

The Corporate Kingmakers

Criminological Insights By Dr. Mridul Srivastava

How proxy warfare, assassinations, and corporate ambition fractured the Carnatic (1710–1751).



Where crowns, treasures, and independence are to be reaped, the ties of kindred have often been a slender security.

Power Shift in the Carnatic: The Rise of European Influence (1738–1751)

1738–1744: The Erosion of Imperial Authority

Following the weakening of the Mughal Empire, the Carnatic region became a “theatre of stratagems” where local succession disputes provided a pretext for European intervention.

1744–1751: The Era of European Intervention



Decline of Central Mughal Power



1738

The 1738 invasion by Nadir Shah weakened central government control over distant provinces.



Rise of the Independent 'Nabobs'

Provincial governors stopped paying revenue to Belhi, becoming effectively independent and often oppressive rulers.



Fragmentation of the Deccan

Local leaders began appointing their own successors without consulting the Imperial Court in Delhi.



1744



Global Rivalry Enters Indostan

War between Great Britain and France in 1744 turned Indian soil into a battleground.



Strategic Alliances with Local Princes

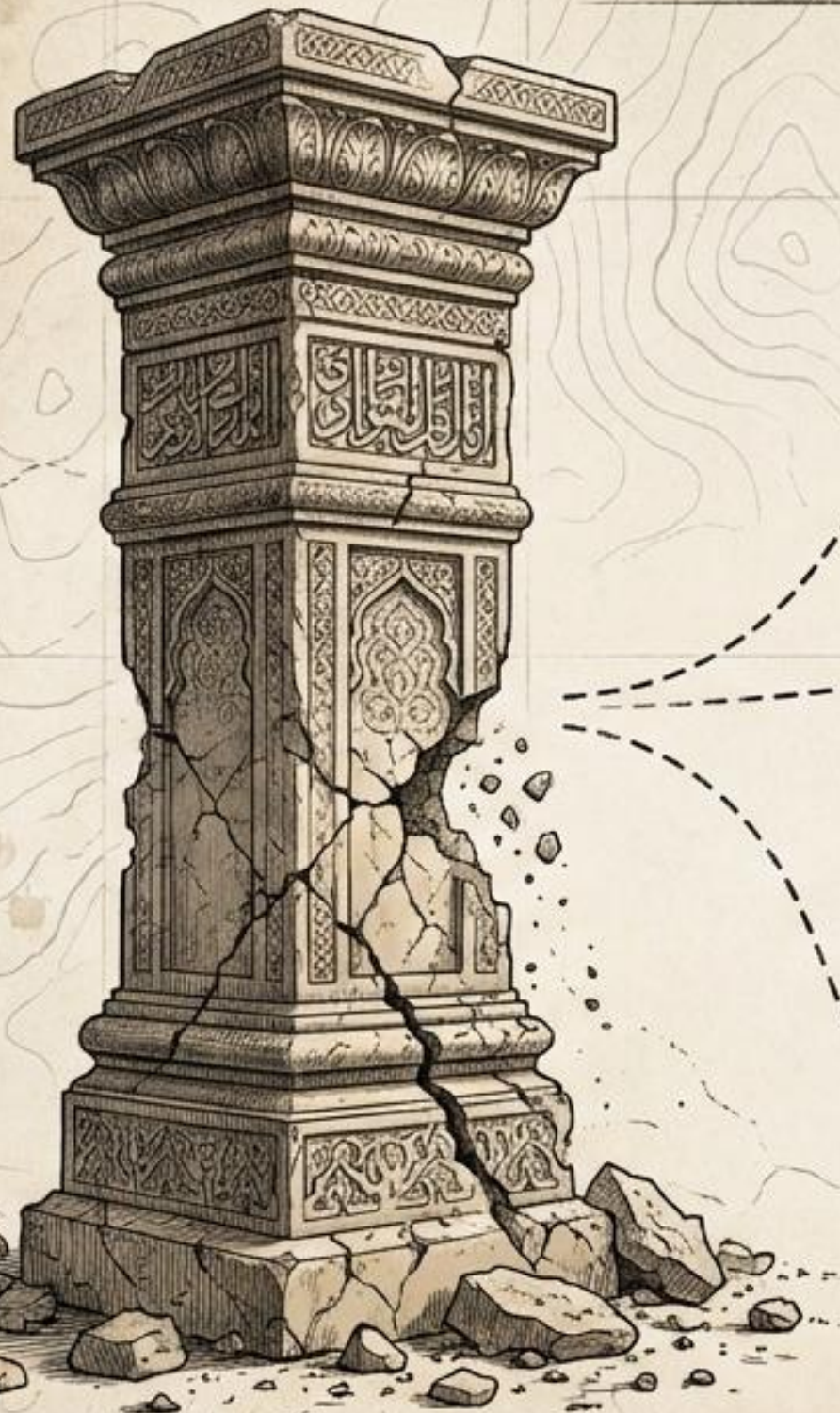
European companies backed rival claimants to the throne to secure territorial and financial rewards.



