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Creation of a Royal Personality. The *Yadgar-e Silver Jubilee* of Mir Osman Ali Khan, Nizam of Hyderabad, 1936

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The Silver Jubilee: celebration of a ruler and mirror of an epoch

Mir Osman Ali Khan, ruler of the princely State of Hyderabad since 1911, could at no time of his reign complain of a lack of public interest in his person and works. Yet the image of him that was presented to the world outside of his dominions, the standards by which he was judged, reflected the perception and the values of the colonial power and to a somewhat lesser extent of the anglicized section of the nationalist movement in British India. The Silver Jubilee of this accession to the throne in 1936 for once seemed to offer an occasion to present the world with a grandiose self-image. Festivities on a great scale had been planned, when the untimely death of King George V. required the postponement and reduction of the celebrations.[1] Nevertheless, a 'Jubilee Hall' in the Public Gardens of the capital was inaugurated to commemorate the occasion[2], a parade was held at Fateh Maidan and some addresses of loyalty given.

Not affected by these last-minute changes was the *Yadgar-e Silver Jubilee*, a richly ornamented and calligraphed volume of more than 400 folio pages, including hundreds of photographs, the selection and iconography of which would well deserve a separate study. In contrast to the congratulatory articles in the English-language press, which concentrate on the administrative achievements of Mir Osman's reign[3], the *Yadgar* describes the position

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1 Bawa (1992), pp. 163–164

2 Alikhan (1991), pp. 168–169

3 They find their shortest form in the invitation cards for the 'Presentation of address and casket' on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee: The reign of the Nizam is symbolised by five photographic medallions, epitomising Health, Education, Justice, Irrigation and Railways and showing the new buildings of the Osmania Hospital, the Osmania University, the High Court, a dam and the Secunderabad Railway Station. (Photographs of the Silver Jubilee,

of the Nizam against the background of a whole cosmology, creating a vision of the history of mankind in which he holds an essential place. As unfortunately the first pages in my copy of the *Yadgar* are missing, I have not been able to ascertain who was responsible for the editing. Many signs, however, point to Nawab Hosh Bilgrami, confident and secretary of the Nizam, if not as actual editor, at least as the driving force behind both the celebrations and the volume. The images in which Mir Osman is presented draw mostly on Islamic and Mughal traditions, but the authors are by no means only Muslims. As far as they can be identified, the majority belong either to the administrative service of the State or to the staff of the recently established Osmania University – the members of the higher nobility, with the exception of Maharaja Sir Kishen Pershad, the Prime Minister, are conspicuous by their silence.

Historians have usually been reluctant to use panegyrics as source material, judging them to be the works of flatterers and sycophants and containing little or no reliable information and surely no one should turn to the *Yadgar* with the sole purpose of ascertaining facts. For those, however, who are interested in mentalities and particularly in mentalities relating to the way government is perceived and justified, this study proves doubly rewarding: Though the genre aims at flattering the ruler, flattering him in a highly stereotyped way, the images offered by the tradition are wide enough in scope to permit flexibility and the taking into account of the personal idiosyncrasies of the ruler: to be able to flatter a person effectively, you must know his likes and dislikes and the panegyrists certainly knew their Nizam very well. If they do not draw a photographic picture, they show the way the Nizam wanted to be seen and the ideals and values which provided the orientation for his actions. On the other hand, this type of literature was no longer intended for the consummation of the ruler alone (and perhaps his inner circle), but formed part of the endeavour to praise him to his subjects, or at least to those of his subjects with whom he shared a common cultural language. This public certainly did not expect a faithful picture of the ruler – exaggerations were part of the game, so to speak – but still it should not be completely out of tune with what was known about the real person. At the same time, the panegyrist who took upon himself the task of legitimising the ruler, had to be sensitive to the values of his audience, and these values were changing rapidly in the 1930s. Although never openly discussed in the eulogistic literature, these changes leave their mark in a shift of emphasis, in the admission of new arguments without dislocating the old ones, in new topics becoming eligible for discussion and others being quietly dropped.

Collection of Cyril Walter Lloyd-Jones, MSS/Eur F/196, Vol. 218, India Office Library and Records, London)

By paying close attention to what is said and even more what is no longer said, by reading the eulogies as answers in a dialogue, as refutation of unvoiced charges, it is possible to gain quite a clear insight into the underlying political discourse of Hyderabad.

Indirect rule, bureaucratisation and political mobilisation

The Princely States and in particular the larger ones, were never really cut off from the developments in British India.[4] Not only did the intellectual and cultural currents cut across the borders, but also the constitutional developments in the territories of direct and indirect rule reacted upon each other to a larger extent than hitherto admitted. If this is true even for the period before the First World War, the trends gathered momentum with the debates initiated by the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms and culminated in the discussions of the Round Table Conference in 1930, bringing the states more to the limelight. Akbar Hydari, the Nizam's Minister for Finances, had played an important role in the federal discussions. Nevertheless, by 1936 the enthusiasm for Federation which had pervaded the first Round Table Conference and its aftermath, had waned. Hyderabad and some of the leading figures of the Chamber of Princes, who had hoped to escape paramountcy by joining an all-Indian federation, had in the meantime become hesitant, fearing that this federation might well lead to central areas coming under the control of an increasingly hostile nationalist movement.[5] Instead, Hyderabad tried to emphasise its historic position as an independent state with its own traditions and culture. This conscious search for a 'Hyderabadi identity' was new. Nevertheless it not only did not exclude a growing influence of ideas coming from across the border, but was even to some extent the result of this confrontation.

