Malik Khushnud, who composed a Dakkani poetic work called *Jannat Singār* (ca. 1647), which was implicitly based on Amir Khusrau's Persian *Hasht Bihisht* (Eight paradises).³⁹ An Abyssinian slave in the Qutb Shahi court, he resided in Hyderabad much of his life. Malik Khushnud was sent to guard Khadija Sultana's dowry when she moved to Bijapur in the early 1630s. His poetic works allude to the slave-poet's friendships with two patrons—in particular, Khadija Sultana and the Iranian minister of Golkonda, Mir Mu'min Astarabadi (d. 1625).⁴⁰ Beyond what we know about his allegiance to these patrons, we have very few biographical details about this poet. In a comprehensive study of his oeuvre, Sayeeda Jafar observed that Khushnud speaks of his unfree status as a slave and prays for his freedom through these words:

jo hove ruh jiyū tan mein merā shād / kare khāliq tumare kin son azād

my soul rejoices in this bodily form / from which the creator may set [it] free⁴¹

Like many enslaved Indo-Africans in the Deccan before him, Khushnud rose in status and eventually served as a diplomat between the Deccan courts, earning repute as a poet in Khadija Sultana's literary circuit.⁴² Further clues about Malik Khushnud's career, his role as an emissary, and his bond with Khadija Sultana reveal a friendship that cut across status, descent, and blood ties.

The queen and the slave-poet were bound by the two homes they shared, grew up in, and moved to. Hyderabad was the queen's natal ghar and the adoptive ghar of Malik Khushnud. As a member of Khadija Sultana's circuit, Khushnud moved with her to Bijapur but frequently returned as an ambassador to Hyderabad, where he had spent much of his youth. After recounting Khadija Sultana's pivotal role in the struggle between Mustafa Khan and Khawas Khan in the 1630s, the chronicler Nizamuddin Ahmad reports that 'Abdullah Qutb Shah sent a letter to congratulate Muhammad 'Adil Shah for removing enemies of the household (*dushman-i khānegī*). In return, to mark the occasion and thank his brother-in-law, the Bijapur sultan sent Malik Khushnud as ambassador to Hyderabad. In a narration of this embassy, the chronicler Ahmed notes:

Malik Khushnud, who was one of the great servants of this exalted court, had been in charge of the golden palanquin of *bilqīs zamān* [Khadija Sultana], having been given

as part of her dowry along with other servants and eunuchs [*ū ra dākhil-i malikān wa khwāja sarāyān jahez kardeh*]. He served the queen so well and was close, kindred to her that he acquired distinction, earning a rank higher than other eunuchs [*az khwājaha-yi dīgar imtiyāz be ham resānideh būd dar khidmat-i malika-i ‘ālamīyān qurb wa manzilat zyada yāfte*]. On this occasion, he brought with him a chain of elephants and six horses as gifts. When he reached the area near the city, he was honored more than past ambassadors [*bā ū ta ‘zīm wa takrīm namūdeh*]. Lords and eunuchs from the capital city came to welcome him and brought him to the king’s exalted throne, where he was honored. The king gave him the house of Narayan Rao, a *majmū’ adār* who had passed away and served the court. Every time king called on him, Malik Khushnud was honored and treated with great respect [*har waqt ū rā be hūzūr-i ashraf be talab farmūdeh nawāzish mī kardand*]. After some time, Malik Khushnud returned to Bijapur along with the Dakkani poet Mullah Ghawasi, with some gifts from the king.⁴³

Malik Khushnud’s ascent in the Deccan courts was partly a consequence of his friendship with Queen Khadija Sultana. Describing their relationship as kindred, proximate (*qurb*), the slave-poet prospered in his role as a regional emissary. Khushnud himself appears to have straddled two status groups—eunuchs (*khwājasarah*) and poets (*shā’ir*)—but he managed to set himself apart from other high-ranking servants. At the same time, he circulated in a wider community of roving regional poet-ambassadors, alongside figures like Mullah Ghawasi, who sought patrons for their verse while delivering diplomatic messages across the Deccan courts.

Further clues about Khadija Sultana’s literary investments in artists and literati from different social backgrounds can be found in the material objects produced, circulated, and gifted between Bijapur and Golkonda to commemorate her wedding. In February of 1633, a young Nusrati (a poet whom we will encounter condemning the Mughals and Marathas in chapter 5), penned a celebratory *tarjī ‘band* (poem with a return-tie) on the occasion of Khadija Sultana and Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s wedding. Nusrati’s words were put to paper and ink in an illuminated manuscript by a second-generation Iranian calligrapher, ‘Ali ibn Naqi al-Husaini al-Damghani, whose renowned father had adorned inscriptions on the iconic Ibrahim Rauza, the tomb of the previous ruler Ibrahim ‘Adil Shah II. During Khadija Sultana’s regency, Nusrati would later also compose his celebrated Sufi poem, *Gulshan-i ‘Ishq* (ca. 1658), in which he also commented on her patronage and her role in the politics of the two sultanates.