Shift in Military Dominance

Small battalions of disciplined Europeans proved they could defeat much larger Indian armies.

The Crumbling Board: Indostan Post-1738



The Hollow Emperor

Since Nadir Shah's conquests in 1738, the central springs of government have broken. The Emperor in Delhi is merely acknowledged, no longer feared.



The Rise of the Subahs

Viceroy (Subahs) have severed their strict subordination. They now support themselves in opposition to the Emperor, appointing local deputies with impunity.

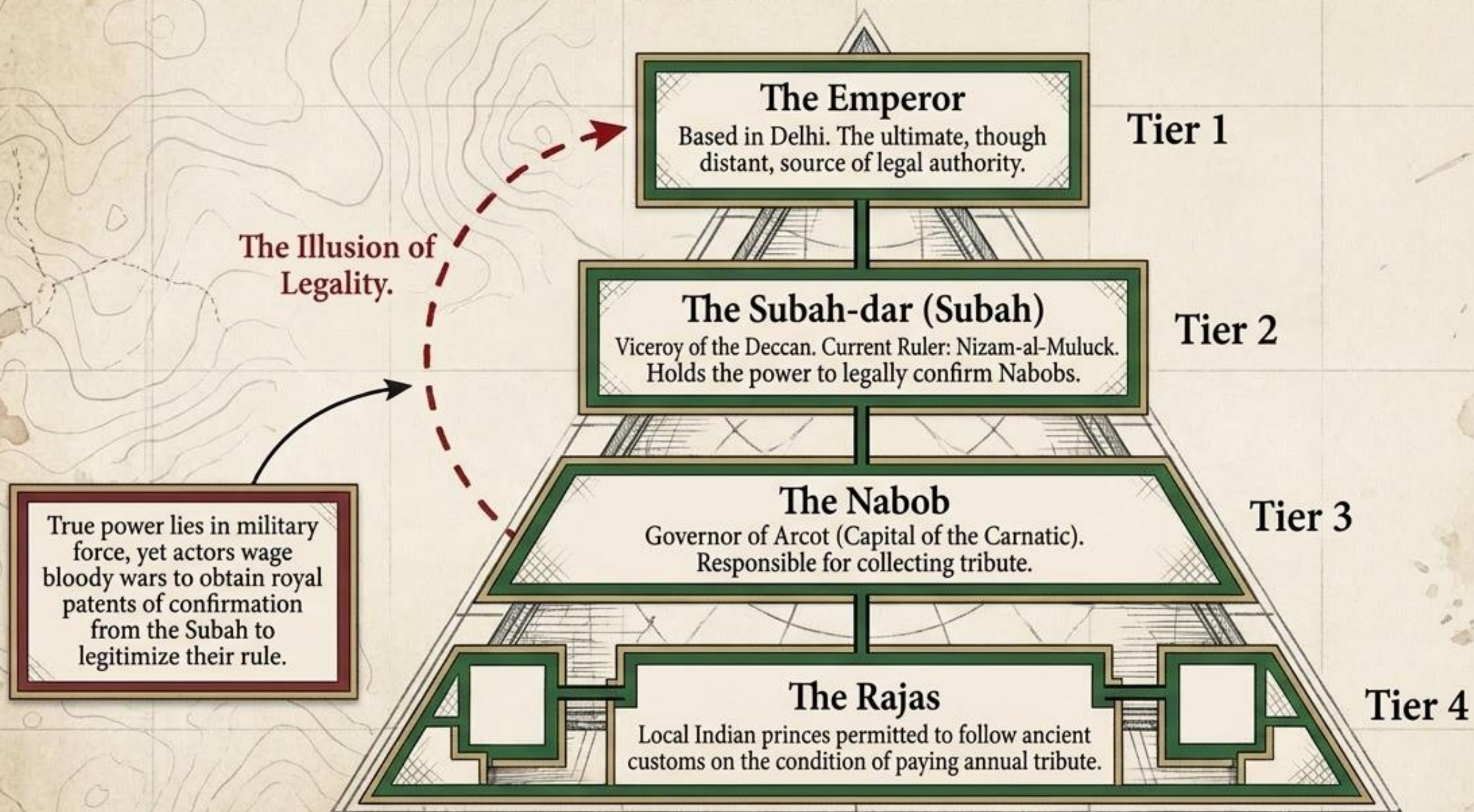


From Taxation to Extortion

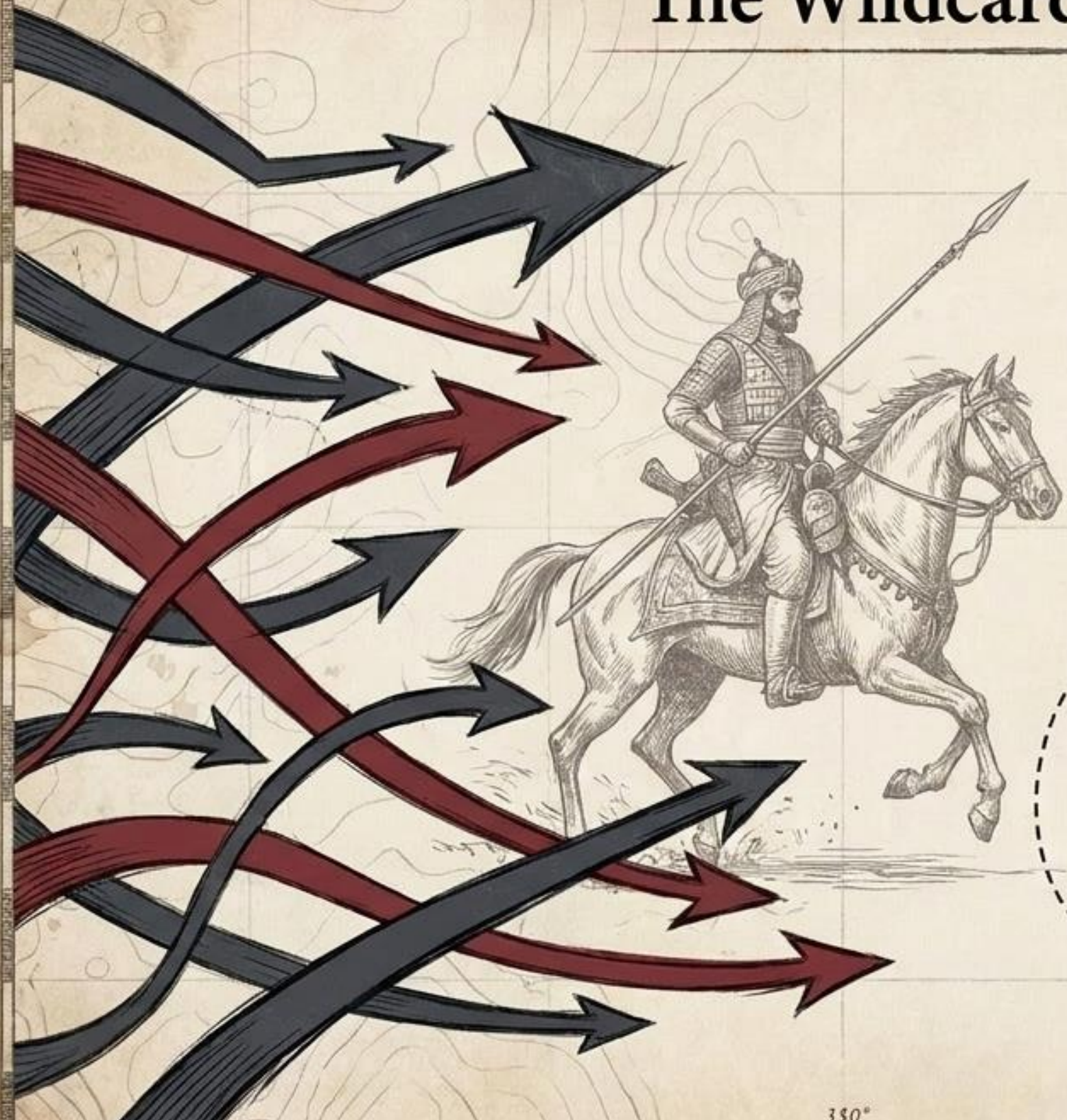
Regulated imperial taxes have devolved into forced tribute. Violence is now a fiscal necessity.

