Iranian Identity and Imperial State Formation ca. 1720–1750

by

M.A.H. Parsa

Submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

At the Department of History, Religions, and Philosophy of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

Declaration for SOAS PhD thesis

I have read and understood Regulation 21 of the General and Admissions Regulations for students of the SOAS, University of London concerning plagiarism. I undertake that all the material presented for examination is my own work and has not been written for me, in whole or in part, by any other person. I also undertake that any quotation or paraphrase from the published or unpublished work of another person has been duly acknowledged in the work which I present for examination.

This doctoral study was completed with the generous funding provided by the British Institute of Persian Studies and the Iran Society.

Signed:  Date: 12/09/2022

Fall 2022

Contents

Acknowledgments

When I began my doctoral studies in the Autumn of 2017, I hardly had a sufficient grasp of Persian, and many of the chronicles and decrees seemed incomprehensible upon first viewing. Furthermore, my degree in Mathematics had ill-prepared me for researching and writing a book-length historical study, and I struggled even with the basics of academic writing. I owe a great debt to my supervisor, Dr Roy Fischel, for his patience with my shortcomings and inexperience. His meticulous comments and corrections on each and every draft which I submitted to him helped me improve my style of academic writing in addition to providing guidance on how to formulate an effective structure for my arguments. Several of my friends were kind enough to aid me in my quest to learn Turkish during my studies. In particular, I'd like to thank my dear friend, Parsa Rad, with whom I practiced my Turkish regularly and who gave me several books on Turkish grammar and poetry. Guglielmo Zucconi proved himself to be as kind as he was knowledgeable whenever I encountered difficulties with some of my Turkish manuscripts. I am grateful to Sarah Fenner who read over many of my rough drafts and gave erudite feedback.

This doctoral study was completed with the generous funding provided by the British Institute of Persian Studies and the Iran Society.

Abstract

The study argues that in the eighteenth century, for the first time since the fall of the Sāsānids in late antiquity, the ideology of the imperial state in Iran came to be dominated by discourses on Iranian identity. A collective Iranian identity emerged among the Shi'i elites which was rooted in a sense of territorial belonging to the imperial realm of Iran and a sectarian differentiation of the Shi'i self from the Sunni other. This identity permeated the ideologies of various leaders who sought to topple the Hotakids and establish their own state. Foremost among the Hotakids' opponents, Ṭahmāsp II Ṣafavi portrayed himself as the saviour of Iran and Iranians, establishing a decentralised state with the aid of Nāder, his vassal and commander-in-chief. Nāder utilised his military victories to undermine Ṭahmāsp's ideology by presenting himself as Iran's true saviour, eventually usurping the crown from the Ṣafavids altogether. Nāder Shāh's discourse on collective identity gave him a special role as the custodian of his fellow Iranians, legitimating his centralisation of administrative powers over what he referred to as the 'Iranian state'. The centralisation of revenues facilitated the establishment of an effective military, enabling Nāder to conquer neighbouring realms to form an empire in pursuit, supposedly, of Iranian interests. Thus, for its subjects in Iran, the Nāderid state legitimated its political, military, and administrative policies in reference to a collective Iranian identity.

As Nāder incorporated Sunni peoples and lands beyond Iran's frontiers into his empire, he revised his ideological discourse on Iranian identity to eschew Shi'i-Sunni sectarianism while developing a complimentary discourse on universal sovereignty. Nonetheless, the contrast between Iran and non-Iran endured and was reflected in the administrative structure of the empire: While Iranian territories were placed under increasingly centralised administration, control over the empire's non-Iranian lands was devolved to local vassals. Those vassals, whether shāhs or sultans, were made to pay tribute to Nāder, the shāhanshāh. The imperial conquests of the Nāderid state, purportedly in service of Iranian interests, did not necessarily endear it to the Iranian elite. They saw their powers heavily restricted by the Nāderid state's centralisation programme while a growing number of non-Iranian Sunnis were given access to the same positions as their Iranian counterparts, particularly in the imperial army. This formed the ideological and institutional basis for many of Iran's elites to question Nāder's Iranianness, and by extension, the legitimacy of his state. From the mid-1740s many Iranians rose up in numerous rebellions which eventually led to the collapse of Nāder's imperial state and his assassination in 1747.

Transliteration System and Pronunciation Guide

Characters

آ ا	*ā*	Pronounced as the '**a**' in c**a**rd
ب	*b*	**b**ook
پ	*p*	ma**p**
ت	*t*	**t**alk
ث	*ṡ*	**s**ea
ج	*j*	**j**oy
چ	*ch*	**ch**air
ح	*ḥ*	**h**air
خ	*kh*	A voiceless velar fricative, similar to the '**ch**' in the Scottish pronunciation of lo**ch**
د	*d*	**d**one
ذ	*ẕ*	**z**ero
ر	*r*	**r**un
ز	*z*	**z**ero
ژ	*ĵ*	Equivalent to the '**g**' in the pronunciation of bei**g**e
س	*s*	**s**ea
ش	*sh*	**sh**ine
ص	*ṣ*	**s**ea
ض	*ż*	**z**ero

Short Vowels

◌َ	*a*	b**a**d
◌ِ	*e*	b**e**d
◌ُ	*o*	b**o**dy

Long Vowels

ی ا	*ā*	c**a**rd
ی	*i*	tax**i**
و	*u*	r**u**de

ط	*ṭ*	**t**alk
ظ	*ẓ*	**z**ero
ع	ʿ	Narrow the throat slightly as you pronounce the preceding/following vowel(s)
غ	*gh*	A voiced velar fricative, equivalent to the '**g**' in the Spanish pronunciation of hi**g**o
ف	*f*	**F**an
ق	*q*	Another voiced velar fricative, pronounced identically to *gh* (غ)
ک	*k*	**k**ey
گ	*g*	**g**one
ل	*l*	**l**and
م	*m*	**m**an
ن	*n*	**n**ow
ه	*h*	**h**air
و	*v*, *w*	Same as the '**v**' in **v**ery, or (infrequently) as the '**w**' in **w**allet
ی	*y*	**y**ard
أ ء	ʾ	Narrow the throat slightly, just as in the case of ع

One of the main aims of this transliteration system is to be sufficiently rigorous enough to allow for the reconstruction of the exact Persian spelling. Another key objective is to aid in the more faithful pronunciation of Persian terms. As the table above makes clear, Persian speakers pronounce *z*, *ẓ*, *ż*, and *ẕ* identically, as they do *s*, *ṣ*, and *ṡ*, or *gh* and *q* (and some other letters are pronounced identically to one another, the differentiation in spelling being solely for the purpose of enabling the reconstruction of the correct spelling in the original tongue). For Arabic, Turkish and Kurdish, the IJMES transliteration system is used.

Demonyms for regions will be suffixed with *ian* rather than *i*, for example, Iranian and Khorāsānian, instead of Irāni and Khorāsāni respectively. For words which end with an adjectival form such as تذکرة النادریه *(Taẕkerat ol-Nāderiyeh)*, the suffix is rendered as *iyeh* instead of *yyah* or *yya*. As can be seen in this example, the Arabic *tāʾ marbuṭeh* ة is rendered simply as *t* rather than *a* or *ah*. The connective is also rendered as *ol* rather than *al*, to align more closely with the Persian—rather than the Arabic—pronunciation. The same rationale has led to the transliteration of the originally Arabic term (دولة) *dawla*, into a more Persianised (دولت) *dowlat*.

For the plural suffix *hā*, no hyphens are used, e.g. *ghāzihā* instead of *ghāzi-hā*. This is the case even when the word ends in *h* ه. For instance, *goruhhā*. The same applies for the other plural suffixes *āt* and *ān*. The Persian *eżāfeh* is represented by a hyphen followed by ‘e’ after consonants, and ‘ye’ after long vowels, e.g. *ghāziān-e* or *ghāzihā-ye*. For terms such as *khʷāhar* (sister), the labialisation denoted by ʷ is not pronounced, (and is read the same as *khāhar*). The *tashdid* is almost always transliterated by two letters of the term appearing consecutively, e.g. *mādde* or Somayye. In rare instances, it could be transliterated using the two letters *iy* together in that order, e.g. Ṣafaviyeh. All place names are transliterated except for countries and their capitals. Thus, Istanbul instead of Istānbul, and Iran instead of Irān. Of course, this does not apply when directly quoting a source in the Persian original, e.g. “*ahl-e Irān va Irāniān*”.

Titles and professions are kept in lower case, e.g. shāh or mirzā, unless they are attached to a proper name, e.g. Nāder Shāh or Mirzā Mehdi Khān. The names of government bodies are not capitalised, e.g. *divān-e aʿlā* (supreme chancellery). The names of well-known tribes and peoples are not transliterated, e.g. Afghans, Turkmens, or Iranians, but the lesser known counterparts are, e.g. the Qalmāqs or Bakhtiāris. Similarly, the two main denominations of Islam are rendered in their familiar forms; Sunni and Shi’i (singular)/Shi’a (plural). Also, well-known transliterations of terms such as Qur’an, or hadith will be preserved instead of

introducing *Qorʾān*, or *ḥadiṡ*. The names of dynasties are appended with -id, such as Ṣafavid or Nāderid. Whilst Qājār is exclusively used for the tribe, the term Qājārid refers exclusively to the dynasty.

Introduction & Literature Review on post-Ṣafavid and Nāderid Iran

An era of chaos and questions

On 22 October 1722, the Ṣafavid shāh led his courtiers out of the capital Eṣfehān. He was not setting out on a royal hunt, nor was he mustering for a military campaign. Shāh Ḥoseyn Ṣafavi (r. 1694–1722) was surrendering to an army of Afghan rebels who had laid siege to Eṣfehān for six months. The shāh and his men were escorted to the tent of the Afghan chieftain, Maḥmud Ghaljāy. A Ṣafavid courtier later recalled that Shāh Ḥoseyn 'called for his royal diadem, then placed it upon Maḥmud's head, surrendering his crown and throne'.[1] For many onlookers, this spelt the end of the Ṣafavid dynasty which had reigned in Iran for over two centuries. The period following the conquest of Eṣfehān was defined by political instability. Dozens of claimants stepped forth to take the throne, though none succeeded in holding it for more than a few years. The Ṣafavids were repeatedly overthrown and restored across the eighteenth century, while new dynastic states established themselves in Iran, most of which proved ephemeral. The Afghans laid claim to the entirety of Iran by declaring a new imperial dynasty: the Hotakids. Meanwhile, several Ṣafavid claimants waged war on one another and the Hotakids to restore the Ṣafavid state. Taking advantage of the turmoil, the Ottoman empire occupied large swathes of territory in the west, while the Russian empire occupied the northern provinces. Those territories which were outside Hotakid, Ottoman, and Russian control came to be ruled by local warlords.

The most prominent Ṣafavid claimant was one of Shāh Ḥoseyn's sons, Prince Ṭahmāsp. He found himself in Khorāsān after suffering a series of defeats by Ottoman and Afghan armies. Despite his military setbacks, Ṭahmāsp gained the loyalty of many among Iran's elites, helping him to slowly rebuild the Ṣafavid state. In Khorāsān, Ṭahmāsp gained the loyalty of a young and charismatic warlord by the name of Nāder. He assumed military leadership over the campaign to restore the Ṣafavid prince in his ancestral capital of Eṣfehān. In the late 1720s under Nāder's leadership, Ṭahmāsp's army vanquished the Hotakids and drove out the

[1] Moḥammad-Moḥsen Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Behruz Gudarzi, (Tehran, 1996), p. 132.

Ottomans from the west. The de facto leader of the Ṣafavid state was increasingly Nāder, rather than Ṭahmāsp.