The physical manuscript and poetic composition in Nusrati’s earliest work commemorated the forging of affinal ties across the two dynastic lines. Here, once again, the metaphor of ghar or home, a measure of affect and belonging, tied two dynastic households and their members to city, place, and dominion. Thus, Nusrati began by first praising Sultan ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah, who came from the city of Hyderabad, marking his descent from the city and a good home (*hyderabad nagar kā/sū sharaf kīch achī ghar kā*). He then described his sister, the young Khadija, as the Deccan’s pride, skilled in affairs of the home (ghar) and the world (*jag*),⁴⁴ also evoking her lineage and ties to place:

hain sū asad var kī maryam / dukhtar-i shāh mukarram
sū dakkan kī nikū makdam / khātūn-i hashr kī mahram

she who is the Mary of lion (sons) / daughter of the illustrious king
 keeper of the Deccan's good repute / chosen among the gathering of great women⁴⁵

In this composition, Nusrati welcomes the brother and sister, Sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah and Khadija Sultana of Golkonda, to Bijapur. Through Dakkani's distinct phonetics, Nusrati captures aural and visual qualities of the ceremony—the banquets, the sounds, the processions of armies, the dancing, the gifts, and the receptions. The manuscript's adornments and design match the visual qualities signified by the words in verse. Its eclectic margins and illuminations suggest that the unique poet-calligrapher collaboration created the manuscript as a gift for the great wedding, a part of the new bride's dowry, indicating that both artists were part of a luxury workshop with access to many talents and templates, under the patronage of Princess Khadija Sultana.

The occasion of a wedding between two dynastic lines produced artistic-literary partnerships that cut across lines of ethnicity and language and across different material mediums. This manuscript of twenty-eight folios produced for Khadija and Muhammad's wedding embodies the interactions of a network of individuals from different social milieus—namely, regional Muslim poets, Iranian émigré calligraphers, and their royal patrons. Persian-speaking Iranian migrant calligraphers wrote out poetic works in the regional literary idiom, Dakkani, possibly from drafts or copies of the poetic works in dialogue with the poets who composed them.⁴⁶ Through Nusrati's ode to the princess's wedding, memorialized in an expensive manuscript, a portrait of Khadija Sultana emerges—as a consumer and patron of multitalented and multiethnic literati before and after her wedding, on the one hand, and as political advisor to the two regional sultans, her husband Muhammad 'Adil Shah and her brother, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah, on the other.

A RELUCTANT PROPOSAL

And yet, when Khadija's much anticipated wedding linked the dynastic houses of Bijapur and Golkonda, it was not without disagreement. The marriage proposal unfurled during a time when the Mughals were threatening the very existence of the Deccan sultans. Zuhur's *Muhammadnāma* from Bijapur and Nizamuddin Ahmad's *Hadiqat al-Salātīn* from Golkonda offered parallel portraits of this wedding bracketed by chapters that recast Mughal imperial occupation. Describing affinal ties in a moment when the actual physical borders of regional kingdoms were uncertain presented a contradiction for provincial Persian chroniclers. Affinal bonds would not ensure the regional integrity of peninsular India's Islamic courts. The potential political advantages of this interdynastic marriage were not at all apparent to contemporary observers, which

explains why the narrations concerning this proposal vary considerably from one chronicler to another.

Zuhur and Ahmed preface accounts of Khadija Sultana's wedding by first casting an eye on the changing relationship with the Mughals. A standard form of rhetoric among provincial commenters was to size down the imperial overlords, a theme we saw in the previous chapter. Portraits of consumption and celebration at weddings followed narratives of Mughal humiliation, where the imperial rulers were reported (and imagined) to have retreated in defeat. Golkonda's Nizamuddin Ahmad, for instance, contrasted famine and death in the Mughal frontier city of Burhanpur at the time of Emperor Shah Jahan against the prosperity of the Deccan kingdoms. He evoked the protection of the twelve innocent Imams (*i'mmah-i ma'sūmīn*) to protect the residents (*ahl-i īn bilād*) of the lands of Telangana (*mumlikat-i tilangāna*) from all disasters and unfortunate events.⁴⁷ In Bijapur, Zuhur also inverted Emperor Shah Jahan's successful invasion of the south in the 1630s, framing it as a misguided and unethical war with fellow Muslim polities. Shah Jahan, therefore, returned to Daulatabad. He stopped his troops from entering Bijapur out of respect for followers of the religion of the Prophet and the realization that Muslims should not go to war with each other (*shāh jahān pās-i dīn-i khair ul-mursalīn dāshte nemīpasand ke musalmānān bā yek digar jang kunand*).⁴⁸ Chroniclers then contrasted the unjust character of Mughal rule with the generosity of the Deccan sultans toward each other and toward their subjects as more ethical and more just. The image of the grand wedding and consumption rituals followed immediately after such portraits of war and destruction of an external enemy. As the imperial army marched toward the Deccan sultanates' northern borders, projecting regional unity and solidarity through celebratory kinship portraits was not just a symbolic move. It stood in marked contrast to what we saw in the second chapter whereby regional states adopted imperial institutional mechanisms for pansubcontinental military recruitment and identification practices. In effect, regional states were starting to look like their enemy. Emulating Mughal institutions, such as horse branding, could be used to check the growing power of provincial elites within peninsular India. Despite these actual overlaps, the chronicle form created an ideological opposition far starker by juxtaposing it with ceremonial wedding portraits that projected regional resilience and solidarity.

