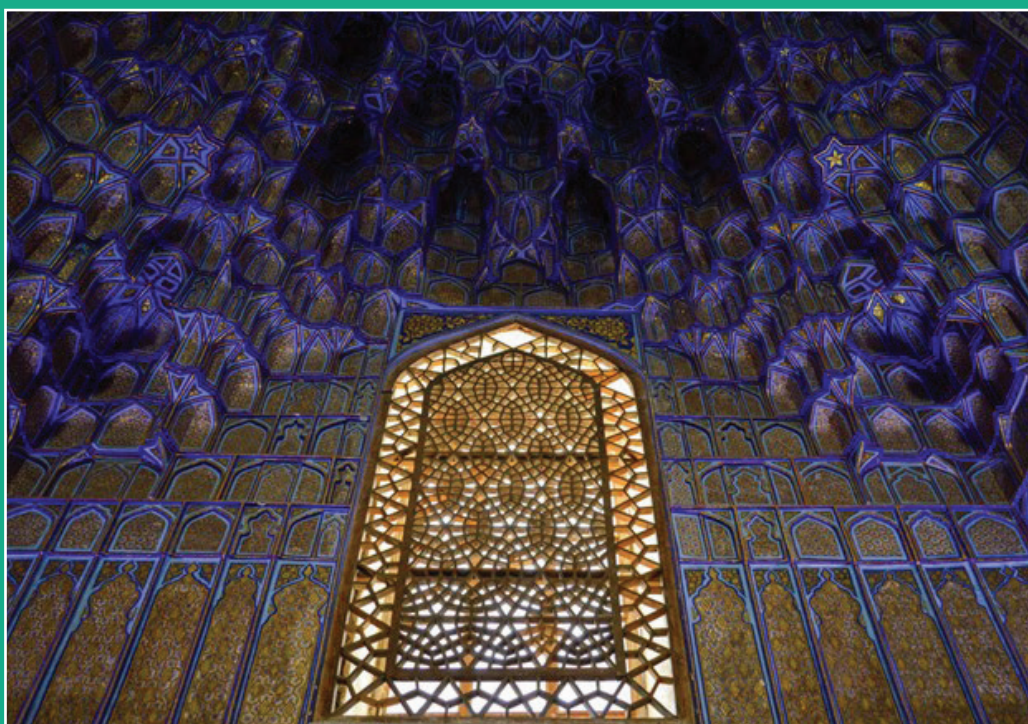


VIJAYANAGARA

The Deccan Empires of Medieval India
1290-1398



PLAYBOOK

by Saverio E. Spagnolie

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

1.0 Introduction	2	6.0 Selected Sources	24
2.0 Historical Background	2	Designer Notes	25
3.0 Faction Guides	9	Acknowledgements	28
4.0 Event Cards	12	Credits	28
5.0 Pronunciation Guide	23		

Cover image: Gūr-e Amīr – Mausoleum of the Timurids, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
Photograph by Francisco Anzola.

1.0 Introduction

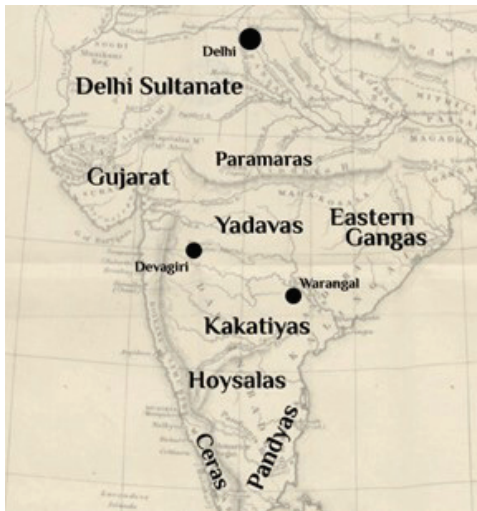
This Playbook begins with a historical background, followed by a tour of the Event cards in the game, ordered chronologically so as to be readable in a linear fashion. We then include an introduction to the Factions in the game, and a basic strategy guide for each playable Faction. Designer notes, a pronunciation guide, and suggested readings then follow. Names in [square brackets] throughout this Playbook refer to specific items in the list of suggested readings, which can be consulted for additional information.

If you are new to the game, we recommend starting with the separate Learn to Play booklet, which will guide you through setting up the game and playing your first few turns.

2.0 Historical Background

Prologue: The sun rises in Delhi and a shadow is cast on the Deccan

It is 1290, and the Indian subcontinent finds itself under the authoritative sway of the formidable Delhi Sultanate. The Sultan's dominion stretches across vast expanses, from the northern realms of Punjab to the Tamilakam region far to the south. Deeply entrenched in their pursuit of power and prosperity, Delhi's rulers have for generations gazed with ambitious intent upon the affluent kingdoms of the Deccan plateau, beyond the impassable Vindhya Range. Among these kingdoms are the Yadavas in the natural stronghold of Devagiri; the Kakatiyas ruling from Warangal, a capital city surrounded by three great concentric walls; and the Hoysalas and Pandyas further south in Karnataka and Tamilakam.



Some of the prominent kingdoms of the Indian subcontinent, circa 1290 (see [Sch] for more detail).

The Sultan's quest for riches comes with some urgency and is not without purpose. Ever-looming is the threat of Mongol invasions from the northwestern frontier, requiring the continual purchase of warhorses from afar and the maintenance of a standing army. Other imports that will help the Sultan's southern excursions include the most advanced siege technology of the age: trebuchets, ballistas, wooden parapets, and long earthen ramps.

Although the Sultan periodically sends his armies to attack and plunder the southern kingdoms, the Sultanate cannot afford to maintain its military presence in the south. Instead, after demanding obedience and collecting tribute, these armies will retreat to Delhi. Local rulers, amirs and rajas, are left intact to pay annual tributes again in the future – but are also left with a smoldering desire to cast off Delhi's oppression once and for all.

The firm grip of Ala-ud-Din Khalji

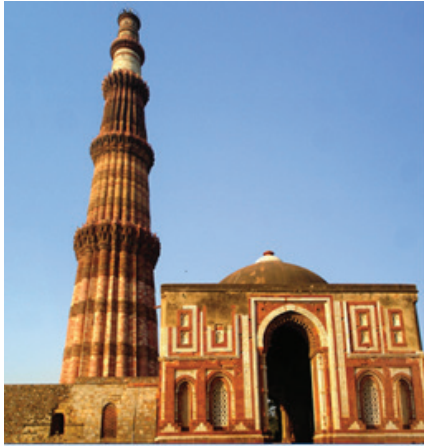
In July of 1296, upon murdering his father-in-law and crowning himself Sultan, Ala-ud-Din Khalji (r. 1296-1316) ascended the throne of the Delhi Sultanate. The activities of the state under Ala-ud-Din Khalji became strongly centralized, with government officials overseeing all revenue collection. The Sultan's distrust extended widely. Spies tracked the activities of state servants and even the smallest details of market transactions. Territories of the kingdom were brought under complete control with the help of "trusted maliks and sincere servants, while the rebels and recalcitrant turned obedient" [Barani]. Large swaths of the Indian subcontinent were under the thumb of a nearly totalitarian regime.

Ala-ud-Din Khalji rapidly expanded the reach of the Sultanate with the help of his generals, none more successful than Malik Kafur. Born into slavery and captured by the Sultan's army during a raid on Gujarat, Malik Kafur rose to prominence by advancing through military ranks. His command of the Sultanate's armies brought him to the west in Punjab to defend against invading Mongols and deep into the south to plunder the powerful dynasties there, including the Yadavas, Kakatiyas, and Hoysalas. The riches of the south were widely known. From a poem composed for Ala-ud-Din Khalji by the esteemed Amir Khusrau,

The diamonds were of such colour that the sun would have to stare hard for ages before the like of them is made in the factory of the rocks. The pearls glistened so brilliantly that the brow of the clouds will have to perspire for years before such pearls again reach the treasury of the sea. For generations the mines will have to drink blood in the stream of the sun before rubies such as these are produced. The emeralds were of water so fine that if the blue sky broke itself into fragments, none of its fragments would equal them. [Khusrau]

The new Sultan introduced aggressive domestic policies, both to maintain a large standing army and to detract would-be rivals. Revoking land and revenue assignments from the elite nobles and raising taxes to 50% on agricultural produce inflicted substantial hardship on the populace and kept rivals from growing too wealthy and powerful. Price controls were instituted in the markets so that the Sultan's troops could subsist on low wages. Traders who violated the controls were severely punished.

There were no successful rural rebellions during Ala-ud-Din Khalji's rule. Invasions by raiding Mongol armies, however, posed a substantial threat. In 1303, while the Sultan was laying siege to Chittor in Mewar, a Mongol army reached the walls of Delhi and besieged it for two months. Once the Sultan had returned to Delhi with reinforcements from the south, however, the invaders were repelled, and they quickly retreated back across the mountains to the northwest.



Qutb-Minar (tower) and Alai Darwaza (gate) in Delhi.

The cause of Ala-ud-Din Khalji's death in 1316 is not known, but upheaval in Delhi would soon follow. A brief rule by Malik Kafur was undone by his assassination at the hand of one of Ala-ud-Din Khalji's sons, who crowned himself Qutb-al-Din Mubarak Khalji (r. 1316-1320).

The new Khalji's rule would last for only four years. The totalitarian tendencies of his father were relaxed. The new Sultan reduced taxes, increased wages for his army, relaxed price controls in the market, and restored the iqta land grants (similar to European fiefdoms) to rural elites, which his father had discarded when coming into power.

But during this time of upheaval, amirs and rajas, rulers of smaller kingdoms in the Deccan, took the opportunity to withhold their annual tributary payments. In response, the new Sultan marched with an army into the Deccan in 1318. Unlike his father, he was not content to arrange for a tributary relationship with local rulers, instead annexing the Yadava territory, including the stronghold of Devagiri, into direct Delhi Sultanate control. Governors were appointed throughout the former Yadava territory and strategic qasbahs (small towns and forts occupied by a member of rank within the Delhi Sultanate) were established and garrisoned.



Daulatabad Fort in Devagiri, constructed by the first Yadava king in the 12th century, sits atop a hill 200 meters high and is surrounded by a large moat. Photograph by Hiroki Ogawa.

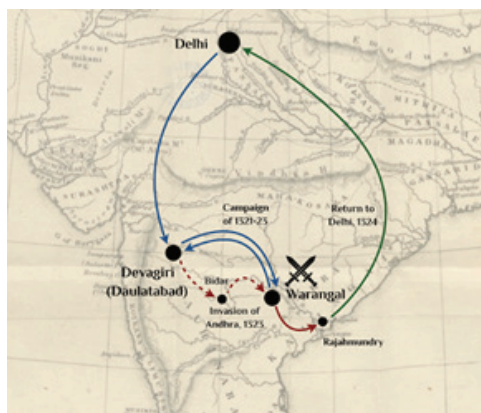
The Khalji dynasty ended in the same way it began, with another assassination. In the year 1320, the Sultan's slave-general Khusrav Khan usurped the throne and crowned himself Nasir-al-Din Khusrav Shah. Politically naive, his alienation of the nobles of Delhi soon cost him their loyalty. When a popular and experienced commander, Ghiyath-al-Din Tughlaq (r. 1320-1325), invaded Delhi with his Turkish kinsmen and an experienced army only four months later, Khusrav Shah was easily displaced. The time of the Khaljis had ended. The Tughlaq Dynasty had begun.

Zenith of the Delhi Sultanate

The Tughlaqs would take hold of a kingdom that remained only loosely controlled. The important economic hub of Gujarat, through which critical war horses and other military technologies were being imported from far-away lands, was host only to a small garrison of the Sultanate's troops. To the east, Bengal remained independent and ruled by the descendants of Balban, a slave of Iltutmish, the founder of the Delhi Sultanate in the early 13th century. The Kakatiya maharaja in Warangal, Pratapa Rudra, had ceased paying tribute, and not for the first time. And the Mongol threat to the northwest remained ever-present.

One of Sultan Ghiyath-al-Din Tughlaq's first actions was to send his son Ulugh Khan on a campaign into the Deccan. His tasks were both to strengthen the Sultan's grip on the stronghold of Devagiri and the western plateau, and to punish the Kakatiyas for failing to send the expected tribute. In 1321, marching from Delhi and joining forces garrisoned in Devagiri, Ulugh Khan's army appeared in Andhra on the doorstep of the Kakatiya capital in Warangal. On two previous occasions the Delhi Sultanate had sent an army to Warangal to remind the maharaja of an expected tribute payment. No peaceful arrangement would be made on this occasion. Ulugh Khan set his army upon Warangal, which easily overwhelmed the city. Warangal was renamed 'Sultanpur', and Pratapa Rudra, rather than submit to the Tughlaq Sultan in Delhi, chose to end his own life by the Narmada river.

The campaign was, from the vantage point of the Delhi Sultanate, a thundering success, resulting in the annexation of the entire northern half of the Deccan. Previous to this expedition, the Swayambhu Shiva temple in the citadel of Warangal made plain that the "icon of the god was also the emblem of the Kakatiya state" and the source of its authority [Eaton]. Emblematic of Ulugh Khan's entire campaign into the Deccan, his response to this symbol of sovereignty was to dismantle the temple to its foundations.



Campaign of Ulugh Khan (Muhammad bin Tughlaq) during the years 1321–1326.

While Ulugh Khan was re-extending the Sultanate's reach into the Deccan, his father, Ghiyath-al-Din Tughlaq, was marching east into Bengal, whose rulers had taken the recent succession crisis in Delhi as an excuse to assert their autonomy. His presence in Bengal, with a large army behind him, quickly led to a renewed tributary relationship to Delhi.

After this successful venture the Sultan began his return to Delhi. Ulugh Khan, having already made his own triumphant return, arranged for an ornate reception to mark his father's arrival. But upon passing beneath an opulent structure specially arranged for the celebration, the canopy collapsed and the Sultan was instantly killed. Whether the Sultan's death was precipitated by his son remains unknown, though such possibilities were whispered throughout Delhi and beyond. In 1325, Ulugh Khan, bane of the Kakatiyas, ascended the throne in Delhi as Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq (r. 1325–51).