Nāder used his power to recover all the territories lost by the Ṣafavids since 1722. Having restored the territorial integrity of the empire by 1736, he gathered the elites of Iran on the Moghān plain. It was there that he orchestrated the demise of the Ṣafavids and established a dynastic state of his own. Almost immediately, Nāder embarked upon a series of inexorable wars of expansion. After the conquest of Afghanistan, Nāder continued on to Mughal India. Nāder defeated the Mughals and installed them as his vassals. The next year he crossed the Oxus River to subdue the Central Asian Khanates, gaining new vassals and tributaries. In 1741 Nāder invaded Dāghestān, in the North Caucasus. In a series of costly campaigns, he failed to fully pacify the region and lost significant numbers of men and money fighting a protracted war against the Dāghestānian guerrillas. His invasion of the Ottoman empire in 1743 had to be aborted when rebellions in Iran's interior forced Nāder to withdraw his armies in order to deal with the rebels. From the mid-1740s onwards, despite its size and military strength, Nāder's empire was challenged by obdurate rebellions. Nāder is said to have descended into paranoia, even madness, leading him to tyrannise his subjects. His tyrannical oppression only further stoked the fires of rebellion. In 1747, several of Nāder's own guards broke into his tent and assassinated him. The empire disintegrated precipitously as numerous claimants battled over the throne while others carved out regional kingdoms in the periphery. For many contemporaries, a new era of chaos and political fracture had begun in Iran, heralding 'clan rule' (*moluk ol-ṭavāyef*) for the next half-century.[2]

The study begins by asking what lay behind the rise and fall of so many ephemeral states after the (first) collapse of the Ṣafavids in 1722. Rather than seeking a biographical account of the rulers and personalities of the period, the study seeks an integrated understanding of the ideological and institutional forces which led to the formation and fragmentation of imperial states between 1722 and 1747. This line of investigation leads to several interrelated questions: Did these states draw from common ideological foundations or were they fundamentally different in terms of their discourses on identity and legitimacy? How did they

[2] This brief narrative overview summarises the major events of the era. For a more detailed narrative look at the time period see Laurence Lockhart, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia*, (London, 1958); idem, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources*, (London, 1938); Michael Axworthy, *Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*, (London, 2006). The notion of *moluk ol-ṭavāyef* can be seen in Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi, *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi*, 3 Vols., ed. Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi, (Tehran, 1985), p. 1085 as well as Mirzā Mehdi Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā-ye Nāderi*, ed. ʿAbdollāh Anvār, (Tehran, 1962), pp. 420–433 for example.

utilise their ideologies to legitimate not only their political existence, but the structure of their military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic institutions? Were the institutional structures of these states significantly different from one another, and if so, then in what ways and why? And how did the elites in Iran contribute to, or contest, these state's ideological and institutional structures? To answer these questions, this study adopts a structuralist approach, moving past the biographical paradigm which has hitherto dominated the historiography of eighteenth-century Iran.

Literature on post-Ṣafavid Iran (c. 1722–1747)

Since the mid-twentieth century, most of the scholarship on post-Ṣafavid history has been biographical and Nāder-centric. Nāder's charismatic figure and his dramatic rise from peasant to imperial sovereign has led most historians to overlook his contemporaries and the broader historical processes at play. The Hotakids who established a state of their own, and Ṭahmāsp II's reconstitution of the Ṣafavid state, have been either ignored or rendered as the preamble to the rise of Nāder. The very limited scholarship that exists on the states established in Iran by the Hotakids and by Ṭahmāsp II, treats them as teleological steppingstones for the formation of the Nāderid state.[3] For instance, Laurence Lockhart's monograph on the fall of the Ṣafavid dynasty only follows events up to 1722, leaving Ṭahmāsp out of the picture, while presenting Afghan rule as little more than a brutal 'occupation' without pausing to consider the Hotakid state in its own right.[4] In his authoritative study of Ṣafavid crises and collapse, Rudi Matthee too limits his chronology to 1722, implying a complete rupture in Ṣafavid history with the Afghan conquest of Eṣfehān.[5] J.R. Perry's article on 'The Last Safavids 1722–1773' is a rare engagement with Ṣafavid history after the fall of Eṣfehān, but the article is more an overview rather than an analysis of the latter-day Ṣafavids.[6] Overall, there is a paucity of scholarship on both the Hotakids and post-1722 Ṣafavids, and we know very little of the ideological or institutional structures of their states.

[3] One of the few dedicated pieces of research on the Hotakid period is my own work, M.A.H. Parsa, 'Iran's State Literature under Afghan Rule (1722–1729)', in *Professional Mobility in Islamic Societies (700–1750): New Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Mohamad El-Merheb, and Mehdi Berriah, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 182–206. Willem Floor's *The Afghan Occupation of Persia 1721–1729*, (Paris, 1998) is a useful sourcebook but is not a study.

[4] Lockhart, *Fall of the Safavi Dynasty*.

[5] Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the fall of Isfahan*, (New York, 2012).

[6] J.R. Perry, 'The Last Safavids 1722–1773', in *Iran*, Vol. 9, (1971), pp. 59–69.

In contrast to the Hotakids and the latter-day Ṣafavids, the Nāderids have been the subject of numerous publications. Most of these only incidentally engage with the Nāderid state, however, taking a biographical approach. Laurence Lockhart's *Nadir Shah*, published in 1938, constitutes the first modern biographical study of the subject. Drawing on a diverse corpus of contemporary sources in not only Persian, but also English, French, and other European languages, Lockhart's contribution to the scholarship was so ground-breaking that many publications, particularly Persian-language histories, follow his biographical approach.[7] Lockhart argues that Nāder was the main driver of the military and political processes of his day. Nāder's genius was behind the ouster of the Afghans and Ottomans; the restoration of the Ṣafavids; the overthrow of the Ṣafavids in favour of Nāder's own dynasty; and the relentless expansion of the Nāderid empire. Likewise, the rebellions which brought an end to the empire were due to Nāder's mental deterioration and his descent into tyrannical insanity.[8] Thus, the formation and fragmentation of Nāder's state are understood to be functions of his personality, his mental faculties, and disposition.[9]

The logic of Lockhart's study follows from the nineteenth-century great man theory of history. This theory, or rather historiographical framework, was formally articulated by the philosopher Thomas Carlyle in 1840, who argued that 'the history of the world is but the biography of great men'.[10] This intellectual tradition has dominated the study of Nāderid Iran up to the present.[11] Axworthy's 2006 biography of Nāder works within the same historiographical paradigm. Much like Lockhart, Axworthy's study does not contain any explicit thesis and the arguments are sifted into the narrative. The main driver of Nāderid state formation is of course held to be Nāder's military genius, in contrast to his weak and incompetent Ṣafavid peers. Again, the collapse of the Nāderid state is described as a

[7] Examples of this would be Gholāmḥoseyn Moqtader, *Nabardhā-ye Bozorg-e Nāder Shāh*, (Tehran, 2004) which even lifts diagrams and maps from Lockhart's book without accreditation, for example see p. 58; and ʿAli Ghafuri, *Tārikh-e Janghā-ye Irān: Az Mādhā tā be Emruz*, (Tehran, 2009).

[8] Lockhart, *Nadir*, pp. 257–281.

[9] Ibid, p. 276.

[10] Carlyle's lectures were published the subsequent year as *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, (n.p., 1841). The influence of this tradition continued in the subsequent century, for example see Sidney Hook, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, (New York, 1943).

[11] Andrew Newman makes the case that the historiography of the Ṣafavid era (in which he includes the Nāderid period) is still largely dominated by ideas of 'great men'. See his '"Great men", "decline", and empire: Safavid Studies and a way forward', in *Empires: Elements of Cohesion and Signs of Decay*, Vol. 2, (Vienna, 2015), pp. 45–58.

consequence of Nāder's physical ailments and his mental deterioration.[12] These arguments continue to be reiterated by scholars such as Foad Sabéran.[13]

The centrality of Nāder's personality, his 'genius', and his later turn to avaricious cruelty, are also present in Peter Avery's chapter in the *Cambridge History of Iran*.[14] Nonetheless, Avery alludes to some important historical processes in Nāderid state formation and fragmentation, such as the role of religious reforms in politics, the challenges these posed to Nāder's legitimacy in the long-run, the tensions within the imperial officer corps, and the heavy fiscal burden imposed by Nāder's administrative reforms.[15] Yet none of these are developed into arguments, and most are only mentioned in passing across a sentence or two. Avery's chapter remains a general overview of major events rather than a comprehensive analysis of historical processes of the Nāderid era.

The scholarship in Persian has until very recently adhered to the great man paradigm found in the works of Lockhart and Axworthy. Whether one refers to the works with a broader scope in terms of the period they cover, such as Shamim's *Az Nāder tā Kudetā-ye Reżā Khān-e Mirpanj* (From Nāder to the Coup d'etat of Mirpanj Reżā Khān),[16] or more focused biographical works such as those of Nurollāh Lārudi or Kalim Tavaḥḥodi,[17] the great man theory is omnipresent. Many of these Persian biographies can be classed as apologia for what the authors anachronistically identify as a national hero.

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, and especially in the last few years, several works have emerged that eschew biographical approaches in favour of studying socio-political structures in Nāderid Iran. An excellent example of this nascent trend in the scholarship is Ernest Tucker's 2006 monograph titled *Nadir Shah's Quest for legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran,* which draws extensively on Ottoman-Iranian diplomatic correspondence.[18]

---

[12] Axworthy, *Sword of Persia,* pp. 275–285.

[13] Foad Sabéran, *Nader Chah: La Folie au Pouvoir Dans L'Iran du XVIII Siècle*, (Paris, 2013). Outside the western tradition, the Persian-language biographies also adhere to these tropes (see below).

[14] Peter Avery, 'Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy' in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. XII, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, eds. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 50-54.

[15] Ibid.

[16] ʿAli-Aṣghar Shamim, *Az Nāder tā Kudetā-ye Reżā Khān-e Mirpanj*, (Tehran, 1937), pp. 91–93.

[17] Nurollāh Lārudi, *Nāder: Pesar-e Shamshir*, (Tehran, 1991), pp. 242-243; Abutorāb Sardādvar, *Tārikh-e Siyāsi va Neẓāmi-ye Dowrān-e Nāder Shāh Afshār*, (Tehran, 2010); Kalim Tavaḥḥodi, *Nāder-e Ṣāḥebqerān*, (Mashhad, 2013).

[18] Ernest S. Tucker, *Nadir Shah's Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, (Florida, 2006).

Tucker explores how the Nāderid state negotiated its religious and political identity with its neighbours, and to a lesser extent, its own subjects. The work demonstrates how Nāder's introduction of Ja'farism as the new state religion was motivated by the political considerations of his day. Furthermore, he argues that this religious change was resisted successfully by Iran's elites who held pro-Ṣafavid and Shi'i sympathies. Tucker compliments his analysis of Nāder's religious policies with an exploration of his imperial rhetoric, arguing that Nāder based his dynastic legitimacy on an imagined community of Turkmen.[19] Thus, Tucker introduced some analytic models from Western historiography such as 'imagined communities' and 'the invention of tradition' to explain Nāderid state ideology.[20] Tucker, then, situates the Nāderid state within a broader framework of early modern Eurasian states, eschewing the previous tendency by scholars to view the aforementioned state in isolation from its contemporaries and neighbours.

After Tucker's work, a new stream of structuralist scholarship has emerged in both English and Persian, focusing on issues of religious identity and religious policy in Nāderid Iran. Scholars such as Moḥammad Faridi, Maʿṣumeh Qareh-Dāghi, Maqṣud-ʿAli Ṣādeqi, Manijeh Kāẓemi Rāshed, Nurollāh ʿAbdollāhi, and ʿAli-Akbar Kajbāf, have argued that it was Nāder's estrangement of Iran's Shi'i ulema and lingering Ṣafavid loyalties among his subjects that gave rise to an ultimately fatal challenge to the Nāderid state's legitimacy.[21] Other scholars, including Ḥoseyn Ebrāhimi and Moḥammad-Kāẓem Rādmanesh, have focused on the political motivations which led to the introduction of the Ja'fari creed and the role it played in Nāder's discourse on Islamic unity and his imperial claims to universal rule over the Islamic world.[22] Rather than Nāder's unbridled ambition and genius driving historical processes, this new scholarship seeks to understand Nāderid religious and imperial

[19] Ibid, pp. 1–12; Tucker's book was a fruition of his earlier articles on Nāderid religious policy, for example, see 'Nadir Shah and the Ja'fari Maddhab Reconsidered' in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1/4, (1994), pp. 163–179.

[20] Tucker, *Nadir Shah,* p. 10 refers to Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, and Benedict Anderson's works.

[21] Moḥammad Faridi, Maʿṣumeh Qareh-Dāghi, Maqṣud-ʿAli Ṣādeqi, and Manijeh Kāẓemi Rāshed, 'Nāder Shāh, mashruʿiyat va shureshha-ye ejtemāʿi 1726–1740' in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 8, No. 15, (2017), pp. 143–175; Nurollāh ʿAbdollāhi, and Jajbāf, ʿAli-Akbar, 'Mashruʿiyat-e Ṣafaviān va pādshāhi-ye Nāder' in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (2013), pp. 117–138.

[22] Ḥoseyn Ebrāhimi, and Rādmanesh, Moḥammad-Kāẓem, 'Maẕhab-e Nāder Shāh' in Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh, Vol. 9, No. 34, (2014), pp. 1–24; Zahrā ʿAbdi, 'Andisheh-ye taqrib-e Shiʿeh va Sonni: siāsat-e Sonni-garāyi-ye Nāder Shāh', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Taqribi Maẕāheb-e Eslāmi (Forugh-e Vaḥdat)*, Vol. 11, No. 41, (2015), pp. 33–45; Parviz Fatḥollāhpur, 'Tashayoʿ dar dowreh-ye Nāder Shāh Afshār', in *Shiʿeh-Shenāsi*, Vol. 4, No. 16, (2007), pp. 57–96; James Pickett, 'Nadir Shah's Peculiar Central Asian Legacy: Empire, Conversion Narratives, and the Rise of New Scholarly Dynasties', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 48, (2016), pp. 491–510.

policies in the socio-political context of the early modern Islamicate world. It is more concerned with structural analysis, and less focused on the peculiarities of Nāder's persona.

