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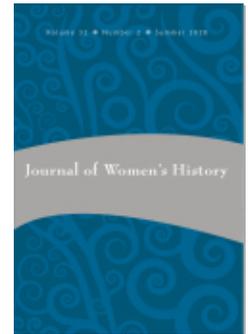
## A Mughal Matriarch and the Politics of Motherhood in Early Colonial India

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# A MUGHAL MATRIARCH AND THE POLITICS OF MOTHERHOOD IN EARLY COLONIAL INDIA

Rochisha Narayan

*During the eighteenth century, the East India Company and Princess Qutlugh Sultan Begam forged an alliance that publicly acknowledged her maternal authority over a large Mughal household in the city of Banaras and the Mughal princes residing there. In a period when the relationship between public authority and motherhood was subject to debate in Britain and India, Qutlugh Begam used this collaboration to reproduce Mughal power in Banaras. This article shows that the politics of motherhood that emerged between the Company and Qutlugh Begam was a site of possibilities. To Qutlugh Begam, it was the means to shaping Mughal patrilineal succession, and to the Company, it was a strategy to make the Mughal princes who posed a threat to its sovereignty into subjects. These competing aspirations determined the limits of the politics of motherhood at the onset of colonial rule in India and the fading of Mughal orders.*

In 1791, Jonathan Duncan, an official of the East India Company (hereafter, the Company) and Resident (or political agent of the Company) at the north Indian principality of Banaras, reported to his seniors in Calcutta that he recently had resolved a dispute between the Mughal prince Khurram Bakht and his widowed mother, Princess Qutlugh Begam. Qutlugh Begam was the daughter of Ladli Begam Sahiba, the sister of the Mughal emperor Shah Alam II (r. 1759–1806), and the wife of Shah Alam II's eldest son, Jahandar Shah. Qutlugh Begam and Khurram Bakht were recent arrivals to the city of Banaras after fleeing from the Mughal center in Delhi with the rest of Jahandar Shah's large household in 1787.<sup>1</sup> According to Duncan, the young prince imprisoned his mother in the palace complex, where they lived as exiles and guests of the Company, and declared himself the head of the Mughal household. Duncan convinced the prince to listen to Qutlugh Begam. He made Khurram Bakht swear on the Quran and extracted a promise from the young prince that he would offer complete "obedience to her maternal authority and submit himself to her will and rule in all things."<sup>2</sup> However, within a few years of this event, the Mughal matriarch's "rule" became a pressing problem for officials of the Company. Writing to the Governor General of the Company in 1794, Duncan complained that

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Qutlugh Begam had established a “distinct jurisdiction” within and around the palace complex the family had been residing in.<sup>3</sup>

Qutlugh Begam’s maternal rule extended over a vast and stratified household. During the eighteenth century, state and household were intimately connected by members of the ruling family as power flowed from them. The household at Banaras represented such intersections. Aside from Jahandar Shah’s wives and concubines and their children, the Banaras Mughal household comprised of slaves, servants, dependents, and other service providers whom the royal family organized in an elaborate bureaucracy. During her tenure as the head of the household, Qutlugh Begam employed only those officials who were loyal to her. She removed long-standing prominent officials from her husband’s time and promoted lower-level officials, who owed their rise solely to her.<sup>4</sup>

Rank and status influenced the position of each member in this political complex, which had multiple offices in place to serve a variety of functions. There was a royal paymaster’s office and departments of the bullocks and cows, the post, the kitchen, and the stores and troops of the household.<sup>5</sup> Qutlugh Begam maintained lawyers, agents who managed the family’s finances and investments, and other officials, including a *darogha* (head official) of sheep and goats!<sup>6</sup> She even kept a royal guard equipped with canons and guns.<sup>7</sup> At the time of her death, Qutlugh Begam had sixteen *maulvis* (clerics) in her commission and fifteen peons whom she employed for the upkeep of the family mosque and burial ground.<sup>8</sup> Centered in the palace complex at Banaras, this household was Qutlugh Begam’s seat of power, and it was from there that she extended her influence outward.

Motherhood was considered a sociopolitical status in the eighteenth-century polities of the Indian subcontinent. It was public recognition as such, rather than biological reproduction, that accorded women in ruling households the position of mother.<sup>9</sup> Only women of a certain age, rank, position, and ability were able to claim motherhood in these multigenerational, polygynous, and stratified households. These women strove to maintain the ties between maternal and public authority in the late eighteenth century. During this period, however, the Company used gendered discourses to effectively question the influence and power of ruling mothers. Yet, as I argue, the Company’s position on motherhood was contingent on its political and economic needs. On the one hand, Duncan’s report from 1791 highlights a compact between the matriarch and the Company to bolster maternal sovereignty over the Mughal establishment in Banaras. On the other hand, the report from 1794 shows that Company officials were uncomfortable with the political nature of both Qutlugh Begam’s maternal authority and the Mughal household through which she gained local sovereignty.

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In this article, I use such documents as official reports, correspondence between officials and Mughal family members, court records, and petitions to demonstrate that motherhood became one of the key axes upon which Mughals and East India Company officials forged Anglo-Mughal relations in the late eighteenth century. However, I also show that in entering this alliance and affirming Mughal maternal authority, Qutlugh Begam and the Company worked at cross-purposes. The Begam was invested in creating a Mughal seat of power in Banaras, from which she planned to beat the competition and place her son, Khurram Bakht, on the Mughal throne at Delhi. The Company wanted a Mughal ally in Banaras, and they considered publicly recognizing Qutlugh Begam's maternal authority as preferable to raising a Mughal prince to the position of the head of the Mughal household in Banaras. Their diverging goals produced tensions, but, as I will show, their collaboration is reflective of the polyvalence of motherhood and the multiple projects it informed in the politically fractured landscape of eighteenth-century India.

Colonial reports and correspondence regarding the family were performative texts in which the Mughal household appears as a politically redundant, sequestered institution and the Mughal princes as decadent has-beens. Yet the extensive reportage of Company officials illustrates that Mughal familial issues were highly political affairs. Local officials betrayed anxieties about the Mughal family in their reports to their superiors in Calcutta, rupturing colonial discourses of control. I use these documents alongside petitions sent by Mughal family members to the Company to highlight how Qutlugh Begam reproduced Mughal politics and households in the Company's territory.

The eighteenth century had not been kind to the Mughals. For the better part of the period, the imperial center in the city of Delhi was subjected to repeated attacks by aspirant warlords and chieftains.<sup>10</sup> The Mughal emperor Shah Alam II spent most of his reign away from Delhi seeking out powerful allies who could support his claim to the throne.<sup>11</sup> Recalcitrant nobles imprisoned Mughal princes, with the objective of placing their puppets on the Mughal throne and harnessing residual Mughal authority through them to carry out their political interests.<sup>12</sup> When he returned to Delhi in 1772 with the support of the Maratha Confederacy—a powerful political contender during this time period—Shah Alam II and those associated with his court invested themselves in rebuilding Mughal prestige and authority. But rebuilding was a fraught process. In 1788, the Rohilla chieftain, Ghulam Qadr, attacked Delhi and then blinded and imprisoned the emperor before Shah Alam II's allies routed him.<sup>13</sup>

Qutlugh Begam found herself in Banaras during this tumultuous year. Jahandar Shah's household fled Delhi one year before, escaping Shah Alam

II's imprisonment of the princes and their families at the Delhi court. The emperor kept a close watch over the Mughal princes, fearing rivals used them to challenge his authority in this mercurial political landscape. He was not misguided. Jahandar Shah and his family wound up in the city of Banaras after the Company wooed the imperial prince to their side, having lost Shah Alam II to the Marathas. But Jahandar Shah died within a few months of his arrival, and Shah Alam II began pressuring Qutlugh Begam to return to Delhi with the rest of the family. As Shah Alam II rebuilt the Mughal center of authority in Delhi, Qutlugh Begam embarked on her own project of establishing Mughal power away from Delhi—in Banaras. This was remarkable given how early colonial rule had gradually eroded Banaras' connections to its Mughal past.