The second major field which induced a change in the political values in the time under review, was the rapidly progressing bureaucratisation of the administration of the State. The policy of non-intervention followed by the Political Department in the 1920s had led to a deterioration of the internal situation in Hyderabad, to a point where a popular revolt against the Nizam could no longer be ruled out.[6] Mir Osman Ali Khan had not only alienated

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[4] Pernau (1992)

[5] The most recent elaboration of the federal discussions in the 1930s is to be found in Copland (1997).

[6] Hyderabad Affairs 1924-26, Resident to Political Department, 16.3.1925 R/1/1/1465 (Residency Records, IOLR)

the nobility of the State, but also converted the traditional symbol of nazar, an offering presented in acknowledgement of sovereignty, into a means of pillaging rich and poor alike. The administration, with the exception of the resorts held by British officers 'lent' to the ruler by the Indian Civil Service, had virtually come to a standstill. When at the same time the Nizam challenged British paramountcy in connection with discussions pertaining to a possible rendition of the province of Berar and claimed equality with the Viceroy, the Political Department reacted sharply, insisting on a restructuring of the Executive Council, in order to extend the number of high-ranking British officials and shift the real administrative power from the ruler to the Council, which acted in co-ordination with the Residency. The nomination as President of the Executive Council of Maharaja Kishen Pershad, the leading Hindu noble of the State and for many the embodiment of the traditions of Hyderabad, masked the extent of the change to a certain degree. The real powers behind the scenes, however, were Akbar Hydari and Richard Chenevix-Trench, who occupied the two key resorts in the cabinet, Finance and Revenue. Dedicated bureaucrats, they worked for the increase of the efficiency and predictability of the administration – a development which necessarily entrenched on the right of the ruler to disregard powers and procedures[7], and founded the administration no longer on personal ties, but on abstract rules, which were moreover guaranteed by the colonial power. The 'Hyderabad Civil Service Classes' were reopened and the exigencies for admission in the State Service and for promotion laid down[8]; several commissions inquired into the financial disputes between the Nizam and the nobles[9], thereby creating two powerful groups of partisans with a stake in the success of the reforms.

The last development, which induced far-reaching changes in the political structure of the state as well as in the legitimation of the government, was the increasing mobilisation of the people. Although, as mentioned above, Hyderabad had never really been cut off from the political developments in British India and had had its share of Swadeshi and Ganesh Utsav agitation at the turn of the century[10], the Khilafat movement for the first time featured mass demonstrations not only in the capital, but in the major provincial towns as well. The Nizam had been recognised by the British as the 'Leader of the Indian Muslims' at the beginning of the First World War in exchange for an appeal to loyalty. Since the end of the war he had tried to base this

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[7] Hyderabad Affairs 1928, Resident to Political Department, 20.3.1928, R/1/1/1708

[8] Aleem (1985), p. 51; Mazhar (1945), pp. 162, 243–244

[9] Restoration of the Paigah Estates in Hyderabad, R/1/1/1464; Restoration of the Paigah Estates in Hyderabad, R/1/1/1799

[10] Andhra Pradesh State Committee (1957), pp. 54–62; 151–170

claim on popular support especially among the North Indian Muslims and had therefore in the initial phase supported the Khilafatists both inside and outside his dominion.[11] The following years however showed, that this very concept of 'natural leadership', by which rulers, nobles or powerful zamindars could claim to represent a community in virtue of their traditional standing or personal capacity, was becoming increasingly challenged. Instead, their leadership was to be founded on the more or less explicit consent of those led – delegation was taking the place of representation. Of course these developments were strongest amongst those groups that found themselves inadequately 'represented' by the Nizam – specially those who found their identity not in the traditional courtly culture of Hyderabad, but in the regional traditions of Maharashtra and Telengana.[12] Nevertheless, by the mid 1930s they were also taken up by the 'Mulki League', an association voicing a Dekhani nationalism and which enjoyed the patronage of quite a number of members of the traditional elite.[13]

This is the background against which the *Yadgar* must be seen. It is a document of a transitorial period, a transition which was at no moment uniform, but allowed for a simultaneity of elements belonging to different historical layers. As long as this ambiguity was not perceived as such and the contradictory elements were kept apart and not integrated into a common framework, it worked as a 'reconciling rhetoric'[14], permitting the partial integration of new elements without forcing a breach with the past.