And yet, there were limits to this rhetorical interregional affinity between the two dynasties of Bijapur and Golkonda even within chronicle representations. The marriage of Khadija Sultana to Muhammad 'Adil Shah marked both the beginning and the end of an "ancient custom of relations" (*nisbat i-qadīmī*) across the Deccan sultanates.⁴⁹ As the last exogamous, interdynastic marriage between the two houses, it followed an old pattern across the regional sultanates that had been developed since the sixteenth century.⁵⁰ Golkonda chronicler Nizamuddin Ahmad, citing previous marriages between the two dynastic houses, began by acknowledging that there was indeed a custom (*mirāsīm*) of close relations (*nisbat-i qurbatī*)

between the two lineages (*dūdman*), for they had often come together (*muwāsalat*) through marriage.⁵¹ Shortly after coming to the throne, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah sent two ambassadors, Shah Abu’l Hasan and Shaykh Rahim, with the proposal for Khadija to her brother, the sultan of Golkonda, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah. Ahmed informs us that the Bijapuri ambassadors

reminded the Qutb Shahi sultan of the relations of [the] unity [*nisbat-i-itiḥād*] and friendship and love [*rābteh yegānegī wa wadād*] he had had with the ‘Adil shahs. Upon hearing these words from the chamberlain [*hujjāb*], ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah answered, as God was willing. The sultan said what our ancestors had done in the past was good. His most trustworthy and close advisors advised the king. He answered this question but covered his words with a garb of silence [*be kiswat-i-sukūt wa libās-i mutaraz betarāz-i khāmushī*]. From the way the king expressed his words and from his countenance, the wise chamberlain understood it to be proof of his agreement with the proposal. The ambassadors went back to Muhammad ‘Adil Shah and told him of the nature of the circumstances in great detail, expressing the truth of the facts with the hope of opening the doors of marriage [*abwāb-i muwāsalat*]. When this fortunate and joyous news reached Muhammad ‘Adil Shah, he was pleased. Such good tidings [*naṣīd farrukh afzāyī*] and the hope of this gain took away the [Bijapur] king’s sadness, as this occasion would strengthen the arms of his kingdom, which had grown weak due to challenges from enemies, for now his kingdom would be stronger.⁵²

Ahmed’s cautious reconstruction of the proposal gives the reader pause. He dissuades us from accepting affirmations of a natural unity and a friendship between the Deccan sultans that preface the narration. The chronicler proceeds with a degree of ambiguity, not quite revealing the Golkonda sultan ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah’s answer. Eventually, he concludes that this marriage strengthened the groom and the house of Bijapur more than it did Golkonda, the prospective bride’s natal home. But it was doubtful whether this alliance would ensure political stability at a time when regional sultans were faced with two choices—either accept Mughal suzerainty or commit to fighting their northern rival together. Ahmed’s account suggests that a regional political unity was easy to imagine but far more difficult to commit to in practice. Given his allegiance to the Qutb shahs, the chronicler was responsible for making his king appear all-powerful at all times. Instead, Ahmed notes that his king’s response, veiled with silence rather than an enthusiastic acceptance, betrays his vulnerability. In signaling ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah’s reluctance, Ahmed reveals a sense of foreboding that undergirded affinal bonds. Rather than guaranteeing a natural alliance and political certitude, kinship forged through marriage brought with it the possibility of unraveling the monarchical form all together.

The uneasiness around Muhammad and Khadija’s marriage comes alive when considered through another chronicler, Zuhur ibn Zuhuri, writing from the vantage point of the groom. In contrast to Ahmed’s cryptic narration, which suggested

the proposal was not wholeheartedly accepted, Zuhur presents a narrative of outright refusal and coercion. Recounting how negotiations of the engagement (*kat khudāi*) began, he notes:

when ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah heard Muhammad ‘Adil Shah’s proposal for his sister [*khavar-i khwāstegārī-yi ham-shīra wālānizād-i khīsh*], he did not want to send her away as he loved her more than his own life and saying no, he apologized. The king [Muhammad ‘Adil Shah] came to know this and called upon Nawab Khan Baba and Khawas Khan and told them that ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah wished to take a step in an opposing direction [*qutb shah mī khwāhad qadm dar rah-yi khilāf nihād*] and lose his entire kingdom in one breath. It is necessary to send the victorious troops to Golkonda to destroy them and make ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah obey the world-obeying emperor.⁵³

Unlike Ahmed, who is reticent in this regard, Zuhur constructs the Bijapuri sultan as an imperial overlord presiding over his regional neighbor, echoing the relationship of vassalage that the Deccan sultans had with the Mughal Empire. In this imagined hierarchy, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah and his advisors could reprimand ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah and paint him as misguided and naive. Only after the prospective groom threatened to send his army, out of fear and helplessness, did the prospective bride’s brother accept the proposal. Zuhur’s rendition right away blurs the boundary between the affective and the familial, on the one hand, and the political, on the other. A gendered and hierarchical portrait of the two sovereigns emerges with the bride’s brother subordinate to the groom. This political equation is then contrasted with the more intimate affective bond of the bride, as a beloved sister to her brother. According to Zuhur, ‘Abdullah Qutb Shah used the excuse of brotherly love to reject the marriage proposal and avoid becoming a political subordinate to the neighboring sultan, his future brother-in-law, Muhammad ‘Adil Shah.