Banaras owed a great debt to the Mughals. The art historian Madhuri Desai has recently shown that Mughal patronage and architectural styles shaped Banaras since the sixteenth century as Mughal emperors and their Hindu clients tied the city into the Mughal imperial and cultural world.<sup>14</sup> Mughal support of Banaras served as a reflection of the Mughal Empire's cosmopolitanism and its ability to bring together diverse communities. During the eighteenth century, the city became a part of the post-Mughal successor state of Awadh. But its administrators, the Mughal governor, Rustom Ali—and his successors and protégés, the Rajas of Banaras—fostered Mughal culture. The Mughals still wielded titular authority, and new rulers drew upon certain Mughal architectural styles in their building activity as a way to claim political influence, ritual piety, and status.<sup>15</sup>

By the end of the century, however, the Company and its Orientalist officials essentially identified Banaras as an antiquated Hindu city, eliding its Mughal pasts and drawing legitimacy from their control over it. The Company regulated the patronage activities of ruling houses that made pilgrimages to the city with thousands of pilgrim camp followers in tow.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, it introduced comprehensive reforms to govern social life.<sup>17</sup> Each of the Company's administrative measures disassociated the city and its inhabitants from late-Mughal pasts. Ambitious native intermediary groups with histories of courtly service increasingly associated themselves with this emergent power.<sup>18</sup>

Qutlugh Begam strove to create an imperial presence in Banaras in this context. She collaborated with the Company and attempted to bind key rulers of post-Mughal successor states to herself and her son Khurram Bakht. In the process, she defied Mughal patriarchs, including Shah Alam II and other nobles, who vied to control succession in the patrilineal Mughal dynasty. Qutlugh Begam's ambitions to shape Mughal rule during this period began with the reproduction of a seat of Mughal power in Banaras away from the male power-holders at Delhi. But she kept the Mughal throne in Delhi in her sights in the hope of elevating her son to it.

Qutlugh Begam's ambitions ran counter to the Company's plans for Banaras Mughals. In recognizing Qutlugh Begam as head of the Mughal household in Banaras, the Company wanted to avoid being pulled into a contest between Jahandar Shah's sons for this office. It was also in the Company's political interest to deny this position to any of the deceased prince's sons. The Mughals were a patrilineal dynasty, and Jahandar Shah's sons had political legitimacy as potential heirs to the Mughal throne.

This article shows that by publicly recognizing Qutlugh Begam's authority as mother, the Company tried to elide the Mughal princes' political presence in Banaras. But, even as British officials worried about the princes, Qutlugh Begam used her maternal status to maintain a politically potent Mughal household in the city of Banaras. By focusing on the competing uses of reproductive politics in eighteenth-century Banaras, this article argues that Qutlugh Begam and the Company's intersecting and contradictory investments in maternal authority played an important role in the making of a Mughal seat of power outside of Delhi.

### **Mughals, Motherhood, and the Transition to Colonial Rule**

There are several examples of ruling mothers who punctuated eighteenth-century politics in India, when contenders vied for sovereignty and aspired to expand their territorial influence. Scholars have shown that historical contingency and a combination of factors, including status, age, and ability, determined how some women assumed positions of power.<sup>19</sup> Matriarchs who derived authority from their status as mothers of rulers and princes played a key role in ensuring the wellbeing of ruling households. They cultivated kinship ties to secure the biological reproduction of the lineage, and they invested in public piety and relationships of service that tied generations of slaves and servants as dependents to the household.<sup>20</sup> Family and state were thus interlocking institutions here, and with each of these processes, ruling households expanded outward, embedding matriarchs in the political economy even as they facilitated the making of patrilineal states.<sup>21</sup>

Qutlugh Begam belonged to a dynasty in which women had a long history of sharing power. As the historian Ruby Lal has shown, Mughal matriarchs emerged as strategists and peace brokers in the early Mughal monarchy, when the state was peripatetic and lucrative alliances and constant warfare rendered lineage reproduction urgent.<sup>22</sup> Women entwined Mughal domestic life and matters of state. Even when the domestic was demarcated as a separate institutionalized space under Akbar's reign, Mughal women, especially those who were senior, remained an integral part of the Mughal court and its politics.<sup>23</sup> By Akbar's period, there were

many more women in the royal household, including aunts, foster mothers, and multiple wives from the various matrimonial alliances that the Mughals forged to reflect a growing political base. But, of these privileged royal women, the matriarch, particularly the mother of the emperor, came to hold a place of special esteem and importance.<sup>24</sup>

Lal cautions against oversimplifying Mughal politics. She argues that unlike the Ottoman empire (which saw the ascendance of powerful concubines to the sovereign position of queen mother who had influence over dynastic succession) or the Safavid state (which recognized the political authority of Safavid women and men) only the most resourceful women gained visibility in the Mughal dynasty.<sup>25</sup> Yet Lal asserts that a tradition of matriarchal authority emerged out of processes of negotiation and contestation in the early Mughal period when the new regime was developing.<sup>26</sup> Qutlugh Begam inherited this tradition. Like the sixteenth-century Mughal women, Qutlugh Begam was at the frontiers of state formation. Alliance building and negotiation were as urgent in eighteenth-century politics, when Mughal power was waning, as they were during the early Mughal period, when it was in a nascent stage. In investigating Qutlugh Begam's role in the making of Mughal state power, this article extends the reconstruction of Mughal women's history into the later Mughal period.<sup>27</sup>

The historian Malavika Kasturi is one of few scholars who focuses on the Mughals in Banaras and foregrounds the role of matriarchs in the management of the Mughal household in the city.<sup>28</sup> Studying the Mughals along with other royal households whom the Company exiled to Banaras, Kasturi argued that they were "removed from the glare of politics, intrigue and power from the eighteenth century onwards."<sup>29</sup> Kasturi reasoned that when colonial officials extinguished their political ambitions, the Mughals, like other exiled elites, marked the household as a space to assert their "power, masculinity and symbolic capital," thereby intensifying the competition for resources and recognition between Jahandar Shah's wives and lineal heirs after his death.<sup>30</sup> This article extends Kasturi's explorations on the reproductive labor of Mughal matriarchs, but it complicates the binary of a depoliticized "private" and a political "public" implicit in historical reconstructions of the Banaras Mughals. It instead demonstrates that the household politics of the Banaras Mughals may be read as a continued process of state formation, rather than as the fading of Mughal political power. The article places motherhood and the labors of reproduction at the center of this history.

Mothers, motherhood, and maternity emerge as important axes for studying eighteenth-century histories. In Britain, historians have shown that shifts in monarchical authority and the emergence of middle-class cultural dominance challenged the legitimacy of maternal authority "as a

constitutive presence in public affairs," imagining it only in the context of "isolated, private households."<sup>31</sup> While motherhood's relationship to the emerging separate spheres ideology remains a subject of debate, historians have shown that eighteenth-century British constructions of idealized motherhood relied heavily on racialized discourses about indigenous mothers.<sup>32</sup> As the colonies provided discursive fodder for producing idealized forms of motherhood, those norms circulated back to the colonies, impacting the lives of colonial women.<sup>33</sup>

Feminist scholarship has shown that indigenous women's experiences of early colonial rule were complex. The Company's governance of everyday life compromised elite women's control over resources and benefited their male kin.<sup>34</sup> The social lives of European men were built upon the domestic labor of indigenous slave-concubines with whom they established patriarchal interracial households.<sup>35</sup> Yet, despite these legal and social regimes of the colonial state, elite and non-elite indigenous women were agential subjects who engaged with colonial institutions from their limited positions. They negotiated financial provisions for themselves and used the emergent colonial courts to challenge male authority.<sup>36</sup> Ruling matriarchs were among many women who navigated the shifts to colonial rule as agents.