“Force alone can oblige them to fulfil their engagements.”

The Chain of Command (In Theory)



The Wildcards: The Marattoes



FACTION DOSSIER: THE MARATTOES

Origin: Mountains between Indostan and Persia.

Tactics: Peerless cavalry. Capable of surviving immense fatigue and long marches. For agility and exactness of their evolutions, they are excelled hardly by any troops in the world.

Motivations: Strictly mercenary. War is their profession; their primary objective is plunder and devastation.

The Silver Allegiance

Despite a fearsome reputation that causes the throne of Delhi itself to tremble, they are fundamentally driven by coin. They will happily change sides mid-conflict for a lack of rupees.



The Spark of Chaos: Tritchanopoly (1736)

CHUNDA-SAHEB



Details: Distant relation to the Nabob of Arcot.

Attributes: Consummate statesman, accomplished general, entirely devoid of scruples.

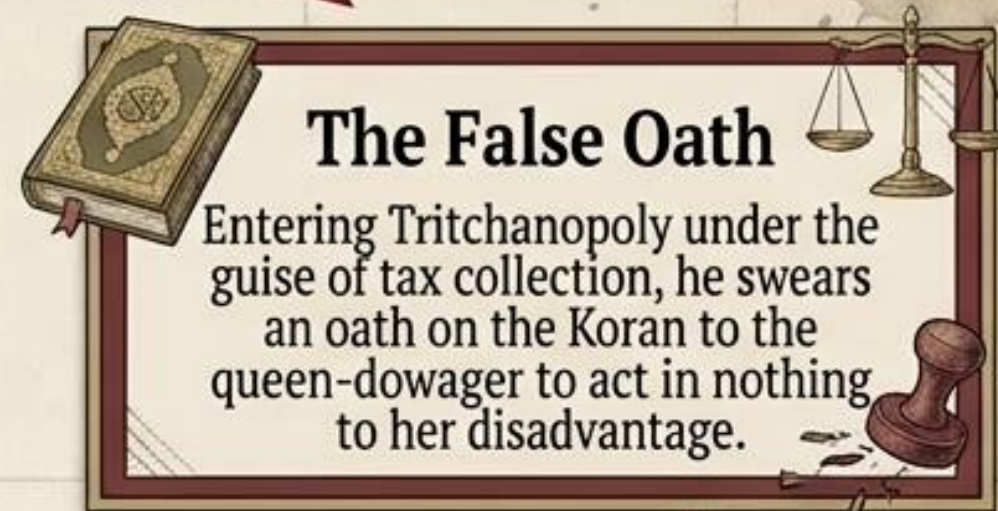
The Imprisonment

He imprisons the queen (who dies of grief) and usurps the kingdom, placing his brothers in the strongest dependent towns.



The False Oath

Entering Tritchanopoly under the guise of tax collection, he swears an oath on the Koran to the queen-dowager to act in nothing to her disadvantage.



The Bribe

Once permitted inside the gates, he immediately bribes the garrison to turn their weapons on the royal guard.



Takeaway: This act of perjury and violence serves as a catalyst, sharpening the resentment of the Subah and destabilising the entire region.

A Throne Written in Blood: The Arcot Succession

Doast-Ally

Slain in battle, 1740, against
100,000 Marattoes.

Subder-Ally

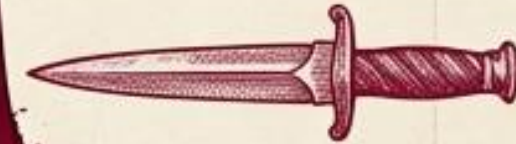
Son of Doast-Ally.
Takes the throne.

Seid Mahomed

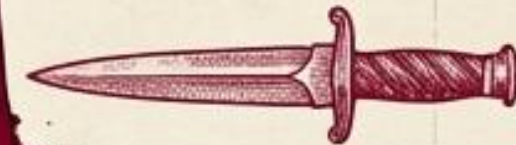
Young son of Subder-Ally.
Proclaimed Nabob amidst
public acclaim.

Ana-war-di-Khan

Initially appointed by the Subah merely
as the young prince's guardian.
Following the assassination, he leverages
his military reputation to seize the
Nabobship for himself.



Assassinated in 1742 by his
avaricious brother-in-law,
Mortiz-Ally, who temporarily
usurps the title.