The Delhi Sultanate falters

The reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq would see the Delhi Sultanate at the peak of its power and the zenith of its geographical reach. But it would also mark the beginning of a precipitous collapse, in large part due to two major blunders of administration and attempts at grandiose schemes of foreign conquest.



*Khush Mahal, Tughlaq audience hall, Warangal Fort.
Photograph by Richard Eaton.*

Perhaps the greatest disruption during the Tughlaq rule was a disastrous attempt to relocate the capital from Delhi to Devagiri. In 1327-1328, with aims to establish a permanent presence in the Deccan and to bring such kingdoms as the Yadavas and Hoysalas into closer reach, the Sultan ordered the capital moved to the stronghold of Devagiri, south of the Vindhya Range, and renamed it Daulatabad. In pursuit of his vision, the Sultan forced many high-ranking Muslim families in Delhi to relocate, an action which proved politically devastating. Most of the transplanted families bitterly resented their forced removal from their homes, where their families had risen to prominence for generations. Only two decades would pass until this resentment erupted into widespread rebellion. These resentful amirs would later go on to form a rival state that we shall return to shortly – the Bahmani Kingdom.

Another substantial blunder involved the physical currency. In 1330, the Tughlaq Sultan ordered his mint to issue brass or copper coins that were nominally equivalent in value to silver ones, in order to pay his standing army of 370,000 troops. This led to a number of unexpected economic consequences. Taxes were paid in the coins made of less valuable material, while merchants demanded payments in silver, thereby removing silver from circulation, a system failure now known as Gresham's Law. With the state treasury collapsing at the expense of the merchant class, the Sultan raised taxes on the lands nearest to the capital. But this resulted in further economic collapse, since fields were abandoned and went uncultivated, in some cases resulting in famine.

The pursuit of grand foreign conquests also diminished the strength of the Delhi Sultanate. Muhammad bin Tughlaq, tired of the threat of Mongol invasions, envisioned a Delhi Sultanate with a firm footing in central Asia. This would mark a singular effort among the Sultans of Delhi, an offensive stance against the Mongols rather than the principally defensive stance of the previous century. Huge forces were sent to conquer lands beyond the mountain passes to the northwest. But permanent gains were never established, and the end result was to further reduce the stature of the Sultanate in its own lands. One army fell victim to a very harsh winter on such a journey, which may be responsible for the name given to a mountain range primarily located in modern day Afghanistan, the Hindu Kush, Persian for "Hindu killer" or "Indian killer".

By the 1340s, though the Tughlaqs maintained power over the subcontinent, the treasury had been all but emptied. Exacerbating the economic situation, regions once in the tributary system were beginning to rise in open rebellion. One such rebellion took place in Bengal in 1342, a province that had vacillated between Delhi Sultanate control and independence for more than a century. The failure of the royal army to suppress the numerous uprisings and the looming independence of the Deccan were no doubt of deep concern to Muhammad bin Tughlaq.

Sensing instability, the Sultan replaced older noble families with new ones, those over whom he could exert greater control, and gave them orders to execute anyone thought to be rebelling, or even aiding a rebellion. In the year 1345, 89 amirs were collected, accused of plotting southern rebellions, and executed. In response, the remaining amirs of Daulatabad, Gujarat, and nearby districts revolted, founding the Bahmani Kingdom in 1346. Revolts in Madurai and Warangal followed soon after, and another new kingdom appeared in the south: the Vijayanagara Empire.

The Sultan was unable to support an army of the same size as he had before with such limited finances, and these new kingdoms seized upon his apparent weakness. The Delhi Sultanate's peak of strength was now behind it.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq died in Sindh in 1351 while chasing the elusive Taghi, a former high-ranking officer and now rebel who had helped to liberate Gujarat from the Sultan's grip. With the Deccan falling out of the Sultan's control, he hoped both to capture Taghi and to absorb Sindh, which had never been fully annexed by Delhi. But on this journey the Sultan was stricken with a violent fever; though recovering initially, within a few months he would perish. Sindh would remain unconquered, and Gujarat would be added to a growing list of autonomous, independent provinces.

Muhammad bin Tughlaq would be succeeded on the throne by his nephew Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-1388) (not to be confused with Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah of the Bahmani Kingdom), who would rule for a long and quieter 37 years. Although Firuz Shah would (unsuccessfully) wage war with Bengal, primarily his focus was on the population near Delhi, constructing mosques and madrasas, and irrigation canals that would continue to be used through the 19th century. The years leading up to Firuz Shah's death in 1388 would see his descendants in intense internal conflict and the Delhi Sultanate reeling and entirely unprepared for a massive raid by the Mongols ten years later, this time led by the great conqueror from Samarkand, Timur.



Dome ceiling in the mausoleum of Firuz Shah Tughlaq.

A fateful uprising in the Deccan

The Deccan in the 14th century would be host to a repeating pattern: “political expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, the diffusion of Persianate culture, and rebellion” [Eaton]. Among the rebellions in the Indian subcontinent, the emergence of two independent regional kingdoms in the central and southern parts of the Indian peninsula would have the greatest impact on history, those of the Bahmani Kingdom and the Vijayanagara Empire.

The first Deccan rebellion on record was in 1327. Land had been granted by iqta to the Sultan's cousin, Baha-ud-din Gurshasp, in Sagar. Sagar lies near the Vindhya range, north of the Narmada river, and notably would have been just beyond the easy reach of Delhi. Upon his arrival, the new governor soon began to ignore the orders and authority of the Sultanate. The rebelling cousin was eventually captured by an army ordered to march out from Gujarat by Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq, but the affair may have contributed to the Sultan's ill-fated decision to move the capital to Daulatabad.

Through the years in which Muhammad bin Tughlaq personally relocated back and forth between Delhi and the new capital in Daulatabad, a number of revolts flared up during his absences. Following the political fallout of relocating the elite families of Delhi, in 1337 the Sultan abandoned his vision of Daulatabad. Sensing a growing tension with potential rivals, he ordered many of the same amirs from Daulatabad back to Delhi. After the execution of the 89 amirs in 1345, others banded together the following year in a fierce uprising, a first step towards founding the Bahmani Kingdom.

With revenues from these regions no longer supporting Delhi, the Sultan in turn marched back south to Daulatabad at the head of an army. But Daulatabad was now under Bahmani control, and the Sultan faced 30,000 troops and a 6,000 horse royal Deccan bodyguard [Sherwani]. On this day the Sultan remained stronger; fierce fighting ended with the Deccan army being “trampled down by the Sultan's elephants and thousands of [rebels] dead on the battlefield” [Sherwani]. Muhammad bin Tughlaq, in control of Daulatabad once again, gave amnesty to all political prisoners there.

Two months later, however, the Sultan would depart for Gujarat on the heels of the rebel Taghi, which would be his final endeavor. Along with a force of 1500 cavalry sent by the raja of Telangana, Zafar Khan rode out of Gulbarga and into Daulatabad, capturing the city, along with a massive stock of gold and silver bullion, camels, and horses [Sherwani]. The kingship of Zafar Khan, once a noble in the service of the Tughlaq Sultan, had begun. Crowned with the title of Sikandar-i-Sani Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahman Shah al-Wali and legitimized by the Sufi Shaikh Siraj-al-Din Junaidi on Friday March 8, 1347, the Bahmani Kingdom was now a dominant entity in the Deccan Plateau.

The Bahmani Kingdom had an eye towards expansion. Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah wished to unite the Indian subcontinent, just as Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq had attempted before him. Reminded by an adviser that the Sultans of Delhi had failed to control the south, the Bahmani ruler was advised first to master the Deccan, and only afterwards to proceed to Malwa and Gujarat. With the Delhi Sultanate out of the way, the Bahmani Kingdom was now free to collect revenues from the land. The Bahmani system of government was largely inherited from Delhi, including the naming and organizational structure of political offices and personnel, like the iqta land grant system.

The Bahmani Kingdom attracted great minds and adventurous personalities from afar, and would become a center of high culture. Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah made sustained efforts towards this goal, reaching out with one trade ship after another to attract Persian and Arab newcomers to the Deccan, including poets, artisans, merchants, and soldiers. But factionalism would grow between the newcomer “Afaqis” (or Cosmopolitans) from central Asia, and the native Deccanis who saw themselves as the old nobility. This factionalism was to become a deeper problem for the Bahmani Kingdom in the coming century. That many immigrants were Shia Muslims exacerbated the divisions, given that the native Deccanis were predominantly Sunni Muslims.

Rule of the Bahmani Kingdom would pass through two generations of Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah’s descendants, some lasting no more than a month, during which time the internal struggle between the Afaqis and Deccanis was becoming more unsustainable. Ascending from this intricate blend of cultures, the eighth ruler of the Bahmani Sultanate was crowned Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah Bahmani (r. 1397-1422).

Upon receiving the news of Timur’s imminent arrival in the Indian subcontinent in 1398, Firuz Shah promptly dispatched an assortment of precious gifts to the forthcoming conqueror. Timur, meanwhile, with a strategic eye on the aftermath of his invasion, appears to have sent word earlier to the Bahmani ruler about the possibility of placing a Bahmani son on the Delhi throne. Firuz Shah was offered the use of Timur’s royal paraphernalia, and received gifts from the great power in Samarkand as well. Although Gujarat and Malwa were beyond the reach of both Timur and Firuz Shah at the time, Timur nevertheless offered these regions to the Bahmani king in advance of the Mongol army’s arrival.

An empire rises at Pampa’s tirtha

At the same time that upheaval in Daulatabad was birthing the Bahmani Kingdom, another new entity was just peeking over the horizon further south. The dawn of the Vijayanagara Empire would begin in the hands of two brothers, Harihara and Bukka, of the Sangama dynasty. The Sangama brothers were local warriors from Karnataka who first served in the army of the Hoysala king, and later appear to have voluntarily given their allegiance to Muhammad bin Tughlaq while the seat of the Delhi Sultanate was in Daulatabad [Asher & Talbot, Wagoner]. Harihara had been appointed by Tughlaq’s Sultanate as a “governor of Bellary and a portion of the (soon to be heavily contested) Krishna-Tungabhadra Doab and its western seacoast” [Sherwani].

In 1336, with Delhi’s presence fading in the Deccan, the Sangama brothers saw their opportunity to assert independent control of the region. Ten years later, in 1346, they held a major ceremony, gathering at the important Shiva center of Sringeri in Karnataka, and celebrating their conquests of the previous decade. This meeting “anticipated the final collapse of Tughlaq authority on the plateau, the disappearance of the Hoysala house altogether [...] and the formation of a new state, Vijayanagara, which would have an illustrious place in Indian history” [Eaton]. Some scholars mark this ceremony as the true commencement of the Vijayanagara Empire.

The city of Vijayanagara itself was an awe-inspiring urban center. With an estimated population of 300,000 to 400,000, it sprawled out over a huge area of roughly 25 square kilometers. The greater metropolitan area, including the outermost fortifications, covered nearly 650 square kilometers [Asher & Talbot]. There is evidence of over eighty major trade centers within Vijayanagara territory. The currency of Vijayanagara, the hon, also reflected the economic power of the kingdom in the south. Merchants and consumers on both sides of the Raichur Doab trusted the Vijayanagara’s currency more than the newer currencies introduced by the Bahmani Kingdom, giving the southern empire an economic advantage. In later centuries, twice as much Vijayanagara coinage circulated in the Bahmani state as did the Bahmanis’ own coins.

With rapid growth came immediate material benefits in food and labor. To support the expanding population, rulers consistently promoted advances into neighboring territories. Agricultural activity was supported by technological advances in irrigation, storage, and transportation of goods: rice in particular, but also coconuts, sugarcane, pomegranates, oranges, and bananas [Morrison].

According to an ambassador sent to Vijayanagara in the 15th century on behalf of the Timurid ruler Shah Rukh of Herat, the capital radiated sophistication and style. Men and women of all classes walked about the city adorned with pearls, rubies, emeralds and diamonds [Dalrymple]. Gardens, orchards, and smooth, polished canals reached like tendrils into the city center from the nearby Tungabhadra river. The ambassador was most impressed with the Vijayanagara ruler’s throne, which was “of an extraordinary size, made of gold inlay encrusted with beautiful jewels and ornaments with exceeding delicacy, dexterity and artistic refinement” [Henry].

Like the Bahmani amirs to the north, the rajas of Vijayanagara also had aims towards expansion. Calling themselves the “Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans”, they envisioned dominance over the Bay of Bengal to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west. They captured port cities on both coasts where trade could be controlled, imported war horses and elephants, and blocked the same economic and military benefits to their regional rivals. Other imported items like sandalwood, musk, and camphor were used in the court for rituals and gift exchanges, granting rulers and nobles further means of wielding their soft power.

The location of the capital city Vijayanagara, which translates to “city of victory”, was chosen for both its natural strategic advantages and because of the site’s mythical associations. The site lies near the Tungabhadra River and was known as Pampa’s tirtha, or the crossing of Pampa the river goddess, in what is now modern day Hampi. Numerous foundational myths suggested that the site enjoyed divine protection from the god Virupaksha, and the merging with Pampa evoked ancient Hindu narratives [Vergheze]. Other stories from an important Hindu text, the Ramayana, had connections to the region. It was believed to be Kishkindha, the monkey kingdom in that epic tale. But the most popular foundational myth was the story of the Hare and the Hounds. According to this legend, Harihara and Bukka were hunting in the Hampi region with two hunting dogs when they happened upon a lone hare. But instead of fleeing in fear, the hare instead turned on its pursuers and bravely chased the hounds away [Balasubrahmanyam]. Such stories may have promoted the legitimacy of the new empire widely, as it easily became infused with previous cult mythologies throughout the land.



Virupaksha Temple, modern day Hampi, Karnataka, India. Construction began in the 12th century, and was completed in the early 16th century. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra.

The construction of tremendous temples like one dedicated to Virupaksha made plain the importance of Hindu symbology and religious traditions, yet the rajas outwardly projected a Persianate stance, wearing Persianate clothes and taking on Persianate titles. The rajas of Vijayanagara “fashioned themselves as ‘Sultans among Indian kings’ (hindu-*raya*-*suratrana*)” [Wagoner]. By 1355 Vijayanagara’s rulers were referring to themselves “simply as ‘Sultan’ several decades before they began using the Sanskrit titles of *rajadhiraja* (king of kings) or *rajaparamesvara* (supreme king)” [Eaton]. The absorption of Persianate civilization into the Deccan has been likened to the Hellenization of Europe, in that cultural values, justice in particular, were absorbed by choice, not by force, rapidly propelling such cultural ideals far and wide.

