

A MUSLIM CONSPIRACY IN BRITISH INDIA?

As the British prepared for war in Afghanistan in 1839, rumors spread of a Muslim conspiracy based in India's Deccan region. Colonial officials were convinced that itinerant preachers of jihad – whom they labeled “Wahhabis” – were collaborating with Russian and Persian armies and inspiring Muslim princes to revolt. Officials detained and interrogated Muslim travelers, conducted weapons inspections at princely forts, surveyed mosques, and ultimately annexed territories of the accused. Using untapped archival materials, Chandra Mallampalli describes how local intrigues, often having little to do with “religion,” manufactured belief in a global conspiracy against British rule. By skillfully narrating stories of the alleged conspirators, he shows how fears of the dreaded Wahhabi sometimes prompted colonial authorities to act on thin evidence, while also inspiring plots by Muslims against princes not of their liking. At stake were not only questions about Muslim loyalty but also the very ideals of a liberal empire.

CHANDRA MALLAMPALLI is Professor of History at Westmont College, USA. He has written extensively on the intersection of religion, law, and society in colonial India. His books include *Race, Religion and Law in Colonial India* (Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-19625-4 — A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?
Chandra Mallampalli
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

A MUSLIM CONSPIRACY
IN BRITISH INDIA?

*Politics and Paranoia in the Early
Nineteenth-Century Deccan*

CHANDRA MALLAMPALLI
Westmont College



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-107-19625-4 — A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?
 Chandra Mallampalli
 Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

University Printing House, Cambridge CB2 8BS, United Kingdom
 One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
 477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
 4843/24, 2nd Floor, Ansari Road, Daryaganj, Delhi – 110002, India
 79 Anson Road, #06-04/06, Singapore 079906

Cambridge University Press is part of the University of Cambridge.

It furthers the University's mission by disseminating knowledge in the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107196254

DOI: 10.1017/9781108164634

© Chandra Mallampalli 2017

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2017

Printed in the United Kingdom by Clays, St Ives plc

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

NAMES: Mallampalli, Chandra, 1965- author.

TITLE: A Muslim conspiracy in British India? : politics and paranoia in the early nineteenth-century Deccan / Chandra Mallampalli.

DESCRIPTION: Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 2017. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

IDENTIFIERS: LCCN 2017008319 | ISBN 9781107196254 (Hardback)

SUBJECTS: LCSH: Muslims—India—Deccan—History—19th century. | Deccan (India)—

Ethnic relations—History—19th century. | Deccan (India)—Politics and

government—19th century. | Paranoia—Political aspects—India—Deccan—

History—19th century. | Conspiracies—India—Deccan—History—19th century. |

Allegiance—India—Deccan—History—19th century. | India—History—

British occupation, 1765-1947. | BISAC: HISTORY / Asia / India & South Asia.

CLASSIFICATION: LCC DS485.D25 M35 2017 | DDC 954/.80314—DC23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2017008319>

ISBN 978-1-107-19625-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-19625-4 — A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?
Chandra Mallampalli
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For refugees, migrants, and displaced peoples

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-19625-4 — A Muslim Conspiracy in British India?
Chandra Mallampalli
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

Contents

<i>Figures and Maps</i>	<i>page</i> viii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
Introduction	i
1 The Fear of Itinerant Muslims	28
2 Prince Mubariz ud-Daula	66
3 A Fondness for Military Display	106
4 A Diamond in the Trough	142
5 Slaying Men with Faces of Women	178
Conclusions	216
<i>Bibliography</i>	224
<i>Index</i>	235

Figures and Maps

Figures

- | | | |
|----------|--|----------------|
| Figure 1 | Raja Chandulal, Minister of the Nizam of Hyderabad,
1809–43 | <i>page</i> 58 |
| Figure 2 | James Stuart Fraser (1783–1869) | 85 |
| Figure 3 | The British Residency at Hyderabad | 101 |
| Figure 4 | View of Trichinopoly, British Library | 137 |

Maps

- | | | |
|-------|--|---------------|
| Map 1 | Map of colonial India, which includes key nodes of
the alleged conspiracy | <i>page</i> 5 |
| Map 2 | Map of India, Central Asia and Arabia, depicting
journeys of migrants to the Deccan | 38 |

Acknowledgments

I arrived at the topic of this book while conducting research in 2007 at the Tamil Nadu State Archives in Chennai. There I encountered documents describing the East India Company's confrontation with Ghulam Rasul Khan, the last Nawab of Kurnool (r. 1824–39). The Company accused him of amassing weapons in his fort with the intention of launching a rebellion. At the time, I thought this would make an interesting article. Parts of the Kurnool story even worked their way into my last book. Years later, at the Oriental and India Office Collection at the British Library, I found material that situated Kurnool within the investigation of an alleged conspiracy. The investigation was largely centered on the years 1839–40, which mark the early stages of the First Anglo-Afghan War. Subsequent visits to archives at Delhi, Hyderabad, and Chennai helped me learn about the transnational and local contexts that shaped the events described in this book.