Assassinated in 1744 by Pittan
soldiers at a wedding, stabbed
with a poniard while entirely
off his guard.

The Corporate Interlopers: Britain vs. France



The French Company (Pondicherry)



Key Figure

Governor Dupleix.
Genius was comprehensive,
bold, and original.



Strategic Motivation

Territorial acquisition and the
foundation of a lasting empire
in Indostan.



Tactics

Vigilant, proactive, utilizing
bribes, promises, and direct
manipulation of Indian courts.



The English Company (Madras / Fort St David)



Key Figure

Major Lawrence &
Admiral Boscawen.



Strategic Motivation

Primarily commercial
enterprise and reactive defence.



Tactics

Heavy naval reliance, undeniable
bravery but severely lacking in land
siege skill, forming impolitic alliances.



The Epiphany: St. Thomas, 1746



An army of 10,000 Indian troops is effortlessly repulsed by a single French battalion.
The geopolitical calculus is permanently altered: disciplined Europeans are suddenly proven more than a match for thousands of local forces.



The English Blunder in Tanjore (1749)



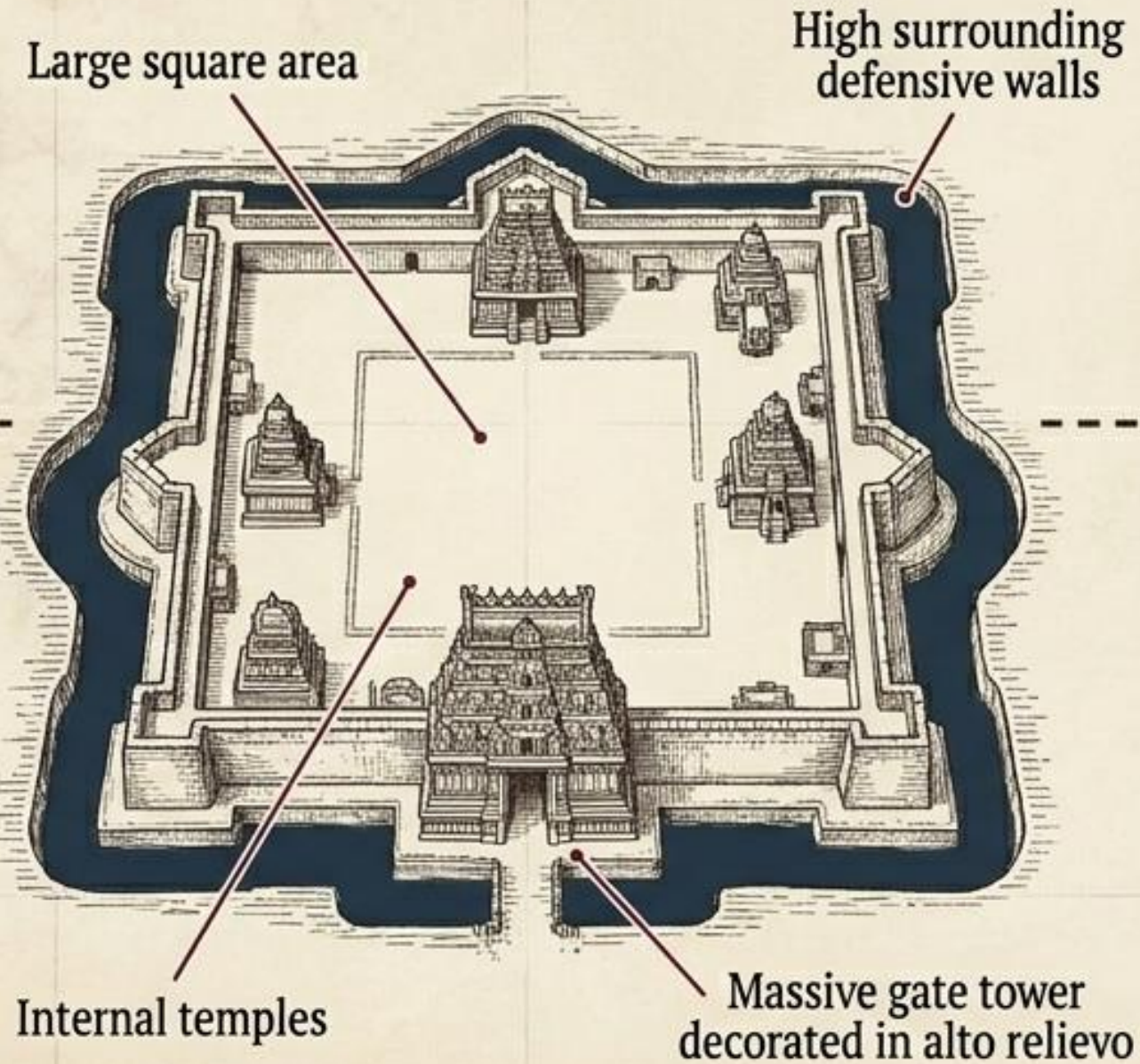
The Expectation

The English impolitically back a deposed prince (Saujohee), expecting the locals to flock to his standard.

In return for placing him on the throne, they are promised lucrative territorial cessions, specifically Devi-cottah.



Pagoda Fort



The Reality

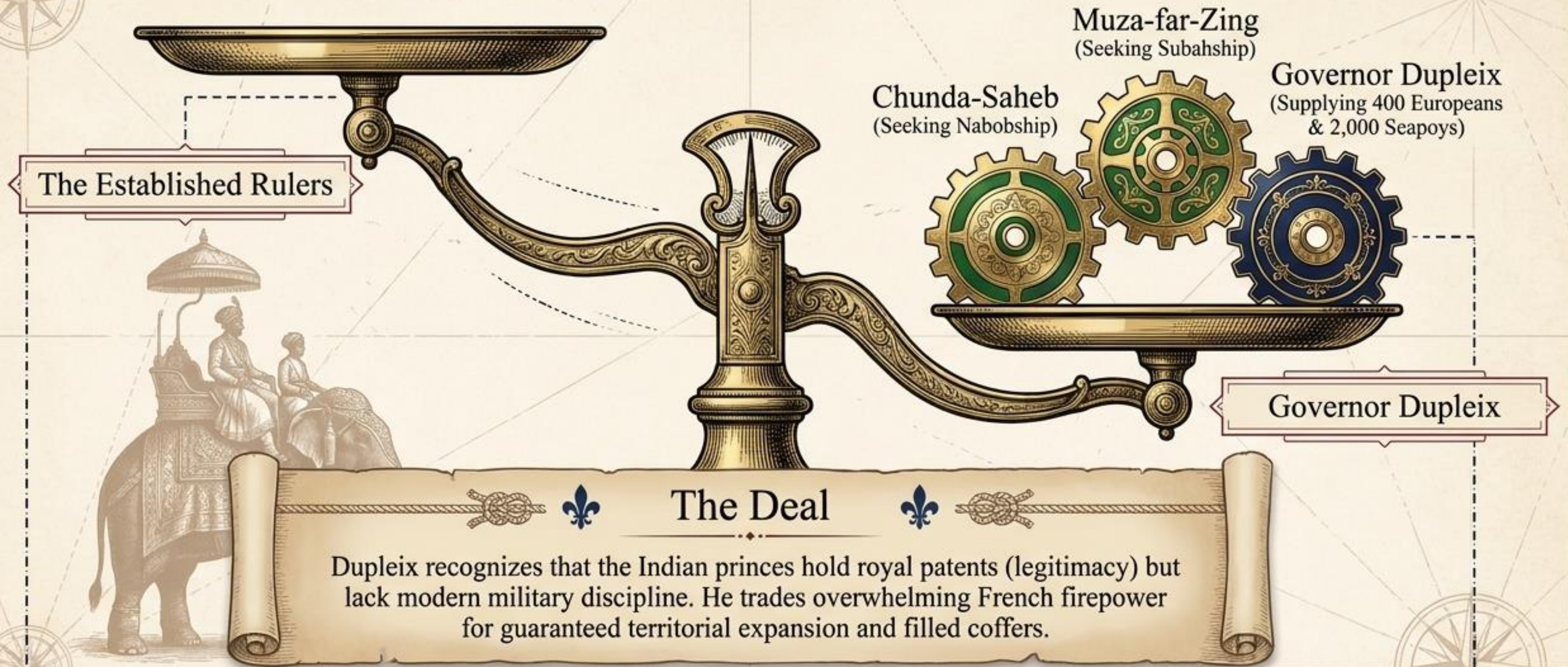
The locals despise the deposed prince for his weak and wicked administration.

A violent southern monsoon wrecks two ships of the line, drowning 750 men.