A limited number of studies have adopted a structuralist approach to analysing the Nāderid state's imperial expansion and its conquest of Iran's neighbours. In particular, the Nāderid invasion of Central Asia has received considerable attention in the past few years. Andreas Wilde and Nigora Allaeva have examined how Nāder's conquest of Khʷārazm led to the cumulative build-up of Nāderid military forces in the region and the long-term removal of Chinggisid dynasts from power.[23] James Pickett has shown that the religious legacy of Nāder's Ja'fari creed remained relevant among Central Asia's ulema well into the nineteenth century.[24] Outside of the Central Asian theatre, however, Nāderid imperialism remains understudied. The Indian expedition has been used to underline Nāder's military genius as a driving force of historical changes such as Mughal decline, but no study has sought to proffer an understanding of its political or economic significance in Nāderid empire-building.[25] On Nāder's expeditions in the Persian Gulf and ʿOmān, Lockhart and Axworthy have both given competent overviews, though neither examine the ideological-political significance of these campaigns for Nāderid imperialism.[26] Most of these are case studies, and there exists no general or comprehensive study on Nāderid imperial ideology and state formation.[27] A systematic and multifaceted understanding of the Nāderid state's imperialism and its conquests of neighbouring realms is lacking.

Our understanding of the internal administration of the Nāderid state and its military and fiscal institutions is likewise limited. Ann Lambton's general administrative history of Iran, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia* (1956), deals with the eighteenth-century interregnum, from the fall of Eṣfehān to the establishment of Qājār rule. Across a handful of pages, Lambton dismisses the period as 'not of great importance in the history of land tenure and land

[23] Andreas Wilde and Nigora Allaeva, 'Lost in Khvārazm: On the Interdependence of Power and Conflict in the Example of Nādir Shāh's Khīva Campaign(s)', in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1–2, (2016), pp. 77–100; See also, Moḥsen Raḥmati, 'Ravābeṭ-e khan-neshin-e Khiveh bā dowlat-e markazi-ye Irān az soquṭ-e Ṣafaviyeh tā marg-e Nāder Shāh' in *Paǰuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh*, Vol. 4, No. 13, pp. 47–59.

[24] Pickett, 'Nadir Shah'.

[25] The only dedicated study to date is Jadunath Sarkar, *Nadir Shah in India*, (Calcutta, 1925).

[26] Laurence Lockhart, 'Nādir Shāh's Campaigns in ʿOmān, 1733–1744', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (1935), pp. 157–171; Michael Axworthy, 'Nader Shah and Persian Naval Expansion in the Persian Gulf, 1700–1747', in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2011), pp. 31–39.

[27] Tucker's monograph is the closest thing we have to this.

administration'.[28] Much like the Afghans which preceded him, Nāder is said to have brought only ruin and chaos, marking a tribal resurgence which was antithetical to a centralised and rational administration. The dismissive approach in Lambton's history largely reflects the limited primary sources available to her in the 1950s. Her study largely relies on impressionistic accounts written under the Qājārs in the nineteenth century, which may have been attempting to contrast contemporary tranquillity with the chaos of the pre-Qājār era.[29]

The only dedicated study on the administrative history of the Nāderid state which draws primarily on contemporary sources is *Gosudarstvo Nadir-Shakha Afshara* (The Government of Nāder Shāh Afshār), written in 1956 by two Soviet historians, Arunova and Ashrafiyan.[30] It is a valuable piece of scholarship for its extensive use of state documents such as edicts (*farmān*s) to construct a structuralist understanding of Nāderid fiscal administration. The thesis argues that Nāder, an avaricious feudalist, engaged in continuous monetary exploitation of the lower classes in order to fuel his imperialist wars. By enlisting many peasants into his army, and brutally suppressing rebellions, the economic forces of production declined significantly. The so-called popular revolts which arose from these adverse economic circumstances eventually brought an end to the empire. The collapse of the empire was a case of the lower classes defeating the imperialist ambitions of the feudal ruling class.[31] Despite its shoehorning of events and processes into the Marxist paradigm of the 'progress of history', the work sheds much light on the administrative institutions of the Nāderid state. This is possible due to its significant use of primary sources outside the narrative chronicles.

Similar to Arnuova and Ashrafian, Reżā Shaʿbāni's two-volume social history from 1990 takes a non-biographical approach to analysing the Nāderid state and the society it ruled. Shaʿbāni's work encompasses the political, economic, administrative, and religious dimensions of Nāder's polity.[32] It argues that Nāder took an eclectic approach to forming his state, drawing upon Ṣafavid models for his administration. He raised revenues through centralisation and the expropriation of the elites' estates; used a mixture of Sunni and Shi'i discourses alongside ideas of Turco-Persianate sovereignty to legitimate his rule; and

[28] Ann K. S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia: A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration*, (London, 1953), p. 129.

[29] Ibid, pp. 129–133.

[30] M.R. Arunova, and K.Z. Ashrafiyan, *Dowlat-e Nāder Shāh-e Afshār*, tr. Hamid Amin, 2nd edition, (Tehran, 1978). I have used only this Persian translation of the Russian original.

[31] Ibid, pp. 298-309.

[32] Reżā Shaʿbāni, *Tārikh-e Ejtemāʿi-ye Irān dar ʿAsr-e Afshāriyeh*, 2 Vols., (Tehran, 1990).

assumed direct control over a reformed military. Shaʿbāni's multifaceted analysis is held back by his limited bibliography, which almost entirely excludes non-Persian sources. Furthermore, he develops little in the way of an argument, but gives a descriptive account of various Nāderid institutions. The descriptive approach to Nāderid administrative history is evident in Willem Floor's fiscal study of early modern Iran where he covers the Nāderid era in a chapter, briefly outlining some of Nāder's centralising programmes.[33] While the scholarship seems to agree that centralisation was a feature of the Nāderid state, there is little discussion on how and why this centralisation was effected, and what the long-term consequences of it were.

This study sheds the Nāder-centric and biographical approaches dominant in the scholarship. It aims at a structural understanding of state formation in Iran between the Afghan conquest of the Ṣafavid capital of Eṣfehān in 1722 and the collapse of the Nāderid empire in 1747. This periodisation will allow the study to investigate the ideological and institutional processes which contributed to the formation and fragmentation of the three imperial states of the Hotakids (1722–1729), the restored Ṣafavids (1722–1736), and the Nāderids (1736–1747). It will seek to answer how the ideological foundations of these states legitimated, and thus supported, their military and administrative institutions. The intention, then, is to proffer an integrated analysis of the ideological and institutional elements of these states, and how the interplay between those two elements changed or remained the same in each consecutive state. The intention is to address the major lacunae in the scholarship of Iran's post-1722 history. For example, what were the ideological and institutional foundations of both the Hotakid and restored Ṣafavid states prior to Nāder's rise? How did these two states take influence, if at all, from pre-1722 Ṣafavid models? To what extent, if at all, was the Nāderid state's ideological and institutional foundations influenced by the preceding Hotakid and Ṣafavid models? What were the continuities and ruptures between these three states? What new ideologies and institutional reforms allowed Nāder, in contrast to his predecessors, to expand his imperial state over the entirety of Iran and lands far beyond?

Literature on the state and state formation in the early modern Islamicate world

In this section, we will outline some of the main theoretical models which this study draws on to answer the research questions outlined above. It will review the relevant literature on the state and state formation in the early modern Islamicate world, providing the background for

[33] Willem Floor, *A Fiscal History of Iran in the Safavid and Qajar Periods 1500–1925*, (New York, 1998).

how these two concepts will later be operationalised to analyse the Hotakids, Ṣafavids, and Nāderids. First and foremost, we will proffer a definition of state to provide framing for all subsequent discussions. In his survey of the scholarship on pre-modern states, Walter Scheidel noted that there were two distinct types of definition of what the state is and how it ought to be studied.[34] One set of scholars formulate exclusive definitions that prioritise modern Western ideas of what constitutes a state. Others, pursue inclusive definitions in favour of universal heuristic applicability across different civilisations and time periods.[35] The study herein adopts the latter approach as it seeks to give an account of state formation outside the modern Western world.

For the purposes of this study, the term state is used in the same sense that early modern contemporaries used the term *dowlat*, which encompassed several interlinked concepts. By engaging with the same theoretical conceptions of the state as eighteenth-century contemporaries in Iran, I hope to avoid imposing anachronistic misunderstandings of their actions and ideologies. *Dowlat* originally referred to a 'turn', referring to the rotation of each successive ruler on the throne.[36] Thus, the *dowlat* was associated with the idea of a patrilineal chain of rulers or a dynasty (*dudmān*). The dynastic nature of the state meant that elites were almost always grounded in loyalty to a particular dynasty and rarely developed a sense of the state as an entity which could exist apart from the charisma of the ruling household.[37] A common allegory for the *dowlat* was that of a garment donned by a chain of rulers from the same family, underlining the centrality of the dynasty in the conception of state.[38] Thus, from the sixteenth century onward, contemporaries understood the state to constitute the decision-making power of the legitimate dynast, and those military, civil, and ecclesiastic elites to whom he delegated power.[39]

---

[34] Walter Scheidel, 'Chapter 1: Studying the State', in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, eds. P.F. Bang and W. Scheidel, (Oxford, 2013), pp. 5–57.

[35] Ibid, p. 8; Jan Dumolyn and Jo Van Steenbergen, 'Studying Rulers and States across Fifteenth-Century Western Eurasia', in *Trajectories of State Formation*, ed. Jo Van Steenbergen, (Leiden, 2020), p. 93.

[36] F. Rosenthal, 'Dawla', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, (2012), pp. 177– 178.

[37] Jack Fairey, 'Southwest Asia, 1300–1800: Ottomans, Safavids, and the Turco-Persianate Imperial tradition', in *Empire in Asia: A New Global History*, Vol. 1, eds. Jack Fairey and Brian P. Farrell, (London, 2018), pp. 122–123. Of course, we will see how this changed in Iran during the eighteenth century.

[38] For the imagery of royal sovereignty being donned as a robe of honour, see Stewart Gordon, 'Robes of honor: A "transactional" kingly ceremony', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1996), 227–242.

[39] This essentialisation is drawn from Rifa'at 'Ali Abou El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State, The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, (Syracuse, New York, 1991), p. 19 who draws on Andrea Tietze for his conception of the state in the seventeenth century; Karen Barkey, 'The Ottoman Empire (1299–1923): The

The concept of the *dowlat* was suffused with a religious aura. The prevalent coupling of 'faith and state' (*din o dowlat*) indicated the necessity for the reigning dynast to emanate religious virtue.[40] Works of political theory in the Turco-Persianate world commonly featured a maxim by the founder of the Sāsānid dynasty, Ardashir I (r. 211–224): 'sovereignty and religion are twins'.[41] In Iran, as in other Turco-Persianate empires, the dynastic figurehead was bestowed with divine splendour (*farr*), allowing him to reign as the 'shadow of God' (*ẓellollāh*).[42] A ruler's loss of divine favour was associated with his 'loss of *dowlat*', i.e. the fall of his state. Conversely, victories, and success in general, were taken as evidence of a divine mandate.[43] For example, when one town refused to take sides in an intra-dynastic war between two Ottoman princes in the fifteenth century, its representatives informed the rival princes that 'you will confront each other and whoever receives the *dowlat* (from God) will also receive the fortress (from us)'.[44]

Following on from the religious associations of the term, the possession of *dowlat* was thought to imply the possession of God-given fortune. The divine fortune and triumph of a dynast had to be accompanied by imparting *dowlat*, in the sense of munificence, unto the constituents of his state from the senior commanders and viziers to the lowly soldiers and scribes.[45] Thus, munificence emanated from God unto the head of state, and from him unto the constituents of the state. In Islamic political thought, generosity and charity figured among the ideal characteristics of a ruler, helping him to articulate the union of faith and state

---

Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority', in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, (Cambridge, 2016), pp. 102–126; T. Ball, Farr, J., and Hanson, R. L. (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, (Cambridge, 1989), p. 102.

[40] Gottfried Hagen, 'Legitimacy and World Order', in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, (Leiden, 2005), p. 57; Hāshem Āghājri, *Moqaddameh-i bar Monāsebāt-e Din va Dowlat dar Irān-e Ṣafavi*, (Tehran, 2016), pp. 37–40; Abou El-Haj, *Formation of the State*, pp. 19–20; Linda Darling, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (New York, 2013), pp. 39– 46.

[41] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 108. The quote comes from the legendary *Testament of Ardashir* (*ʿAhd-e Ardashir*) quoted in influential works such as Neẓām ol-Molk's *Siāsatnāmeh*, thought to have been written between 1086–1092.

[42] For an overview of the fusion of Persianate and Islamic themes in the legitimation of the state see the research introduced by Kazuo Morimoto, 'Introduction: Kingship and Political Legitimacy in the Persianate World', in *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 12, (2019), pp. 175–180.

[43] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 123.

[44] Quoted from Halil İnalcık, 'The Ottoman Succession and Its Relation to the Turkish Concept of Sovereignty', in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, (Bloomington, 1993), p. 60.