In a period when Britain questioned the association of maternity with public authority and power, the Company actively used gendered representations of the *zenana* (living quarters reserved for women and children), and women's place within them, to qualify the power of ruling matriarchs when suitable. But the Company's policies were contingent upon its evolving relationship with ruling families.<sup>37</sup> The Company was sensitive to the political challenge of royal households, as may be evidenced from its varying stances with royal matriarchs. Mothers were seen as competitors with access to their sons, the princely rulers, and were caricatured for their harmful influence on their sons and state affairs.<sup>38</sup> In some instances, the Company actively compromised mothers' authority over their sons.<sup>39</sup> But in other cases, Company officials supported the ascension of women who could help further their causes to the position of matriarch.<sup>40</sup>

Far from being outside the political arena, households and motherhood lay at the heart of eighteenth-century politics. This article demonstrates how Qutlugh Begam's reproductive labor and the Mughal household in Banaras were part of two competing political projects that occasionally intersected and allied. The Company strove to diffuse the political challenge Mughal princes posed to its sovereignty by yoking Qutlugh Begam's maternal authority and its expansionist ambitions. But Qutlugh Begam had her own agenda: she used her leverage with the Company to undertake her own reproductive politics, which she geared toward the creation of a new seat of Mughal power for her household and children. The ambitions of the

Mughals in Banaras thus were asserted by way of the household, which was rendered as a highly political space in eighteenth-century India.

### The Mughal Prince in Colonial Banaras

Banaras was a Mughal city in the early modern period. Its administration and urban patronage reflected Mughal influence. It was the place Prince Dara Shikoh ([b. 1615, d. 1659] the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan's [r. 1592–1666] son) chose to embark on philosophical explorations and exchanges with Brahmin pandits on spiritual matters. But when Jahandar Shah moved to Banaras with his household in 1788, the Company mediated the Mughal presence in the city because they were not eager to draw attention to the city's Mughal history. The Company had faced resistance to their rule in Banaras and its officials were wary of the prince's presence there.

In 1781, Chait Singh, the potentate—whose family the Company maintained as rulers on the condition that they made annual revenue payments from the principality of Banaras—rebelled under increased demands in taxes.<sup>41</sup> Although the rebellion was unsuccessful and Chait Singh's nephew replaced him on the throne, it galvanized Company officials into reducing the influence of the Banaras dynasty in the region. In 1781, Governor General Warren Hastings introduced judicial reforms that led to the institutionalization of colonial law.<sup>42</sup> He appointed a member of the Mughal gentry, Ali Ibrahim Khan, to the position of magistrate to supervise the colonial courts.

By 1788, when Lord Cornwallis became the Governor General, his suspicion of "oriental venality" was manifest in the impulse to remove Indian service providers from positions of power and replace them with British officials.<sup>43</sup> In Banaras, the office of the British Resident under Jonathan Duncan subordinated the Indian Magistracy to assert the Company's monopoly over the governance of everyday life.<sup>44</sup> It was Duncan's task to establish a lucrative taxation regime for the Company in Banaras and its adjoining districts, one that systematically gave the Company control over the agrarian economy and made landlords and peasants liable to pay revenues on a regular basis.<sup>45</sup> The colonial administration undertook extensive surveys and comprehensive settlements with village landlords.

Jahandar Shah and his family became a part of Banaras society in this context. His presence was a source of anxiety because he posed a threat to the Company's sovereignty. Cornwallis insisted that the prince not be allowed to "fix himself at such places as would encourage intrigues with different parties struggling for power."<sup>46</sup> It did not help matters that British officials in Banaras gave him residence in the deposed ruler Chait Singh's palace complex, Shivala.

Jahandar Shah moved to Banaras from the Mughal successor state of Awadh, where he had fled to from Delhi on the advice of Company officials. As Awadh was a subordinate ally of the Company, British officials persuaded its ruler Asaf-ud-Daulah to pay a monthly pension of 25,000 rupees toward the prince's expenses as well as the maintenance of his large household in Banaras.<sup>47</sup> The prince maintained an elaborate court in Shivala, entertaining his special guests with splendid meals and dance performances.<sup>48</sup> Each of these ceremonies asserted his power and the hierarchy through which the prince enjoined the Company and other rulers to defer to him. His demands for daily rites of deference from the ruler of Awadh made him unwelcome there.<sup>49</sup>

Describing a particular episode when Company servants visited the prince in Shivala, one disgruntled official noted how the prince required Governor General Cornwallis, Resident Duncan, and others to perform every code of deference before him in the very room that Chait Singh had begun plotting his rebellion against the Company.<sup>50</sup> Honorary gifts were given to the prince at the Company's cost, officials were required to dress in robes and turbans for the occasion, and shoes were to be removed in his presence—a ceremony the Governor General shrewdly recused himself from, citing trouble with his gout.<sup>51</sup>

Jahandar Shah also had the potential to disrupt power relations the Company sought to establish with landlords and revenue farmers in the region. Landed elites who owed the Company and Raja of Banaras revenue (the latter was responsible for collecting and giving the revenue from the principality over to the Company) flocked to Jahandar Shah for support and protection.<sup>52</sup> The prince's ability to draw locals to himself irked Company officials, and they stymied Jahandar Shah's efforts to strengthen his ties to the region. When Jahandar Shah approached the Company to bestow an estate upon his son in Banaras, officials declined his request.<sup>53</sup> Company officials were intent upon maintaining the family's guest status in Banaras. Their attitude toward the prince was also informed by their estimation that he bore no influence on Shah Alam II or other powerful nobles at his father's court.<sup>54</sup> They even threatened to expel the prince from Banaras for "making himself objectionable" to the Company.<sup>55</sup> But before matters worsened, Jahandar Shah died from a sudden illness. It was now down to Qutlugh Begam to secure the Mughal household's future in Banaras.

### **Qutlugh Begam: Mother, Intelligence Broker, and King-Maker**

After Jahandar Shah's death, his household's residence in Banaras became the subject of much deliberation. The prince left a note expressing his desire that the family remain in Banaras irrespective of his father's,

Shah Alam II's, wishes.<sup>56</sup> Qutlugh Begam, who had been instrumental in Jahandar Shah's politics from the onset, even orchestrating his escape from Delhi, promptly requested from the Governor General that the family continue residing in Banaras.<sup>57</sup> She was not the only one writing to Cornwallis, however. Eager to have Jahandar Shah's household under his control, Shah Alam II asked that the household members be sent back to Delhi immediately.<sup>58</sup> But Qutlugh Begam had an ally in Jahandar Shah's mother, Taj Mahal Begam, who feigned support for the emperor but wrote covertly to Cornwallis, asking him not to send the family back to Delhi.<sup>59</sup> This was a time for being Janus-faced! Cornwallis played both sides, too. Writing to Qutlugh Begam, he impressed upon her the propriety in returning.<sup>60</sup> He simultaneously wrote to Shah Alam II and Taj Mahal Begam, buying time for Qutlugh Begam's return.<sup>61</sup>