Theory of kingship: embodiment of *aql* and Khalif of Islam

The opening passage of the article 'Qualities of Osman' by the Nizam's confident Hosh Bilgrami – the written version of the speech delivered by him at the Jubilee festivities – is worth quoting to some extent, as it sets the tone for the whole *Yadgar*:

> 'In the beginning, when men started to transcend the borders separating them from the wild beasts, and began to learn the use of speech, when they relinquished the life in the dreadful wilderness of the open plains and instead built regular places of dwelling, the first thing their newly cultivated minds thought about, was how the unpleasantness and the disputes of com-

[11] Pernau (1999)

[12] Andhra Pradesh State Committee (1966), pp. 43–45 (Telengana), pp. 120–126 (Maharashtra)

[13] Husain (1935); List of Members: Razvi (1985), pp. 14–16; Ali Yavar Jang (1949), pp. 1–2

[14] Ewing (1988), pp. 1–25, quotation p. 3

> mon life could be avoided. The same human passions, which today are forcefully dominating over the intricacies of human life, at that time were dominating the nature of these innocent and simple people. Therefore it was necessary that such a mind (*dimagh*) should be chosen, who would save the surface of humanity from unevenness and hinder unreasonable passions from transcending the limits set by a well-balanced reason (*aql salim*). This is the wisdom which lies behind the designation of the prophets and this is the basic purpose for sending men of wisdom and sagacity, those who showed the people the rules of spiritual evolution, who taught men the subtle points of inner disposition and good actions they should cultivate, who marked the foundation for supremacy and rule, who kept mankind within the limits of proper behaviour.
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> The personality, who was recognised as a superior and an authority, was distinguished mainly by a feeling for reason and knowledge (*aql o ilm*) and – to a larger degree than common people – an inclination towards ordering and constructing (*tadbir o ta'mir*). As the circles of civilisation and culture (*tahzib o tamaddun*) began to widen, the boundaries of order (*nizam*) were extended and by and by this order of the universe took a permanent shape and mankind was forced to bow under one shepherd and leader.
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> The history of past days' governments will tell you that those rulers were awarded an eternal place in the world, who had a feeling for their responsibility, who polished the surface of knowledge and moral behaviour in their domains, who could by their own qualities teach kindness (*neki*) and virtue (*akhlaq*) to a large number of people.'[15]

The soul of man, as regarded by classical Islamic psychology, consists of two contending forces. *Nafs*, the lower soul, is seen as the 'specifically uncontrolled energy – physical power, desire, animal passion and carnal appetite'[16] which man shares with the animals, and which, if left uncontrolled, leads to devastation. *Aql*, the faculty of reasoning, is the force by which *nafs* can be dominated and led on the path to salvation. In this context, 'nature' does not evoke romantic feelings and much less the image of Rousseau's good savage, but a frightening state of wilderness and roughness, which has to be overcome. Like a rough piece of wood, the soul of man has to be planed down and polished before it becomes beautiful and reaches *adab*, the good breeding and politeness which can only be achieved through the control of the passions.

Different persons embody these qualities to a different extent. Richard Kurin has shown how in the popular perception *aql* is associated with the refinement of city-life and town-dwellers, whereas the villagers are thought

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[15] Hosh Bilgrami, Sirat Osmani, in: *Yadgar*, pp. 25–30, quotation p. 25. I would like to thank my teacher and friend Dr. Yunus Jaffrey, who with great patience corrected my translations and was as generous as ever in sharing his knowledge and his time.

[16] Kurin (1988), p. 223

to be simple-hearted, but dominated by the passions of their *nafs*.[17] But whereas his informants simply state this difference without drawing further reaching conclusions about the way the relations between urbanites and villagers ought to be structured, Hosh Bilgrami imparts a meaning to this ontological difference between people and uses it as the starting point for the elaboration of his theory of government. In a state, as in a soul, the ultimate aim is an order (*nizam*), in which all the different forces have been assigned their proper place and are dominated by the supreme reason. Whosoever has learned to dominate his passions, who has acquired *ilm*, the knowledge and wisdom which enables him to recognise the rules governing the evolution of the human soul and their relation to man's place in the universe[18], has done so not only for his own sake, but is thereby enabled to lead others, who are still struggling with their passions. This is the task of a ruler – an essential task if the order of the world is to be preserved. He therefore cannot be chosen at will by the people, but has to legitimise himself by the possession of certain qualities not accessible to other persons: an almost classical example of what Max Weber calls rule by charismatic power.

The king embodies *aql* to such an extent that he is 'freed from the bondage of the inordinate passions of *nafs*'.[19] In the neo-platonic theory of emanation, which forms the background to much of Sufi thinking, the ontological status of man and his proximity to God are intertwined. The ruler who by virtue of having conquered *nafs* is nearer to God than all others, partakes in his qualities. The light which emanates from God falls first on him, by him it is transmitted to the world. By this true light, the Nizam 'lifts the veil of darkness from the remotest corners of the world'[20] and 'dissipates our superstitions'.[21] He is the embodiment of all the virtues, the perfect man, the 'insan-e kamil'[22]; like the perfect Shaikh, he is able to lead 'his disciples with a guidance granted directly by God.'[23] This guidance may be an imparting of knowledge; more often, however, it will just be the setting of an example. Even his comportment in ordinary walks of life, the way he eats and drinks, offers the disciples matter for loving contemplation and improvement of their self: 'In short, every action of Hazrat Jahan Panah is

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[17] Ibid.