That Persian chroniclers constructed narratives to one-up rival rulers is nothing new.⁵⁴ Marriage portraits frequently appear in this textual genre but have been dismissed as mere corollary to alliance politics, another way of affirming the sovereign’s absolute power. And yet, to contemporary observers like Ahmed and Zuhur, marriages were hardly natural or inevitable. Affinal ties were rarely absolute indicators of kingly power despite the rhetorical overtures to naturalness that framed such representations. Rather, contemporary observers treated such occasions with a degree of caution and, in Zuhur’s case, even suspicion.

It should come as no surprise, then, that both chroniclers followed up their conflicting reports of the marriage proposal with images of abundance, consumption, and courtly ritual before and during the wedding. Here the wedding canvas moves to a wider circuit of courtly participants. In the performative scenes that dramatized court ritual, descriptive terms emphasize the status, as well as the degree of trust and loyalty, of those who attended the wedding, and what role each actor played in the ceremony. The two chroniclers echo each other’s narratives

in describing the sequence of public rituals that consecrated the marriage. From Bijapur, the groom's (*dāmād*) older sister departed for Hyderabad to deliver the formal proposal and gifts along with Murari Pandit, the Brahmin chief of armies (*sipah sālār*), and an Abyssinian general, Husayni Habz Khan, who had served the crown since childhood. These men were like house born sons (*khānazād*), a portrait that would change quickly after the so-called civil war.⁵⁵ On the way back from Hyderabad:

Mir Fasihuddin Muhammad, who was known for his great talent and abilities, was selected to take the queen's palanquin to the 'Adil shahs. He was given two Turkish horses with adorned saddles and silver stirrups. The king gave this responsibility to Mir Fasihuddin Muhammad along with a *tankhwāh* of eighty thousand. Shaykh Muhammad Tahir, a high-ranking learned religious scholar, also received special gifts with two horses, to go along with the queen's palanquin. Another person that he chose was Qazi Ahsan, known as the *qāzī* of Mecca, a very famous scholar and a member of the *majlis*, to go on this journey. Sayyid Babu, a general, and Makh-dum Malik with four hundred cavalry, along with followers, all were given gifts and accompanied the bride's palanquin.⁵⁶

Listing which nobles had the honor of visiting the bride's brother, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah, Ahmed concludes the wedding festivities that stretched over a month and a half from June to July of 1633. After the formal acceptance of the proposal (*khwāstegārī*) and gift-giving, the city of Hyderabad was decorated in order to receive the groom's party. Both chroniclers concluded their accounts of the wedding of 1633 with descriptions of festivity, ceremony, and consumption.

Following the chronicle form's convention of reporting, the description of the royal wedding's courtly participants is named; the ranks of officers, itemizing lists, and the amount of dowry (*jahez*) and bride price (*mahr*) given. After the proposal for Khadija Sultana and Muhammad 'Adil Shah was accepted and the preparations began, Nizamuddin Ahmad plots the bridal party's journey within and eventually outside of Hyderabad to Bijapur, noting audiences held with the bride and her brother, Sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah:

On the twenty-sixth of Sha'ban the bejeweled palanquin of the queen plus twenty *khāssa* palanquins and a hundred and fifty other palanquins with servants, elephants, horses, and camels, with ministers and nobles, they went outside the capital city. At the end of the night, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah met the elder sister of Muhammad 'Adil Shah to bid farewell to them, giving her and all the ladies of the *haram* so many gifts. The palace was lit up with lamps and lights, and 'Abdullah Qutb Shah then returned to the capital city. The value of the dowry was five lakh *hun* and all the expenses of the celebrations were around fifty thousand *hun*. . . .

All the celebrations took one and a half months and were continued day and night at different places. In the middle of the month of Ramadan, the entourage of the Queen set off for Bijapur and two thousand infantry were sent. When they were close to the border of 'Adil Shah, high ranking generals and nobles who had accompanied the Queen's entourage, returned back to the Qutb Shahi territories. When

the Queen's entourage entered the Bijapur kingdom, they reached Gulbarga, where Ikhlas Khan, the *mir jumla*, along with four thousand cavalry came to welcome them and kiss the queen's throne; in return, she presented him with special gifts.⁵⁷

Ahmad concludes the wedding narrative with poetic images of rituals. The first of these is *jalwa* or the face-showing ceremony, a well-known custom in the Deccan (*rūsūm wa qā 'ida-i jalwe ke dar dakkān muta 'ārīf ast*). The final image of the night of the union (*shab-i wasl*), when the royal bride and groom consume the marriage, the chronicler concludes with the following distich (*qīt 'a*):

*lailatu 'l-qadr būd ān shab-i wasl / ke nāmūdand mehr-o-māh qirān
bud dar khurramī be az nawrūz / ān shab-i faiz bakhsh nūr afshān
gul-i 'ashrat sabāh-yi 'id ān shab / chid az bazm-gāh sad dāmān*

The night of the union was the night of power / with the sun and moon conjunction,
more joyful than the day of Nowruz / that bountiful, luminous night
on the morning of that night, flowers of delight / were picked from that banquet