Timur’s invasion of Delhi in 1398 was fairly well removed from the Vijayanagara Empire’s geographical domain, but the Bahmanis to the north were making arrangements with the imminent conqueror to control Malwa and Gujarat upon his departure, presumably with an understanding to send regular tributary payments to Samarkand. During this time, however, messages were sent from the Delhi Sultanate forces in Malwa to the Vijayanagara rulers about the possibility of an alliance. The balance of power in the Deccan had by then most certainly shifted.

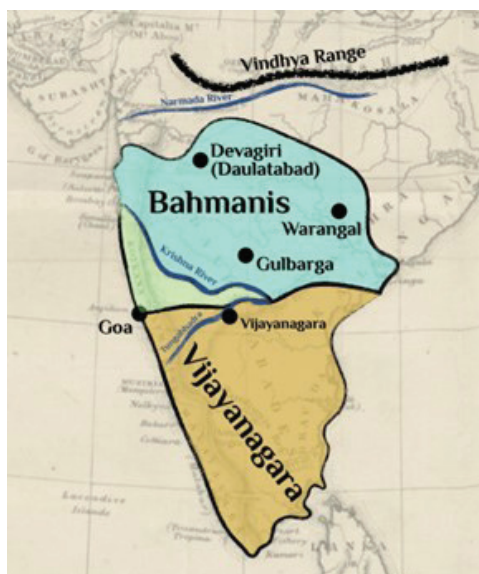
Cooperation and devastation in the Deccan

With the Delhi Sultanate’s reach receding, the central rivalry in the Deccan for the second half of the 14th century would be between the Bahmani Kingdom and the Vijayanagara Empire. Although the oppressive tribute demands of the Delhi Sultanate had been cast aside, there remained fierce contests for important economic hubs like Goa and other port cities to the west, and the lush, fertile Raichur Doab between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers. Nayakas, warrior kings emerging from the embers of the Kakatiya dynasty, aided the Bahmani Kingdom in some contests of power and the Vijayanagara Empire in others.

But the interactions between the two rebel kingdoms was complex, from a shared enhancement in trade and commercial activity to the mixing of the populations and Hindu-Muslim marriages. Although the Bahmanis had a long history of strengths in trade, particularly in the cavalry market, they also benefited and learned from the economic might of their southern rivals, who offered access to “imported horses from Hormuz, elephants from [Sri Lanka, and] musk and fur from China” [Sherwani]. The influence of Hindu culture is even evidenced by architectural choices in the sacred buildings of the Bahmanis. Meanwhile the Vijayanagara Empire would learn from the Bahmani military strength, and would improve their defensive capabilities by welcoming Bahmanis, highly respected for their martial skills, to the state. A mosque was even constructed by one such officer in the capital city of Vijayanagara, in an area which later became a Muslim quarter.

Long peaceful stretches of beneficial interaction, however, would be punctured by a number of devastating battles. Early on in their shared history the military technology of the Bahmanis overwhelmed the soft defenses of the rajas to the south. Vijayanagara’s troops could not prevail over the smaller Bahmani armies due to the latter’s great advantages in cavalry forces and technology. The Bahmanis posed a geographic and military block to Vijayanagara’s desire to expand, resulting in a greater commitment of resources by Vijayanagara to build up its military might. Only after decades of borrowing military personnel and learning new technologies from the Bahmani Kingdom was the Vijayanagara Empire able to find its footing against its northern rival. Military innovations including horse-riding equipment such as foot-stirrups, harnesses, high saddles with pommels, and nailed horseshoes eventually found their way into Vijayanagara’s defenses. The availability of high-quality horses was another important factor in the conflicts on both sides of the Raichur Doab, the highly desirable, fertile land between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers.

The sixteenth century would see the Bahmani Kingdom fading out of existence, breaking in 1518 into the five late-medieval Deccan Sultanates: Ahmadnagar, Berar, Bidar, Bijapur, and Golconda. But these smaller kingdoms that had once comprised the Bahmani Kingdom were terrifyingly successful in their unified assault on the city of Vijayanagara in 1565 at the Battle of Talikota, which resulted in the devastation and plundering of the once-great capital city, and signaled the beginning of the Vijayanagara Empire’s decline.



The Deccan Plateau at the end of the 14th century.

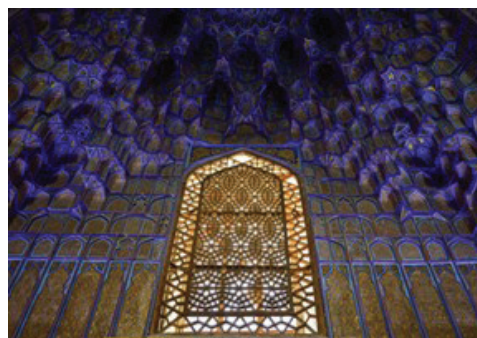
Epilogue: The sack of Delhi

In December of 1398, the feared nomadic conqueror Timur turned his attention towards Delhi. Sultan Nasir-ud-Din Mahmud Shah Tughlaq (r. 1394–1413) and his general Mallu Iqbal met the Mongol army on the battlefield, but quickly found their forces in disarray. The Tughlaq Sultan fled with what remained of his army to Gujarat. The city of Delhi was sacked and left in ruins, resulting in a catastrophic loss of life.

The people of the adjoining districts all flocked into the fortress of Delhi, and the old fortifications had not yet been built up, so that such consternation among men has never been witnessed, nor even heard of; for all the inhabitants of the city both great and small were completely overpowered with terror.

– Zia al-Din Barani, on the arrival of the Mongol hordes to Delhi. [Barani]

Timur's invasion of Delhi would trigger a wave of new power structures throughout the Indian subcontinent. In 1391, seven years before the arrival of Timur, the Tughlaq Sultan sent four governors from Delhi to reestablish Delhi's control in Gujarat, Jaunpur, and Malwa. After Timur's raid the governors each formed their own independent sultanates. The Tughlaq Sultan returned from Gujarat to rule over a burnt and plundered Delhi, which had been left in a state of utter chaos upon Timur's departure. In 1414 the Tughlaq governor Khizr Khan, claiming to represent Timur, would take control of the Delhi Sultanate, marking the end of the Tughlaq dynasty of rulers and the beginning of a new dynasty in Delhi, that of the Sayyids.



*Gūr-e Amūr, Mausoleum of the Timurids, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
Photograph by Francisco Anzola.*

2.1 Rulers

Delhi Sultanate (from 1290–1413)

Khalji Dynasty

- Jalal-ud-Din Khalji (1290–1296)
- Ala-ud-Din Khalji (1296–1316)
- Shihab-ud-Din Omar (1316)
- Qutb-ud-Din Mubarak Shah (1316–1320)
- Khusrau Khan (1320)

Tughlaq Dynasty

- Ghiyath-al-Din Tughlaq (1321–1325)
- Muhammad bin Tughlaq (1325–1351)
- Firuz Shah Tughlaq (1351–1388)
- [crisis] (1388–1413)

Bahmani Kingdom (from 1347–1422)

- Ala-ud-Din Bahman Shah I (1347–1358)
- Muhammad Shah I (1358–1375)
- Mujahid Shah (1375–1378)
- Muhammad Shah II (1378–1397)
- Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah (1397–1422)

Vijayanagara Empire (from 1336–1422)

Sangama Dynasty

- Harihara I (1336–1356)
- Bukka Raya I (1356–1377)
- Harihara II (1377–1404)
- Virupaksha Raya (1404)
- Bukka Raya II (1404–1406)
- Deva Raya I (1406–1422)

3.0 Faction Guides

3.1 The Delhi Sultanate



The Mosque of Delhi and the Iron Pillar; Indian origin, artist unknown. Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery.

Role: You represent the Sultans in Delhi, many of whom will come to power by force, others by the careful political management of Delhi's nobles. Few and far between are gentle transitions of power from one generation to the next. Every Sultan learns quickly that control of the throne in Delhi is precarious...and expensive. You will need to finance the defense of Delhi from Mongol invasions, and cannot allow regular tributary payments from the southern provinces to fall behind.

Basic Strategy Tips

An uncertain economy: The Delhi Sultanate survives or falls with the size of its coffers, and once a southern Province becomes independent it will not be easy to bring it back to heel. A strategic Sultanate will be sure to distribute its Troops so as to curtail any nearing rebellions. Keep a close eye on the distant provinces of Gujarat, Maharashtra, Bengal, and Karnataka, as these regions of high Prosperity will be hotly contested.

Governors of uncertain loyalty: Delhi's Governors are sharp tools, and the Sultanate must be careful with them. After a Governor has taken time to establish a position in a Province, Governing again can deal a devastating early blow to Obedient Amirs and Rajas before they are able to Rebel. Do not forget that Governors command their own armies and can fight along with Troops in any battles. And make sure a Governor is nearby when it is time to place a Tributary marker back on the map, as their presence is required to Demand Obedience.

But the Sultanate must be very careful about where to deploy these powerful servants. The Bahmani Kingdom will rise through the betrayal of the Sultan by his Governors. It may be wise to station them near but not inside valuable Provinces, in order to keep them from making such disloyal contacts, but ready to be called into action when needed. On the other hand, if the Bahmani Kingdom is busy Conspiring with Delhi's Governors, they will not have time to Build defensive Forts. Will the Sultanate send out Governors who it knows will become disloyal? A truly intriguing possibility.

Defense against Mongol raids: It may be prudent to station some Troops in Punjab, where the consequences of Mongol invasions begin to incur not only financial losses, but also Troop reductions in the south. A more aggressive approach might include the stationing of Troops in the Mountain Passes. In both cases, try to attack the amassing Mongols before they attack you, as any survivors of a battle will otherwise escape with your valuable Resources. Whether this wall of defense is too heavy or too light will depend on what transpires further south.

Positioning Qasbahs: The Delhi Sultanate has strength in numbers, resources, and cavalry. Carefully managed Troops may be just enough to keep numerous Provinces in its domain. Qasbahs are of use not only for conscripting Troops, but also for supporting attacks on neighboring Provinces. Although not as valuable for tributary payments, a Qasbah in centrally located Madhyadesh or Andhra might prove useful in this regard. And remember that there need not be attacking pieces already in the targeted Province - an Attack can be performed using only supporting units from a neighboring Province with a Qasbah if desired.

Common pitfalls: New Sultans will find the splitting of their attention between the Mongol Invaders and the southern Provinces very challenging, and their responses are often off-balance. Most will learn some valuable lessons the hard way. Another common mistake is to station too few Governors in the southern Provinces late in the game, where and when they are desperately needed to Demand Obedience. Without them there is no hope (outside of a fortunate Event) to place Tributary markers that have been removed back onto the map.

The Delhi Sultanate can be the most challenging Faction to play. Consider giving this role to the most experienced player, who should prepare for the inevitable: the tide will eventually turn against them. Provinces will rebel, income will dwindle, and everything will become harder. Try not to despair! It is often possible to salvage victory even when it all seems lost, especially if the other burgeoning kingdoms no longer see the Sultanate as a threat. It is not easy to be the Sultan.

3.2 The Bahmani Kingdom



Tombs and shrine of Gisu Daraz, Gulbarga. March 1797, watercolor; by Colin MacKenzie (British Library).

Role: You represent elite nobles, regional rulers, and the Sultan’s Governors who have wandered outside of his loyal inner circle. On the surface these Amirs appear as obedient servants to the Delhi Sultanate, continuing to send tribute to Delhi, while gently undermining it in the marketplace and political backrooms throughout the land, and waiting for just the right time to break away as an independent kingdom.

Basic Strategy Tips

Dangerous whispers: Whether or not the Bahmani Kingdom will survive its disunion with Delhi will depend on its timing. While Amirs are Obedient the Sultanate may suspect a potential betrayal but will not attack them outright. Attacking and Rebelling against the Sultan will reveal the Amirs’ true intentions – a storm of attacking Troops is likely to arrive in response. Obedient Amirs must keep a close eye on Delhi’s Governors – they can be devastating to the upstart kingdom’s interests, but if timed right, they too might be willing to Conspire against the Sultan.

Masters of trade: The Bahmani trade network covered the subcontinent and reached Central Asia through ports on the western coast. Early migration into new regions will enhance trade activity, as will finding ways to augment the Bahmani Influence in the Deccan. In addition to maintaining a healthy economy, access to Cavalry through Trade is of paramount importance.

Lord of Horses: A strong trade network will not be sufficient to keep Delhi at arm’s length, and Vijayanagara may have expansion in mind. The Bahmanis must also develop their defenses, through construction of Forts and by acquisition of powerful Cavalry. Construction of two Forts in neighboring Provinces presents a thorny challenge for would-be aggressors, as they can support one another with counterattacks. Your Cavalry strength will dominate that of Vijayanagara in this century (giving rise to the name bestowed upon you by your rivals, “Ashvapati”, the Lord of Horses). Cavalry will be key to your defense against attacks by Vijayanagara in particular.

Common pitfalls: The primary winner in an early battle between the Bahmani Kingdom and the Vijayanagara Empire is likely to be the Delhi Sultanate. Perhaps the neighbors to the south could be seen as natural allies, especially while the Sultan’s grip on the subcontinent is firm – a successful breakaway will prove almost impossible if Vijayanagara remains under Delhi’s thumb. Attacking the Sultanate early in the game will invite attacks in response – waiting until the Sultan’s economy is crumbling to become more aggressive is advised. In the early game, remember that Forts and Influence provide Cavalry tokens when the first Succession card is drawn.

If the pendulum of history swings against you, you may find the number of Amirs resisting Delhi dwindles to a small few in the early game. If this happens it will be painful to recover, but it can be done! You can always Rally two Amirs in Maharashtra, and once you are on solid footing there you can begin to reach outward again. Be patient, point out to the other players that you are not a threat, and watch for opportunities.