[18] Lapidus (1984), p. 39

[19] Bilgrami, p. 30

[20] Bilgrami, p. 26

[21] Razaq, Muhammad Abdul ("Rashid"): Saltanat-e Dakn aur wafadari, *Yadgar*, pp. 242–244

[22] Mir Khurshid Ali Khan: Be-naqab haqiqat, *Yadgar*, pp. 101–108, quotation p. 102

[23] Schimmel (1975), p. 237

such a lesson, that seeing it, man can say "be off!" to the shortcomings of his reason and understanding (*aqli aur zahni kamian).*'[24]

The natural tendency of history being towards decay and disruption of order and civilisation, a periodic renovation – first through the prophets, then through the perfect men – is vital[25]:

> 'It cannot be denied that nature (*fitrat*) never grudges work for the upbuilding and progress of mankind. When the world is getting lost in the darknesses of ignorance and futility, it adorns someone with the robe [of honour] of life, so that he may change the corrupted system of life and order the scattered parts of existence. Those who lost the way of temperance by following passions are brought back to the path of moderation by reason, and the world that was deeply asleep awakens anew. The land of Hind since long needed such a man, who revives its forlorn past and imparts freshness to its withered environment. In the end, nature has realised this anxiety and made rise from the horizon of the Dekhan the sun of bliss of Alahazrat Mir Osman Ali Khan Bahadur.'[26]

Even if the eulogies stop short of actually claiming sanctity for the Nizam, the images used merge with those of the Sufi leader.[27] In this line of thought, his rule finds its justification not only, perhaps not even primarily, on the political, but on the spiritual level. The claims Hosh Bilgrami puts forward on behalf of his royal master might have seemed exaggerated to his contemporaries – that they were not completely out of tune with their own frame of reference, is perhaps indicated by the fact that in 1918 the Nizam had been awarded the title of 'Mohi ul Millat wad Din' (Reviver of the Community and the Faith) on the occasion of the annual meeting of the Nadwat ul Ulama in recognition of his support of the Khilafatist idea.[28]

Since the early 1930s the Nizam had made several moves to secure the Khilafat if not for himself, then at least for his family – the marriage of his sons to the daughter and niece of the last Turkish Khalifa certainly has to be viewed in this light[29] as also Mir Osman Ali Khan's patronising of Shaukat Ali, who spent most of his time in the Near East working for a revival of the

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[24] Bilgrami, p. 28

[25] On the concept of the mujaddid: Sanyal (1996), pp. 177–178

[26] Bilgrami, p. 26

[27] Metcalf (1984), pp. 7–8. It is in consonance with this observation that the Nizam was currently referred to as Ala Hazrat, at first glance a translation of the British title of His Exalted Highness, but also a common term of address for a Sufi master.

[28] Hyderabad Affairs 1919, Fraser (Resident) to Wood (Political Department), 8.10.1918, R/1/1/635; for the background see the newspaper *Sitara-e Hind*, 29.7.1918

[29] National Archive of India, File No. 538 P (Secret) of 1931, Serial No. 1–26

Khilafat[30]. Although the *Yadgar* yet refrains from claiming the succession of Abdul Majid for the Nizam, it points out that if a new Khalifa were to be elected, he would be the obvious choice.[31]

To be distinguished from this idea of the universal Khilafat, of a single Khalifa uniting the whole *umma* is the claim to the local Khilafat, a fairly common occurrence since the tendencies of regionalising power in the middle ages. Titles formally connected with the Khalifa spread to lower levels. In his own territories every Sultan was the *amir ul musalman*, the leader of the believers and the *Zil Ullah*[32], the Shadow of God on Earth, in whom the divine attributes are reflected. In the same way as God is qualified by the traits of universal compassion and forgiveness, by the care for the poor and humble, by the preservation of peace, the lustre of these virtues emanates from the ruler as well.[33]

This argumentation is almost identical with the legitimation by personal qualities we have encountered above, nevertheless it is important to distinguish clearly between the two different starting points: the charismatic legitimation begins with extraordinary attributes to be found in a person, attributes which point to him as the only person able to fulfil the office of the ruler. Once a person is recognised to be endowed with these qualities, the choice ends and obedience is henceforth a duty. The same qualities may show in the *Zil Ullah*, but here they are a reflection of God's attributes, which cling not to the person, but to the office – the person is not the ruler due to his extraordinary qualities, but on the contrary has been endowed by God with these qualities in virtue of his office – it is the distinction Max Weber draws between personal charisma and charisma attached to the office (*Amtscharisma*).

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[30] National Archive of India, Foreign and Political Department, Government of India, File No. F 281-N/30, Serial Nos. 1–211. Although Shaukat Ali spent some very busy years shuttling between India, Palestine and Egypt and causing periodic flutter among the British Intelligence Service and the Foreign Department, he never seems to have been quite sure about his personal choice for the next Khalifa, offering it alternatively and some times simultaneously to Abdul Majid of Turkey, the Nizam and King Fuad of Egypt. See Pernau (1999).