With these words, the wedding portrait of Khadija Sultana of Golkonda and Muhammad 'Adil Shah concludes, moving on to matters of war with the Mughals. The 1630s marked merely the beginning of Khadija Sultana's long itinerancy between Hyderabad and Bijapur. After 1646, when the Bijapur sultan fell ill, she would rule as regent for ten years until her adopted son 'Ali 'Adil Shah II came of age. Her regency had a lasting effect on the final years of both sultanates, including on the ability of the English, the Dutch, and the French to function on the Coromandel coast. In chapter 6, we will see that, in the 1670s, Khadija's political career would require frequent trips between the two capital cities to negotiate with several contenders, including the chiefs of military households, such as the much-maligned Indo-African Siddi Jauhar (d. 1665?), the Maratha Shivaji Bhonsle (d. 1680), and the Miyana Afghan Bahlol Khan, all of whom sought to carve out autonomous strongholds in the military campaigns of the 1660s in the Karnatak.⁵⁸

A FEAST OF WORDS: CONSUMPTION AND AFFINITY IN A REGIONAL IDIOM

One such household was that of Muzaffar Khan, whose daughter married Muhammad 'Adil Shah of Bijapur shortly after his wedding to Khadija Sultana. This final wedding of the 1630s was memorialized, not in the Persian chronicle form but in a narrative poem composed in Dakkani. The Bijapur sultan would give the title *khān-i khānān* (lord of lords) to his father-in-law, Muzaffar Khan, an act that would infuriate Mughal emperor Shah Jahan, since the title was reserved for high-ranking imperial nobles.⁵⁹ Like his contemporary Mustafa Khan Lari (d. 1648), the aforementioned Nawab Khan Baba, whose daughter also married the Bijapur

sultan, Muzaffar Khan was a second-generation Persian who led Bijapur's campaigns in the Karnatak in the late 1630s. Both weddings were reported in contemporary chronicles and narrative poems. In a telling reversal of the gender and lineage hierarchies in these marriages, the chronicler Zuhur, for instance, noted that the groom-king had made the father-in-law Nawab Khan Baba proud (*mufakh-khar wa mubāhi gardānīdand*) by asking for his daughter's hand, rather than the other way around.⁶⁰ Under imperial suzerainty, aristocratic-military household chiefs in regional courts interlocked themselves with kingly authority. Just as Mustafa Khan was the patron of a polyvocal literary circuit that included chroniclers like Zuhur, who wrote in Persian, and Muqim, who wrote in Dakkani, we may surmise that Muzaffar Khan commissioned Hasan Shauqi to compose *Mezbānīnāma* on the occasion of his daughter's wedding to the sultan.

Now the question remains why a text was commissioned in Dakkani, rather than simply being recorded into a Persian chronicle, to commemorate yet another wedding of the Bijapur sultan to a household lord. We can only turn to internal clues and themes within the text to understand the social, literary, and political purposes of the *Mezbānīnāma*. Dakkani textual traditions, in the romance genre, offered images of spending, consumption, wealth.⁶¹ Drawing on that tradition, I argue that *Mezbānīnāma* draws the audience's attention to the material resources necessary for celebrating and forging new households. The fact that this work was composed in the panregional literary idiom of Dakkani to commemorate the king's marriage with the daughter of a second-generation émigré household raises questions, once again, about how we read representations of "Iranians" beyond Persian in the Deccan courts, particularly in portraits of consumption and celebration that drew on Indic and Persianate imagery. As I showed in chapter 3, such representations were not anomalous. Unsurprisingly, and as with other new social groups not associated with regional languages but rather with the high register of Persian, émigré households asserted their political claims to the region by deploying a well-established idiom that drew on recognizable Perso-Arabic forms infused with an Indic vocabulary. These works code-switched between different linguistic registers particularly to show the resolution of political and military conflicts.⁶²

Commemorating a wedding between the royal lineage of Bijapur and the household of Muzaffar Khan, Hasan Shauqi's *Mezbānīnāma* (ca. 1630s) is a rare, versified work and one of the earliest texts to focus on a nonmilitary historical event. It falls in line with the leitmotif of *bazm* (meaning feast, assembly, or festivity) in Persian literature, the counterpart to war or *razm*.⁶³ In the next chapter, we follow Nusrati's '*Alināma*, which adopted the latter frame of battle or fighting within which the poet embedded a broader political commentary. In contrast to war, the festive poem draws on a different set of images, aesthetics, and metaphors to depict courtly life.

Images of feasting and consumption on the occasion of a wedding emphasized the ability and capacity to bear expenses (*kharchīyā*) on innumerable objects, materials, rituals, and ceremonies that sacralized affinity. Shauqi details *kharchā* or spending, an image running throughout the *Mezbanīnāma*, in all its physical forms—coins, gold, silver—resources that made the consumption and enjoyment of food, drink, carpets, clothing, jewelry and therefore a grand wedding possible. With the objective of illustrating consumption, poets mobilized a range of motifs legible to courtly audiences to capture the wedding feast's sounds, sights, and smells. To do so, they devised original metaphors, a critical foundation of Persian poetry, while adhering to strict rules of form and literary convention.⁶⁴ It goes without saying, then, that readers listen to the poem's literary and aesthetic qualities first, rather than seek in it a straightforward, instrumentalist purpose of merely legitimizing the patron. Below, I follow the narrative sequence and describe the composite sensory and linguistic canvas of the *Mezbanīnāma*, reconstructing images of spending and objects of consumption that sacralized affinity in the regional idiom. Throughout the poem, I examine how Shauqi played with Indic vocabularies within a Perso-Arabic poetic to highlight Muzaffar Khan's polyvocal spheres of patronage, which evolved alongside those of the sultan, his new son-in-law.