Qutlugh Begam, too, was actively corresponding with multiple parties. She wrote to the ruler of Awadh for his support.<sup>62</sup> She requested of Cornwallis not to heed to the Mughal emperor's wishes.<sup>63</sup> Taj Mahal Begam and Qutlugh Begam's brother kept her abreast of intrigues against her at Delhi; one of Shah Alam II's other wives, Mubaraq Mahal, was determined to bring her back to Delhi. They advised Qutlugh Begam to secure the Company's support.<sup>64</sup> Qutlugh Begam put her connections to good use. Updating the Company on affairs at Delhi, she apprised Cornwallis of Mubaraq Mahal's machinations to place her own son, Prince Sulaiman Shikoh, on the Delhi throne and expressed hope that the Company would instead support Khurram Bakht's succession.<sup>65</sup>

A shrewd diplomat, Qutlugh Begam did not want to alienate Shah Alam II. After Jahandar Shah's death, Qutlugh Begam had to prove that she could be an asset to the Company. She already had ties with people at Delhi, but her relations with the emperor gave her the opportunity to assume the role of a mediator between the Company and the emperor.<sup>66</sup> Thus she tried to appeal to his empathy, stating that she wished to live close to Jahandar Shah's tomb.<sup>67</sup>

The Company saw an advantage in keeping Qutlugh Begam close because of her connections at Delhi. In Banaras, officials supported her after the imperial prince's demise. Reluctant to empower any Mughal patriarch or prince after their experience with Jahandar Shah, Qutlugh Begam's elevation was accompanied by the marginalization of Jahandar Shah's maternal uncle, Mukram-ud-daula, whom the prince had invited to Banaras to take charge of the affairs of his family and his (Jahandar Shah's) sons.<sup>68</sup> By overlooking the Mughal patriarch, officials fostered Qutlugh Begam's authority over the household, subordinating Jahandar Shah's sons to her. This age-based gendering of princes to the Mughal mother was central to the Company's control over Mughal sovereignty.

The Company's engagements with ruling mothers were complex. In the case of Awadh, the Company's growing need for funds in its campaigns against the French drove top officials in the Governor General's council into conflict with the mother (Bahu Begam) and grandmother (Sadr-un-Nissa Begam) of the ruler Nawab Asaf-ud-Daulah. The begums controlled a large portion of Awadh's state wealth as well as massive agrarian and commercial enterprises of their own.<sup>69</sup> Vying to extract wealth from them, officials used gendered arguments. They questioned how as *women* the begums could delve into state affairs and noted that they had rights to only what was within the *zenana*.<sup>70</sup>

Colonial discourses on the *zenana* inaccurately represented the institution as a cloistered space within which women resided, cut off from the state and political economy. They rendered the begums as *women* whose rights extended only to wealth in the women's quarters. The begams of Awadh certainly did not perceive themselves thus.<sup>71</sup> Company officials fanned existing tensions between Asaf-ud-Daulah and his mother to gain access to the resources commanded by the begams of Awadh. In circumscribing Bahu Begam's influence to the *zenana* and scoffing at her for presuming to "talk of appointing ministers and governing kingdoms," officials recognized the son, who was more amenable to their demands, as the legitimate head of state.<sup>72</sup>

The Company undermined maternal authority in Awadh. But in Banaras, it fortified Qutlugh Begam's maternal authority to deny the princes' political subjecthood. This served Qutlugh Begam's interests well. With other male patriarchs and competing wives and their sons out of the running, she could head a Mughal seat in Banaras that was independent of Delhi. Under her seal, letters began to arrive at other royal courts during this period. She received letters from various heads of state, and complimentary letters from the Governor General to Indian royals were addressed to Qutlugh Begam, right alongside Shah Alam II.<sup>73</sup>

Qutlugh Begam used her position as a head of state to improve Khurram Bakht's chances of succeeding to the Mughal throne. She tried forging an alliance with the rulers of Awadh and Bengal. These states, now subordinated to the Company, had been two of the richest and most powerful provinces of the Mughal Empire, until they emerged as sovereign in the eighteenth century. By 1789, when Akbar Shah, another son of Shah Alam II, was declared Mughal heir apparent, Qutlugh Begam was trying to use her leverage with the Company to bring the rulers of these states to marry their daughters to her son.<sup>74</sup> Such a marriage whereby the Banaras Mughals took in the daughters of the rulers of Awadh and Bengal would have cemented those states' subordination to the Mughals. Not surprisingly, the rulers politely declined such overtures.<sup>75</sup>

Next, Qutlugh Begam tried to bind her son closer to the Company. With the Company on its way to becoming an insurmountable power, the Mughals could rise with it. In 1790, when Cornwallis was planning to lead a campaign in the south against a recalcitrant ruler, Qutlugh Begam asked if her son might accompany his "uncle" (Cornwallis) in the field.<sup>76</sup> A public display of proximity to the Governor General and the fictive kinship ties Qutlugh Begam forged with Company officials could lend credibility to Khurram Bakht's chances at the Mughal throne. Khurram Bakht did not march south alongside Cornwallis, just as he did not marry one of the daughters of the rulers of Bengal and Awadh.<sup>77</sup> Qutlugh Begam's tactics kept the Banaras Mughals politically relevant, but the inability to bring all her plans to fruition made Qutlugh Begam's control over affairs in Banaras all the more significant. With reduced financial circumstances fueling competition between household members and Company officials fretting over her exertions of power, she had her work cut out for her.

### **The Matriarchal Household in Colonial Banaras**

When Qutlugh Begam became the head of the household, the ruler of Awadh reduced the monthly stipend that the household received from 25,000 rupees to 17,000 rupees. From this sum, Qutlugh Begam enjoyed 11,000 rupees and Jahandar Shah's other wife, Jahanabadi Begam, received 2,000 rupees.<sup>78</sup> Jahandar Shah's first son, a young boy named Mirza Haji, who was born to the prince by a concubine, received 4,000 rupees. Each of these three recipients used the stipend to look after dependents of their own. Qutlugh Begam's share reflected her status as the overarching superior.

For Qutlugh Begam and Jahanabadi Begam, motherhood was an important means to gain influence in the family. But rank, status, and the social capital that came with it determined which mothers gained the Company's approval. Of the three recognized sons of Jahandar Shah, the youngest, Khurram Bakht, was Qutlugh Begam's biological son, but she also adopted another son named Muzaffar Bakht who was born of a concubine. Jahanabadi Begam had adopted Mirza Haji, the prince's oldest son. In 1789, Jahanabadi Begam adopted another son, Ali Qadar, who was rumored to have been born to the deceased prince's favorite concubine. When Jahanabadi Begam approached the Resident at Banaras for more money on his account, Qutlugh Begam thwarted her plans.<sup>79</sup> She questioned the child's lineage and suggested that he "be considered baseborn and not allowed parity with the other children."<sup>80</sup> In the competition between the two mothers, Qutlugh Begam received the Company's allegiance. When Jahanabadi Begam strove to forge a direct relationship with the Governor

General, he blatantly refused to correspond directly with anyone from the family except Qutlugh Begam.<sup>81</sup>

Such preferential treatment toward Qutlugh Begam irked Jahandar Shah's sons. His eldest son, Mirza Haji, protested against the begam, inheriting a major portion of the family's wealth and the Company's endorsement of her status as head of the household.<sup>82</sup> He also resented the privileges that were exclusively accorded to the begam; for instance, the begam had a royal guard, which the Resident Duncan did not allow him to keep.<sup>83</sup> Although the Company allowed Prince Haji to have his own establishment (because of the tensions between the begam and himself), it limited his royal privileges.<sup>84</sup> When Prince Haji wanted to hoist a royal flag at his establishment, Company officials perceived it as a threat to its sovereignty and foiled his plan.<sup>85</sup>

The Company's scrutiny notwithstanding, the princes had political purchase and they, along with their allies, tried to cash in on it to improve their prospects. Within a short time of Qutlugh Begam's accession, Mirza Haji clandestinely left Banaras for the Awadh court.<sup>86</sup> Jahandar Shah's maternal uncle snuck the adolescent Prince Muzaffar Bakht away to the courts of other rulers with the hope of furthering his own career.<sup>87</sup> The princes were away for only a short period, and both came back to Banaras by the late 1790s. Having cultivated a stable relationship with the Company, Qutlugh Begam could now close ranks against these princes more firmly.<sup>88</sup> Like the other Mughal princes at Delhi, Mirza Haji and Muzaffar Bakht continued to be competitors, and hence Qutlugh Begam astutely denied them a piece of her establishment in Banaras.