[31] Hazrat Aqdas o 'ala ke adim an nazir mahasin o ausaf, *Yadgar*, pp. 90–92

[32] Abu Khair Muhammad Khair Ullah: Zil Ullah, in: *Yadgar*, pp. 88–89

[33] Ibid.

The Asaf Jahi Dynasty and the Dekhan

Both these lines of argumentation are highly abstract and stereotyped. They elaborate a theory of government, but they do little to legitimise a particular ruler or even a particular dynasty. At this point, the 'invention of tradition'[34] becomes crucial, for the weight of history can make the association between a country and a ruling house appear as a matter of course. In this particular case, however, the creation of a history had to satisfy several contradictory exigencies. The Asaf Jahi family originated from Samarkand, tracing their ancestry back to Shaikh Shahab ud Din Suhrawadi[35] and from him to Abu Bakr, the second Khalifa.[36] Khwaja Mir Abid Qilji, who had held the posts of Qazi and Sheikh ul Islam in Bukhara had migrated to India at the time of Shahjahan, where he became a member of the entourage of Aurangzeb and quickly rose in the administrative, later also in the military service. He and his son Ghazi ud Din Firoz Jang took a leading part in the repeated sieges of Golconda. Whereas the foreign descent and the military prowess would traditionally have sufficed to establish the nobility of a family – that they were still considered indispensable is shown by the extent to which the writers of the *Yadgar* dwell on these topics – in the age of incipient nationalism these very issues began to provoke uneasiness. Trying to prove the preordained and intimate connection of the family with the history of Hyderabad, the *Yadgar* lays emphasis on the fact that Khwaja Mir Abid was buried in the soil of the Dekhan, a sign of God for the future rule of the dynasty.[37] Qamar ud Din, Asaf Jah I. was already born in Hindustan, 'he was a genuine Turkman, but his mother was a Hindustani [...] Because he was due to become the ruler of the Dekhan, God provided it that his whole youth was spent in the Dekhan, so that he was very familiar with the whole atmosphere of the Dekhan. This is the reason why, when he took the reigns of rule in his hands, he was as well acquainted with the geographic and political conditions of the Dekhan and knew its different clans and tribes so well as if his family had been Dakhni.'[38]

Asaf Jah I., who had been appointed governor of the Dekhan, had since 1724, for all practical purposes, acted as an independent ruler, nevertheless carefully preserving the formal trappings of the Moghul suzerainty. This policy had been followed by all his successors. Unlike the Nawabs of

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[34] Hobsbawm / Ranger (1984)

[35] Abu ul Muhasan Muhammad Muhin Khan "Mutin": Hazrat Asaf Jah Awwal ke Ab o Jad, *Yadgar*, pp. 41–45

[36] Moulvi Hakim Shifa: Shajarah-e Khandan-e Asafia, *Yadgar*, pp. 37–40

[37] Muhammad Abdul Majid Siddiqi: Saltanat-e Asafia ka Ahd-e Hukumat, *Yadgar*, pp. 46–62

[38] Ibid., p. 48

Awadh, they had even resisted the British overtures during the first half of the 19th century to proclaim themselves kings. Right up to 1858, therefore, the *khutba* had been read in the name of the Moghul Emperor. Much effort was spent on the correct interpretation of the events of 1724, even more so since the beginning of the federal discussions in the wake of the Round Table Conferences. On the one hand, the Nizam had to guard himself against the accusation of faithlessness – which not only might endanger the prestige still to be derived from the connection of the family history with the Mughal dynasty, but also jeopardise his position as 'Faithful Ally of the British Government'. On the other hand, his constitutional position might well be enhanced, should he be able to prove that Hyderabad had been an independent and sovereign state at the advent of the British and that this position had not been changed by the subsequent treaties.[39] The way that was chosen to resolve this ambiguity was to emphasise the factual independence, but at the same time to impute it to necessity: 'The truth is that if Nizam ul Mulk had not proclaimed the independence of the Dekhan, the Marathas would have brought it under their power [...] By this independence, he saved not only the Dekhan, but also many of the traditions of the Moghul Sultanate, which still today can be seen in their purity.'[40] 'It was the result of the declaration of independence (*'ilan khud mukhtari*) that saved a glorious civilisation (*tahzib*) from complete annihilation.'[41] This line of argument shifted the emphasis from the image of the dynasty as conquerors of the Dekhan to the saviours of its culture. At the same time it shows very clearly that the legitimation of government was still exclusively addressed to those raised on the premises of an Urdu/Persian culture – at no moment did it take into consideration the Hyderabadi popular movement based on Marathi nationalism, which claimed precisely these persons and events from whom the Nizams had saved the Dekhan, as hallmarks of their identity.

Mir Osman: royal *faqir* or successful administrator?