This project kept me within the familiar terrain of religion, law, and society in South Asia, but took me more deeply into the study of Indian Islam and Muslim reformism. I grew indebted to the contributions of many scholars, including Mohiuddin Ahmad, Qeyamuddin Ahmad, Richard Eaton, Marc Gaborieau, Nile Green, Peter Hardy, Marcia Hermansen, Ayesha Jalal, Omar Khalidi, Ira Lapidus, Barbara Daly Metcalf, Filippo and Caroline Osella, Harlan Pearson, Claudia Preckel, and Francis Robinson.

I must extend my sincerest thanks to colleagues who shared their expertise and precious time as they fielded questions, read chapters, and shared resources in support of this project. Marc Gaborieau and Prasannan Parthasarathi kindly read through a draft of the manuscript and offered incisive comments on the chapters. Gaborieau's work on South Asian Wahhabis shaped my thinking, especially as I examined the movement of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilvi in relation to events in the Deccan. Benjamin Cohen and Benjamin Hopkins read initial drafts of the early chapters.

Cohen, a dedicated scholar of colonial Hyderabad, kindly shared materials he had collected during his own research. Conversations with Benjamin Hopkins helped acquaint me with the politics of Afghanistan during this period, as did his fine scholarship. Others who assisted me by reading individual chapters or through conversations include Nile Green, Munim Faruqi, and Derek Peterson. Comments from the anonymous readers for Cambridge University Press and the constant support of Lucy Rhymer were vital to the production of this book.

In 2015, I organized a panel on South Asian Wahhabis at the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Annual Conference on South Asia. Sylvia Vatuk and Julie Stephens were co-panelists and Karen Leonard the discussant. Conversations with Sylvia Vatuk over the years have greatly enriched my understanding of Muslim reformers in South India. Conversations with Julie Stephens about Wahhabis and her impressive work on Muslim reformers in North India were highly informative. At various points in the research process, Karen Leonard offered helpful feedback, drawing on her expertise on the history of Hyderabad. I am particularly thankful to Leonard for introducing me to Raghu Chidambi, an independent scholar who is passionately invested in Hyderabad’s history and who generously assisted me with various tasks while in Hyderabad. Chidambi introduced me to Illyas Hashmi Syed and Mir Fazaluddin Ali Khan, two individuals who translated Urdu and Persian materials that were valuable to my research. Hannah Archambault also assisted me with Persian translation. Others who assisted me while in Hyderabad are Sarada and Prem Kumar Chiruvolu (my sister and brother-in-law) and Rajagopal Vakulabharanam of Central University.

Several individuals deserve my thanks for assisting me in connection to my 2010 visit to Kurnool. An M.Phil. student at Central University, Hyderabad, V. Raj Muhammad, offered valuable assistance. Syed Moosa Miah was most helpful in guiding me to the various sites in Kurnool discussed in my chapter on Kurnool. I am also grateful to Anees ul-Mulk and his grandson Owais Khan, descendants of the last ruling family of Kurnool, for their kind assistance in reconstructing the family history.

I must also thank a number of people who invited me to present my research at various seminars. These include Joya Chatterji, for the Cambridge Center for South Asian Studies; Scott Levi, for the Ohio State University’s Sawyer Seminar; Alka Patel, for the University of California Irvine’s Asia Access Seminar; and Joy Pachuau, who arranged my seminar presentation at Jawaharlal Nehru University’s Center for Historical Studies. At each of these venues, I received valuable feedback that guided

Acknowledgments

xi

my research and shaped the arguments of this book. Others I must thank include the archival staff at the Tamil Nadu State Archives, Andhra Pradesh State Archives and Research Institute, National Archives of India, and British Library's Asian and African Studies Reading Room.

My colleagues in the History Department at Westmont College deserve my sincerest thanks for their support and encouragement: Alister Chapman, Heather Keaney, Monica Orozco, Richard Pointer, and Marianne Robins. Heather Keaney and Jim Wright assisted me with the transliteration of Arabic names. Lisa DeBoer provided helpful input on the title. Student workers such as Matt Browne and Kyndal Vogt helped with many odds and ends. My project was funded by a sabbatical grant from Westmont College and discretionary funds made available by the offices of the provost and the president. For this support I am most grateful. My wife, Beverly, was a true hero during the research and crafting of this book – patient, encouraging, and tolerant of my idiosyncrasies, which tend to become more pronounced during the writing process.