Qutlugh Begam was aware that securing her position as matriarch was essential to the maintenance of a Mughal seat of power in colonial Banaras, and that it was how she could build her son's political career. She brooked no challenge, even from him. In 1791, the prince imprisoned his mother and declared himself the head of the household. Close to reaching his "majority" in age, Khurram Bakht was inspired by other dissidents in the family to overthrow his mother and seize control.<sup>89</sup> As a first step toward claiming sovereignty from his mother, Khurram Bakht wrote a complimentary letter to Resident Duncan, apprising him of the events and his ascension.<sup>90</sup> But Duncan refused to acknowledge the letter officially. He instead left a verbal message with one of the dependents in the Prince's service, stating that because the colonial government only recognized Qutlugh Begam as the head of the household, officials corresponded directly only with her.<sup>91</sup>

Qutlugh Begam then raised the stakes by writing to Duncan and threatening to take her own life, after which the Resident visited both mother and son. He admonished the prince for his "impolicy and cruelty," making him swear on the Quran that "he in future would yield implicit obedience to

her [Qutlugh Begam's] maternal authority and submit himself to her will and rule in all things."<sup>92</sup> The prince furthermore promised "dutiful submission to his mother."<sup>93</sup> To quell any further rebellion, Duncan proceeded to instruct all the household officials and members that Qutlugh Begam was "invested with the sole management" of the family.<sup>94</sup>

Duncan's support notwithstanding, Qutlugh Begam and the Company officials were not always on the same page with respect to the matriarch's authority or the nature of the Mughal household. Their relationship was one of tense negotiation. After Jahandar Shah's death in 1788, British officials urged Qutlugh Begam to reduce the size of the household and scale back expenditures.<sup>95</sup> Qutlugh Begam complied to an extent by reducing offices outside of Banaras, but the household in Banaras continued to be quite elaborate.<sup>96</sup> Equipped with various offices and dependents who maintained them, the household was a space where the Mughal state and family intersected—a Mughal seat that Company officials like Duncan anxiously strove to regulate. Colonial governance of the household was made easier as the begam's discontented dependents sought out British officials for help.

In 1790, Company-appointed Indian judges of the civil city court at Banaras looked into a case lodged against the begam by Sadiqulla Khan and other dependents of the family; their grievance being that the begam dismissed them without payment of salaries.<sup>97</sup> Sadiqulla Khan presented as evidence a complimentary letter addressed to him from the begam in which she attested that she owed him arrears in salaries.<sup>98</sup> In response, the judges asked the begam's lawyer, Dhuniram, to bring the household paymaster's papers into the Company court for inspection. Dhuniram refused to submit to the court's demands, stating: "Here in the court what conception can the officers [of the court] thereof have of the royal establishment?"<sup>99</sup> When pressed by officials to put it in writing that he would not bring the papers to the court, the lawyer defiantly stated that he was not subject to court officials' jurisdiction.<sup>100</sup> Dhuniram eventually complied with the court's wishes, no doubt because his mistress advised him to do so.<sup>101</sup>

Writing separately to Duncan, Qutlugh Begam complained about being subject to the Company's jurisdiction.<sup>102</sup> At the same time, she delicately allayed the Resident's anxieties about the inviolable jurisdiction of the Company courts, stating that she would be "guided by" the Resident's opinions.<sup>103</sup> Encouraged by these words, Duncan asked Qutlugh Begam to explain the letter attesting that she owed the disputing dependents sums in arrears.<sup>104</sup> Addressing Duncan as "Brother, dear to me as life," in a bid to restore amicable relations, Qutlugh Begam questioned the authenticity of the letter, stating that it did not bear the usual marks of her registry office.<sup>105</sup> Duncan responded positively to Qutlugh Begam's tact. He informed Sadiqulla that the begam, being of "royal stock," could not be subject to the

"foreign jurisdiction" of the Company court and could regulate her conduct toward her dependents as she thought proper.<sup>106</sup>

These accommodations were fragile, especially since the Mughal household was an expanding institution that made its presence known in Banaras, enveloping more people within it. In 1794, Duncan wrote to the Governor General that the family should never have been allowed to settle in the palace complex, noting that the begam established a "distinct jurisdiction" that extended her influence from the palace to the surrounding localities.<sup>107</sup> In his report, he drew attention to the royal establishment as a site of chaos that fostered "disorderly rabble" and "riots and felonious acts."<sup>108</sup> Duncan's report elicited a stern response from the Governor General, who declared that the family was not allowed to "exercise any authority over any persons in the province or city of Banaras, not [even] their own immediate servants."<sup>109</sup> In subsequent tussles that involved the Company and the begam's dependents, British officials were more insistent upon subjecting them to the Company's administration.<sup>110</sup>

Such contests over sovereignty were inevitable as Qutlugh Begam pushed the boundaries of her seat of power and the Company regularly gauged how it could accommodate the expanding Mughal household in its territories. Qutlugh Begam salvaged relations with the Company through gestures of friendship. In 1798, she contributed to Britain's war funds despite being in debt herself.<sup>111</sup> Senior officials at Calcutta thanked her for the "attachment" shown to their government but disdainfully pointed to the fairly humble nature of her contribution.<sup>112</sup> The Company was not the most graceful ally, but it, too, had to make allowances.

Political instabilities in the period made the Company see value in keeping one branch of the Mughals attached to it, especially in the rebellion led by Wazir Ali, the ousted ruler of Awadh in 1799. Wazir Ali Khan succeeded to the throne of Awadh with the Company's support after the death of his adoptive father, Asaf-ud-Daulah, in 1797. However, finding him noncompliant, the Company replaced him with his uncle. The Company then exiled Wazir Ali Khan to Banaras, from where he launched a rebellion. Proposing to establish his government in the Banaras city, he proclaimed Jahandar Shah's son Muzaffar Bakht as the emperor and himself as minister.<sup>113</sup> Parading through the town with Muzaffar Bakht, Wazir Ali visually ushered in a return to the Mughal Empire, locating himself at the center.<sup>114</sup>

Awadh had been an important piece in Jahandar Shah's sons' performance of royal status. Mirza Haji (Jahandar Shah's eldest son) sent robes of honor to Wazir Ali Khan when the latter ascended the throne.<sup>115</sup> Qutlugh Begam asked Wazir Ali's successor if Khurram Bakht might hunt in his grounds (a means of displaying kingly masculinity because hunting in another's grounds signaled dominance over them).<sup>116</sup> Yet, in all this, Qutlugh