The last step after the elaboration of a theory of government and the establishment of the historic rights of the ruling dynasty is the legitimation of the actual ruler. This step was even more critical in the case of Mir Osman Ali Khan, because he had always to sustain comparison with his father. His own succession had by no means been undisputed, both his father and an

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[39] This was the line of argument the State Government eventually chose in the 1940s when it introduced the annual celebration of the 'declaration of independence'.

[40] Siddiqi, p. 50f.

[41] Khud Mukhtar-e Daulat-e Asafia, *Yadgar*, p. 162

important section of the nobility favouring his younger half-brother Salabat Jah, who up to his death in 1934 had provided an alternative focus of affection and loyalty to the former confidants of his father.[42] Mir Mahbub Ali Pasha, like Harun ar Rashid, had loved to roam the streets of Hyderabad in disguise, distributing his bounty to the poor. Perhaps no other ruling monarch had ever come so close to the 19th century image of the oriental monarch – lacking only the element of cruelty so dear to the British construction of the 'Oriental despot'. He survives to the present day in countless anecdotes[43], in which his generosity, his politeness, his gift for a beautiful gesture and his courage are depicted and kindle the imagination of the people.[44] The contrast between father and son was certainly one of character, and it points to the remarkable flexibility of the traditional panegyrics that they could at once praise Mahbub Ali Pasha for his undiscriminating generosity and Mir Osman for his thriftiness. At the same time, however, this change is in consonance with the development of the reformist, puritanical current in Islam, whose longing for past grandeur focused no longer on the splendour of the Mughal or Abbasid court, but on the simplicity and sternness of pristine Islam.

The perception of the ruling class in Hyderabad during Mahbub Ali Pasha's time had on a common notion of the qualities that ennobled a man and hence been based gave him a legitimate place at the apex of society. This culture, although perhaps more Islamic than local in origin, was open to the participation of men of other creeds as well, the *sharafat* of a person being more important in the constitution of a social identity than his faith. Without the legitimatory power of nobility being renounced – as shown above – the relative importance of the elements of identity changed under Mir Osman. Paradigmatic in this context are the numerous anecdotes which depict the importance Mir Osman placed on Islamic equality – whether he asked the people not to accord him a special salutation during prayer time, as 'in the house of God the king and the *faqir* are equal', forbade the reading of a *qasida* in his honour on the premises of a mosque or renounced the traditional guards of honour during the Urs in Gulbarga.[45] This emphasis on religious identity is matched by the annihilation of all other identities, fore-

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[42] Husain (1997)

[43] Lynton/Rajan (1974); Ahmad (1945); Siyasat Roznama (1979); Luther (1995); Austin (1992)

[44] It would be interesting, however, to know when exactly these anecdotes and legends started to be circulated, as they might also fulfil the purpose of an indirect criticism levelled against Mir Osman by eulogising those qualities everyone knew he lacked.

[45] Ala Hazrat ke usul ta'limat Islamia ki pabandi ke chand namune, *Yadgar*, p. 96

most of social ranking, at least within the limits of the sacred space and time.

Mahbub Ali Pasha as well as Maharaja Sir Kishen Pershad had been praised for embodying the syncretistic tendencies of the Dekhan; Maharaja transcending the limitations imposed on commensality and connubium and marrying Hindu and Muslim ladies alike, the Nizam going to the extent of performing puja for the angry goddess of the river Musi during the flood of 1908.[46] Mir Osman, however, was thanked for abolishing 'illegal customs', a current topic in reformist Islam, which in this particular case referred not only to the prohibition of prostration at court[47], but even more his 'reformation' of the Muharram processions.[48] These celebrations, however, had since the time of the Qutb Shahis developed as one of the central festivals uniting Hindus and Muslims and patronised by the nobles irrespective of their faith.[49]

But where the redefinition of values to emphasise the exclusiveness of the Muslim faith might not pose too great a problem in a North Indian religious centre, the Nizam and his eulogists had always to keep in mind that not only the population, but also the elite supporting his rule, was not composed only of Muslims. Side by side with the articles, which point out the uncompromising attitude of the Nizam, where his faith is concerned, others are to be found, which reiterate the classical credo of the Hindus and the Muslims being the two eyes of the Nizam, and he as a ruler being so perfectly neutral that he might even be considered as without faith.[50]

One of the most dangerous attacks on the image of the Nizam were the anecdotes picturing him as excessively fond of money and disliking to spend any of his own.[51] These tales were too currently known to be simply ignored or supplemented by others. Considerable energy therefore is spent on the effort of reinterpreting miserliness as thriftiness, on depicting Mir Osman as a *faqir*, who had risen above worldly needs, who had renounced luxury and lived in utter simplicity, thereby setting an example not only to his own

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[46] Lynton/Rajan (1974), p. 16

[47] Muhammad Abul Razaq 'Rashid': Uruj-e Dekhan, *Yadgar*, pp. 159–160

[48] Mubarak ahd aqdas o ala men khurafat ka insadad, *Yadgar*, p. 107, lists the firmans which forbade 'improper and obscene speech', the use of colours during the processions and any form of dance and merrymaking in the Ashuras during Muharram. For a description of the customs observed by the participants of the processions who disguised themselves as animals and painted their bodies see Naqvi (1993), pp. 200ff.