[45] Marinos Sariyannis, 'Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought', in *Turkish Historical Review*, Vol. 4, (2013), pp. 96–104; Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 122.

under his auspices.[46] In practical terms, the distribution of money, gifts, war booty, lands, offices, and titles underlined the munificence of the ruler, consolidating the loyalty of his subjects. Munificence also served to co-opt intellectual, bureaucratic, military, and ecclesiastic elites into the state's service.[47]

In the early modern Islamicate context, then, the state (*dowlat*) consisted of a network of elites beholden, if only sometimes nominally, to the reigning dynasty. That dynasty, or the central body acting in its name, vested members of the network with the religio-political authority to engage in war or resource extraction either for the centre or for themselves. By sharing access to the various resources under its authority, the dynasty displayed munificence to the members of the network, aiming to retain their loyalty.[48]

The state, then, was underpinned by ideological foundations which supported institutional networks of military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic elites. In other words, both mental and social constructs were involved in the process of state formation. Jan Dumolyn and Jo Van Steenberg note that the act of state formation happened simultaneously in the subjectivity of ideological structures and the objectivity of institutional structures. The state was comprised of the royal household and court, military offices and formations, bureaucratic offices and administrations, and other institutional structures. The function of these objective structures was legitimated, and therefore made possible, by the subjective ideological structures which underpinned the state and the society within which it functioned.[49]

The construction of ideologies for the purpose of legitimation is a necessary activity of the state as no political power can endure purely through brute force.[50] Legitimation, then, is an intrinsic activity of the state and its ruler, both of which were considered virtually equivalent in pre-modern societies.[51] What is meant by legitimacy here is the subjects' belief in the rightfulness of the ruler and the state over which he presides, facilitating the subjects'

[46] Hakan T. Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis', in *Legitimizing the Order*, pp. 46–48, 50–52.

[47] Ibid, p. 47.

[48] See above and Jo Van Steenbergen, 'From Temür to Selim: Trajectories of Turko-Mongol State Formation in Islamic West-Asia's Long Fifteenth Century', in *Trajectories of State Formation*, pp. 27–87; Dumolyn and Steenbergen, 'Studying Rulers', pp. 88–155.

[49] Jan Dumolyn and Jo Van Steenberg, 'Studying Rulers', p. 93.

[50] Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman', p. 15 drawing on Max Weber.

[51] Rodney Barker, *Legitimating Identities: The Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects*, (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 30–31; Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman', p. 15.

obedience and eliciting their support.[52] Furthermore, legitimacy, as an ideological construct, is not an objective entity which the state can possess concretely but something which its subjects can perceive it as possessing.[53]

Legitimacy and identity are inextricably linked, for rulers legitimate themselves by giving an account of who they are in writing, images, ceremonies, and rituals. These actions both create and express identity. The identity at one and the same time legitimates the person. At the same time, identification between rulers and the people to whom the commands are issued serves to legitimate compliance with commands.[54] Thus, the process of legitimation is defined by how the ruler of the state ideologically constructs or engages with personal and collective identities, delineating himself from his subjects in some respects while claiming to be the same as them in other respects. For example, the ruler might delineate himself from his subjects in his personal identity as the representative of God on earth but identify with (most of) them in terms of being collectively Muslim.

When rulers, or anyone else, expresses an identity, they are inevitably drawing a line distinguishing the self from the other. This is true for both individual and collective identity. Jan Assmann and Jürgen Straub suggest that inclusion and exclusion are general characteristics of the ideological formation of collective identities. Ascribing an identity to a collective implies unifying its members in their possession of certain characteristics. A mental border is drawn around the collective self to exclude the collective other whose members are supposed to possess characteristics distinguishing them from us.[55] The delineation of the collective self from the other is not based on 'methodically achieved empirical knowledge' and is meant to 'serve the purposes of ideological manipulation'.[56] In other words, commonalities among the members of the self, and the differences from the collective other, are politically motivated mental constructs rather than empirical observations of reality. Thus, the discourses on identity in early modern states must be subjected to ideological analysis in order to understand how rulers legitimated themselves to

[52] Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman', p. 15; Barker, *Legitimating Identities*, 22.

[53] Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman', p. 15.

[54] Barker, *Legitimating Identities*, p. 35.

[55] Jürgen Straub, 'Personal and Collective Identity: A Conceptual Analysis' tr. Anthony Nassar, in *Identities: Time, Difference, and Boundaries*, ed. Heidrun Friese, (New York, 2002), p. 69; Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory, and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (New York, 2011), pp. 116–185.

[56] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 70.

different audiences. Furthermore, it will be possible to achieve an understanding of which groups were considered by the state to be part of the collective self, and which were excluded from it.

By understanding the state's ideological discourses on identity and legitimacy, we can gain a better understanding of its institutional structures and vice versa. Just as there is a congruence between identity and legitimacy, there is a congruence between identity and the material interests bound up in the institutional structures of the state.[57] Identity and interest are frequently constructed in terms of one another, and each is necessary to make the other comprehensible.[58] Thus, the formation and reformation of military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic structures went hand in hand with the formulation of new ideological discourses on identity to legitimate those structures.

In the early modern Islamicate world, the ruler was not the only active participant in shaping discourses on identity and legitimacy. The elites under him were actively involved in creating or at least contesting the state's ideology and the structure of its institutions. The elites, which took up various positions in the state, endeavoured to preserve their interests against the encroachment of the ruling dynast. They limited the ideological and institutional hegemony which the ruler exercised over what was nominally his state. Rulers, especially those who presided over large imperial states, had to adjust their ideological and institutional programmes to gain at least the acquiescence if not alacritous support of the elites under them.[59] Consequently, there was frequent tension between the dynast at the centre and the elites in the periphery over the control of the military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic institutions of the state.

The tension between the state's centre and periphery was characteristic of Turco-Mongol polities, including Iran. Turco-Mongol did not signify an ethnic category but a tradition among the military elites who hailed from a variety of Turkic and non-Turkic backgrounds.[60]

---

[57] Barker, *Legitimating Identities*, p. 35.

[58] Idem, 'Hooks and Hands, Interests and Enemies: Political Thinking as Political Action', in *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, (2000), pp. 223–238.

[59] Roy Fischel, *Local States in an Imperial World: Identity, Society and Politics in the Early Modern Deccan*, (Edinburgh, 2020), p. 12; drawing on Dariusz Kołodziejczyk, 'What is Inside and What is Outside? Tributary States in Ottoman Politics', in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, eds. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, (Leiden, 2013), pp. 421–432 and W. G. Runciman. 'Empire as a Topic in Comparative Sociology', in *Tributary Empires in World History*, eds. Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Baylay, (New York, 2011), pp. 99–107.

[60] For the role played by non-Turkic military aristocrats in Timurid Iran, see Beatrice F. Manz, 'Iranian Elites under the Timurids', in *Trajectory of State Formation*, pp. 257–282.

According to Van Steenbergen, the Turco-Mongol mindset considered entitlement to the state's offices and assignments, and the access these provided to the resources across the realm, to have been 'collectivist elitist arrangements' which the centre had to negotiate with the periphery.[61] In contrast to the ideological narratives championed by the dynastic centre which identified it as universally sovereign and sought to legitimate absolute centralised control over the state, the countervailing Turco-Mongol tradition was characterised by ideological notions which legitimated the elite's accumulation of power across a decentralised state.[62] For these elites, power was legitimated by ideological discourses which emphasised not just agnatic descent and seniority but the demonstration of individualised qualities such as ambition, charisma, political acumen, coercive prowess, and even survivability in the face of intense military competition.[63] As a consequence, any centralisation of the state under the dynast faced entrenched resistance from elites who saw their identity and interests bound up in a conception of the state which displayed a strong tendency towards decentralised governance.[64]

The study's focus on the Turco-Mongol tradition is meant to reflect the intrinsically military nature of the states in not just post-Chinggisid Iran, but the broader Turco-Persianate world. Marshal Hodgson described such states as 'military patronage states', defined by the following characteristics: First, a legitimation of dynastic law; second, the conception of the state as a single military force; third, the attempt to exploit the realm's economic resources as appanages of the military elites.[65] Though the bureaucratic and ecclesiastic elites in these states were influential, they were nonetheless in the shadow of their military counterparts. Many bureaucrats and clerics were employed and patronised by local military leaders who ruled the provinces with varying degrees of autonomy.[66] The military elites and their Turco-Mongol conception of the state predominated.[67] Hodgson's model has been selected here

[61] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 36.

[62] For the tension between the centralising discourse of the patrimonial household and the decentralising discourse of the collegial elite in Turco-Mongol societies see Michael Hope, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Īlkhānate of Iran*, (Oxford, 2016), pp. 1–8.

[63] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', pp. 36–39.

[64] Ibid, p. 38.

[65] Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 Vols. (Chicago, 1974), Vol. 2, p. 405; see also Pamela K. Crossley, 'Military Patronage and Hodgson's Genealogy of State Centralisation in Early Modern Eurasia', in *Islam and World History: The Ventures of Marshall Hodgson*, eds. Edmund Burke III and Robert J. Mankin, (Chicago and London, 2018), pp. 102–116.

[66] Dumolyn and Van Steenbergen, 'Studying Rulers', pp. 120–122.

[67] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', pp. 43–44.

since it gives full appreciation to the role of the military in the state and its formation, allowing one to analyse the militaristic ideologies and policies of states such as the Hotakids, Ṣafavids, and Nāderids, all of which were forged in the fires of war. Furthermore, it accounts for the structural tensions between the centre and the elites, particularly the military elites, who sought to preserve or even expand their appanages at the centre's expense.

The first characteristic of the military patronage state was the legitimation of dynastic law. One of the most pervasive manifestations of dynastic law for such states was the 'Great *Jasaq*', a legal code or series of traditions set down by Chinggis Khān.[68] Rather than a definitive book of laws, the *jasaq* was a negotiable collection of ideal proscriptions ascribed to Chinggis Khān, allowing the elites of post-Chinggisid states to legitimate new policies.[69] The *jasaq* formed a basis for the elite to negotiate the administration and institutional structures of the state with the dynastic ruler.[70] As an instrument of decentralised governance, it was cited regularly during the distribution of offices, land-revenue assignments, and fiscal exemptions by the centre to the military elites.[71] Even though explicit references to Chinggis khān and the term *jasaq* were relatively uncommon in Iran by the early modern era, this was due to the supersession of Turkic and Mongolic terms with Persian ones (such as *qāʿedeh*).[72] In practical terms, the organisation of elite relations with the dynastic centre continued to adhere to the centrifugal model provided by the *jasaq*.[73]

Another manifestation of dynastic law was Islamic law (*shariʿat*), reinforcing the notion of unity between faith and state (*din o dowlat*) as rulers began to not only prioritise specific jurisprudential schools of Islamic law, but actively intervened and regulated the textbooks, doctrines, pious endowments, and hierarchy of the ulema.[74] Consequently, important positions were established in the state for ecclesiastic officials. The highest religious office in the Ottoman state was that of the grand mufti, while its approximate equivalent in the Ṣafavid

[68] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, pp. 406–407.

[69] David Morgan, 'The "Great Yāsā of Chinghiz Khān" and Mongol Law in the Ilkhānate', in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (1986), p. 167.

[70] Igor de Rachewiltz, 'Some Reflections on Činggis Qan's Jasar', in *East Asian History*, Vol. 6, (1993), p. 99.

[71] Hope, *Power, Politics*, pp. 54–57.

[72] Maria E. Subtelny, 'The Binding Pledge (*Möchälgä*): A Chinggisid Practice', in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell, (London and New York, 2011), pp. 9–29, particularly, p. 20.

[73] Ibid, pp. 9, 20.

[74] Florence Hodous, 'Inner Asia, 1100s–1405: The Making of Chinggisid Eurasia', in *Empire in Asia*, p. 31; Guy Burak, 'The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Post- Mongol Context of the Ottoman Adoption of a School of Law', in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (2013), 589–599.

state was that of the ṣadr.[75] Both the grand mufti and the ṣadr were responsible for all the religious duties of the realm, including the appointment of judges and the supervision of endowments.[76] Just as land-revenue assignments were appanages of the military elites, the endowments were appanages of the ecclesiastic elites.[77] The dynastic centre legitimated itself to these ecclesiastic elites by upholding their custodianships of various endowments and the fiscal exemptions tied to it under Islamic law.[78] Similar to their military counterparts, then, the ecclesiastic elites had vested interests and appanages which could place them at tension with the centre.