Begam did not compromise her relationship with the Company. When Wazir Ali Khan approached the begam for weapons (she had four hundred cannon balls, cannons, mounds of gunpowder, pounder guns, matchlocks, guns, and other artillery) and servants under her command, she diplomatically denied him the resources.<sup>117</sup> At the same time, she wrote to Company officials offering to take on Wazir Ali herself.<sup>118</sup> When the British quelled the rebellion, Qutlugh Begam's son, Khurram Bakht, was one of the first to profess his continued loyalty to the Company.<sup>119</sup> Upon British officials' request, Qutlugh Begam's servants joined Company forces to catch Wazir Ali as he fled Banaras.<sup>120</sup>

Shaken by its temporary loss of control over the city, the Company came to terms with its vulnerabilities. In the aftermath of the Rebellion, rumors flared that the Company would divest the begam of her arsenal. Her dependents armed themselves, and there was general unrest in the city.<sup>121</sup> But the tension abated without any such action. British officials needed Qutlugh Begam. Her presence by their side fractured the Mughal legitimacy that lay at the core of the political imaginaries of their contenders without challenging the Company's aspirations for hegemony, as Jahandar Shah once did or his sons could do as potential heirs of the patrilineal dynasty. And so they begrudgingly accommodated her endeavors to create a stronghold in Banaras. Qutlugh Begam managed to get a stake in Banaras's agrarian economy by gaining rights in land—something Company officials had denied Jahandar Shah.<sup>122</sup>

She gained social capital by patronizing the *dargah*, or shrine of a Sufi saint Shah Qasim Sulaiman, through a monthly allowance.<sup>123</sup> Like the Mughal mothers before her, whose public piety played a key role in adhering subjects to the Mughal state, Qutlugh Begam's patronage of the popular shrine reminded devotees, elite and non-elite, of the Mughal lineage at Banaras.<sup>124</sup> Shrines like these bound subjects to their rulers in shared devotion.<sup>125</sup> This *dargah* had deep connections with the Mughals. Shah Qasim Sulaiman had acquired fame and a large following during the reigns of Emperors Akbar (r. 1556–1605) and Jahangir (r. 1605–1627), and the latter patronized his shrine.<sup>126</sup> Qutlugh Begam's piety thus socially reproduced a Banaras public that was made aware of the perseverance of Mughal power and dynasty in her family, particularly her son.

## Conclusion

In 1806, Company officials who controlled Delhi recognized Shah Alam II's second oldest son, Akbar Shah II, as heir. Although Qutlugh Begam challenged Akbar Shah II's accession in petitions to the colonial government, she was unsuccessful in overturning their decision.<sup>127</sup> This was a

critical blow to the begam and to her ambitions for her son.<sup>128</sup> Despite these disappointments, Qutlugh Begam was vested in making the Mughal household in Banaras politically relevant. Unbeknownst to Company officials, and in consultation with the new Mughal king, Qutlugh Begam arranged matches for her granddaughters to Mughal princes in Delhi.<sup>129</sup> In Banaras, she extended Mughal presence outside the complex by patronizing the construction of elaborate tombs, a mosque, and a garden.<sup>130</sup> The officials watched with consternation as Qutlugh's son, Khurram Bakht, handed out honorific titles to locals, a practice reserved for kings.<sup>131</sup>

During a period when those in Britain and India debated the relationship between public authority and motherhood, the Company and Qutlugh Begam successfully built an alliance that publicly acknowledged her authority as mother and matriarch. The public recognition of Qutlugh Begam's maternal authority allowed the Company to marginalize Jahandar Shah's sons—princes who were lineal heirs to the Mughal throne and had the potential to rally support from competing political contenders who vied for Mughal legitimation. It also saved the Company from the anxiety of cultivating a Mughal king-in-the making in their backyard.

Qutlugh Begam inscribed her authority as mother and matriarch of the household with contrary meanings. Away from Delhi and its intrigues, she reproduced an alternate Mughal center in Banaras. From there, she envisioned a Mughal future in which her son rode alongside the Company. In this political imaginary, the Mughals, with her son at the center, could ingratiate themselves in the Company's campaigns of territorial expansion, yoking its successes to theirs. But the Company was unwilling to share.

This article has demonstrated that motherhood emerged as a site upon which a fragile Anglo-Mughal alliance was forged. For the British, it was a means of establishing control. For Qutlugh Begam, it was an alliance of possibilities. These competing aspirations determined the limits of the "politics of motherhood" at the onset of colonial rule and at the fading of Mughal orders.

#### NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Banaras Resident (BR) to Charles Stuart, Member of the Council at Fort William (CFW), August 1791, Uttar Pradesh Regional Archives Allahabad (UPRAA), Resident's Proceedings (RP), Basta (Bundle) 32, vol. 47, 10.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 11.

<sup>3</sup>BR to Governor-General (GG), 20 October 1794, UPRAA Letters Issued (LI) by Agent to the Governor-General Banaras (AGGB), October 1795 to December 1796, Basta 1, vol. 1, 118–119.

<sup>4</sup>BR to CFW, 4 August 1791, UPRAA, RP, Basta 32, vol. 47, 9–12.

<sup>5</sup>Case involving Qutlugh Begam and Banaras Mughal family's dependents from December 1790 in UPRAA, Basta 19, vol. 100 (page numbers missing).

<sup>6</sup>Magistrate City Court of Benares to AGGB, 10 July 1797, UPRAA Letters to AGGB, 1797–1798, Basta 10, vol. 42, 55–56.

<sup>7</sup>Mirza Haji to Secretary to Government, 15 September 1795, UPRAA LR (Letters Received) AGGB, 1795–1796, Basta 10, vol. 41, 11–13.

<sup>8</sup>UPRAA LI by AGGB, 1815–1817, Basta 3, vol. 13, 263.

<sup>9</sup>Indrani Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery, and Law in Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 105.

<sup>10</sup>Michael Fisher, *A Short History of the Mughal Empire* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2015), 216–218.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 219–222.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., 222.

<sup>14</sup>Madhuri Desai, *Banaras Reconstructed: Architecture and Sacred Space in a Hindu Holy City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 31, 46, 62.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 156. A Maratha royal family requested 14,000 passports from the Company so that they and their camp followers could come to Banaras on pilgrimage. Palmer to Jonathan Duncan, Resident at Banaras, 28 June 1789, Commissioner's Office, Banaras, June to July 1789, Basta 4, vol. 25, 441.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 155. As the historian Radhika Singha has shown, the state claimed exclusive rights to juridical power and reserved the right to criminal justice. Singha, *Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

<sup>18</sup>Bernard S. Cohn, *An Anthropologist among the Historians and Other Essays* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1987), 373.

<sup>19</sup>Michael Fisher, "Becoming and Making 'Family' in Hindustan," in *Unfamiliar Relations: Family and History in South Asia*, ed. Indrani Chatterjee (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 95–121.

<sup>20</sup>See the patronage activities of the Maratha ruler Ahilyabai Holkar in Desai, *Banaras Reconstructed*, 130–133. The deposed ruler Chait Singh's mother, Panna, patronized the construction of a well at a Kabir *math* (monastery). See the inscription on the *Inscribed Stone by Mother of King Chet Singh*, located in the Bharat Kala Bhawan, Varanasi. Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery and Law*, 49–50.

<sup>21</sup>Two articles that explore the relationship between state and family are Ramya Sreenivasan, "Honoring the Family: Narratives and Politics of Kinship in Pre-colonial Rajasthan" and Sumit Guha, "The Family Feud as a Political Resource in Eighteenth-Century India" in *Unfamiliar Relations*, ed. Chatterjee, 46–72 and 73–94.