[49] Leonard (1978), pp. 47, 81–82 for the patronage of Muharram by the Kayasths

[50] Mir Khurshid Ali Khan, p. 103

[51] Variety of anecdotes current in the 1920s and 1930s to be found in MSS Eur/F 222/10 (Hunt Collection), IOLR.

nobles, but to all the other Indian princes as well.[52] What generosity there was – and the praise of thriftiness untrammelled by generosity was still not admissible – was no longer the spontaneous munificence of Mahbub Ali Pasha, who would give away his purse without knowing what it contained[53], but the well-planned funding of projects and institutions. Once again, the difference in character between father and son provided the starting-point for this change, which however transcends personal traits of individuals and reflects the cultural evolution of a whole epoch.

In this context, rather than reducing the relations between bureaucratisation and changes in values to simple causalities in one or the other direction, it seems more helpful to recur to Max Weber's term of affinity (*Wahlverwandtschaft*). Like the Protestant ethic analysed by him in its relation to the spirit of capitalism, reformist Islam, as it had developed since the turn of the century, postulated a religious obligation to rationally organise one's life and to avoid useless squandering of resources.[54] By looking for an 'affinity' between these tendencies of Islam and the secular trend towards bureaucratisation, it might be possible to draw the attention to the way these two movements were intertwined – the reformist current may be seen as provoked by the needs of an expanding bureaucracy and also as a necessary precondition for this expansion – while at the same time avoiding the reduction of a religious and cultural movement to a mere epiphenomenon.

When focusing on the daily occupations of the Nizam, the *Yadgar* therefore no longer depicts him as a personality above the quotidian, who demonstrates his 'difference' by not being subjected to rules, but as willingly obeying a self-imposed discipline. Mir Osman is shown as rising early in the morning, needing only very little food and devoting most of his waking time to the administration of the State.[55] His intelligence and the ease with which he solves difficult problems are praised as extraordinary, he is the '*hakim us siyasat*' [56], the master of all the questions pertaining to politics and administration. But where a purely bureaucratic legitimation lays the emphasis not on the personal qualities of the incumbent of an office, but on the correct procedure by which he is chosen and by which the official tasks are performed, the qualification of the Nizam as *hakim us siyasat* is included in the praise of his extraordinary, hence charismatic qualities, it forms part of

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[52] Rae Guru Charan Das Saxena: Zil Ullah ki Sadagi, *Yadgar*, pp. 78–79

[53] Lynton / Rajan (1974), p. 73

[54] Metcalf (1992), Introduction; Metcalf (1994)

[55] Hosh Bilgrami, p. 28

[56] Hazrat aqdas, p. 90

the '*jam'a ul kamalat*'[57], the sum of perfections embodied by the ruler. Being, as might be said with an only apparent contradiction, a charismatic ability to act rationally, this topos forms the hinge between two systems of political thought and legitimation. Intelligence and wisdom are personal qualities of the Nizam with which he has been endowed to an extraordinary extent. Like other extraordinary qualities they fit into the pattern of charismatic legitimation. In this context, the enumeration of Mir Osman's administrative achievements essentially serves the purpose of proving the existence of these qualities and therewith identifying him as the legitimate ruler. Formally, bureaucratic attributes are not treated differently from other charismatic qualities out of the '*jam'a ul kamalat*'. Nevertheless, although personal, these qualities affect the life of the Nizam's subjects:

> 'If Alahazrat is like a cloud of rain, who showers all he has to others and holds nothing back for himself, it would not be proper to think that these qualities remain limited in their benefit to his person. The illuminative power of the sun is its personal quality, but when it spreads its shafts of light, not only the globe of the sun itself becomes bright, but the whole solar system benefits. The fragrance is a personal quality of the flower, but when it exhales its vivifying breath, whose sense of smell is not filled by its perfume?'[58]

The string of traditional poetical images should not hide the fact that an important shift in emphasis is already being prepared, drawing attention to the recipient of the royal bounties. When long articles on the administrative reforms in all the departments of government fill the pages of the *Yadgar*, the reference to the Nizam as the driving force behind them is never missing, but the emphasis is on the results these reforms engender. Actions in this new understanding no longer only point to the qualities of the ruler, but acquire a value of their own. In a next step they might well be considered independently of the actor, who would then become interchangeable – a functional instead of personal legitimation of government. The *Yadgar* stops short of these conclusions, it opens the door, but does not cross the threshold. Actions acquire an importance they never had before, they are no longer spontaneous emanations of a royal personality, but the result of continuous, rational work, no longer a beautiful gesture, illustration of character, but the result of planned and calculated activity for the sake of the subjects.

Perhaps nowhere is this difference more marked than in the comparison of the attitude Mahbub Ali Pasha and Mir Osman adopted towards the catastrophic floods of the Musi river, as depicted in their respective panegyrics. When in 1908 the flood destroyed a large part of the old city, leading to

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[57] Ibid.