The Bahmani Kingdom is not far behind the Delhi Sultanate in the challenge it presents to the player. Although the Bahmanis will find themselves with defensive advantages, they also find rivals to both the north and south. Their rebellions must be well-timed so as not to arouse the wrath of the Sultanate; and perhaps any aggression towards the Vijayanagara Empire is best left for a time in which the Sultanate does not present an immediate threat.

3.3 The Vijayanagara Empire



Scene in a street outside a South Indian Temple, anonymous artist working in the South India/Madras style, c. 1800-1810 (British Library).

Role: You represent the Sangama brothers, Nayakas, and other minor rulers left in the wake of fallen kingdoms, seeking to rise in the south as a new independent empire. These Rajas of Vijayanagara are eager to cast off the oppressive taxation of the distant Delhi Sultanate, and like the Amirs to the north wish to claim their independence. Their relationship with the Bahmanis is complex. In some decades they will find themselves engaged in prosperous trade and a careful peace; in other decades the shared desire to rule Deccan Plateau and the fertile Raichur Doab will prove to be too strong and aggression will ensue.

Basic Strategy Tips

Delhi's oppression from afar: Take advantage of your distance from Delhi and Rebel as soon as possible. The sooner you cease your tributary payments the more likely the Sultanate will be permanently weakened. More immediately, the resources gained by the taxes on your burgeoning economy are needed to maintain its growth.

Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans: Vijayanagara has the potential to spread far and wide, with natural allies ready to join the empire once its influence begins to rise. But the full strength of the Vijayanagara economy cannot emerge until independent temple towns begin to appear throughout the south. Temples provide benefits to Rallying and Taxing, and early construction of Temples will help to organize a large population who will support a break from Delhi. Temples are safest in well-defended regions, Karnataka being a natural early location for one. But it might also be worth attempting to build a Temple in a newer region in the hopes of catalyzing a vibrant outpost.

A compelling rise: Look out for opportunities to effectively combine your actions. Compel allies in a new adjacent Province and then immediately Migrate from there to reach distant Provinces quickly. Once your Influence is sufficiently high, those new allies can be called upon to remove a troublesome Governor at the same time, and even to acquire Cavalry. Compel followed by an Attack, supported from an adjacent Temple, can result in a surprise that might prove critical if timed properly.

Deccan Influence: Influence in the Deccan can be enhanced both by aggressive means and by softer economic activities. You will find that the Bahmani Kingdom is stronger on the battlefield than you are in this century, owing to their substantial cavalry advantages. In later centuries you will incorporate their technology and even commanders into your own ranks to turn the tables. But for now, a safer way to advance your interests might be to focus on infrastructure development as part of the Migrate command. From constructing stepwells to markets, convince the rulers of millions of Deccanis that the Vijayanagara Empire is on the rise.



Stepwells like this one in Hampi were constructed to handle variations in water supply across different seasons.

Common pitfalls: Keep in mind that Rajas, like all other pieces in the game, cannot be voluntarily removed from the map in order to add them elsewhere. Given the large number of possible Rajas in the game, it might be worth keeping some uncommitted in case opportunities arise that would place Available Rajas onto the map. In the early game, remember that Temples and Influence will provide resources on the first Succession card. Be wary of Governors even when they appear distant – they can Campaign and Govern in the early game, or March and Demand Obedience in the late game, both to tremendous effect.

Health warning: The Vijayanagara Empire cannot emerge as the dominant Deccan Empire without the assistance of the Nayaka warrior kings, additional Rajas which are made available only after Vijayanagara carries substantial Influence in the Deccan. Be sure to establish those ties early.

If the Bahmani Kingdom never rebels, you will find that the Delhi Sultanate remains a threat even from afar. An alliance with the Bahmanis in the early game may be in both your interests. On the other hand, once a wall of Bahmani Forts are on the map, it may be impossible to penetrate for northward expansion.

3.4 The Mongol Invaders (non-player)



*Timurid Mausoleum, Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
Photograph by Francisco Anzola.*

While the southern Provinces may appear appetizing to the Delhi Sultanate, Delhi itself has caught the eye of Mongol armies for over a century. Raiding villages and farms with relative ease, the Mongol Invaders even besieged Delhi for two months in 1303 before being repelled by reinforcements and sent back across the mountains.

To claim the riches of Delhi and its surrounding regions the Mongol Army will Amass in the mountain passes, Advance ever closer to Delhi, and Attack and Plunder along the way. Its strategic decisions are aided at different times by the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagara Empire. The Timurid Empire is even willing to send gifts in return for their assistance, should they so desire, though such gifts are not without cost, making their recipient appear weak and reducing their Deccan Influence.

At the end of the game Timur's large Mongol army will advance on Delhi and attempt to conquer it. The success or failure of this assault can be pivotal, increasing or reducing the Delhi Sultanate's final score by up to three points. The Delhi Sultanate must be prepared for this, or else gamble on maintaining sufficiently many Tributaries in the south that they can win even without defeating Timur.

4.0 Event Cards

Each Event card depicts an important event or person, along with shaded and unshaded options that may be carried out by one or multiple Factions, *and* flavor text that plays no role in gameplay. These background notes have been organized in approximate chronological order so that they may be read linearly for additional historical narrative.

Dates are given for specific historical events. The order of eligibility is also indicated, here abbreviated as **DS** (Delhi Sultanate), **BK** (Bahmani Kingdom) or **VE** (Vijayanagara Empire). The Event text is repeated here for reference, and additional tips are provided in cases where an Event effect may not be entirely clear. If an Event is marked 'STAY ELIGIBLE' then any Faction executing either option will remain eligible to act on the subsequent Event card. '**BK/VE**' means 'either **BK** or **VE**' (acting Faction chooses which), and 'adjacent to' means 'in any Provinces adjacent to'.

1. Malik Kafur DS BK VE

STAY ELIGIBLE

General assassinated, power struggle ensues: Move all Governors on the map to Provinces adjacent to Delhi. **BK/VE** free Limited Rebel (either Dynasty).

Favored slave-general brilliant in battle: **DS** selects one space into which it moves up to 8 of its Units from anywhere on the map, flips any Units to Rebellious, and Attacks for free.

Tips: The unshaded text allows a Faction to Rebel even during the Khalji Dynasty. The shaded text may only flip Units to Rebellious and Attack in the single selected space.

Background: Born into slavery and sold to the Khaljis, Malik Kafur rose rapidly through military ranks and commanded armies against invading Mongols in Punjab and powerful dynasties in the south, including the Yadavas and Kakatiyas. Following the death of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khalji, Malik Kafur took his seat on the throne – and was murdered not long after. The period that followed was accompanied by rebellion and uncertainty across the Deccan Plateau.

Arriving before Warangal's outer walls in mid-January 1310, Malik Kafur rained showers of arrows on Kakatiya defenders for a full month. After breaching the great capital city of the Kakatiyas, Malik Kafur began his march back to Delhi, his pack trains laden with the spoils of victory, and for several years [Raja] Pratapa Rudra dutifully paid Delhi a heavy annual tribute. [EatonSocial]

2. Mongol Army Repelled DS BK VE

STAY ELIGIBLE

Pyrrhic victory: Remove up to 2 DS Units in each of Mtn Passes and Punjab.

Sultan's mercenary army victorious: DS may Attack in Mtn Passes or Punjab for free, then may rearrange up to 6 of its Units among Mtn Passes, Punjab, and one other space.

Tips: The shaded text grants one free Attack only, in either Mtn Passes or Punjab.

Background: Among the Delhi Sultanate's strengths was its early successes in repelling Mongol armies that had emerged from the mountain passes to the northwest. Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khalji even appeared for a time to have entirely erased the Mongol threat. A standing army of hundreds of thousands of troops in Punjab and elsewhere not only protected Delhi and its surroundings, but also blocked aggressive foreign advances deeper into the south.

3. Diamond Mines of Golconda BK DS VE

Untold riches lie just beneath the surface: In each Province adjacent to Warangal in which it has a piece, BK/VE may Rally for free and gain 2 Resources.

Sultan's oppressive taxation: In each Province adjacent to Warangal with a DS piece, DS may take up to 2 Resources from each Faction with a piece there.

Tips: The shaded text would allow DS to take 2 Resources from each other Faction in each space adjacent to Warangal where they share pieces, potentially up to a total of 8 Resources each from both Factions.

Background: To pay for its standing army the Delhi Sultanate often imposed oppressive taxes upon the populace. Raising taxes up to 50% on agricultural produce resulted in substantial hardship, and kept potential rivals thoroughly occupied. By instituting price controls in the markets, the Sultan's troops could subsist on low wages. Traders who violated the controls were severely punished.

But another source of riches could be found underground. Among the natural resources found in the Deccan were the great diamond mines of Golconda, from which would emerge some of history's most famous gems. They likely include the Koh-i-Noor diamond ("Mountain of Light") which now resides among the British Crown Jewels [Dalrymple], and the blue Hope diamond, once owned by Louis XIV and stolen during the French Revolution.



The Syamantaka jewel being presented to Krishna, as described in Puranic Hindu literature, a gem that "provoked envy, greed and violence in those who coveted it" [Dalrymple].

4. Ears of the Sultan DS VE BK

STAY ELIGIBLE

Sultan's plans intercepted: VE/BK may replace one Governor with an Obedient or Rebellious Raja/Amir.

Network of spies covers the Deccan: DS may Govern ignoring location requirements.

Tips: The unshaded text may only place a piece belonging to the selecting Faction. The shaded text would allow DS to Govern even in Independent Provinces that they do not Control.

Background: The Delhi Sultanate was known to maintain a very active spy network. Administrative and social matters, and even the specifics of market transactions, were monitored and reported to the Sultan by his many royal spies. But the Delhi Sultanate was not the only kingdom engaging in such discreet efforts. Later in the 14th century the spies of the Bahmani Kingdom proved valuable when they learned that the Raja of Telangana was communicating with Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-88) of Delhi, promising that if he attacked the Deccan he would be "thrice welcome" and would be joined not only by the Raja of Telangana but by the Raja of Vijayanagara as well (Event #28). Photograph on card by Kevin Gessner.

5. Siege of Chittor (1303) VE DS BK

STAY ELIGIBLE

Hammir Singh reclaims a Rajput Kingdom: VE/BK may replace up to 2 DS Units adjacent to Chittor with Rebellious Units, and may place a Temple/Fort in Rajput Kingdoms.

Massacre at Chittor: DS may replace up to 3 opposing Units adjacent to Chittor with Troops, and may place a Qasbah in Rajput Kingdoms.

Tips: The unshaded text may only place pieces matching the selected Faction, and may not violate stacking (1.4.4).

Background: Whether due to anger at its resistance to subjugation, or possibly fearing an impending uprising there, in 1303 Ala-ud-Din Khalji and his army invaded Mewar and assaulted

the fort at Chittor. Although the Rajput ruler there, Ratnasimha, would be left to live in poverty, thousands of others would be slaughtered by Ala-ud-Din's troops in a single day. Chittor Fort was granted to Khizr Khan, Ala-ud-Din's eldest son, and the fort was renamed Khizrabad. After passing to the Tughlaq Sultans, Chittor Fort would be reclaimed by another Rajput king, Hammir Singh.

Appearing in entertainment media even to this day is the story that Ala-ud-Din attacked Chittor Fort out of desire for the queen Padmavati. This tale appears not to have much historical support, and stories that give romanticized depictions of the military battles of Ala-ud-Din's era should not be considered accurate historical accounts. However, they do indicate that North Indians in subsequent generations saw him as a powerful conqueror whose actions had a lasting impact on multiple kingdoms. [Asher & Talbot]

6. Siege of Warangal (1310) DS VE BK

STAY ELIGIBLE

Continual looting encourages resistance: VE/BK may remove a Tributary marker and place up to 2 Rajas/Amirs in one Province adjacent to Warangal.

Koh-i-Noor diamond among war spoils: DS may execute a Campaign ending in a Province adjacent to Warangal and take 3 Resources from a Faction with a piece there.

Tips: The unshaded text may only place pieces matching the selected Faction. The shaded text may only take Resources from a Faction with a piece in the selected Province.

Background: To continue the flow of tribute and goods to Delhi the Sultan would send his general Malik Kafur and Khusrau Khan, another slave-general captured during Ala-ud-Din Khalji's conquest of Malwa in 1305, on a campaign deep into the Deccan. Among the planned destinations on this grand tour, the generals approached the great three-walled city of Warangal, the seat of the Kakatiya Empire, from which tributary payments to Delhi had slowed.

The threat of a large Sultanate army at the doorstep was often enough to renew the flow of gifts to Delhi. It is written that 20,000 horses and 100 elephants were given by the Kakatiya king on this occasion, along with the famous diamond later known as the Koh-i-Noor (Event #3). Returning to Delhi after such an expedition, the spoils were presented to the Sultan in a public ceremony attended by all of Delhi's elite nobles. [Asher & Talbot]

7. The Conquest of Madurai (1311) DS VE BK

STAY ELIGIBLE

Tale of Madurai Sultan's defeat chronicled in epic Sanskrit poem: VE/BK may place up to 2 Rajas/Amirs in Tamilakam and gain 3 total Resources/Cavalry.

Sultan's generals plunder Pandyan kingdom: DS may place up to 4 Troops and a Governor in Tamilakam, and gain 3 total Resources/Cavalry.

Tips: The unshaded text may only place pieces matching the selected Faction. Both options allow the executing Faction to take any combination of Resources or Cavalry, up to 3 total.

Background: Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khalji's reach into the Deccan in the early 14th century would extend farther south with each attempt. His generals plundered Gujarat in 1297, Mewar four times between 1299 and 1303, Malwa in 1305, Maharashtra in 1307, and Andhra in 1310. The greatest distance covered to seize elephants, horses, and gold was a campaign to both Karnataka and as far south as Tamilakam, home to the Madurai Sultanate, in 1311.

A few decades later, with the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagara Empire declaring independence, Madurai would follow suit, cushioned by them to the north and comfortably distant from the Sultan's grip. But its independence was short lived – the Madurai Sultanate would come to be subsumed instead by the much closer and expanding threat, the Vijayanagara Empire.