<sup>22</sup>Ruby Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 60, 63.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 203. See also Gregory C. Kozlowski, "Private Lives and Public Piety: Women and the Practice of Islam in Mughal India," in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World: Power, Patronage, and Piety*, ed. Gavin Hambly (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 469–488; and Alison Banks Findly, "The Capture of Maryam-uz-Zamani's Ship: Mughal Women and European Traders," *Journal of American Oriental Society* 108, no. 2 (April–June 1988): 227–238.

<sup>24</sup>Lal, *Domesticity*, 203–205.

<sup>25</sup>Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); and Lal, *Domesticity*, 214–225.

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>27</sup>Scholars have called for histories that do not portray later Mughals as being politically defunct. Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Envisioning Power: The Political Thought of a Late Eighteenth-Century Mughal Prince," *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 43, no. 2 (2006): 131–161.

<sup>28</sup>Malavika Kasturi, "The Lost and Small Histories of the City of Patronage: Poor Mughal Pensioners in Colonial Banaras," in *Banaras: Urban Forms and Cultural Histories*, ed. Michael Dodson (New Delhi: Routledge, 2012), 110–139.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 110, 114.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 118.

<sup>31</sup>Toni Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680–1760* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 42.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.* The impact of these ideologies on lived experience has been called into question by scholars who show that bourgeois women continued to participate in the political economy and provide for their children. Margot Finn, "Women, Consumption and Coverture in England, c. 1760–1860," *The Historical Journal* 39,

no. 3 (1996): 703–722; Joanne Bailey, “Favoured or Oppressed? Married Women’s Property and ‘Coverture’ in England, 1660–1800,” *Continuity and Change* 17, no. 3 (2002): 351–372; and Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 4. Others have argued that the overwhelming preoccupation with good and wicked mothers in eighteenth-century English literature is suggestive of disjunctions between norms of motherhood and practice. Marilyn Francus, *Monstrous Motherhood: Eighteenth-Century Culture and the Ideology of Domesticity* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 9.

<sup>33</sup>Kathleen Wilson, “Citizenship, Empire, and Modernity in the English Provinces, c. 1720–1990,” in *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, ed. Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 168; Felicity Nussbaum, *Torrid Zones: Maternity, Sexuality, and Empire in Eighteenth-Century English Narratives* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); and Jennifer Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 12–49.

<sup>34</sup>See Indrani Chatterjee, “Women, Monastic Commerce, and Coverture in Eastern India circa 1600–1800 CE,” *Modern Asian Studies* 50, no. 1 (2016): 175–216; and Rochisha Narayan, “Caste, Family and Politics in Northern India during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries” (unpublished PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, 2011), 116–163.

<sup>35</sup>Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, 15–16. In the context of the Maravar country in southern India, the historian Pamela Price has shown that royal women used the British law courts to publicly challenge male authority. Price, *Kingship and Political Practice in Colonial India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 46–47, 72–73. For a discussion on how shifts in colonial legal institutions during the nineteenth century enabled women to assert their rights through the courts, see Angma Dey Jhala, *Courtly Indian Women in Late Imperial India* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008), 126–129.

<sup>37</sup>Bowers, *The Politics of Motherhood*. For the Company’s policies regarding states led by Indian rulers, see Barbara Ramusack, *The Indian Princes and Their States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 48–87.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 179–182.

<sup>39</sup>Richard B. Barnett, *North India between Empires: Awadh, the Mughals and the British, 1720–1801* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 199–200; and Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery, and Law*, 77.

<sup>40</sup>Chatterjee, *Gender, Slavery, and Law*, 61.

<sup>41</sup>National Archives of India (NAI), Fort William Council to the Commander-in-Chief, 9 July 1778, Foreign Department (FD), Secret Branch (S), serial no. 3, 9 July 1778.

<sup>42</sup>NAI, Foreign and Political Department, Secret Department (S), serial no. 7, 12 November 1781.

<sup>43</sup>Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78.

<sup>44</sup>UPRAA Duncan Records (DR), March 1789, Basta 4, vol. 22, 245–247; and April 1789, Basta 4, vol. 23, 319–329.

<sup>45</sup>Suprakash Sanyal, *Banaras and the English East India Company, 1764–1795* (Calcutta: Word Press, 1979), 147–148.

<sup>46</sup>Cornwallis to E. O. Eves, April 1788, Descriptive List of Secret Department Records (DLSDR), Vol. VII 1787–1788 (Delhi: NAI, 1973), 275.

<sup>47</sup>NAI GG's Assistant to Deputy Secretary to the Government in Foreign Political Department, 22 May 1834 (75).

<sup>48</sup>British Library (BL) Add. MS 45, 423, Anderson Papers Vol. VII, Letters from Thomas Graham to Anderson, Extracts of the 2nd and 4th of September 1787 from Benares, 151.

<sup>49</sup>For Awadh rulers who strove to make an independent Shiite state out of a former province of the Mughal Empire, everyday acts of subordination to the Mughal prince were anathema. Letter from Gabriel Harper to GG John Macpherson, 27 September 1786, FD, Secret Branch, Consultation: S, serial no. 1, 27 September 1786.

<sup>50</sup>BL Add. MS 45, 423, Anderson Papers Vol. VII, Additional Manuscripts 45, 423, Letters from Thomas Graham to Anderson, Extracts of the 2nd and 4th of September 1787 from Benares, 149.

<sup>51</sup>Anderson Papers Vol. VII, Extracts of the 2nd and 4th of September 1787 from Benares, 149.

<sup>52</sup>*Calendar of Persian Correspondence* (CPC), Letter 1627, Vol. 6, 417. For more examples of contestations between the prince and the raja of Banaras and the former's complaints of how his dependents were being treated by the raja and his dependents, see UPRAA DR, May 1788, Basta 21, vol. 6, 204–205 and 218.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, 242–243.

<sup>54</sup>Governor-General's Council to the Secret Committee, November 1788 in India Office Records (IOR) L/PS/5/20, 321.

<sup>55</sup>UPRAA RP, 3 May 1788, Basta 18A, vol. 96A, 180.

<sup>56</sup>Jahandar Shah to Ali Ibrahim Khan, June 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII 1787–1788, 308.

<sup>57</sup>"A Narrative Written by the Prince Jehandar Shah," in Warren Hastings, *Memoirs Relative to the State of India* (London: J. Murray, 1786), 177; and DLSDR Vol. VII for Letters to Resident Duncan and GG, June 1788, 308, 314.

<sup>58</sup>Shah Alam II to GG, July 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 325.

<sup>59</sup>Taj Mahal to GG, July 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 325.

<sup>60</sup>GG to Qutlugh Begam, July 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 333.

<sup>61</sup>GG to Shah Alam II, July 1788; and GG to Taj Mahal Begam, August 1788, both in DLSDR Vol. VII, 333, 342.

<sup>62</sup>Asaf-ud-Daulah to GG, August 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 352.

<sup>63</sup>Qutlugh Begam to Governor-General (hereafter, QB-GG), July 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 326.

<sup>64</sup>QB-GG, January 1789, DLSDR Vol. VIII 1789–1790, 4.

<sup>65</sup>QB-GG, January and March 1789, DLSDR Vol. VIII 1789–1790, 4, 51.

<sup>66</sup>G. F. Cherry to Qutlugh Begam, March 1789, UPRAA Commissioner's Office, Banaras, Basta 4, vol. 22, 215–216.

<sup>67</sup>Qutlugh Begam to Shah Alam II, July 1788, DLSDR Vol. VII, 326. Shah Alam II seemed to have warmed up to Qutlugh Begam and wrote to the Governor General and resident at Banaras in February 1789 to extend all benefits to her. See DLSDR Vol. VIII, 16.