[58] Mir Khurshid Ali Khan, pp. 104–105

tremendous loss of lives and property, Mahbub Ali Pasha was continuously to be seen on the spots of distress, in his car, on horseback, on an elephant or even on foot, consoling the people and making them feel, that he shared their ordeal, that all he had belonged to them, his children, as well.[59] Mir Osman for his part is remembered for damming the river and constructing tanks, which not only prevented further floods, but ensured the provision of the city with drinking water and electricity. Superb administrative achievement though it was, it never endeared him to the people to the same extent as the symbolic actions of his father, thereby pointing clearly to the limited capacity of rational actions to legitimise personal rule. The notion of *hakim us siyasat* might temporarily bridge the gap between the personal-charismatic system of legitimation of government and the bureaucratic system. The more, however, the *hakim us siyasat* showed his capacity to rationalise his own work and the organisation of his administration, making them dependent not on a sudden flash of inspiration but on continuous and planned activities, the more he eroded his own personal legitimation, paving the way for his substitution by a collective and anonymous administration.

This same process, by which a new form of legitimation is inserted in the old one, apparently reinforcing it, but in the long run eroding it from within, can be shown in the praises of the Nizam as the foremost promoter of progress in his realm. As shown above, an important part of the legitimation of the ruling dynasty was based on a construction of the history of the state, by which its members shown to be the lawful heirs of the Moghuls, the preservers and protectors of the traditional culture and civilisation, which, after the downfall of Delhi and Lucknow, had taken refuge in Hyderabad. A number of poets had made their way to the Dekhan to find patronage at the court of the Nizams or of a noble. The official language of the state had only after the death of Salar Jang I. been changed from Persian to Urdu. Although spoken by only a minority of the people, Urdu more than anything else had become the hallmark of the Hyderabadi identity – a heritage from the past which had to be protected against the common onslaught of English and modernity.

The Nizam was praised for his poetry in Urdu and Persian, which was regularly published in the newspapers[60] and was considered by his eulogists to be a knowledgeable patron of poets – both traditional topoi of the Indo-Muslim panegyrics. His main achievement, however, was considered to be the foundation of the Urdu-medium Osmania University in 1917, accompa-

[59] The description of the flood and Mahbub Ali Pasha's comportment occupies the best part of the first chapter of Lynton/Rajan (1974), showing how central these orally transmitted anecdotes were for the constitution of the atmosphere of the 'Days of the Beloved'.

[60] Bawa (1992), p. 209

nied by the establishment of a translation bureau.[61] Where the traditional patronage of science, art and language had seen its task in enabling scholars of every generation to acquire the canon of established knowledge and to transmit it intact to the next generation, the aim of the Osmania University from the very beginning had been to achieve a blending of Eastern and Western sciences, so that 'full advantage may be taken of all that is best in the ancient and modern systems of physical, intellectual and spiritual culture'.[62] The task of the translation bureau consisted not only in providing the students with textbooks in Urdu, but also, through the systematic creation of new technical terms, in developing the Urdu language so as to enable it to hold its place among modern and scientific languages. The Nizam, as a patron of a new kind, is praised no longer only for his Messiah-like ability to impart new life[63], but even more for the impetus he gives to the country and its people to start moving on the path of progress. No longer static, characterised by periods of decadence and subsequent reforms which re-establish pristine splendour, history is now seen as moving towards a glorious future, the Nizam being the one who provides the impulse and shows the way: no longer *islah* (reform), but *taraqqi* (progress) proves the key-word for most of the articles.[64]

If, however, the past loses its legitimating power, the traditional base of the Nizam's rule is itself no longer protected against erosion. Once modernity and change are considered prime values, the very fact that his dynasty had ruled the Dekhan for more than 200 years, that it posed as the living link to India's Mughal past, might well turn against him. If the aim of political action was no longer to be the preservation of tradition, but 'progress' the Nizam had to enter into competition with the popular British Indian leaders on the question whom the people believe to be most competent to lead the country to a bright future. In the long run, Mir Osman could but lose this competition.

When V.K. Bawa claims that 'there was no hint of an impending doom at the Silver Jubilee celebration'[65], he is no doubt right, if he focuses his attention solely on the glamorous trappings of the festivity and the absence of loudly voiced protest. The analysis of the *Yadgar*, however, has perhaps

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[61] Mir Ahmad Ali Khan: Sultan ul Ulum ki dilchaspi zaban-e Urdu ke sath, *Yadgar*, pp. 82–84; Jamia Osmania, *Yadgar*, pp.185–187; Abdullah ul Imadi: Dar ul Tarjuma, *Yadgar*, pp.189–194

[62] Ansari (1933), p. 217

[63] Muhammad Abul Razaq, p. 159. For the current use in Urdu poetry of the symbol of the Messiah as restoring life to the dying see Bhajjan/ Yesudas (1985).

[64] Most explicitly voiced in the small article: Qaumi o mulki taraqqi kya hai? *Yadgar*, p.155f.

[65] Bawa (1992), p.163

shown that even within a volume which was commissioned solely for the praise of the ruler and his achievements, the elements that were to lead to the disruption of the whole system within a few years, had already entered the legitimatory argumentation.

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