The English occupy the Acheveram Pagoda; enraged by the sacrilege, Tanjoreans attack at night, forcing a brutal and desperate defence.



Dupleix's Masterstroke: The Proxy Alliance



The Fall of Ana-war-di-Khan (Battle of Amour)

Ana-war-di-Khan's
Entrenched Army
(12,000 Cavalry, 8,000 Infantry)

The
French/Rebel Alliance

1. The Assault: Driven by the promise of rich plunder, French detachments storm the breast-works. Repulsed twice, their disciplined artillery and sheer impetuosity eventually force a breach.



2. The Climax: Believing his son dead and his wings routed, Ana-war-di-Khan displays incredible valour. Rushing into the thickest combat seeking Chunda-Saheb, he is pierced through the heart by a musket-shot.

3. The Result: Chunda-Saheb is immediately appointed the undisputed Nabob of the Carnatic by the victorious Muza-far-Zing.



The Web of Treachery: Battle of Gingee (1750)

The Subversion:

Over 7 months of monsoon inaction, Dupleix conducts a secret, highly criminal correspondence, bribing the avaricious Pittan lords to abandon their prince on the field of battle.



Governor Dupleix

Dossier

The Surface Threat

Nazar-Zing
(The Rightful Subah)

Arrives with a staggering force:
300,000 men, 800 pieces of cannon,
and vast numbers of elephants.

Dossier

Pittan
Lord of Canou

Pittan
Lord of Coudapa

Pittan
of Savanore

Pittan
Lord of Savanore

Direct Assault

The Betrayal:



On December 4th, the French throw the first line into disorder. Nazar-Zing rides to the Pittans to order a counter-charge, only to be called a coward and shot dead point-blank by the Raja of Coudapa's carbine.



The Price of Empire: Dividing the Spoils

Dossier

The Pittan Conspirators

Granted minor remissions of arrears, but left deeply unsatisfied with their portion of the booty.



The Beneficiaries:

Personal Wealth (Governor Dupleix)

Receives jewels of a very considerable amount and a staggering £200,000 in physical currency.

Corporate Territory



The French Company is granted absolute sovereignty over the principality of 81 towns in the neighbourhood of Pondicherry.

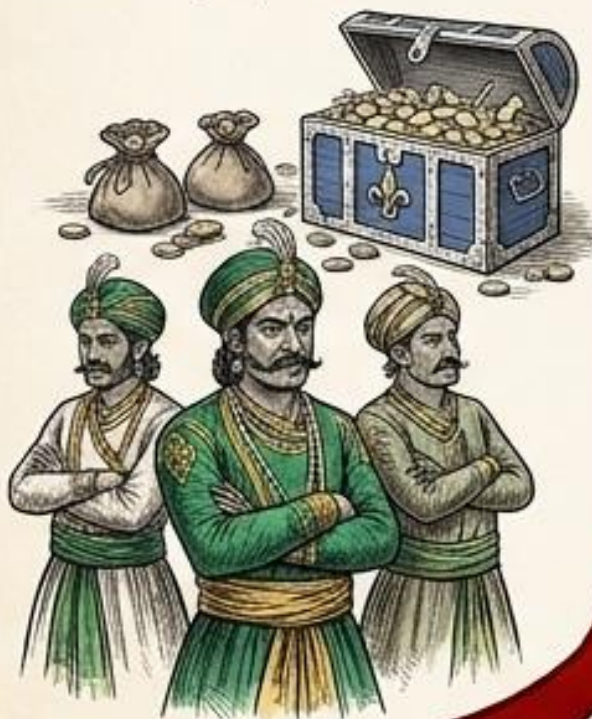
Insight: The immense treasures of the Subah were divided by Dupleix's own arbitration. The French successfully purchased sovereign territory using the blood of local succession disputes.

The Fate of the Pawns (1751)

1

Discontent

The Pittan lords, despite orchestrating the grand revolution at Gingee, fester with anger over the disproportionate distribution of booty doled out by Dupleix.



2



The Ambush

As the newly installed Subah, Muza-far-Zing, marches to Aurangabad, the disgruntled Pittans spring a violent ambush in a narrow defile.

3

The Death

Fighting the Prince of Canoul in single combat, Muza-far-Zing is struck squarely in the forehead by a javelin and falls dead from his elephant.



The Aftermath

A new Subah (Salabad-Zing) is instantly proclaimed on the battlefield. The war in the Carnatic does not end; it merely continues indefinitely, now permanently locked in conflict between English-backed and French-backed proxy claimants.