In terms of its structure, the *Mezbanīnāma* consists of three short chapters or sections (*bāb*). In the first, the Bijapur sultan, Muhammad 'Adil Shah, titled the friend of God (*khudā kā khalīl*) and the Prophet's successor (*nabī kā khalīfā*), presides over an assembly, giving gifts to people in preparation for the party (*majlis ārāstan wa bakshish kardan sultān muhammad mardmān rā mezbānī-i khud*). In the second, he mounts his horse to tour the city of Bijapur (*dar bayān-i shahar gasht sawār shudan sultān muhammad 'ādil shah*).⁶⁵ The groom's party reaches the bride's home, where Muzaffar Khan (the bride's father) makes preparations to welcome them. In the third and final scene, a great feast is hosted at the wedding party and a dowry is given for the daughter of Nawab Muzaffar Khan (*dar bayān-i mehmānī kardan sultān muhammad 'ādil shah rā wa dādan-i jahez-i dukhtar-i nawab muzaffar khān*).

Shauqi begins with the usual convention of praising God and the sultan. These sections are brief and, within a few lines into the poem, he turns to the task before him. He once again begins with the metaphorical and spatial notion of *ghar* and the adorning of this place for a grand feast:

suniyā mein ke shah ghar badā kāj hai / ke jis kāj kā khalaq muhtāj hai
jahāndār ne mezbānī kariyā / usse nāvon mein shādmānī dhariyā

I heard there was a great work at the king's house
 A work on which all of creation depended

The possessor of the world was to host a feast
 One that would instill joy and delight to his name

The notion of home or *ghar* appears in narrative poems with both the *bazm* and *razm* leitmotif, but for distinct purposes. For Nusrati in the 'Alīnāma, political conflicts threatened the very integrity of the home, a space of belonging, the building

block of the state. In the *bazm* poem, the home or *ghar* is a site of poetic and aesthetic adornment and celebration. The groom's home and the bride's natal home are interlinked through the poet's description of procession, assembly, gifting, and feasting. Shauqi constructs a portrait of the preparations for the king's house, drawing the listener's attention to sensory objects of adornment and decoration. The verses capture the visual, experiential, and aural qualities of consumption items and decorated spaces, from latticed chalices (*mushtabik mane jāṃ*) to water basins (*hauz khāne*) filled with perfume (*ghāliyah*).

For seventeenth-century courtly listeners, the interplay between the alliteration of words and the physical characteristics of each object would have resonated with the experience of seeing the elaborate preparations for the king's wedding being made across the city of Bijapur. Consider for instance, Shauqi's description of light and candles, objects revered for their myriad qualities in Persian poetry:⁶⁶

lage maum bātiyān kanchan ke lagan / kanchan ke lagan nau ratan ke gagan
yatā maum kharchiyā apas kāj kon / na kaun rāj kharchiyā apas rāj kon

the wick of candles like gold / gold like nine jewels of the skies
so much was spent for candles on this occasion / no other king had spent as much
in his realm⁶⁷

The ability of kings to bear expenses for lighting candles in public spaces such as mosques featured in inscriptions across the Islamic world.⁶⁸ The two meanings of the *tatsama*-Sanskrit loanword *kanchan/kānchan* in this verse refer to the visual quality of golden light but also to the shimmering of thousands of lit candles being compared here to moving dancers.⁶⁹ In the single manuscript of the *Mezbānīnāma*, in this line the letter 'alif has been omitted to adhere to the poem's meter. Shauqi appears to be playing on both meanings of the word, *kanchan* (dancers) versus *kānchan* (gold), to bring alive the visual and tactile qualities of thousands of lit candles. Shauqi uses an Indic vocabulary to name objects and substances associated with festive courtly ceremony, a pattern that continues in the rest of the poem, when describing flowers, foods, and drinks at the wedding party.

The poet turns to worldly images of money, the ability to spend (*kharchā*), giving *bakshish* (presents) to subjects, *sone hor rupe* (gold and money) to courtiers, and so forth, placing them in a broader geographic imaginary.⁷⁰ When the court gathers around the king in the poem's second chapter, Shauqi once again turns to gifting, in the form of gems and horses from across the world, and its role in connecting the king (*shah*) to the people (*log*) and to the lords (*mīr wa mirzā*), placing an emphasis on the scale of expenses and transregional spaces where things were acquired:

huā kharch us kāj kon beshumār / sunere rupere hazārān hazār
jadat hor jawāhir yatā kuch diyā / jo ūs dekhte khalq hairān rahiya

the expenses on that task were infinite / thousands upon thousands of gold coins
so much gold and precious jewels were given / leaving all of mankind astonished⁷¹

*kite la 'l wa nilam wa marmar kite / diyā bhī jawāhir sau bartar kite
firangān wa kurdī diyā turbatī / jabnī alemānī wa maghribī
sau dībāye rumī wa chīnī parend / sau tāzī wa turkī malūkān pasand
'arabī 'irāqī wa turkī turang / sau balkhī bukhārī wa khatlī surang*

So many rubies, sapphires, and marble / giving many such sublime precious stones
Franks, Kurds, Turbati / German and Maghrebi
Hundreds of Rumi brocades and Chinese silks / Tazi, Turki, the choicest from all lands
Tazi, Turki, Arabi, Iraqi horses / A retinue of Balkhi, Bukhari and chestnut [horses.]