Madhura Vijayam (The Conquest of Madurai) is a long Sanskrit historical poem written by the poet Gangadevi in the 14th century. It tells the story of how her husband Kumara Kampana, son of Bukka I and a general of Vijayanagara, invaded and defeated the Madurai Sultanate (which had been founded in rebellion against Delhi). The poem is among the most famous primary sources from this period of south Asian history.

8. Yadava Kingdom Annexed (1318) DS BK VE

Multi-ethnic polity seeds development: In each Province adjacent to Devagiri and/or Gulbarga BK/VE may replace 1 DS Unit with an Amir/Raja.

Sultanate reclaims natural stronghold: In each Province adjacent to Devagiri and/or Gulbarga, DS may Govern for free ignoring location requirements, and place 1 Troop.

Tips: The unshaded text may replace up to 1 DS Unit per space, but may only place pieces matching the selected Faction. The shaded text would allow DS to Govern even in Independent Provinces that they do not Control, also placing 1 Troop in each selected Province.

Background: After the death of Sultan Ala-ud-Din Khalji, with Delhi embroiled in an internal power struggle, many Deccan states withheld their tribute payments to the Sultanate. In response, Sultan Qutb-al-Din Mubarak Khalji (r. 1316-1320) personally marched with an army into the Deccan in 1318. Instead of delivering a firm reminder to pay the expected tribute, this time the Sultan fully annexed the Yadava territory, including the stronghold of Devagiri. Governors were appointed throughout the former Yadava territory and strategic qasbahs were garrisoned. Photograph by Vijay Chennupati.

9. Kakatiya Empire Extinguished (1323) DS VE BK

Telugu kingdom leaves a mythic legacy: +1 VE Influence. VE may Compel in one Province adjacent to Warangal that they do not Control, then Build there.

Sultanate tires of awaiting tribute: +3 DS Resources. DS may place up to 4 Troops and a Governor in one Province adjacent to Warangal and Demand Obedience.

Tips: The Demand Obedience granted by the shaded text would only have an effect if the selected Province was Independent, and requires DS Control as usual.

Background: In 1323, tributary payments from the Kakatiya Empire had fallen behind once again. The new Tughlaq Sultan, before departing on an eastward campaign to recalcitrant Bengal, sent his son Prince Ulugh Khan in his stead towards Warangal. The popular Kakatiya ruler Pratapa Rudra sent messengers to the commander of the arriving army, claiming the tribute to be late “since the distance is great and the roads are infested with miscreants” [EatonSocial]. But Ulugh Khan’s patience had run out, and the city was fiercely attacked and promptly overwhelmed.

Not lost in the assault, however, were principles of social mobility through military service. These values were sustained by Telugu warriors who would contribute much to shaping the emerging Vijayanagara Empire. The foundational myths of the Kakatiyas (based on the goddess Pampa), once subsumed by the Vijayanagara Empire, produced a new empire origin story – the bonding of Pampa with the god Virupaksha (Event #23).

10. Capital Relocated (1327) BK DS VE

STAY ELIGIBLE

Political damage and chaos ensues as the Delhi elite is forced to migrate: Move up to 4 DS Units from any Provinces to adjacent Provinces. -5 DS Resources.

Sultan shortens his reach into the Deccan: DS may move any Qasbahs to any spaces which contain Governors. Then place up to 2 Troops in each space with a Qasbah.

Tips: The unshaded text would allow any Faction to move DS Units. The shaded text only allows DS to move Qasbahs that are already on the map, not from Available.

Background: In 1327-28, aiming to establish a permanent presence in the Deccan and to bring kingdoms such as the Yadavas and Hoysalas into closer reach, the Sultan in Delhi ordered the capital to be moved from Delhi to Devagiri, a stronghold south of the Vindhya range. He would rename it Daulatabad. The Sultan demanded many high-ranking families in Delhi relocate there, a decree which proved politically devastating. Most of the transplanted families bitterly resented their forced removal from their homes, where their families had risen to prominence over generations. Only two decades passed before this resentment erupted into widespread rebellion. In 1337 the Sultan aban-

doned his vision of Daulatabad. Sensing a growing tension with potential rivals, he ordered many of the same elite nobles and their families back to Delhi, but they had now grown resentful of his tyrannical rule.

11. Hindu Kush Mountains DS BK VE

STAY ELIGIBLE

Sultanate army perishes in the snow on a scheme of foreign conquest: Place up to 2 Mongol Invaders in each of Mtn Passes and Punjab.

Grandiose schemes pay dividends: DS may remove up to 4 Mongol Invaders.

Tips: None.

Background: Muhammad bin Tughlaq aimed to secure the Delhi Sultanate against Mongol invasions by expanding into central Asia. He dispatched large armies to conquer territories beyond the mountain passes to the northwest, but these efforts failed to yield lasting results and diminished the Sultanate’s reputation in its own lands. One army fell victim to a very harsh winter on such a journey, which may have contributed to the mountain range being named the Hindu Kush, meaning “Hindu killer” or “Indian killer” in Persian.

12. Musunuri Nayakas (1335) VE DS BK

“Warrior kings” rise in the shadow of the Kakatiya Empire: BK/VE +2 Cavalry, and may remove up to 4 DS pieces adjacent to Warangal.

Telugu warriors no match for siege technology from Central Asia: DS +2 Cavalry, and may place a Qasbah, up to 4 Troops, and execute a free Limited Attack adjacent to Warangal.

Tips: The free Limited Attack granted by the shaded text must be in the same Province where the Qasbah and Troops were just placed.

Background: The Sultanate armies marching into the Deccan were equipped with war horses and siege technology that easily overwhelmed the defensive capabilities of the Kakatiya Empire and its Telugu warriors. But upon the dismantling of the Kakatiyas and the return of the Sultanate army to Delhi, independent houses of Telugu warriors like the Musunuri Nayakas rose up and established themselves as minor but substantial regional powers.

The Tughlaqs struggled to maintain control over Sultanpur (formerly Warangal), and by 1335 several local leaders had taken control and sought to legitimize their rule. These “warrior kings”, the Rajas of Telangana, supported other revolts in nearby areas. A stone inscription from 1330 mentions Prolaya Nayaka, an otherwise obscure chieftain, who claimed to be the rightful successor to Pratapa Rudra, despite having no previous connection to the Kakatiya state. Photograph by Kandukuru Nagarjun.

13. Sage of Vidyaranya (1336) **VE** **BK** **DS**

Meeting with revered jagadguru in Sringeri sparks a foundational myth: +2 **VE** Influence. **VE** may place any Rajas just gained adjacent to Vijayanagara.

Inferior military suffers early defeats: Move any number of Rajas from one Province into an adjacent Province with a **BK** piece. **BK** may Attack **VE** there for free.

Tips: The unshaded text allows **VE** to place any Rajas that have just been released from the Influence track.

Background: The Sangama brothers Harihara and Bukka were local warriors from Karnataka who first served in the army of the Hoysala king, and later appear to have voluntarily given their allegiance to Muhammad bin Tughlaq. But with the Delhi Sultanate's grip slipping in the Deccan, they saw an opportunity to assert independent control of the region, and held a major ceremony in 1346, founding the Vijayanagara Empire. Gathering at Sringeri, an important Shiva site in Karnataka, they celebrated their conquests up to that time, and gazed towards a near future free from Tughlaq authority.

Rather than the pedestrian timeline described above, with the Sangamas as enterprising local warriors in the employ first of the Hoysalas, and then the Tughlaqs in the Bellary district of Karnataka, many have envisioned instead a more dramatic tale: one of forced conversion to Islam under the Tughlaqs and a momentous return to Hinduism under the guidance of an esteemed sage of Vidyaranya in 1336. The historicity of this tale has been called into question – the divisive religious scaffolding of the story appears likely to be tied instead to the political aims of future generations centuries later.

14. Last Great King of the Hoysalas (1342) **VE** **BK** **DS**

Vijayanagara emerges from the crumbling kingdom of Veera Ballala III: **VE** +2 Cavalry, and may remove a Tributary marker and place up to 2 Rajas adjacent to Vijayanagara.

Delhi's armies plunder the Hoysala Capital: **DS** +3 Cavalry, and may place up to 4 Troops and a Governor in one Province adjacent to Vijayanagara and Demand Obedience there.

Tips: The Demand Obedience granted by the shaded text would only have an effect if the selected Province was Independent, and requires **DS** Control as usual.

Background: In the early 14th century, King Veera Ballala III, with his 'Garuda' bodyguards at his side, had successfully defended the Hoysala Empire from the nearby Yadavas of Devagiri and the Pandyas of Madurai. The Hoysalas would not be as fortunate upon the arrival of Malik Kafur in 1311, who attacked and plundered the Hoysala capital of Dwarasamudra. The Hoysala ruler began to send regular tributary payments to Delhi, but ceased these payments upon news that a new regime, that of the Tughlaqs, had risen to power. The Delhi Sultanate's response was swift – the Tughlaq army returned to plunder Dwarasamudra once

again in 1327. Veera Ballala III would recover and construct a new capital, which would someday become Vijayanagara – but the king's defeat and demise at the hands of the Madurai Sultanate would signal the end of the Hoysalas in 1342.



Exterior wall reliefs at Hoysaleswara Temple, a 12th-century Hindu temple of the Hoysala Empire dedicated to Shiva, in Karnataka.

Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra

15. Uprising in Daulatabad (1346) **BK** **DS** **VE**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Delhi resentment reaches breaking point: Replace any Governors adjacent to Devagiri with Rebellious Amirs and remove a Tributary marker in one affected Province.

Commanders sentenced to death: In one Province adjacent to Devagiri, replace an Amir with a Governor to place a Tributary marker.

Tips: The unshaded text may only remove a Tributary marker in a Province where a Governor was replaced. The shaded text may only place a Tributary marker if an Amir is replaced, and would also flip all Amirs and Rajas in the Province to Obedient.

Background: In 1345, in order to send a message to other potential rebels, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq seized 89 amirs, accused them of plotting to rebel, and had them executed. The amirs of Daulatabad (Devagiri), Gujarat, and adjoining districts revolted in unison, uniting together as the Bahmani Kingdom and asserting their independence from Delhi in 1346. The Sultanate would return in force to reclaim Daulatabad one year later.

To counter the Sultanate's fierce response, a former governor under Muhammad bin Tughlaq, Zafar Khan, rode out of Gulbarga and into Daulatabad, along with a force of 1500 cavalry sent by the Raja of Telangana, expelling the Delhi Sultanate's troops from the city once again. Zafar Khan was crowned the ruler of the Bahmani Kingdom, with the title of Sikandar-i-Sani Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahman Shah al-Wali (r. 1347-58) and legitimized by the Sufi Shaikh Siraj-al-Din Junaidi on Friday March 8, 1347. Photograph by Abhijit Shylanath.

16. Gulbarga Fort (1347) **BK VE DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Defenses expanded in the first Bahmani capital: **BK** may place up to 3 Amirs and a Fort adjacent to Gulbarga.

Bahmani Kingdom threatens control: **DS/VE** may March/Migrate for free into a Province that contains a Fort. Remove the Fort there.

Tips: **VE** executing the shaded text could also shift Influence if they paid an additional Resource.

Background: After rebelling from the Delhi Sultanate the Bahmani ruler Ala-ud-Din Hasan Bahman Shah soon shifted the Bahmani capital from Daulatabad (Devagiri) to Gulbarga. A fort there was immediately enlarged and improved – mosques, palaces, and tombs were constructed inside its walls over the following decades. One such mosque is the Jama Masjid Gulbarga, constructed to commemorate the establishment of Bahmani dynastic rule by the second Bahmani Sultan, Muhammad Shah I (r. 1358-75). Enclosed with beautiful domes and arched columns, it is unique among mosques in India for its architectural features. Gulbarga remained the capital of the Bahmani Kingdom until 1424.



*The Jama Masjid Gulbarga, a mosque inside Gulbarga Fort, constructed by the second Bahmani Sultan, Muhammad Shah I (r. 1358–1375). Gulbarga, Karnataka, India.
Photograph by Matteo Gianni.*

17. Sufi Shaikh Relocates (1347) **BK VE DS**

Siraj-al-Din Junaidi takes up residence: +1 **BK** Influence. **BK** removes up to 5 **DS** pieces among any Provinces with a **BK** piece.

Relationships sour between Bahmani rulers and Sufi shaikhs: Remove a Fort and up to 2 Amirs from one Province. -2 **BK** Resources.

Tips: None.

Background: In Sufi tradition, sovereign authority is held by Sufi shaikhs, and Bahmani rulers required the presence and approval of such a spiritual leader to stake their claim. It was therefore a key component to a successful break from the Delhi Sultanate to enjoy the endorsement of Shaikh Siraj-al-Din Junaidi, who moved along with the new ruler of the Bahmani Kingdom to its capital in Gulbarga.

But just as good relations with a shaikh could bring huge benefits, so too could a souring of relations result in political devastation. A theological rift would widen between the Sufi Shaikh Gisu Daraz and the Bahmani ruler Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422), who thought the former “deficient in the external sciences”, in 1409 [EatonSocial]. The forced relocation of the beloved shaikh away from the capital may have planted a seed leading to the eventual collapse of the Bahmani Kingdom into the five “Deccan Sultanates” starting in 1490.

18. Center of High Culture **BK VE DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Bahmani Kingdom attracts great minds from afar; culture flourishes in the Deccan: +1 **BK** Influence for each Province containing at least 1 **BK** piece and 1 **VE** piece.

Divisions among Deccanis and newcomers: **DS/VE** may replace 1 Amir with 1 Governor/Raja. -1 **BK** Influence.

Tips: The shaded text may only place pieces matching the selected Faction.

Background: The Bahmani Kingdom was successful in its aim of attracting merchants, poets, artists, soldiers, and adventurers to its lands. Newcomers from Iran and Central Asia, by way of the Persian Gulf and Caspian Sea, added to a flourishing cultural center. Tensions, however, would grow between the new immigrants, known as Afaqis, and the Deccanis who saw themselves as the old nobility. This factionalism would contribute to a rupture in the fabric of the Bahmani Kingdom a century later. That many immigrants were Shia Muslims exacerbated the divisions, as the native Deccanis were of Sunni orientation.