The second characteristic of Hodgson's model conceptualises the state as a cohesive military entity under the dynast. The cohesion did not necessarily entail centralisation of military power. As Hodgson pointed out, the Mamluks of Cairo were an example of a military 'oligarchy' whose members vied for state power through displaying martial chivalry and 'incessant internecine fights'.[79] In at least one case, Hodgson identified successful centralisation of military power. For instance, the Ottoman state, 'founded in *ghāzi* traditions rather than steppe (i.e., Turco-Mongol) traditions', eventually overcame the centrifugal tendencies of its elites, establishing an absolutist state in which even the mosque imams were regarded as military (*ʿaskeri*) officials, and most of the realm's economic resources were regarded as in the dispensation of the sultan and his army.[80] Most military patronage states, however, were formed in the Turco-Mongol tradition, associated with strong centrifugal tendencies among the elites. Consequently, the military cohesiveness of most of these states was not achieved by the centralisation of military and civil institutions but on the loyalty of a band of warriors to a charismatic dynast. The dynast cultivated and retained the loyalty, and

[75] Hossein Nasr, 'Religion in Safavid Persia', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. ½, (1974), pp. 271–286.

[76] Ibid, pp. 275–276.

[77] Stephen F. Dale, *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*, (Cambridge, 2009), p. 111; Anne Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia: A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration*, (London, 1953), p. 224.

[78] ʿAbdolḥoseyn Navāʾi (ed.), *Asnād va Mokātebāt-e Siāsi-ye Irān: az Sāl-e 1105 tā 1135 H. Q.*, (Tehran, 1984), pp. 180–181 for example contains a Ṣafavid edict from 1713 which ratifies the custodianship and fiscal privileges of a family of seyyeds over a shrine, condemning any encroachment by local officials against their appanage.

[79] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 417–419.

[80] Ibid, pp. 559–563.

thus the cohesion, of his commanders by the distribution of war booty and administrative control over parts of the conquered realm.[81]

The third characteristic of the military patronage state was the exploitation of the realm's resources as appanages of the chief military families. This characteristic often led to the destabilisation of the state as the dynastic centre failed to maintain oversight on the military elites once they had entrenched themselves in their appanages.[82] The appanage system existed under different names all across the early modern Islamicate world. In the Ottoman context, the main type of grant in this general model of devolved remuneration and decentralised fiscal administration was known as *timār*. In Mamluk Egypt it was known by the Arabic *iqtāʿ*, while in Iran and Central Asia similar grants were given Turco-Mongol names such as *tiyul* and *siyurghāl*.[83] The 'Turco-Mongol appanage practice' ensured that the military elites were major stakeholders in the fiscal and administrative institutions of the state, which entrusted them to manage their own soldiers and estates. Even those states which Hodgson regarded as relatively centralised, for example the Ottomans who usually collected taxes and tribute from their appanage-holders, did not do away with appanages until the late eighteenth century.[84] In conclusion, the military nature of the state and the Turco-Mongol tradition of its elites provided the ideological and institutional means to resist centralisation.

The study's contentions and structure

The central focus of this study is the process of imperial state formation in Iran between the Afghan conquest of Eṣfehān in 1722 and the fall of the Nāderid empire in 1747. The three imperial states in question are the Hotakids (1722–1729), the restored Ṣafavids (1722–1736), and the Nāderids (1736–1747). The ideological foundations and the identities of each will be analysed, giving an understanding of how collective identity and political legitimacy were contested and leveraged in the formation of the three states. The study will examine how the ideological foundations of each state supported the formation of its military and administrative institutions, and how power over those institutions was distributed between the imperial centre and the elites. Thus, the study aims to proffer an integrated understanding of

[81] Jos Gommans, 'The Warband in the Making of Eurasian Empires', in *Prince, Pen, and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives*, eds. Maaike van Berkel and Jeroen Duindam, (Leiden, 2018), pp. 299, 316; Jo Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 43.

[82] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, pp. 408–409; Crossley, 'Military Patronage', pp. 104–105.

[83] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 43.

[84] Michael Ursinus, 'The Transformation of the Ottoman Fiscal Regime c. 1600–1850', in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead, (New York, 2011), pp. 423–435.

the ideological, military, and administrative conditions under which these states emerged and collapsed.

The Nāder-centric focus of the academic discourse has failed to engage with the Hotakid and resurgent Ṣafavid states on their own terms, missing significant ideological developments among Iran's elites in the years after the conquest of Eṣfehān. Nāder, as the archetypal great man, is cast as lying outside the historical process rather than operating within it and being subject to its influences. By situating the Hotakids, Ṣafavids, and Nāderids in the broader struggle to form an imperial state in the aftermath of the Afghan conquest of Eṣfehān, the current study traces the ideological and institutional trends with which all three actors had to contend, and in turn, how each contributed to the development of those trends. Furthermore, the current study distinguishes itself from previous research on post-1722 states in Iran by taking an integrated and multi-faceted approach to the process of state formation, discussing the ideological, military, fiscal-administrative factors at work. Hitherto, scholars have limited their focus to only one aspect of one state, usually the Nāderid state. For example, Tucker discussed the ideological quest for legitimacy under Nāder from the lens of diplomatic relations between Iran and the Ottoman empire, while Arunova and Ashrafian's analysis is exclusively on Nāder's fiscal and administrative policies. By examining the ideological, military, fiscal-administrative forces involved in the formation of the three aforementioned states, the study gives a cohesive understanding of how each state's ideology and institutional policies were devised in reference to one another and cannot be understood in isolation.

One of the major contentions of the study will be that the ideology of all three states was significantly influenced by emergent discourses on Iranian identity, though each had a different understanding of what being Iranian meant. Furthermore, I argue that the focus on Iranian identity as the cornerstone of the state's ideology was a new development without precedence since the fall of the Sāsānids to the Islamic conquest in late antiquity.[85] In making these arguments, the study challenges the mainstream academic discourse which is plagued by what Afshin Matin-Asgari has termed the 'Persian-National paradigm' that clings to the notion of a continuous national Iranian identity throughout history.[86] This paradigm constructs a 'homogenised sense of Iran and Iranianness across the expanse of recorded history', reflecting modern-day nationalist paradigms which regard the national community

[85] The Sāsānids (224–651) laid the ideological foundation of an imperial polity called Iran-Shahr or 'Realm of the Iranians' (see chapter one below).

[86] Afshin Matin-Asgari's 'The Academic Debate on Iranian Identity: Nation and Empire Entangled' in *Iran Facing Others*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, (2012), pp. 171–190.

as primordial, stretching back through time via ethno-linguistic and racial genealogies.[87] In this vein, the Ṣafavids are frequently cast as the early modern iteration of an Iranian national state.[88] Rather than a homogenised Iranian identity which transcends historical contingencies, this study gives context to the emergence of an Iranian sense of collective self as articulated by the eighteenth-century elites in the former territories of the Ṣafavid empire. The study explores the ideological and institutional conditions of mid-eighteenth-century Iran which led to the emergence of a new collective Iranian identity, and how that identity came to be contested and frequently revised to serve different imperial states.

This study further challenges the prevalent assumption in Iranian studies and modern historiography that regards Persian ethnicity and language to have been central to Iranianness, marginalising or outright excluding Arab and Turkic peoples from the Iranian collective.[89] Drawing on numerous sources in Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish, the study shows that Iranian identity was espoused by eighteenth-century contemporaries from a variety of

[87] Ibid, p. 172.

[88] Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980), p. 3; Alireza Shapur Shahbazi, 'The History of the Idea of Iran', in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, (London, 2005), p. 108; Mansur Sefatgol, 'Rethinking Safavid Iran: Cultural and Political Identity of Iranian Society during the Safavid Period', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 72, (2006), pp. 5–16; Alexander Mikaberidze, *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara, 2011), Vol. 1, p. 432; Moḥammad-Reżā Ḥāfeẓ-Niā, ʿAli Vali Qilozādeh, 'Dowlat-e Ṣafavi va Hoviyat-e Irāni', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Melli*, Vol. 32, No. 8, No. 4, (2007); Seyyed Khodāyār Mortażavi, Moṣṭafā Reẓāyi Ḥoseyn-Ābādi, Ardavān Qarāʾati, 'Goftmān-e Tashayyoʿ va barsāzi-e hoviyat-e melli dar Irān-e ʿaṣr-e Ṣafavi', in *Paĵuheshhā-ye Siāsi-ye Jahān-e Eslām,* Vol. 5, No. 3, (2015), pp. 157–183; Ḥoseyn Seyfoddini, 'Eḥyāʾ va nowzāyi-ye hoviyat-e Irāni: barrasi moqāyesehi Irān-e Sāsāni va Ṣafavi', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Melli*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2015); Zahrā Seyyed-Yazdi, 'Shāh Esmāʿil Ṣafavi va Shāhnāmeh-ye Ṣafavi', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Irāni*, Vol. 15, No. 30, (2016). Though some scholars have pointed out the inaccuracy of this view, framing Ṣafavid Iran as an empire rather than a nation (a view taken by this current study), see W. Hinz, *Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat im funfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1936); Rudi Matthee, 'Was Safavid Iran an Empire', in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 53, (2010), p. 241; Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 128; Bert G. Fragner, 'The Concept of Regionalism in Historical Research on Central Asia and Iran' in *Studies on Central Asia in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWease (2001), pp. 344–345.

[89] For example see Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, (New Haven and London, 2017), pp. 19–20 claims that the 'most evident' marker of communal identity among early modern Iranians was the Persian language, whereas Turkish and Arabic are relegated to 'regional languages'; Hugh Kennedy, 'Survival of Iranianness', in *The Rise of Islam*, eds. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London, 2009), p. 14 places precedence on language but does not exclude Arabs (p. 17); Ali Sadeghi, 'Epic and National Self-Consciousness: The Case of the Shahnameh', in *International Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2014), pp. 45–72; Shahrokh Meskoob, *Iranian National Identity and the Persian Language*, (Washington, DC, 1992), pp. 44–50; Vladimir Minorsky, *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk*, (London, 1943), p. 188; Rudi Matthee, 'Zar-o Zur: Gold and Force', in *Comparing Modern Empires: Imperial Rule and Decolonisation in the Changing World Order*, ed. Uyama Tomohiko, (Sapporo, 2018), p. 49, draws a dichotomy between 'Turcoman Qezelbāsh warriors' and 'Tajik (ethnically Persian) scribes', and later equates Tajiks with Iranians, thus excluding the Turkmen; David Durand-Guedy, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Iṣfahān in the Saljūq Period*, (London and New York, 2010), also confuses Tajik with Iranian, and thus excludes the Turkmen newcomers; Peter B. Golden, 'Turks and Iranians: An Historical Sketch', in *Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects*, eds. Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut, (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 17–38.

lineages who frequently expressed their Iranianness in languages other than Persian. No particular lineage, language, or region in Iran was regarded as quintessentially more or less Iranian than the others. From a political perspective too, the study questions the notion that 'Persian kingship' was invariably central to constructing an Iranian identity for the state and its ruler.[90] The study demonstrates that the Hotakids claimed to be Iranian sovereigns while distinguishing the Afghan self from the Persian-speaking other, while Nāder grounded his identity as the exemplar of Iranian sovereignty in Turco-Mongol rituals and ceremonies. The study argues that non-Persian traditions of sovereignty, particularly the Turco-Mongol tradition, were used as the basis for articulating different versions of Iranian sovereignty. The usual significance assigned to Persian and Persianness in discourses on Iranian identity is thusly challenged.

While Iranian identity formed an ideological foundation under each of the three states in question, the study argues that all of them ultimately failed to co-opt the Iranian elites, leading to their demise. In other words, none of these states successfully negotiated the tension lying at the heart of military patronage states which saw the imperial centre and the elites vie for power over the control of institutions and resources. The study situates the Hotakids and restored Ṣafavids within the tradition of pre-1722 state-building, with the elites asserting their autonomy and their right to share power over state institutions vis-à-vis the centre. In doing so, they were following the Turco-Mongol tradition of decentralised rule which had long precedents among previous generations of elites under the Ṣafavid, Āq-Qoyunlu, and Timurid states in Iran.[91] Unlike those states however, the Hotakids and post-1722 Ṣafavids failed to come to a lasting accommodation with the elites and their centrifugal tendencies. The Nāderid state subverted the Turco-Mongol tradition by using it to justify a thorough centralisation which would keep the Iranian elites in check. Despite early successes, the Nāderid state too was ultimately dismantled by the elites.

The study suggests that Iran's earlier tendencies for decentralised governance, characteristic of military patronage states in general, persisted into the first half of the eighteenth century.

---

[90] Such notions are evident in Amanat, *Iran*, pp. 6–15. Also see pp. 76–79 for ʿAbbās I as the founder of a 'national community' under a centralised state, presenting 'a formidable case study of Persian kingship'; Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, (New York, 2009), p. 128 for the conflation of Iranian with Persian sovereignty.

[91] For the decentralised nature of Ṣafavid rule see chapter one below. For the Āq-Qoyunlu, see John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, (Salt Lake City, 1999), pp. 149–172. For the Timurids, see Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*, (Leiden and Boston, 2007), pp. 230–233.