*yatā kharch pānān huā rāj kāj / na sone mein dekhiyā kad mein rām rāj
diyā khalq kon dān hor pān le / diyā pān hor dān hor mām le*⁷²

so much was spent in the kingdom / such that even Ramraj had not seen in his dreams
giving mankind so much food and drink / in return, gaining honor and respect

Here again, historical referentiality in the poem is apparent through two images—one of material prosperity based on the acquisition of a variety of luxury items; the other of an ideal kingly authority. The image of enumerating people and goods from distant lands was common across narrative poems in regional literary idioms, mediating between images borrowed from the Persian, cosmopolitan sphere to the regional, listing foods, décor, and dress specific to the Deccan.⁷³ The second image that Shauqi plays with is of Aliya Rama Raya, the Aravidu chief of the erstwhile Vijayanagara Empire, who was defeated by an alliance of the Deccan sultans at the so-called Battle of Talikota in 1565, an event that the poet also commemorated in his previous work, the late sixteenth-century poem *Fathnāma-yi Nizām Shah*.⁷⁴ The Vijayanagara ruler, identified as Ramraj, became a stock literary image with historical referentiality in the Deccan's Persianate texts over the course of the seventeenth century, deployed to symbolize both an incomparable kingly authority and an existential rival of the Deccan sultans. The figure of Ramraj operates as a symbolic measure for a peerless patron-king who could spend and devote enormous resources to ceremony and ritual.

The *Mezbanīnāma*'s final portrait captures the groom's arrival at the wedding feast hosted by Muzaffar Khan. The poet begins by placing the groom and father-in-law relationship into the frequently used image of King Solomon and his wise minister, Asaf, while likening the bride and groom to the moon (*chānd*) and the sun (*sūr*). Objects of consumption that were part of the dowry (*jahez*) solidified this new affinal bond between the king and the lord and now father-in-law, Muzaffar Khan:

*sulaimān kon āsaf ne mehmān kiyā / 'ajāib gharāib bahut kuch diyā
diyā chānd kon sūr ke sāt kar / diyā nūr kon nūr ke sāt kar
aqīq miyānī kīre martabān / sau la 'l badakhshān kīre kifdān
nabātāt mein hor jamādāt mein / diyā khūb tar jo athā zāt mein
khatay ghulāmān halqa begūsh / sau chīnī kanizān zarbaft push*⁷⁵

Asaf hosted Solomon as a guest / giving all things wonderful and strange
 giving the moon to the sun / uniting light with light
 jars full of carnelian / boxes full of rubies
 filled with sweetmeats and stones / giving all that they possessed
 with Scythian slaves, rings in their ears / with female servants in gold-embroidered dress

The vivid portraits of consumption of food, clothing, and gifts mark the status of the poem's nonkingly patron and reputation within a wider community while still keeping the monarch as its main protagonist.

At the final banquet in the bride's home, the poet turns his attention to food and commensality, motifs that embody the poem's central theme of hospitality. The practice of eating together and appreciating a meal seals the affinal bond between the king and the lord's households. Shauqi sketches images of different foods, capturing the experiences of wedding guests from far and wide who encountered unfamiliar and familiar tastes, smells, and sights at the feast:

*huā bār sufra shahr-yar kā / milāyā log sab ār kā bhār kā
 kiyā bārdārāye darya-i shukoh / zalebiyān ke jāle wa halwān ke koh
 sau biryān wa bughra wa qalya subās / sau machliyān ke khandre andre ke rās
 bilimbū wa nimbū wa sirkā masīr / sau jughrāt wa na 'na ' wa pudina panīr⁷⁶*

the king's table was abundant / people met from far and wide
 as majestic as the sea of glory / coils of *jalebī*, mountains of sweetmeats
 the smell of biryani, pastries, fried pilafs / varieties of fish, rows of eggs
 pickled limes and lemons / cream and mint and cheese

A wider transregional circuit of courtly audiences at the wedding marveled at the taste of new ceremonial foods, such as *pān* or betel-nut, which had long fascinated travelers visiting the subcontinent:

*jite mīr wa mirza khurāsān ke / rahe dekh hairān tabaq pān ke
 sunaharī rupahrī supāriyān ko dekh / jite pān khāte son sārīyān ko dekh⁷⁷*

all the great lords from Khurasan / were astonished seeing the trays of betel
 beholden to gold and silver-tinted betel-nuts / looked astounded at all upon tasting it