19. Bengali Resistance (1353) **BK DS VE**

Governors repeatedly assert independence: Place up to 2 Amirs/Rajas in both Jaunpur and Bengal and remove a Tributary marker in one of them.

Criminals conscripted to reclaim Bengal: **DS** may place up to 4 Troops in both Jaunpur and Bengal and place a Tributary marker in one of them.

Tips: The shaded text would also flip all Amirs and Rajas to Obedient in the Province where a Tributary marker was placed.

Background: Bengal had already become an important social center in the 13th century, and by 1281 had been conquered by Balban (r. 1266-87) of the Delhi Sultanate’s Mamluk dynasty. But the distance from Delhi would result in Bengal changing hands many times over throughout the following century – Balban’s son, even, declared it independent of Delhi upon his father’s death in 1287. Delhi temporarily relinquished its control of the region, with Sultan Jalal-al-Din Khalji (r. 1290–96) instead treating the region as a penal colony.

The transition from Khalji to Tughlaq dynasties in Delhi provided another opportunity for rebellion in Bengal, prompting the first Tughlaq sultan, Ghiyath-al-Din Tughlaq, to march on the Ganges Delta to reassert the Delhi Sultanate's control in 1324 (only to return home to his untimely demise in 1325). But Shamsuddin Ilyas Shah, a former Governor of Delhi, would swing the region away from Delhi yet again within two years time, and the Ekdala Fort built there would help him to survive sieges by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-88) in 1353 and 1359. The latter conflict resulted in an eventual peace between Delhi and the Bengal region.

The Adina Mosque pictured on the card was greater in size than any such structure in Delhi, and was for a time the largest mosque in the Indian subcontinent. Its design drew on pre-Islamic Hindu and Persian architectural motifs, further establishing the region's autonomy from the Delhi Sultanate. Photograph by Amitabha Gupta.

With its immense courtyard surrounded by a screen of arches, and bearing no fewer than 370 domed bays, this structure surpassed in size any edifice built in Delhi. It also broke from Delhi's architectural tradition by asserting its indigenous character. [Eaton]

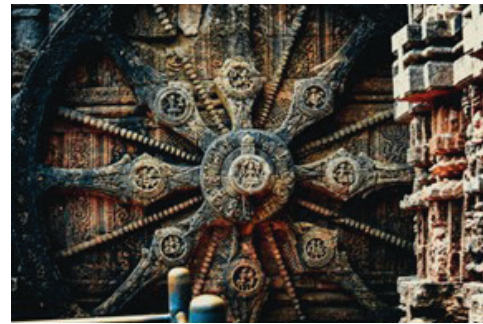
20. Eastern Ganga Dynasty (1353, 1358) DS BK VE

Prosperous kingdom falls into decline: +1 BK/VE Influence. In Orissa or one adjacent Province, BK/VE may free Migrate, then free Rally, then Build.

Sultanate invades Orissa: In Orissa, DS may remove a Temple/Fort, place a Governor, a Qasbah, up to 2 Troops and a Tributary marker.

Tips: The shaded text would also flip all Amirs and Rajas in Orissa to Obedient if a Tributary marker was placed.

Background: Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq's campaign to the eastern coast would include an invasion of Orissa and a reassertion of Delhi's authority there. Tributary payments resumed upon the Tughlaq Sultan's departure. But the Musunuri Nayakas (Event #12) would also find their way into Orissa, staking claims in 1356. Later, in 1417, it would be the Bahmani ruler Firuz Shah's turn to explore and capture this part of the eastern seacoast, though the Gajapati Empire, so named for the easy access to elephants in this region, would ascend to regional dominance in the mid 15th century.



A stone chariot wheel affixed to the Konark Sun Temple of the Eastern Ganga dynasty.

21. Vindhya Range DS BK VE

STAY ELIGIBLE

Mountainous region provides a natural buffer from Delhi: BK/VE may move any DS Troops in Gondwana and Madhyadesh to Delhi.

Long campaigns go unchallenged: DS may Campaign, then Govern, Attack, or Demand Obedience in a Province adjacent to the Vindhya Range.

Tips: None.

Background: The Vindhya Range is a mountainous region separating Delhi in the north from the Deccan Plateau in the south. Were it not for this range, and the Satpura Range running parallel to it to the south, the Deccan kingdoms would have been much easier for the Delhi Sultanate to reach. Long campaigns which departed from Delhi were forced onto paths either far to the west or far to the east to circumnavigate this geographical barrier.

22. A New Calculus (1356) DS VE BK

STAY ELIGIBLE

Madhava of Sangamagrama founds the Kerala School of Astronomy and Mathematics: VE/BK may Build.

Narayana Pandita's mathematical treatises offer new insights of immediate use: DS may place 1 Troop in one space, up to 2 Troops in a second, and up to 4 in a third.

Tips: None.

Background: While there were many dramatic moments in the Indian subcontinent in the 14th century, some very important developments were much quieter. Narayana Pandita was a mathematician from North India who is believed to have written a major mathematical treatise, the Ganitakaumudi ("Moonlight of Mathematics"), in 1356, which covered a wide array of arithmetic calculations. The text, one of a number of his written works, is divided into 14 chapters and contains 395 illustrative examples, all complete with commentary and solutions, including the question "what is the number of cows at the end of 20 years, starting with one cow that gives birth to one calf every year and every calf in turn beginning to reproduce at the age of 3 years?" (The answer is 2745 cows, can you show it?)

At around the same time India would see the birth of the Kerala School of Astronomy and Mathematics. Founded by Madhava of Sangamagrama, this school would produce some of the most advanced mathematical insights in the medieval world, including such important concepts as the infinite series representation of functions and other techniques in the branch of mathematics known as calculus. These discoveries predated some of the same advances in Europe by two centuries.

23. Virupaksha Temple **VE DS BK**

Temple to Shiva merges regional goddess cults: +1 **VE** Influence. **VE** may Build, then in each Province with a Temple **VE** may replace a Unit with a Raja.

Symbols of sovereignty destroyed: A Faction may place up to 4 of its Units in any one Province containing a Temple, remove the Temple, and take up to 2 Resources from **VE**.

Tips: None.

Background: The location of Vijayanagara was chosen for its natural strategic advantages but the site also benefited from the development of mythical associations. At the time of its founding, the site was known simply as the crossing of the river goddess Pampa, where passing warrior clans would pause to make offerings (Hampi, India, where Vijayanagara once stood, is an evolution of the name Pampa).

Temples dedicated to Pampa had been constructed in the region for centuries prior to the medieval era. But by the 11th century there was an increased presence of the male deity Mahakala Deva, who represents the violent aspect of Shiva. By the 12th century, construction started on a grand temple dedicated to another deity, Virupaksha, who embodies Shiva's more universal and benevolent nature. The foundational myths of the Vijayanagara Empire flowed easily throughout the Indian subcontinent, with the merging of Virupaksha and Pampa paralleling a story more widely infused into the whole of India, that of Shiva's marriage to the goddess Parvati [Verghese].

Such temples, and the temple-towns hosting them, acted as community gathering centers, beacons of commercial activities, and imposing symbols of sovereignty. The dismantling of temples such as that in Warangal (Event #9), though rare, sent an equally strong message. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra.

24. Stone Temple Chariots **VE DS BK**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Chariots carry representations of Puranic Hindu gods: **VE** may free Migrate in up to two locations, replacing a Unit with a Raja in one of them.

Cultural development draws interest: **DS/BK** may place up to 2 Units in each Province with a Temple.

Tips: The unshaded text would allow **VE** to move into one destination, replace a Unit with a Raja there, and then move that new Raja into a second destination. They could also shift Influence if one destination contained a **BK** piece and they paid an additional Resource.

Background: The image on the card is a stone chariot sitting in the courtyard of the Vittala Temple complex in Hampi, Karnataka. It is a shrine to Garuda, an eagle-like mythological figure mounted by the Hindu god Vishnu, who is responsible for maintaining the universe. Mythical battle scenes were carved into the base. Such imagery tapped into the regional cult mythologies present for centuries before the arrival of the Sangama brothers and aided the transport of empire origin stories, legitimizing the Vijayanagara Empire's claims to power throughout the Deccan, and presenting rival factions with new strategic challenges. Photograph by Jean-Pierre Dalbéra.

25. Empire Building **VE BK DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

"Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans": **BK/VE** may Trade/Tax or gain 3 Resources.

Sultan's new roads thrust into the Deccan: **DS** may place up to 2 Troops in any three Provinces adjacent to Goa or Warangal, and Govern in one of them for free.

Tips: **DS** would still need to meet the usual location requirement (Control or Tributary) to Govern with the shaded text.

Background: The Vijayanagara kings called themselves "Lords of the Eastern and Western Oceans", seeking to expand their economic reach from the Bay of Bengal to the east and the Arabian Sea to the west. The most highly regarded of the Vijayanagara rulers, Krishna Deva Raya (r. 1509-29), writes:

A king should improve the harbours of his country and so encourage its commerce that horses, elephants, precious gems, sandalwood, pearls and other articles are freely imported. Make the merchants of distant foreign countries who import elephants and good horses attached to yourself by providing them with villages and decent dwellings in the city, by affording them daily audience, presents and allowing decent profits. Then those articles will never go to your enemies. [Sarasvati]

The currency of Vijayanagara, the hon, reflected the exploding economic power of the new kingdom in the south. Merchants and consumers on both sides of the Raichur Doab trusted the Vijayanagara currency more than the newer currencies introduced by the Bahmani Sultanate, giving the southern empire greater economic influence. In later centuries, twice as much Vijayanagara coinage circulated in the Bahmani state as did the Bahmanis' own coins.

26. Of Gods and Kings **VE** **BK** **DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Telugu poet Srinatha revolutionizes the craft and weaves the tapestry of an Empire, while Sufi devotional songs of Amir Khusrau praise the Sultans in Delhi: The selecting Faction draws a random out-of-play Event card and places it face-up near that Faction's Available box. Once, this Faction may Execute the new Event in place of one on a future card.

Tips: The Event should be selected at random from those set aside while constructing the Event deck. The executing Faction must still be eligible to perform an Event in order to play their new reserved Event. They would then execute either the unshaded or shaded Event text as usual, and would remain eligible to play on the next card if the new Event allows them to stay eligible.

Background: The Deccan was alive with poetry and song in the 14th century, exemplified by the song-writing of Amir Khusrau (1253-1325), the “father of Qawwali (Sufi devotional singing)”, and the poetry of Srinatha (c.1365-1370 – 1441), who popularized a new Prabandha form of semi-historical medieval literature.

27. Taghi the Elusive (1351) **DS** **VE** **BK**

Fugitive rebel an expensive distraction: +1 **BK** Influence. **BK** may place up to 2 Amirs in each of Sindh and Gujarat. In Sindh, place a Fort and remove a Tributary marker.

The Sultan marches west in pursuit: **DS** may place up to 2 Troops and a Governor in each of Sindh and Gujarat. In Sindh, place a Qasbah and a Tributary marker.

Tips: The shaded text would also flip all Amirs and Rajas in Sindh to Obedient if a Tributary marker was placed.

Background: After briefly reclaiming the new Bahmani stronghold of Daulatabad, Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq departed for Gujarat and then into Sindh on the heels of the rebel Taghi, a former high-ranking officer who had helped to liberate Gujarat from the Sultan's grip. With the Deccan falling out of the Sultan's control, the Tughlaq Sultan hoped both to capture Taghi and to annex Sindh, which had never been fully controlled by Delhi. But on this journey the Sultan was stricken with a violent fever. After a brief initial recovery, within a few months he would perish. Sindh would remain unconquered, and Gujarat would add to the growing list of autonomous, independent provinces across the subcontinent.

28. The Turquoise Throne (1363) **BK** **VE** **DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Bahmanis cross the Krishna river into Telangana: +1 **BK** Influence, -1 **VE** Influence. **BK** may spend 1 Cavalry to place 2 Amirs and remove 1 Raja in Andhra.

Telangana Nayakas implore allies to attack: In one location with a **BK** piece, **DS/VE** may place up to 2 Troops/Rajas then free Attack targeting **BK**, which rolls no dice to defend.

Tips: The shaded text may only place pieces matching the selected Faction. The defender rolls no dice during the Attack granted by the shaded text, meaning that no attacking pieces will be removed.

Background: In the wake of the Kakatiya Empire a new raja of Telangana, Musunuri Kapaya Nayaka, now holding the city of Warangal, approached Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq (r. 1351-88) and implored him to invade the Bahmani Kingdom. The Telanganas offered to aid in this invasion, and indicated that the Vijayanagara Empire would do so as well. The message, captured by Bahmani spies, resulted in the immediate Bahmani invasion of Andhra.

As the Bahmani general Safdar Khan Sistani and his army approached Warangal, the Raja of Telangana claimed that he had been compelled to attack the Bahmanis and sought the mercy of the Bahmani Sultan Muhammad Shah I (r. 1358-75). A treaty of peace was established, but not before the Telanganas had made gifts of an important fortress in Golconda, three hundred elephants, two hundred horses, and an ornate turquoise throne which would serve as the seat of eighteen Bahmani kings. Atop the throne a canopy was fixed, crowned with a ruby presented by the Raja of Vijayanagara.

29. Ashvapati, Lord of Horses **BK** **DS** **VE**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Bahmani rulers likened to Hindu god: **BK** gains 3 Cavalry, then may execute a free Limited Attack.

War horses and siege technology imported from overseas: Spend a number of Resources to gain that number of Cavalry (max 3), then may execute a free Limited Attack.

Tips: A Faction executing the shaded text may spend 1, 2, or 3 Resources to gain 1, 2, or 3 Cavalry.

Background: The Bahmani Kingdom enjoyed a superiority in military capabilities over the Vijayanagara Empire for the first century after its founding. Like the Delhi Sultanate, the Bahmani advantage was based in large part on its access to war horses through western ports, and trade along the Dakshinapatha trade route to the northeast. The Bahmani ruler was even called by contemporaries “Ashvapati,” Lord of Horses. Only once the

Vijayanagara Empire began to import military technology (like improved horse-riding equipment, e.g., stirrups, saddles, and horseshoes), and even commanders from the Bahmani Kingdom (providing for them such comforts as the construction of mosques inside the Vijayanagara walls), would they find a more even footing in their defensive capability.