Furthermore, unlike their medieval and early modern predecessors, the Hotakids, the latter Ṣafavids, and the Nāderids failed to temper the centrifugal tendencies of their elites and all three proved ephemeral. This distinguishes Iran from many other empires of the period where scholars have identified processes whereby the imperial centre either accommodated or even curtailed the power of the elites. For instance, in the eighteenth-century Ottoman and Qing empires the centrifugal impulses of the elites were successfully accommodated under a stable administration.[92] Empires such as Russia or the Hapsburgs, on the other hand, managed to largely subdue the centrifugal tendencies of their elites by centralising the state's military and administrative institutions during the eighteenth century.[93] The study, then, suggests that centre-periphery relations developed differently in eighteenth-century Iran compared to many other Eurasian empires, resulting in a chronic instability which saw the rise and collapse of a series of ephemeral states in Iran.

Approach to sources and archives[94]

The majority of studies on this period take a positivist approach to the contemporary narrative sources, in particular, the Persian chronicles written during the reign of Nāder Shāh. Lockhart and his disciples draw upon the *Tārikh-e Nāderi* by Mirzā Mehdi Esterābādi, Nāder's secretary and court chronicler, and the *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi* by a Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi, a military officer who served in the Nāderid army.[95] Given that these chronicles were written by avid admirers of Nāder after his ascent to kingship in 1736, their narratives give a skewed representation of the preceding Hotakid and Ṣafavid states. Both chroniclers portrayed the pre-Nāderid era as one of darkness leading to the divinely ordained emergence of Nāder as saviour. The scholarship's dismissal of both the Hotakids and Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavi as mere preambles to the emergence of Nāder's state is reflective of the narratives advanced in these two chronicles.

---

[92] Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (Cambridge, 2010), pp. 227–244; William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire: The Great Qing*, (London, 2009), pp. 69–70, 110–114.

[93] Brian Davies, *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe*, (London and New York, 2011), pp. 176–179, 259–266; Michael Hochedlinger, 'The Hapsburg Monarchy: From "Military-Fiscal State" to "Militarisation"', in *The Military-Fiscal State in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher Storrs, (Surrey and Burlington, 2009), pp. 55–94.

[94] This section does not contain a detailed breakdown of all the major sources used in the present study. In the following chapters, each source is subjected to critique and contextualisation when they are introduced at the relevant juncture of an argument. This section gives the study's approach to the different categories of sources in broad terms and contrasts its bibliography to previous scholarship.

[95] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*; On Marvi's history, see Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi, 'Moqaddameh', in Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi, *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi*, (Tehran, 1985), pp. three–ninety-five.

This study acknowledges that these chronicles were written with an eye on delegitimating the preceding Hotakids and Ṣafavids. As such, they are not used for reconstructing the ideological or administrative histories of either state. Instead, the study limits its use of the two chronicles to the analysis of post-1736 Nāderid ideology (as disseminated by Esterābādi) and its reflection and reception among Nāder's supporters (such as Marvi). The analysis of the Hotakids and Ṣafavids relies on documents and material evidence produced by them or by their contemporaries during their tenure. The numismatic and sigillographic evidence which they left behind is used to reconstruct their identity and legitimacy as rulers.[96] Coins and seals, unlike official chronicles, circulated among relatively large numbers of the realm's inhabitants, making them vehicles par excellence for the dissemination of the ruling elite's ideology, and the articulation of their legitimacy.[97] Accordingly, this study consistently draws on numismatics and sigillographics for its analyses.

The study also makes use of the internal and diplomatic correspondence of both the Hotakid and Ṣafavid states, giving an understanding of how they legitimated their authority among Iran's elites and to neighbouring states.[98] The analysis of administrative institutions under either state relies on the edicts and decrees they issued, the administrative manuals they commissioned, and the petitions of the governed elites in response to the regulations and policies which these states attempted to impose. The integration of these different categories of sources, wherever possible, will allow the study to explain how these states devised their administrative policies and the extent to which these policies were implemented if at all. The aforementioned documents are found in archives across West Asia and the Caucasus, but the overwhelming majority have been published in source books.[99]

---

[96] I use the following two source books: H. L. Rabino di Borgomale, *Coins, Medals, and Seals of the Shahs of Iran (1500–1941)*, (n.p., 1945); Ṣoghrā Esmāʿili (ed.), *Paĵuheshi dar Sekkehhā va Mohrhā-ye Dowreh-ye Ṣafavi [Seals & Coins]*, (Tehran, 2006).

[97] Jere L. Bacharach, *Islamic History through Coins: An Analysis and Catalogue of Tenth-Century Ikhshidid Coinage*, (Cairo and New York, 2006), pp. 3–8; Leonhard E. Reis, 'Coins and Currency', in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri, Vol. 1 (New York and London, 2006), pp. 162–164; Reuven Amitai, 'Political Legitimation in the Ilkhanate: More Thoughts on the Mongol Imperial Ideology, the Introduction of Muslim Justifications, and the Revival of Iranian Ideals' in *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 213–214; Maḥmud Jaʿfari Dehqi, 'Naqsh-e sekke-shenāsi dar bāzshenāsi-ye tārikh va farhang-e Irān', in *Ketāb-e Māh: Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, Vol. 178, (2013), pp. 20–25. On the importance of seals see Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, *When Ego was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden and Boston, 2011), pp. 109–159.

[98] ʿAbdol-Ḥoseyn Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder Shāh va Bāzmāndegānash: Hamrāh bā Nāmehhā-ye Salṭanati va Asnād-e Siāsi va Edāri*, (Tehran, 1989).

[99] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*; idem, *Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafavi*, (Tehran, 1989); Willem Floor (ed.), *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia, 1729–1729*, (Paris, 1998); idem, *Rise and Fall of Nader Shah: Dutch East India Company*

Furthermore, in an effort to gauge the legitimacy of either state, the study examines various texts produced by the elites in Iran during the 1720s. These texts include *divān*s of poetry, versified chronicles, political treatises, travelogues, advice literature, and personal letters written in Arabic and Persian.[100] Consequently, it will be possible to gauge the success of the Hotakids and Ṣafavids in legitimating themselves to the elites which they sought to co-opt under their respective states. Additionally, the study explores these texts to give an understanding of how, at least in some quarters, new ideological discourses were emerging which looked past the Hotakids and Ṣafavids to propose alternative visions for an imperial state in Iran.

For Nāder's early career as a Ṣafavid general, the study eschews the use of Nāderid histories commissioned after his usurpation of the throne in 1736, most of which were written to retrospectively mark Nāder as destined for sovereignty from the very beginning. Nāder's coins, seals, inscriptions, and his correspondence with other elites in Iran during the 1720s and early 1730s will be used to trace the development of his ideology as he went from Ṣafavid vassal to regent to usurper.[101] An important part of the bibliography here is formed of the letters penned by Nāder's personal scribe and secretary, Esterābādi. While scholars have placed too great a reliance on Esterābādi's chronicle written during Nāder's reign, the dozens of letters he penned on behalf of his master in the early 1730s have received almost no attention at all. Esterābādi's letters from this period, most of which are transcribed in his *Monshaʾāt* (Epistles) and some of which survive in their original form and are preserved in archives across Iran, are critical to understanding the ideological foundations of Nāder's rise

Reports, 1730–1747, (Washington State, 2009); Gudarz Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh Aḥkām va Farāmin-e Shāhān-e Irān beh Ḥokkām-e Qafqāz*, 3 Vols., (Tehran, 2015).

[100] Qoṭboddin Neyrizi, 'Ṭibb al-Mamālik', ed. and trans. Rasul Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh dar ʿArṣeh-ye Din, Farhang, va Siāsat*, Vol III, pp. 1324–1354; idem, *Nāmehā*, in Library, Museum, and Documents Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the I.R. Iran, Arabic MS., No. 12347.8; Zaki Mashhadi Nadim, *Divān-e Nadim*, in Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Persian and Turkish MS., No. 1080; Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, 'Moqaddameh', in Seyyed Moḥammad Sabzevāri, *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin*, ed. Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, (Tehran, 1989); Moḥammad-ʿAli Ḥazin Lāhiji, *Divān-e Ḥazin-e Lāhiji*, ed. Ẕabiḥollāh Ṣāḥebkār, (Tehran, 1995); idem, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, ed. ʿAli Davāni, (Tehran, 1996); Anon., *Tajdār-e Nāfarjām: Tajgoẕāri-ye Nāfarjām-e Malek Maḥmud Sistāni dar Mashhad, bar Asās-e Noskheh-ye Khaṭṭi-e Maṡnavi-ye Maḥmudnāmeh*, ed. ʿAlireżā Jannati-Sarāb, (Mashhad, 2014); Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', in Jaʿfariān (ed.), *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1231–1295.

[101] For diplomatic and internal correspondence, the study relies mostly on Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 119–486; Moḥammad-Reżā Naṣiri (ed.), *Asnād va Mokātebāt-e Tārikhi-ye Irān: Dowreh-ye Afshāriyeh*, (Gilān, Iran, 1985); For numismatic and sigillographic evidence, Yusof Eftekhāri (ed.), *Sekkeh-Shenāsi-ye Shāhān-e Afshār*, (Tehran, 2015).

within the restored Ṣafavid state.[102] By focusing on pre-1736 documents produced by Nāder and those under his patronage, and putting these documents in dialogue with our previous analysis of contemporary texts produced by the Hotakids, Ṣafavids, and Iran's elites, the study will place the rise of Nāder in the context of the socio-political upheavals gripping Iran at the time. Thus, Nāder's ascent may be understood as part of wider historical processes rather than the traditional view of Nāder as unshackled by historical contingencies, bending the course of history to his will and genius.

In its analysis of the Nāderid state, the study engages with many underutilised, and a few hitherto unknown, sources. The versified chronicles and court poetry—composed in Persian, Turkish, and Kurdish—will be given due attention in explaining how the Nāderid elite sought to legitimate or question the establishment of a new dynastic state and its imperial expansion into neighbouring realms.[103] To reconstruct Nāder's imperial ideology and understand how he legitimated his empire to contemporaries, I rely on diplomatic letters and treaties just as Tucker has done in his study. Unlike Tucker, however, I expand the focus beyond Iran-Ottoman relations, seeking a more integrated understanding of how Nāder articulated a position of universal sovereignty over all realms within the Islamic world, including the Mughals, Ottomans, and Central Asian Khānates. Regarding Nāder's ideology of universal sovereignty over vassal rulers such as the Mughal pādshāh and the Central Asian khāns, the study uses hitherto unknown peace treaties which were drawn up between the sides at the conclusion of Nāder's expeditions against those sovereigns.[104] Some of the woefully neglected sources for examining Nāder's claims to universal imperium over the Turco-Persianate world are the three monumental inscriptions which he commissioned in the 1740s.

---

[102] Mirzā Mehdi Esterābādi, *Monsha'āt-e Esterābādi*, in National Library and Archives of the I.R. Iran, Persian MS. No. 5/14624; some documents which corroborate the contemporaneousness of the *Monsha'āt*'s letters (and the fact that they were preserved in their original form without later altercations) can be found in document No. 43.117 in the Golpāygāni Library in Qom.

[103] In particular, I use the versified Kurdish epic of Almās Khān Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh-ye Nāder*, ed. Maẓhar Advāyi, (Tehran, 2017); and the Persian versified court chronicle of Moḥammad-ʿAli Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh-ye Nāderi*, ed. Aḥmad S. Khānsāri, (Tehran, 1960). For an overview of this work see Abbas Amanat, 'Shahnameh-ye Naderi and the Revival of Epic Poetry in Post-Safavid Iran', in *The Layered Heart: Essays on Persian Poetry, A Celebration in Honor of Dick Davis*, ed. A. Seyed-Ghorab, (Washington DC, 2019), pp. 295–318. I also use the aforementioned *divān* of Nāder's Turkish court poet, Zaki Mashhadi, better known by his penname Nadim. Another Turkish court poet used herein is ʿAbdorrazzāq Tabrizi Nashʾeh, *Divān-e Fārsi o Torki*, in The Library and Archives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of I.R. Iran, Turkish MS. No. 14761.

[104] A transcript of these treaties is contained in a unique version of Esterābādi's court chronicle which combines the text of his history with transcripts of the chancellery documents (including the aforementioned treaties) he personally drafted. The manuscript is Mirzā Mehdi Esterābādi's *Fotuḥāt-e Nāderi*, in Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Persian MS. No. 41563, ff. 50v–51v, 56v–58r. It was kindly donated to the library by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei a few years ago.

All three are in Turkish, which goes some way in explaining why the Persian-centric scholarship has overlooked them so far.[105]

The study builds on Arunova and Ashrafian's efforts to analyse the Nāderid state from a fiscal-administrative lens by using contemporary edicts and decrees. Since the publication of Arunova and Ashrafian's history in 1956, a wealth of new Nāderid state documents have been discovered and published in source books.[106] Alongside the transcripts of a few unpublished edicts which I discovered in the Islamic Consultative Assembly's archives in Iran, these source books are used extensively in analysing the Nāderid state's fiscal institutions and policies.[107] Rather than impressionistic accounts left by European observers and local chroniclers, the study primarily relies on these edicts to reconstruct the Nāderid state's attempts at centralisation, and to give an unprecedentedly detailed account of how Nāderid bureaucracy functioned, or rather, was designed to function.