With such descriptions of mouth-watering dishes, music, the ornamented dresses of dancers, and adornments across the city of Bijapur, the poem invites its listeners to experience the celebration's aural and visual delights. Shauqi ends the poem with the standard poetic convention of self-exaltation (*ta'allī*) with a reflection on the poetic form and its unique ability to capture the wedding's rich sensory stimuli and the consumption rituals that sacralized affinity. He remarks that neither register nor book (*na daftar mein pāvein na andar kitāb*) could have recorded this event in the way verse could. In other words, administrative documentary genres used in the royal treasury for inventorying countless vessels of gold and silver (*zuruf-i zar-o-sīm*), shining porcelain (*nichal ghorīyān hor faghfuriyān*), and chests (*sandūqān*)

could not transmit the sensory and aesthetic effects of these objects on guests at the wedding as effectively as his poem. It was the poet alone who could immortalize it with a feast of words, memorializing the bond between the king and the lord:

hidāya magar dhan kirāmāt son / kifāyat kiyā us muhimmāt kon
qalm kardan rās sab bāns ke / siyāhī daryā kāghaz ākās ke

gifting with miraculous wealth / capturing the qualities of this important [event]
 I wrote gathering all sticks from earth / using the sea as ink and skies as my paper

The *Mezbanīnāma* is a meditation on poetic craft at the intersection of two linguistic worlds, the Indic and the Persianate. Shauqi mobilizes words, metaphors, and well-known Indic motifs in the masnavī form to represent a grand wedding's festive sensorium. Objects of consumption and ritual were described with attention to their physical and tactile qualities, and the motifs of home, spending, adornment, and food were utilized to capture the theme of hospitality. The wedding's reception by transregional visitors and audiences emphasizes the expression of tastes, sounds, and smells, inviting the poem's readers to inhabit the celebration and its sensory delights.

Why were these grand weddings of the 1630s represented in the panregional literary idiom of Dakkanī alongside Persian? I would argue that unlike in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, when such aristocratic marriages into the dynastic line were also common,⁷⁸ in the period of Mughal suzerainty, the composition and patronage of Dakkanī works was no longer limited or exclusive to sultans. Scholars have focused on the celebrated illustrated manuscripts in Dakkanī, such as the *Kitāb-i Nauras* (Book of Nine Essences) of Ibrahim 'Adil Shah II and the *divān* (collection of poems) of Muhammad Quli Qutb Shah (d. 1612), often interpreting these two golden age works as reflective of a kingship ideology rooted in the Deccan's syncretic or local culture.⁷⁹ Shortly thereafter, aristocratic-military elites from diverse social backgrounds patronized the regional literary idiom, once reserved for the royal dynastic line alone. Dakkanī literary representations, whether of festivity or war, were marking boundaries of kinship, language, and status. It should come as no surprise, then, that second-generation Persians, such as Mustafa Khan and Muzaffar Khan, and Afghan military household chiefs (as I show in chapters 3 and 6) deployed the narrative poem genre in the regional idiom to represent their political claims.

CONCLUSION

As I noted in the introduction, extant textual genres pose certain limits for writing a history of relatedness before 1700. This chapter has stitched together portraits of affinity culled from a mosaic of texts by tracing representations of a series of marriages that took place in the Deccan sultanates in the 1630s. Likewise, from these moments, we have drawn out auxiliary circuits of friendship and patronage between, for instance, elite women patrons and slave literati, to reimagine

expressions of relatedness between individuals of different status. Placing new genres, such as the regional narrative poem, alongside more standard ones, such as the Persian chronicle at the chapter's center, had a twofold purpose. First, I argued that the users, listeners, and audiences of these two linguistic registers intersected and expanded over the course of the seventeenth century. Second, I showed that affinity was memorialized through images of feasting and consumption, a fundamental activity within courtly life. The multiple social locations of hospitality included the adorned palace with the king's assembly, a public procession through the city of Bijapur, and the bride's natal home in Hyderabad.

Moving beyond the usual Persian prose chronicles and European accounts required us to abandon the desire for a sequential narrative history and instead turn to the affective and sensory articulations of affinity and relatedness in the narrative poem. The *Mezbanīnāma* is part of a rare but sizable body of texts that decenter the Persian chronicle, revealing a new set of patrons and listeners. But these texts have largely been dismissed as sources, given the difficulty of extracting straightforward political history from them. Turning to the linguistic layers of the *Mezbanīnāma* shows the familiar pattern of Sanskrit-Indic vocabularies deployed within Persian forms used to portray a consumption culture that lay at the heart of the politics of relatedness.

In South Asia, the Mughal dynastic line has long captured the imagination of political historians and literary scholars with an overwhelming focus on the kingly figure and its corollary—the consanguine household—wherein blood and descent through a male ancestor takes primacy over all other forms of kinship. The Persian-language chronicle is the paradigmatic textual genre from which histories beholden to the consanguine have been periodized and narrated. However, as this chapter shows, the dominant form of writing history, *tārīkh*, is one among a constellation of materials available to us to refract the story of the king and his consanguine household. Along with narrative poems in the panregional literary idiom, we find clues about alternative notions of relatedness and kinship, unbound between the two extremes of blood or fiction.

Together, these texts reflect a larger political shift unfolding in the seventeenth century, that of new, hybrid nodes of political power—namely, elite household chiefs—anchoring, undercutting, and redefining the monarchical form. This was done, as the next chapter will show, to capture the divergence between kingly and household power. Redefining what changed about the meaning of *ghar* in the regional capital and casting their gaze to sites of conflict across the peninsula, Persianate literati set aside the chronicle form and embraced alternate modes of literary expression to comment on the political uncertainties of their present and the place of households in state power.