Card image: Jarasandha's army advances toward Krishna and Balarama, folio from the Mahabharata. Attributed to Purkhu (active ca. 1780-ca. 1820).

30. Bara Gazi Toph **BK DS VE**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Gigantic cannons defend Bahmani forts: In each Province with a Fort, **BK** may Attack for free. The defender rolls no dice.

Gunpowder and cannons appear suddenly in the subcontinent: Execute a free Limited Attack. The defender rolls no dice; the attacker rolls 4 dice even if a Fort is present.

Tips: The defender rolls no dice during the Attacks granted by either text, meaning that no attacking pieces will be removed.

Background: The Bara Gazi Toph, an enormous cannon that sits atop Kalabaragi Fort (previously Gulbarga Fort), was constructed during the reign of the Bahman Shah. Built by Turkish artisans, the cannon measures 29 ft. in length and is claimed to be the longest (though not the largest) cannon in the world. The arrival of gunpowder in the subcontinent would mark a major shift in military engagements (Event #31), though primary use of the new military technologies would not take hold until the following century.

31. The Raichur Doab (1366) **BK VE DS**

Repeated raids over fertile lands: **BK/VE** may free Migrate into a space adjacent to Vijayanagara, then remove 1 opposing Unit and Attack there for free.

Massive casualties in both kingdoms: **DS** may remove up to 1 Fort and 1 Temple adjacent to Vijayanagara. -1 **BK** Influence, -1 **VE** Influence.

Tips: None.

Background: The economic and political conflict between the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagara Empire was nowhere more heated than the region between the Krishna and Tungabhadra rivers, the Raichur Doab. This lush and fertile territory had been contested in earlier eras as well, first between the Western Chalukyas and Rashtrakutas, and then between the Yadavas and the Hoysalas.

After intercepting a threatening communication between Warangal and Delhi (Event #28), the Bahmani ruler Muhammad Shah I (r. 1358-75) personally crossed the Krishna river with a large army, entering the Doab. After defeating the Telanganas, the Bahmani ruler turned his eyes towards Vijayanagara to the southwest. Waiting out a monsoon season, the Bahmanis eventually crossed the Tungabhadra and entered the territory of the Vijayanagara Empire. This campaign is noted as the first time cannons and firearms were freely used by the Bahmanis, including artillery manned by “Turks and Franks”, much-valued immigrants from central Asia.

In response, the Vijayanagara ruler Bukka Raya I (r. 1358-77) gathered all the fighting forces of the kingdom and personally joined the battle near Kautalam in 1366. Commanders on the flanks of the Bahmani forces were both killed by musket balls, threatening a major rout, but 3,000 cavalry arrived just in time to turn the tide [Sherwani]. Elsewhere in the battle an elephant advanced into enemy lines, killing the Vijayanagara commander. The battle ended in the Vijayanagara army's defeat, and the Bahmanis continued their march towards the capital city of Vijayanagara itself. There, guerilla tactics prevailed and the city was successfully defended. Having extended themselves too far and too quickly, now it was the Bahmanis who were pursued as they retreated.

32. The Hare and the Hounds **VE BK DS**

STAY ELIGIBLE

Identical empire origin stories lean on regional cult mythologies: +1 **BK/VE** Influence, -1 **VE/BK** Influence. **BK/VE** may replace up to 2 Rajas/Amirs with 2 Amirs/Rajas.

Persian values inherited from Delhi: -1 **BK** Influence, -1 **VE** Influence.

Tips: The unshaded text will increase one Faction's Influence and reduce the other, then replace up to two of one Faction's Units with those of the other.

Background: Of the many mythological tales spreading through the Deccan depicting Vijayanagara's rise, one of the most important was that of the Hare and the Hounds. According to this legend, Harihara and Bukka were hunting in the Hampi region with two dogs when they happened upon a lone hare. But rather than fleeing in fear, the hare instead turned on its pursuers and bravely chased the hounds away. The Hare and Hounds myth projected naturally as a heroic metaphor for Vijayanagara's emergence out from under the shadow of the Delhi Sultanate and victory against other perceived aggressors, including the various powers of the Bahmani Kingdom to the north, providing its rulers with a mythic legitimacy.

But common threads are found in the foundational myths of many movements. In fact, the very same Hare and Hounds myth was emerging from the Bahmani Kingdom about its own brave defiance against more powerful aggressors [Balasubrahmanyam]. Both empires also drew on aspects of Persianate culture first introduced to India by the Delhi Sultanate's predecessors.

33. Commercial Port of Goa **VE** **BK** **DS****STAY ELIGIBLE**

Struggle for critical maritime routes: The Faction with the greatest number of pieces adjacent to Goa (**BK** if tied) removes up to 3 opposing Units adjacent to Goa; +2 Resources.

Competition over ports boils over: **DS** may reduce **VE** Resources and **BK** Resources each by half, rounded down.

Tips: None.

Background: The western coast of the Indian subcontinent was of particular value due to its commercial ports connecting the Deccan to central Asia and beyond. Through them, kingdoms could access coveted military goods like war horses, but also luxury items such as sandalwood, musk, and camphor, which were used in the court for rituals and gift exchanges, granting rulers and nobles other means of wielding soft power. The port city of Goa would pass between the control of Bahmani and Vijayanagara rulers for a century. In 1510 the city would fall, with the assistance of the Vijayanagara Empire, into the hands of Afonso de Albuquerque and the Portuguese. Goa would remain part of the Portuguese Empire until 1961.

34. Bahmani Sultan Assassinated (1378) **VE** **DS** **BK****STAY ELIGIBLE**

Vijayanagara captures Goa while the Bahmanis are destabilized: **VE** may take up to 2 Resources and 2 Cavalry from **BK**.

Bahmani successor ushers in a period of social reform and cultural revival: **BK** may Conspire or Trade.

Tips: None.

Background: Amidst accelerating aggression between the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagara Empire, in 1378 Bahmani ruler Ala-al-Din Mujahid (r. 1375-78) was assassinated in an internal conflict. Confusion followed, during which time Harihara II (r. 1377–1404) of the Vijayanagara Empire recaptured the valuable port city of Goa and numerous other western ports, improving the empire's ability to trade with foreign entities stretching from central Asia to Portugal. Card image: Bahmani tombs of Bidar. Photograph by Kandukuru Nagarjun.

35. Hindu-Muslim Marriages **BK** **VE** **DS****STAY ELIGIBLE**

Bahmani Sultan weds a Hindu bride: +1 **BK/VE** Influence. **BK/VE** may place one of its Units in up to three Provinces containing Units of the other of **VE/BK**.

Diffusion and dilution of culture: -1 **BK** Influence, -1 **VE** Influence.

Tips: The unshaded text will increase one Faction's Influence, then place one Faction's Units in up to three Provinces containing those of the other.

Background: Though uncommon, interfaith marriage for political purposes was not out of the realm of consideration. The Bahmani Sultan Taj-ud-Din Firuz Shah (r. 1397-1422) would find himself in numerous military conflicts with the Vijayanagara Empire over the decades of his rule. The outcomes of these conflicts were varied, and peace was in some cases achieved with mergers of a different type. One such advance by the Bahmani Sultan resulted in his marriage to the daughter of Vijayanagara ruler Deva Raya (r. 1406-1422). Celebrations took place for a year, and rajas and amirs from far and wide were in attendance.

36. Northern Alliances (1398) **VE** **DS** **BK****STAY ELIGIBLE**

Vijayanagara probes an alliance with Delhi: **VE** may place up to 4 Rajas adjacent to Chittor.

Alliance rejected: -1 **VE** Influence. Remove up to 3 Rajas from the map.

Tips: None.

Background: After decades of intermittent military engagements following the capture of Goa and other western ports (Events #33 and #34), the Bahmani Kingdom and Vijayanagara Empires begin exploiting alliances with distant rulers. In 1398 the Vijayanagara Empire took the opportunity to probe alliances with rulers in Mewar and Gujarat, a region of great commercial activity, timed with the beginning of Timur's assault on Delhi.

5.0 Pronunciation Guide

Map locations:

Andhra AHN-druh
 Bengal ben-GAHL
 Delhi DEH-lee
 Daulatabad dow-LAH-tuh-bahd
 Devagiri DEH-vuh-gee-ree
 Goa GOH-uh
 Golconda gohl-KOHN-duh
 Gujarat goo-juh-RAHT
 Gulbarga guhl-BAR-guh
 Jaunpur JOWN-poor
 Karnataka kar-NAH-tuh-kuh
 Madhyadesh MUD-yuh-desh
 Madurai muh-door-EYE
 Maharashtra muh-HAH-rah-struh
 Malwa mahl-wuh
 Mewar may-wahr
 Orissa or-RIH-suh
 Punjab pun-JAHB
 Rajput RAHJ-put

Sindh sih-ND
 Tamilakam TUH-mil-uh-hum
 Vijayanagara vi-JEYE-nuh-guh-ruh
 Vindhya vin-dee-yuh
 Warangal wuh-rang-gahl

Names:

Ala-ud-Din Khalji ah-luh-ood-deen kal-jee
 Bukka buk-kuh
 Firuz Shah fee-rooz shah
 Harihara hah-rih-hah-ruh
 Malik Kafur mah-lik kah-fur
 Muhammad bin Tughlaq moo-hah-muhd bin too-glul-k
 Ulugh Khan oo-loo khan
 Zafar Khan zah-far khan

Other:

Bahmani BAH-muh-nee
 Ganga gahn-gah
 Ganges gan-jeez
 Kakatiya kah-kuh-tee-yuh
 Mongol mawn-gahl
 Nayaka NAI-yuh-kuh
 Sangama sun-guh-muh
 Sufi Shaikh soo-fee shake
 Sultan suhl-tahn
 Yadava YAH-duh-vuh

6.0 Selected Sources

Of the very limited written history we have from this time, an important source is the work of Ziya al-Din Barani, a chronicler in Delhi in the service of Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlaq some decades later [Barani]. Autobiographical writing by Sultan Firuz Shah Tughlaq also provides a valuable, albeit brief, perspective [Firuz]. Another distant source is the writing of the court chronicler Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah, also known as Ferishta, who served the Deccan Sultans a full two centuries later. Most of the research in this area is of an archaeological nature. The following is a list of resources used in the design of the game.

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Vasanth, Rangachar. "Board games from the city of Vijayanagara (Hampi), 1336-1565: a survey and a study." *International Journal for the Study of Board Games* (2003): 200325.

See also:

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Designer Notes

The model

At its peak the Vijayanagara Empire contained over half a million people, surpassed in size by Beijing alone. Prospering through the 14th and 15th centuries, it reached its zenith during the early part of the 16th century under the rule of Krishnadevaraya, only falling into sharp decline after the Battle of Talikota in 1565. How did this great kingdom come to be? Was its emergence inevitable? Would so much as a displaced stone centuries earlier have derailed the Vijayanagara Empire's rise? What about a more substantial change – had the Delhi Sultanate remained firmly planted in the Deccan in Daulatabad, would the history books have bothered to record the names of the Vijayanagara Empire's founding fathers, the Sangama brothers?

Ultimately this is a question about the stability of a complex system to disturbances. For problems of a more physical character – the response of a sandcastle to a small nudge, for example – we have for centuries developed mathematical techniques that allow a very clear insight about these questions, and a comparison of theory to measured data can lead to a firm understanding.

Such a degree of confidence is not available when looking back upon the course of human history. The building blocks upon which to build a model, be they individuals or small communities, are not as easy to characterize as a grain of sand (and even that is harder than it sounds). Political scientists and economists must find clever means of comparing and measuring human settings and experiences. The question of the stability of human history nevertheless remains deeply compelling as we seek to understand our place within it.

Historical games present to their players an interactive model with which to probe and ponder these questions. With *Vijayanagara* we have chosen to identify what we considered to be the primary factions during the 14th century, and have painted with broad strokes what they were trying to achieve and what resources they had at their disposal to do so. But this is of course a simplification. There were numerous other smaller kingdoms present in the subcontinent, and entities at the scale of, say, the Vijayanagara Empire, cannot possibly be so neatly described [Morrison]. Among factors not included in the model are the role of the Bengal Sultanate and the devastation caused by multiple famines. Some of these important elements appear on Event cards to establish them as part of the story.

The Irregular Conflicts Series

The ICS (Irregular Conflicts Series) is meant to take elements of gameplay that originated in GMT's COIN (COunter INsurgency) series, like the Sequence of Play, in new directions. In *Vijayanagara* the model is based on tributary relationships to rulers across the land, and factions rise and fall with their orientation towards (or management of) tributary payment. *Vijayanagara* takes only a small step in the direction of such new vistas, while future games in the series will move even further afield.

But given that *Vijayanagara* will launch a new series, we wanted to use the opportunity to bring historical gaming to a larger audience. A main design goal was to create something that could be a first step into the hobby, while still retaining the historicity and strategic depth to which experienced COIN players have become accustomed. This was not an abstract problem; convincing new players to dive into a COIN game is not always easy! *Vijayanagara* was created in no small part as a personal device to help with this common predicament, providing a gentle introduction into both the ICS and COIN series. Did we achieve our aim? We hope so, but only time will tell.

Streamlining and storytelling

One of the early design goals for the game was to keep the playtime below two hours, and to reduce player downtime – towards this aim a full two-thirds of the Event cards in the game allow a Faction to perform the Event and remain eligible to play on the next card. One consequence of the short play time is a very tight action economy. For decisions to be meaningful, the Event effects thus needed to be relatively strong, since the opportunity cost of selecting one is so high.

Combat also appeared as an opportunity to streamline. The initial goals for the system were as follows: it needed to be simple and fast; odds of success should be easy to sense, if not to perfectly calculate; it should involve randomness, but it should be possible to mitigate uncertainty with a sufficiently large force; based on slow communication and long preparation times there should be an advantage for the attacker; and cavalry should play an important role. With our goals clearly laid out, a solution, the one appearing in the game, followed closely behind.