Structure and chapters

The first chapter provides the historical background to this study by giving an overview of the Ṣafavid state in early modern Iran, outlining its ideological, military, and administrative foundations up to 1722. It shows that the identity and legitimacy of the Ṣafavids were defined primarily by Shi'i Islam. All other discourses, including sacral kingship, Timurid legitimacy, millenarian sovereignty, Sufi mysticism, descent from the Shi'i Imams, Persianate monarchy, and the idea of Iran were consolidated under and subservient to the theme of Twelver Shi'ism, the central axis of the state's ideology. The Ṣafavids reigned as absolute sovereigns whose ideology was infused with a millenarian aura, but their practical authority over their vast and heterogeneous realm was curtailed by powerful military and ecclesiastic elites. Commanders and clerics wielded significant power in a decentralised Ṣafavid state, with the shāh devolving control over the realm's assets and administration to their charge. Accordingly, the Ṣafavid centre lacked the ability to effectively draw on the military and fiscal resources of the realm. The tension between centre and periphery remained unresolved

[105] Curiously, even though Tucker draws on countless Turkish documents in his study, he avoids discussing the Turkish court poems and inscriptions commissioned by Nāder.

[106] For edicts issued to the Caucasian provinces and vassals, see Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, pp. 1–163; all the disparate documents gathered by Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*; Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Qoddusi, *Nādernāmeh*, (Tehran, 1960). pp. 528–575, and scattered documents published in several anthologies.

[107] Two Nāderid edicts were transcribed the nineteenth century Qājār administrator Gholām-Ḥoseyn Afżal ol-Molk al-Maʿi (ed.), *Korrāseh ol-Maʿi*, in Library, Museum, and Document Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of I.R. Iran, Persian MS., No. 9450/115, pp. 600–601; Andras Barati has also been kind enough to share images of several unpublished edicts he came across during his fieldwork in Eṣfehān's Christian quarter.

until the crisis of the early eighteenth century saw the disintegration of the Ṣafavid state. This chapter will provide the context for the subsequent discussions on state formation, allowing us to identify continuities and changes in the ideological, military, and administrative structures of the state post-1722.

The second chapter explores how Iranian identity came to dominate the ideological foundations of the state in the minds of the elites living in post-1722 Iran. This Iranian identity was contested by different actors to express alternative visions for a new state, reflecting the differing ideological and material interests of those actors. Using Hotakid numismatic and chancellery evidence, I demonstrate that the dynasty sought to expand and consolidate its hold over former Ṣafavid territories by identifying themselves as Iranian sovereigns. Their notion of Iranianness was inclusive of both Sunni and the majority Shi'i inhabitants of the realm, reflecting their ideological need for reconciling the two creeds in loyalty to their state. The overwhelming majority of Iran's Shi'i elites, however, rejected the Hotakid conception of Iranian identity. These elites viewed their Iranianness as defined by their territorial belonging to the realm of Iran and their sectarian enmity with the Sunni foreigner, making submission to Afghan rule unthinkable. For a state to be truly Iranian, and thus legitimate, it had to be Shi'i. The vision of the state which eventually triumphed was the one championed by a Ṣafavid fugitive prince, the self-styled Ṭahmāsp II. He ideologically combined traditional Ṣafavid discourses on legitimacy with the emergent discourse on Iranian identity, portraying himself as the saviour of the Iranian Shi'a who was destined to rid Iran's sacred soil from the profane Sunni invaders. The restoration of Iran and its people was thus connoted with the restoration of the Ṣafavid state under Ṭahmāsp. Ideologically speaking, Ṭahmāsp was equating the recovery of Iranian fortune with re-establishing continuity with the Ṣafavid past. This continuity was evident in the decentralised institutional and administrative structure of Ṭahmāsp's state, with the appanages of the elites ratified and expanded.

Thus, the restoration of the Ṣafavid state helped preserve and, in some cases, expand the appanages of the Iranian military elites. A Khorāsānian commander and Ṣafavid vassal by the name of Nāder was one such beneficiary. Chapter three explores how the decentralised nature of Ṭahmāsp's state allowed Nāder to accumulate ideological and institutional power at the expense of his overlord, eventually challenging Ṭahmāsp for de facto control over the state. The foundations of Nāder's ideology were not entirely original. He portrayed himself as the saviour of Iran and the restorer of the Ṣafavid state, supplanting Ṭahmāsp's role. I argue that

Nāder gradually formulated a new ideological narrative in which he fought for the interests of the Iranian state, rather than the Ṣafavid dynasty. Such a discourse, disseminated through numismatics, sigillography, monumental inscriptions and diplomatics, permitted Nāder to ultimately remove Ṭahmāsp in the interests of the Iranian state, which he defined as restoring the territorial integrity of Iran and freeing Iranians from Sunni captivity. The chapter further explores how Nāder, acting as regent after Ṭahmāsp's deposition, utilised the ideological power of his discourse on being the saviour of Iran and its people to centralise the institutions of the state under his own control. These centralising policies undermined efforts by other elites to challenge Nāder's authority, while Nāder consolidated his hold over the realm's military and fiscal resources. It was with these resources that Nāder fulfilled his ideological quest of restoring Iran's territorial integrity and securing the release of Iranians held in foreign captivity. By 1735, all the territories lost by the Ṣafavid state were restored to it under Nāder's leadership.

Chapter four examines Nāder's ideological use of Iranian identity in his establishment of a new imperial state of his own, replacing the Ṣafavids. The chapter reveals how Nāder drew upon his military victories to reinforce claims that he was the divinely ordained saviour of Iran and its people, marked out for sovereignty over his peers. At the grand assembly he organised in 1736, he manufactured a consensus among the realm's elites, who acknowledged him as Iran's saviour and sovereign on behalf of all Iranians. The chapter will also explore how Nāder began portraying himself as a saviour of Iranians from sectarian strife, and how he gave a new non-sectarian inflection to Iranian identity by introducing a new version of Shi'ism, called the Ja'fari creed. Ja'farism was aimed at discarding some controversial Shi'i rituals in an effort to achieve a reconciliation between the Shi'a and the Sunnis. This ideological shift was meant to serve the Nāderid state's expansion into Sunni-inhabited lands beyond Iran's frontiers, allowing Nāder to rule over Sunnis without their loyalty being undermined by sectarian tensions. To be truly Iranian and Shi'i was, according to the Nāderid state, to be an adherent of the Ja'fari creed. The chapter will also explore how Nāder drew on his ideological claim of being the exemplar of Iranians in order to consolidate his hold over the so-called Iranian state. As the *Nāder-e Irān,* he established unprecedented oversight on the state's military and administrative institutions, carrying out a major centralisation programme which saw him consolidate power over the realm and its inhabitants. In the Nāderid state, the balance of power increasingly shifted towards the imperial centre against the interests of the elites. One of the consequences of Nāderid

centralisation was the substantial increase in revenue streams, leading Nāder to expand and strengthen his military forces for the imperial conquest of neighbouring realms.

Chapter five explores the establishment of a vast Nāderid empire which stretched far beyond Iran's frontiers, to Hendustān, Turān, Oman and other lands. It will show that Nāder utilised different ideological narratives to legitimate his imperial expansionism based on the audience he addressed. For internal audiences, the campaigns were legitimated as avenging Iran's honour and freeing fellow Iranians who had been taken captives in previous wars. For general audiences including Afghans, Hendustānians, and Turānians, Nāder articulated a millenarian discourse on universal sovereignty, modelled on Timur. As part of this narrative, Nāder constructed an entirely new dynastic entity called the Turkmenid clan, which included his own dynasty alongside the other royal households of the Islamicate world. As universal sovereign, Nāder claimed imperial supremacy over his lesser brothers in neighbouring realms, who as his vassals, owed tribute to their elder brother. The ideological framework of Nāder's imperial identity allowed for a decentralised system of tribute collection through which vassals provided the Nāderid state with money, manpower, and materials. The establishment of this vast tributary empire reinforced the ideology of the Nāderid state as serving Iranian interests as monumental inscriptions were commissioned to celebrate the avenging of Iranian honour and the freeing of fellow Iranian from foreign captivity.

The sixth and final chapter of this study examines how the opponents of the Nāderid state within Iran ideologically drew on a new discourse on Iranian identity which portrayed Nāder as a traitor and in league with the foreign other. It ties the emergence of this new discourse to the Nāderid state's extensive centralisation of military and fiscal administration which had curtailed the elites' share of power over state institutions and restricted their autonomy. Thus, the elites' ideological use of Iranian identity against the Nāderid state reflected, at least in part, their disillusionment with that state's centralisation of administrative powers at their expense. The simultaneous influx of non-Iranian Sunnis into the imperial army further perturbed these elites, who saw their historic enemies being enfranchised while they themselves were stripped of their long-held appanages. This formed the ideological and institutional background to a rejection of the Nāderid state's Iranianness, and thus, its legitimacy. The elites rose up in numerous rebellions in the mid-1740s. Despite years of quelling countless rebellions, the Nāderid state was eventually destabilised to the point of collapse in 1747. The same ideological discourse on Iranian identity which had played a

defining role in the formation of the Nāderid state, was later repurposed by Iran's disgruntled elites to undo that state.

Chapter One
Iran in the Late Ṣafavid Period

This chapter will give a brief overview of some of the ideological and administrative foundations of the late Ṣafavid state. It will provide the context for the subsequent chapters' discussions on continuity and change under various imperial states formed in Iran after the fall of the Ṣafavid capital in 1722. The chapter will explore the manner and extent to which the idea of Iran was regularly subsumed into the Ṣafavids' discourses on Shi'i sovereignty. It will be argued that by the reign of the last Ṣafavid ruler, Shāh Ḥoseyn (r. 1694–1722), Iranianness had become thoroughly entangled with Ṣafavid Shi'ism. The Ṣafavids, and many of the elites under their patronage, legitimated their sovereignty over the imperial realm of Iran by presenting it as an intrinsically Shi'i dominion, destined to be ruled by the ʿAlid-descended Ṣafavid household. Such a discourse on Iranian identity may have held the promise of a centralised Iran, wholly subservient to the sacred authority of the Ṣafavid shāh. In practice, however, the elites were rarely subjected to an all-pervasive centralised bureaucracy run by the shāh and his direct appointees; many of Iran's nobles sought to retain and even expand their autonomy in the face of the imperial centre. Throughout Ṣafavid history, the centre vied for power with the military commanders, civil officials, and ecclesiastic leaders in the periphery. By the eighteenth century, the Ṣafavid centre had devolved significant administrative control over the empire to these elites to ensure their continued support and loyalty. The latter part of the chapter explores this tension between the Ṣafavid imperial centre and the nobility, discussing in broad terms how the latter retained significant autonomy under a decentralised state administration, and the consequences this had for Ṣafavid military and fiscal power.

Furthermore, the chapter will familiarise the reader with the major administrative institutions of the state and how they functioned under the late Ṣafavids. This will facilitate subsequent chapters in examining how those institutions were preserved or transformed under the states which emerged after 1722, and how they adhered to, or departed from, the Ṣafavid model of state administration. The two main contentions of this chapter are that the late Ṣafavids suffused the idea of Iran with their sacral authority as Shi'i sovereigns, and that despite their grand ideological claims, they were, by the eighteenth century, ruling over Iran with a relatively light touch while Iran's elites concentrated much of the realm's assets and

administration in their own hands. Some details and figures on late-Ṣafavid military and fiscal administration will be provided for the purposes of comparison in later chapters. This will provide the necessary background for the following chapters' examination of how various states after 1722 endeavoured to disentangle the idea of Iran, and of being Iranian, from Ṣafavid Shi'ism, and how each budding state sought to articulate different notions of Iranianness to accommodate or supress the centrifugal tendencies of Iran's elites.

Iran and Shi'ism in the late Safavid mind

The concept of Iran as an imperial realm inhabited by a distinct collective outdates the Ṣafavids by almost thirteen centuries, going back to the rise of the late-antique Sāsānians who proclaimed their empire to be the 'Realm of the Iranians' (*Irān-Shahr*). This realm, imbued with a Zoroastrian sacrality, was said to extend between the two rivers of the Euphrates and the Oxus, and its supremacy was symbolised by its central position among all other realms.[1] After the Islamic conquest of the Sāsānian empire in the seventh century, the idea of Iran survived in the Persian literary tradition, exemplified by Ferdowsi's *Shāhnāmeh*, celebrating the pre-Islamic Iranian champions and dynasties.

Rulers across the Turco-Persianate world continued to draw comparisons between themselves and the *Shāhnāmeh*'s protagonists. Esmāʿil I, the founder of the Ṣafavids was no exception. In his Turkish verse, he declares 'I am Fereydun, Khosrow, Jamshid, and Żaḥḥāk ·: I am the son of Zāl (Rostam), and I am Alexander'.[2] In the span of a single stanza, Esmāʿil claimed to be the incarnation of no less than six legendary figures from Persianate mytho-history, each exemplifying a different quality.[3] For instance, Alexander was an exemplar of heroic conquest, just kingship, and adventure.[4] In some respects, the Alexandrian archetype overlapped with Rostam, the courageous champion-adventurer of the *Shāhnāmeh*.[5] Esmāʿil's choice of Fereydun, however, was particularly telling for it signified universal as well as Iranian sovereignty. Persianate legends gave Fereydun, the magnanimous world ruler, a pivotal role in the emergence of Iran as a distinct realm. Towards the end of his bountiful

[1] Gherardo Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origins*, (Leiden, 1989); Daryaee, 'Idea of Eranshahr', pp. 394–398.