<sup>68</sup>J. A. Grant to BR, 18 August 1788, in *Banaras Affairs, Vol. I, 1788–1810*, ed. G. N. Saletore (Allahabad: Government of India Press), 36–37.

<sup>69</sup>Barnett, *North India between Empires*, 175; and Nicholas Abbott, "Household, Family, and State: Negotiating Sovereignty and Sarkar in the Awadh Nawabi, c. 1775–1840" (unpublished PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, Madison, 2017).

<sup>70</sup>NAI FD, Secret Proceedings, 3 January to 12 February 1776, 10–12.

<sup>71</sup>Sadr-un-Nissa once declared to the British resident Nathaniel Middleton that whatever her late son and Asaf-ud-Daulah's father possessed, she looked upon and commanded as her own. NAI FD, Secret Branch, S, 9 February 1778 (D), 3–4.

<sup>72</sup>Board of Governors Council in NAI FD, Secret Proceedings, 3 January to 12 February 1776, 12.

<sup>73</sup>Letter to Nawab Mubarakud-Daulah, January 1790, CPC, Vol. IX, 2; and Agent to Persian Secretary to Qutlugh Begum, 20 July 1791, UPRAA DR, July 1794, Basta 32, vol. 46, 140–141.

<sup>74</sup>QB-GG, July 1789, DLSDR Vol. VIII, 80.

<sup>75</sup>Mubarak-ud-Daulah to GG, February 1790, CPC Vol. IX, 23.

<sup>76</sup>QB-GG, November 1790, CPC Vol. IX, 178.

<sup>77</sup>QB-GG, January 1791, CPC Vol. IX, 212.

<sup>78</sup>To C.E. Trevelyan, Deputy Secretary to Government, from G. Mainwaring, 24 April 1834, NAI FD, Political, 22 May 1834 (75).

<sup>79</sup>Ibrahim Ali Khan to BR, in Saletore, *Banaras Affairs*, Volume 1, 56, 58.

<sup>80</sup>BR to GG in Saletore, *Banaras Affairs*, Volume 1, 58.

<sup>81</sup>G. F. Cherry to Duncan, 28 September 1790, in UPRAA DR, September 1790, Basta 7, vol. 40, 259–260.

<sup>82</sup>Resident to Mirza Haji Ali, August 1788, in Saletore, *Banaras Affairs*, Volume 1, 31. Also see, Resident at Lucknow to BR, 5 August 1788, UPRAA DR, Basta 19, vol. 97 (page numbers missing).

<sup>83</sup>Mirza Haji to Secretary to Government, 15 September 1795, UPRAA LR by AGGB 1795–1796, Basta 10, vol. 41, 11–13.

<sup>84</sup>BR to Mirza Haji Ali, 16 August 1788, in Saletore, *Banaras Affairs*, Volume 1, 30.

<sup>85</sup>Extract BR to GG, 20 October 1794, UPRAA LI by AGGB, October 1795 to December 1796, Basta 1, vol. 1, 118–119.

<sup>86</sup>Resident at Lucknow to BR, 5 August 1788, UPRAA DR, Basta 19, vol. 97 (page numbers missing).

<sup>87</sup>Muzaffar Bakht to AGGB, 5 June 1798, UPRAA LI by AGGB, January 1798 to February 1799, Basta 1, vol. 3, 111.

<sup>88</sup>AGGB to GG for report on Qutlugh's refusal to meet Muzaffar Bakht upon his return to Banaras in UPRAA LI by AGGB, January 1798 to February 1799, Basta 1, vol. 3, 109. Muzaffar Bakht left Banaras again, this time for Delhi. Later, his wife and family tried to return to Banaras under Qutlugh Begam's patronage, but Qutlugh Begam was unrelenting. AGGB to Secretary to Government, no date, UPRAA LI by AGGB, 1799–1801, Basta 1, vol. 4, 55.

<sup>89</sup>BR to Charles Stuart, CFW, 4 August 1791, UPRAA RP, August 1791, Basta 32, vol. 47, 9.

<sup>90</sup>*Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>95</sup>She ceased maintaining a lawyer in Calcutta. Saletore, *Banaras Affairs*, Volume 1, 47.

<sup>96</sup>*Ibid.*

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<sup>97</sup>Proceedings of the City Court of Benares, 10 February 1791, UPRAA DR February 1791, Basta 30, vol. 41, 122–140.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid., 139.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid.

<sup>100</sup>Ibid.

<sup>101</sup>Ibid.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid., 164–165.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid.; and Qutlugh Begam to BR, 15 February 1791, UPRAA RP, February 1791, Basta 30, vol. 41, 165.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 213–214.

<sup>105</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>106</sup>UPRAA RP, February 1791, Basta 30, vol. 41, 219–220.

<sup>107</sup>BR to GG, 20 October 1794, UPRAA LI by AGGB, October 1795 to December 1796, Basta 1, vol. 1, 118–119.

<sup>108</sup>Ibid.

<sup>109</sup>Resolutions of the GG, 7 November 1794, UPRAA LI by AGGB, October 1795 to December 1796, Basta 1, vol. 1, 120.

<sup>110</sup>Persian Translator to Government to Qutlugh Begam, 15 August 1797, UPRAA, LR by AGGB, 1797–1798, Basta 10, vol. 42, 66–67.

<sup>111</sup>GG to Qutlugh Begam, 5 October 1798, UPRAA, LR by AGGB, 1798–1800, Basta 10, vol. 43, 19–20. For Qutlugh Begam's debt, see 211–212.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., 19–20.

<sup>113</sup>Hamid Afaq Qureshi, *The Flickers of an Independent Nawabi: Nawab Wazir Ali Khan of Avadh*, vol. 2 (Lucknow: New Royal Book Company, 2002), 320–321.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., 114.

<sup>116</sup>Resident at Lucknow to the GG, 2 August 1798, UPRAA LR by AGGB, 1798–1800, Basta 10, vol. 43, 5. Rosalind O'Hanlon, "Issues of Masculinity in North Indian History: The Bangash Nawabs of Farrukhabad," *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 4, no. 1 (1997): 14–15.

<sup>117</sup>Ibid., 322.

<sup>118</sup>Ibid.

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<sup>119</sup>Ibid., 331.

<sup>120</sup>Ibid., 342.

<sup>121</sup>Ibid., 332.

<sup>122</sup>Local official to Secretary to the Board of Revenue, date unknown, UPRAA DR, Basta 16, vol. 84, 329–332.

<sup>123</sup>AGGB to GG, 21 April 1800, UPRAA LR by AGGB, 1798–1800, Basta 10, vol. 43, 236.

<sup>124</sup>Kozłowski, "Private Lives and Public Piety," 469–488.

<sup>125</sup>Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), 14.

<sup>126</sup>Catherine B. Asher, *Architecture of Mughal India*, part 1, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 149–150.

<sup>127</sup>CFW to W. A. Brooke, AGGB, NAI FD, Secret Branch, 24 December 1806, 63–64.

<sup>128</sup>Extract Political Letter from Bengal, 4 August 1809, IOR Board's Collection 1810–1811, IOR/F/4/309.

<sup>129</sup>IOR Board's Collections 1808–1809, IOR/F/4/247/5571.

<sup>130</sup>A. L. Banerji, "Royal Graves in the Haider Bagh," *The Journal of United Provinces Historical Society* 3, pt. 1 (1922): 32–33.

<sup>131</sup>In 1814, a former manager of the nominal raja of Banaras was able to obtain the title of "raja" from Khurram Bakht. AGGB to Acting Collector of Saran, 26 March 1814, UPRAA LI by AGGB, 1813–1815, Basta 3, vol. 12, 152–153.

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