Other design goals were to match the game mechanics to the desired emotional content of the story. We wanted the Bahmani Kingdom player to feel squeezed between the heat of nearby Delhi and the rapid growth of its southern neighbor Vijayanagara; to sense a need to work quietly in the shadows, waiting until the right time to strike outward, and then to lean on their strong cavalry advantages. We wanted the Vijayanagara Empire player to feel the expansive nature of a burgeoning population, with access to potential allies far and wide who could be compelled into service – all while struggling with a military disadvantage relative to its northern neighbors, and a desperate early need to collect taxes for itself rather than sending them as tribute to faraway Delhi.

One of the very first design goals was to put the Delhi Sultanate player in an unpleasant situation. The threat of Mongol invasions appeared to drive the historical dynamics so strongly that it had to be included in a direct and evocative way. Rather than using a track to indicate their presence, we were drawn to the visceral sense evoked by the red cubes on the map itself, amassing in the Mountain Passes and advancing ever closer to Delhi. Getting the balance right for the timing and scale of the Mongol threat throughout the game was a serious challenge, involving countless iterations and more than a few numerical simulations. And with each tweak elsewhere in the game, even a change to a seemingly unrelated part of the Bahmani or Vijayanagara action menu, we were sent back for a rebalancing of the Mongol advance.

Cavalry too had to be included in even the most abstract model of the century's dynamics. Access to horses from central Asia is believed to have been a major historical factor in the evolution of these powers. While the Bahmani ruler was known as Ashvapati (Lord of Horses) by contemporaries, the Vijayanagara Empire to the south was upon its founding inferior to its neighbors in this regard. Cavalry is hard to come by for the Vijayanagara Empire in the game, until they can compel their allies with sufficient influence to enhance their supply (and even then they will lag behind the Bahmanis on this axis). Or perhaps they can offer to purchase some from another faction, in exchange for Resources or even military cooperation...

The role of mythology played an outsized role in the emergence of the Vijayanagara Empire and Bahmani Kingdom. The additional tug of war represented by the Deccan Influence track was initially called the Foundational Myths track, but the name changed as we bound more concepts of growth and expansion into this small system. Different ways to affect Influence then found their way into the game. They included more pedestrian developments like economic pursuits (e.g., irrigation canals and other infrastructure development), and the more dramatic success in battle. Meanwhile, many Events offer further opportunities for Influence shifts, some which are mutually beneficial for the two factions, and some which are not.

Modern political realities

The understanding among historians of the period covered by the game continues to evolve. Of particular note, modern scholars tend to have a rather nuanced view of Hindu-Muslim relations during this historical period. Certain incendiary elements in the world today hold this period up as an example of deep division, but these views are frequently overly simplistic, and in some cases plainly anachronistic. Some of the provocative modern ideas relating to this period appear not to be based on historical findings, but instead to have been developed much later by Persian chroniclers, and taken up again during the British Raj. According to Richard Eaton,

In part, this idea is a legacy of historian Robert Sewell who, writing in 1900, first brought Vijayanagara's history to the attention of the reading public. Sewell famously described that state as a 'Hindu bulwark against Muhammadan conquests', thereby contributing to an enduring trope of religiously defined territorial separatism in the plateau. Sewell's book was published when India's nationalist movement was in full swing, and when Indian historians were looking to the country's past for evidence of successful states whose memory might mobilize British India's population for the nationalist cause. Inasmuch as Indian nationalism for many meant Hindu nationalism, Sewell's communalized characterization of Vijayanagara found a receptive audience. [Eaton]

Rather, all evidence suggests that people of myriad religious and political beliefs were in close contact during this period, constantly engaging in commercial activity and migrating freely throughout the Deccan. If the Vijayanagara Empire is an initial draw to the period, we hope that the game may help to upend some of the standard stereotypes about these factions in the present day, and to invite further conversation and reflection.

What's in a name?

The Vijayanagara Empire is only one of the playable factions in the game, but somehow earned the game's title. Why? We began with a simple question: how did the great medieval empire of Vijayanagara, its capital situated on the banks of the Tung-abhadra river in Karnataka, come to be? We cannot understand its emergence without first seeing the steady decline of the Delhi Sultanate and the softening of its grip on the Deccan. But why was this grip faltering? The imposing threat of Mongol invasions are now brought into view, among other challenging realities. And no less important during this time is the appearance of the Bahmani Kingdom, which would become a great partner and rival with Vijayanagara for over a century. The game before you is so named because it is the birth story of the Vijayanagara Empire, just at the outset of its rise to prominence in medieval India. But births are messy, and the surfacing of a new political entity can never occur in a vacuum.

An unlikely project

That *Vijayanagara* sits in front of you now is due to a long sequence of unlikely events. The isolation of COVID-19 pandemic led the designers, developer, and historical consultant to meet each other online; most of us have still never met in person! But this project provided us a welcome reprieve and a much-needed escape in both space and time. Watching people playtest and enjoy *Vijayanagara* virtually across the world filled us with joy and made us feel more connected to humanity, eager to be gaming and telling stories with each other in person again. The hundreds of late-night hours spent working with Mathieu Johnson in particular was a tremendous, unexpected gift and silver lining for me over two challenging years.

One of our favorite features of historical gaming is the shared experience of exploring a model and its narrative outcomes. Different groups will have different ways of enjoying a game, but we have found that releasing oneself from the importance of "winning" the game as a faction can strongly promote this kind of curious inspection and collaborative play. Rather, by more fully embodying the role in front of you, even "losing" the game can be a highly enjoyable and fascinating experience. (You didn't lose, it was *the Delhi Sultanate* that lost, after all.) We recommend playing your role to the fullest extent possible. A well-considered food pairing might even open up some new negotiation opportunities.

We hope that *Vijayanagara* will bring you even a fraction of the interest and pleasure that we experienced in creating it. Happy gaming!

– Saverio E. Spagnolie, Madison WI, USA, January 2023

Art and Logic

A few years ago, I had the chance to play a game called “Fire in the Lake”. This was actually one of my first serious forays into the territory of historical boardgames. Coming from a lifelong background of tabletop roleplaying games, card games, heavy boardgames and videogames (my day job), the amount of calculated and representative mechanics, and especially stories and players interactions, that all came together strongly in this game about insurgency in Vietnam, blew me away. And it was love at first sight. Before I knew it, I was decorticating all its nooks and crannies and elaborating on all its intricacies. This passionate moment in time led me to a Discord server for fans of the COIN series, which I eventually became a moderator for. Fabulous! Plenty of fans discussing the COIN core mechanics, ideas on the next settings, playing games! Historical wargames! A world of discoveries for a gamer like me to explore. Until... I wanted to try to make my own. I learned how to use Tabletop Simulator, make, ahem, “art”, and thus “Bakumatsu; The Last Shogun” was born.

The worldwide Covid pandemic was in full effect, the Discord server was expanding at an alluring rate, and soon after I sent Bakumatsu into the wild, some of the most prominent members of the COIN Discord (including our very own developer to be, Joe Dewhurst) organized the first edition of Fred Serval’s ConSim Game Jam. As a team of four members from the Discord server, we worked on and presented the sapling of what would become *Vijayanagara: The Deccan Empires of Medieval India*.

We were lucky enough to win the Game Jam, and with it, given an opportunity to publish the game. Well, the game...of course everything changed after that! And oh, how many hours we worked on it. We raised it from its embryonic state to a fully grown, polished game. Reflecting in it now...it was absolutely ludicrous. We spent way more time on this game than we logically should have (I salute you Saverio); working and reworking each of its details as we delved deeper into the story, as we created art for it, as we playtested it and discussed it late into the night, as we kneaded its mechanics until, finally, well, I can say I am pretty proud of what we have achieved – at least for a first published boardgame design.

This project scratched my gamer-creator passion that I have curated since a very young age, and I learned so much by “throwing paint” on the blank canvas that was this game idea. Here’s hoping as you play the game, with your friends, or by yourself, that you can learn and live, for a moment, the story of the Deccan Empires of Medieval India, 1290-1398. We designed this game to be a no holds barred, fast paced ride that spans a century of history. Powers will shift rapidly as ambition, alliances, treachery and Timur’s shadow cast a maelstrom of struggles upon the Indian subcontinent, but at the end of it all the (almost) historical story it writes, albeit using broad strokes, is what we worked the hardest to bring to you in the most respectful and instructional way.

I also want to extend my thanks to everyone that played this game during its creation. Each of the comments and reactions we got along the way were carefully macerated and given the proper amount of thought. Many, if not most, made their way somehow, obviously or subtly, into the final design.

–Mathieu Johnson, Montreal, Canada, May 2023

Developer Notes

Vijayanagara is one of the first games I worked on for GMT, and in fact I was involved in its genesis even before that, as one of the organisers of the ConSim Game Jam in October 2020. This was a creature of the pandemic, as was my earlier friendship with all four designers of *Vijayanagara*, taking place online and cultivated initially in a Discord server for fans of the COIN series. It’s been a great pleasure to work with them during the development of the game, and also to watch their own development as game designers. I don’t want to play favourites, but I’m sure the other three designers will all agree that Saverio Spagnolie has put in a particularly heroic effort, combining in-depth historical research with sophisticated mathematical modelling and many patient hours of refinement to every single aspect of the game. It really is a labour of love by an extremely passionate team, and I am excited to see what all four designers might do next.

Developing a game with four designers also comes with its own unique challenges, and I’ll admit that it did at times feel a little like herding cats, but in the end it has all come together magnificently. The tournament held in November 2022 was a great testament to this, with 27 players coming together to compete and really push the game to its limits. Observing the tournament, I was impressed by both the robustness of the game and the potential for relatively high-level play in such a small package. *Vijayanagara* really packs a punch, and I am confident it is a game that many players will want to come back to time and time again.

– Joe Dewhurst, Glasgow, Scotland, February 2023

Acknowledgements

We are firstly indebted to Joe Dewhurst, Shaun O’Keeffe, and Fred Serval for organizing the first ConSim Game Jam on Oct. 1-4, 2020, during which time the game was conceived. The organizers and the judges, Volko Ruhnke, Morgane Guyon-Rety, and Jason Carr, all provided important feedback and encouragement at every step along our journey. We have Jason Carr and Bruce Mansfield to thank for many insights regarding the solo game in particular.

Our developer Joe Dewhurst was a valuable member of the team from early on. He provided many important observations and suggestions, was willing to get into the weeds with us to solve technical challenges, and had a strong impact on the quality of both the main game and its capacity for solitaire play. We were very fortunate to have him on board for the journey.

We are very appreciative of the historical guidance and perspectives provided by Professor Aparna Kapadia (Williams College), and to Professor Mitra Sharafi (University of Wisconsin-Madison) for introducing us. Aparna provided valuable feedback on many elements of the game. She guided us to the turquoise throne and suggested turquoise as the color for the Bahmani pieces; she led us to the shared foundational myth of the Hare and Hounds; she provided countless helpful suggestions for further reading and artistic directions; and she settled numerous disputes! Helpful discussions with Zara Chowdhary and Jamal Jones (University of Wisconsin-Madison, both) are also gratefully acknowledged. Finally, we thank Richard Eaton (University of Arizona) for a wonderful conversation and his support; more than those of any other author, his books informed the details of the game before you.

The original designer of the COIN series, Volko Ruhnke, and the many COIN designers who followed have created an expansive, inspiring array of models across space and time. We are among a growing number who have benefitted from the support of this wonderful community. The network of designers, developers, playtesters, and producers orbiting around GMT Games was energetic, dedicated, genuine, and generous. The game would not have reached escape velocity without the constant support of an extremely active and merry band of wargame-wizards and consim-connoisseurs, with particular gratitude extended to Fred Serval, Stephen Rangazas, Joe Schmidt, Dan Bullock, Peter Evans, Joe Byer, Shaun O’Keeffe, Sobhi Youssef, and a Non-Breaking Space. The enthusiasm, creativity, and depth of insight among this diverse group was consistently astonishing.

A *Vijayanagara* tournament was held online in November 2022. Games played over the month by 27 participants helped us probe the learning curve for the game. The first game saw the Delhi Sultanate players more commonly suffering defeat, but by the second game the factions were faring equally. The final game was contested by Ronald Riistan as the Delhi Sultanate, Michael Dochney as the Bahmani Kingdom, and François Martin as the Vijayanagara Empire, all undefeated up to that point in the tournament, and it was streamed on Twitch by Gueric Samples Games. Michael’s Bahmani Kingdom ultimately proved victorious!

Finally, we are grateful to our families, who saw us lost in many long hours of work on this passion project, as neither they nor we predicted just how far down the rabbit hole we would fall.

Credits

Game Design: Saverio Spagnolie, Mathieu Johnson, Cory Graham, and Aman Matthews

Developer: Joe Dewhurst

Historical Consultant: Aparna Kapadia

***Vijayanagara* Solitaire System Design and Development:** Saverio Spagnolie, Joe Dewhurst, Cory Graham, and Jason Carr

***Jacquard* Solitaire System Design:** Bruce Mansfield

Learn to Play Booklet: Joe Dewhurst

Playbook: Saverio Spagnolie

Pronunciation Guide: Jamal Jones

Original COIN Series Design: Volko Ruhnke

Map and Counters: Mathieu Johnson

Cards and Player Aids: Saverio Spagnolie and Mathieu Johnson

Cover Art: Kurt Miller

Package Design: Justin Martinez

Playtesters: Sergio Ortega Barrios, Nathaniel Berkley, Bailey Brewer, Dan Bullock, Joe Byer, Jason Carr, Michael Dochney, Peter Evans, Jeffrey Gringer, Ibai Zabaleta Ibero, Imanol Intziarte, Drew Lawson, Oliver Levine, François Martin, Mark Meck, Scott Melvin, Non-Breaking Space, Adam Olgin, Youssef Rahmoun, Stephen Rangazas, Hector Reyes, Ravel Riik, Ronald Riistan, Sergio Pangua Romero, Chip Roush, Gueric Samples, Joe Schmidt, Fred Serval, Don Smith, Brian Street, Jean-Luc Thiffeault, Michael Wakeley, Sobhi Youssef, Yann de Villeneuve, and Santiago Zaldívar

Proofreading: Kevin Hartman, Michael Neubauer, Brent Pollock, Marco Poutré, and David Spangler

Production Coordinator: Kai Jensen

Art Director: Justin Martinez

Producers: Tony Curtis, Rodger MacGowan, Andy Lewis, Gene Billingsley, and Mark Simonitch