Synthesis: The Engine of Colonial Conquest

1. Systemic Instability

A local succession crisis or dispute over tribute fragments regional power and creates desperate royal factions.

2. Corporate Intervention

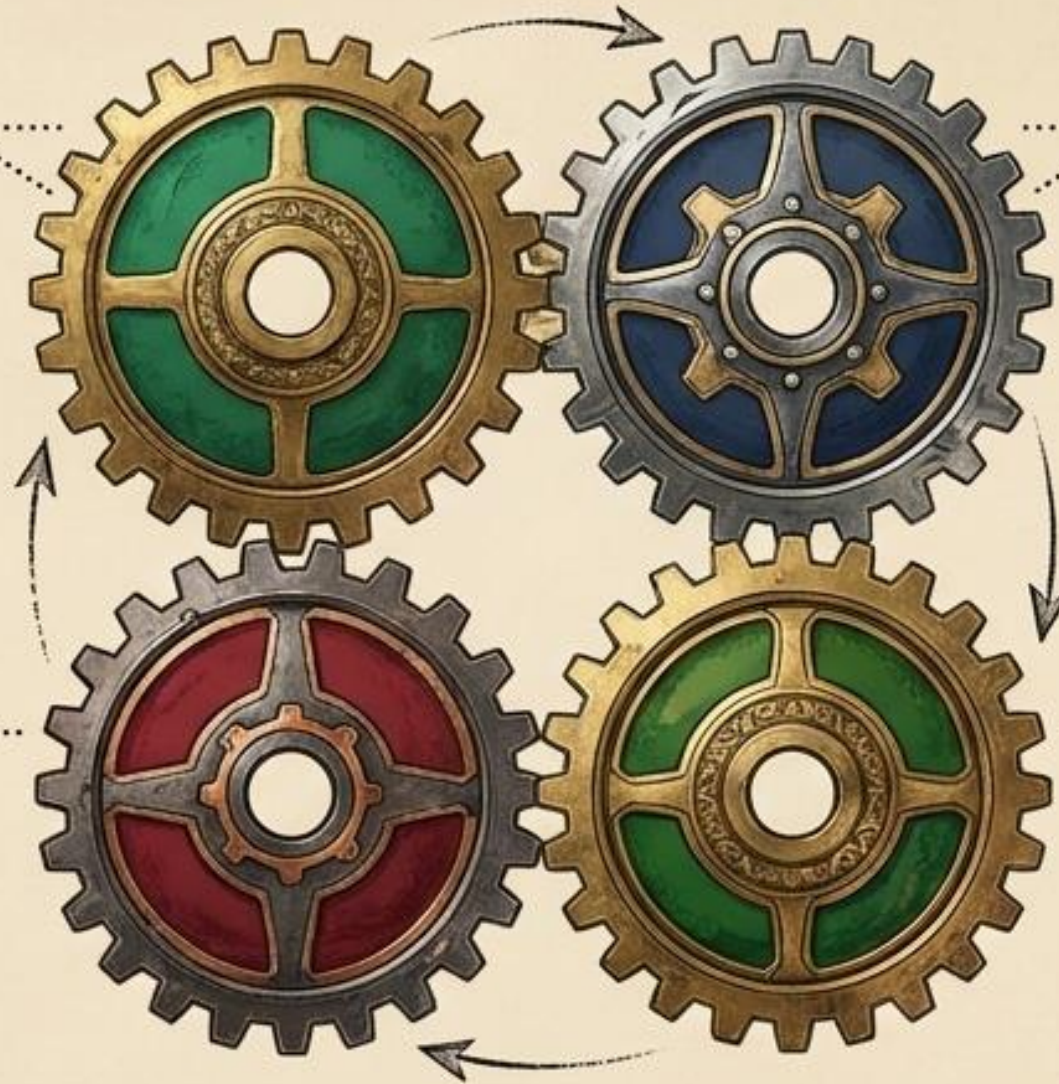
European trading companies offer their superior, disciplined military forces to tip the scales as proxy aid.

4. Territorial Concession

Unable to pay immense financial debts, the prince cedes towns, tax revenues, and sovereign rights to the corporation.

3. Obligation & Debt

The victorious Indian prince ascends the throne but owes his power entirely to the foreign corporation.



The East India Company disputes were never initially about military conquest; they were a corporate arbitrage of political instability, trading European tactical discipline for Indian territorial sovereignty.