[2] Esmāʿil, *Küllüyyati*, p. 183.

[3] See Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion, and Rhetoric*, (London and New York, 2009), pp. 56–58, 120–123, for the Ṣafavids' use of Persianate personas.

[4] Haila Manteghi, *Alexander the Great in the Persian Tradition: History, Myth and Legend in Medieval Iran*, (London, 2018).

[5] Mahmoud Omidsalar, 'Rostam's Seven Trials and the Logic of Epic Narrative in the Shāhnāma', *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol. 60, No. 2, (2001), pp. 259–293.

reign, Fereydun divided his territories between three sons; to Salm went the lands of Rum (Rome and the West), beyond the Euphrates; to Tur went the lands of Turān (Transoxiana and the Steppe), beyond the Oxus; and to Iraj went the lands of Iran, the superlative of realms.[6]

The Ṣafavids saw themselves as inheritors of Iraj, sovereigns over what one Ṣafavid ruler described as the 'realm of Iran, the most sublime of all on earth and an emblem of heaven'.[7] The Safavid geographic dictionary, Yazdi's *Mokhtaṣar-e Mofid*, preserved key elements of the old idea of Iran; 'Iran-Shahr, reaches from the Euphrates to the Oxus, and is situated at the centre of the inhabited world, being the most sublime and superior to all others in the universe'.[8] Unlike the Sāsānian original, Yazdi's version of Iran-Shahr was strongly associated with Shi'i Islam as promulgated by the Ṣafavids. He considered Iran to have been the superlative realm precisely because it was ruled by 'Morteżavid (Moḥammadan) emperors', who sprung from the genealogical 'tree of Moṣṭafavid (Moḥammadan) household', making them the 'inheritors of Ḥeydarid (ʿAlid) caliphate'.[9] The imperial realm of Iran was described in reference to Ṣafavid Shi'i motifs such as the dynasty's claims of descent from the Prophet's household and being the inheritors to ʿAli's caliphate over the Muslim community.

There was a sacral contiguity between the Ṣafavid dynasty and the realm of Iran, an 'imperial space with deliberate temporal and spatial boundaries'.[10] Ṭahmāsp I's letter to the Ottoman sultan in early 1554 recalled how after the death of his father, the Uzbeks of Turān 'coveted all of paradisiac Iran, including Māzandarān, Khorāsān, Sejestān (Sistān), Fārs, ʿErāq (-e ʿArab and ʿAjam), and Āẕarbāijān', but that he defended these imperial dominions of his by vanquishing the Uzbek army.[11] Any rivals, such as the Ottomans, who transgressed against

[6] Farzāneh Vāḥed Dehkordi and Seyyed-ʿAli Mojābi, 'Moṭāleʿeh-ye taṭbiqi-ye sākhtār-e baṣri-ye negāreh-ye "āvardan-e sar-e Iraj nazd-e Fereydun" dar makāteb-e dowreh-ye Ṣafavi', in *Honarhā-ye Ṣanāʿi-ye Eslāmi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2019), pp. 119–131.

[7] This has been pointed out by scholars such as Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 128. The quote is from Ṭahmāsp's I's letter to the Ottomans; see Navāʾi (ed.), *Ṭahmāsb*, p. 204.

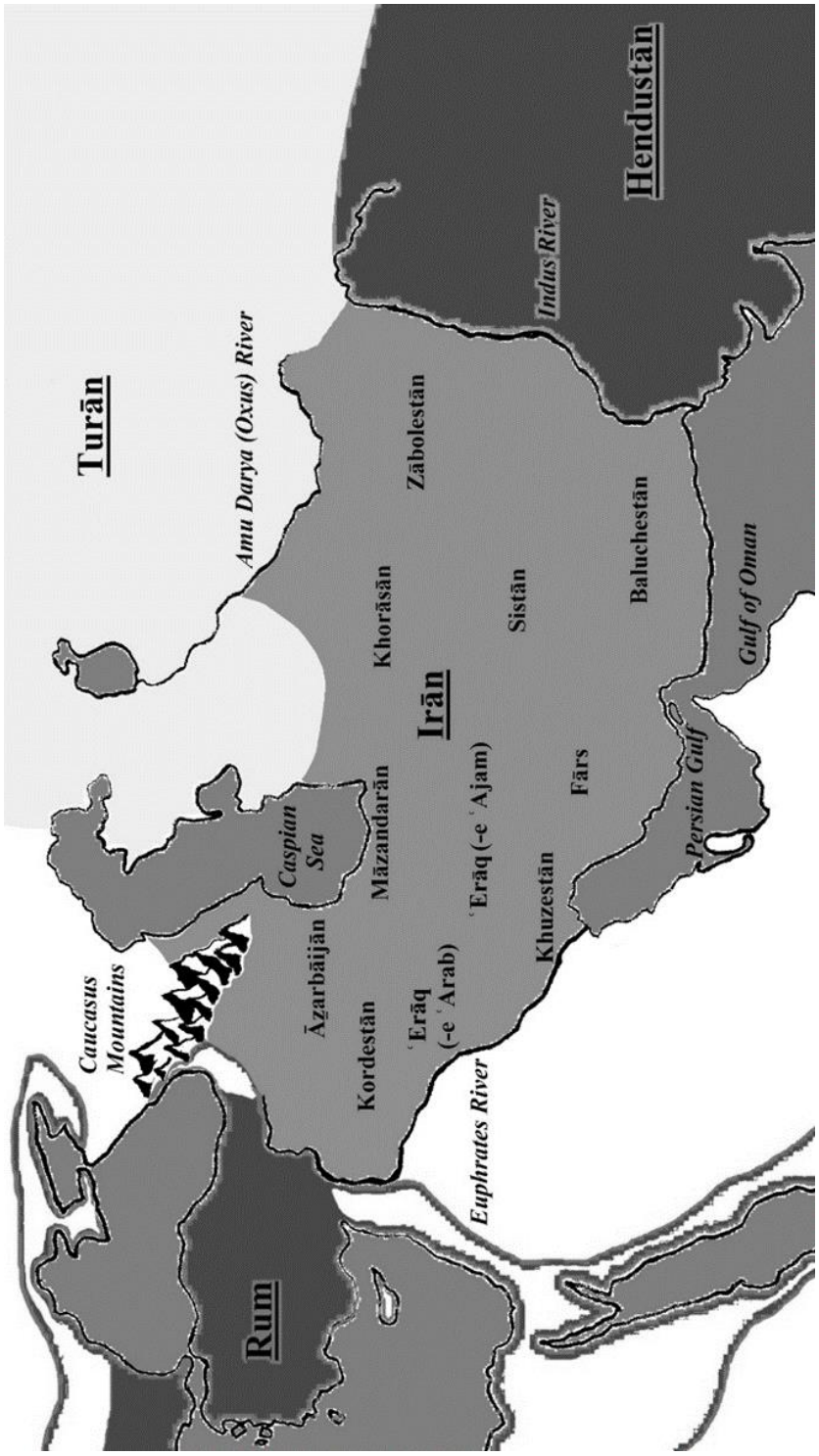
[8] Moḥammad-Mofid Mostowfi Yazdi, *Mokhtaṣar-e Mofid*, ed. Seyfeddin Najmabadi, (Wiesbaden, 1989), p. 15; For medieval and early modern texts on the frontiers of Iran and its constituent regions, see Yāqut al-Hamawi Baghdādi, *Moʿjam ol-Boldān*, Vol. 1, (n.p., 1977), p. 289; Ḥamdollāh Mostowfi Qazvini, *Nuzhat ol-Qolub*, ed. Aqal ol-ʿEbāẕ, (Tehran, 1983), pp. 23–24; Āẕar Bigdeli, *Ātashkadeh*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāṣeri, (Tehran, 1957), pp. 17–30; ʿAbdol-Karim Kashmiri, *Bayān-e Vāqeʿ*, ed. K. B. Nasim, (Lahore, 1970), p. 102.

[9] Mofid Yazdi, *Mokhtaṣar*, pp. 2–3.

[10] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 177, 186.

[11] Navāʾi (ed.), *Ṭahmāsb*, pp. 209–210.

these dominions, were seen not only as transgressors against the Ṣafavids' sovereignty over their dynastic territories, but as transgressors against Iran's imperial frontiers which were under their sacred guardianship. This was encapsulated in the common expression for the Ṣafavid realm: 'guarded dominions of Iran' (*mamālek-e maḥruseh-ye Irān*).[12]



[12] On this concept see Bāqer Ṣadri-Niā, 'Paĵuheshi dar bāb-e eṣṭelāḥ-e mamālek-e maḥruseh-ye Irān', in *Irān Shenākht*, Vol. 1, (1995), pp. 65–87; Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History*, (Yale, 2017).

Iran, and surrounding realms, according to Arabic and Persianate texts from the medieval and early modern eras (See above). Of course, Ṣafavid rule did not correspond perfectly with the mytho-historical frontiers of Iran, and territories such as ʿErāq-e Arab (Mesopotamia), and Diārbakr (Kurdistan), fell to the Ottomans from the mid-seventeenth century onwards. Nonetheless, there remained an idealised understanding of Iran as a realm with the Euphrates and the Oxus as its frontiers.[13]

By the late seventeenth century, a sense of belonging to Iran was increasingly accompanied by loyalty to Ṣafavid Shi'ism. For example, the poet Beheshti Heravi addresses ʿAbbās II, declaring 'I am Iranian (*Irāni-am*) and a servant of the shāh… May your state cast its shadow upon the whole world ·: may the Mahdi come forth during your reign'.[14] Being Iranian was tied directly to one's servitude to the Shi'i Ṣafavid ruler. The usual themes of the Shi'i legitimacy were emphasised by Heravi, including ʿAlid lineage—'you are the son of blessed ʿAli', and the eschatological connection with the twelfth Imam's parousia—'you are the commander of the Mahdi's army'.[15] His contemporaries, Ṣāʾeb Tabrizi (1592–1676) and Vāʿeẓ Qazvini (1618–1679), also composed poems in which Iran was firmly tied to the Shi'i sovereignty of the 'Ḥeydarid-descended' Ṣafavids.[16] For these poets, their sense of belonging to Iran was entangled with their loyalty to Ṣafavid Shi'ism. The implication was that Iran was the land of the Shi'a.

By the eighteenth century, a Shi'ified understanding of Iran found greater reflection in Ṣafavid historiography. For instance, the Ṣafavid court chronicle *Dastur-e Shahriārān* (The Order of Sovereigns), written in the reign of the last Ṣafavid ruler prior to the Afghan conquest, Shāh Ḥoseyn (r. 1694–1722), fused sovereignty over Iran with Shi'i Islam. Ḥoseyn's 'rule over the capacious domains of Iran-Realm (*Irān-Zamin*) is but proof of "verily, we have made you successor (caliph) upon the earth"'.[17] Ṣafavid dominion over Iran and their successorship to the Prophetic household were connected and given Qur'anic sanction. The *Dastur* then goes onto describe Ḥoseyn as gracing the throne of 'the capacious-

[13] See Rudi Matthee, 'The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids, in *International Journal if Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1 and 2, (2003), pp. 158–159.

[14] ʿAbdollāh II Beheshti Heravi, *Nur ol-Mashreqin*, ed. Ṣādeq Sajjādi, (Qomm, 2008), p. 70.

[15] Ibid, pp. 65–71.

[16] For Tabrizi, see https://ganjoor net/saeb/divan-saeb/ghasayed-sa/sh25 and https://ganjoor net/saeb/divan-saeb/ghasayed-sa/sh21 [accessed 04/05/2022]; Qazvini, https://ganjoor net/vaez/divan/ghaside/sh4 [accessed 04/05/2022].

[17] Naṣiri, Moḥammad-Ebrāhim, *Dastur-e Shahriārān*, ed. Moḥammad-Nāder Nāṣiri-Moqaddam, (Tehran, 1994), pp. 8, 186. The Qur'anic quote is from the Sura Ṣād, verse 26.

coursed dominions of Iran, spreading his caring shadow over the heads of the Shi'i faithful'.[18] By implication, the people of Ṣafavid Iran, or at least those who mattered, were all Shi'i.

This conception of Iran as a Ṣafavid realm inhabited by the Shi'a came to be shared by some of the ulema in the eighteenth century. The *Toḥfeh-ye Firuziyeh* (The Gift of Firuz) was written by ʿAbdollāh Eṣfehāni Efendi in 1710-1711. Efendi was one of the most notable clerics of the late Ṣafavid era, producing over thirty-eight works, the majority of which focused on matters of Shi'i jurisprudence.[19] The *Toḥfeh* contained a historical account of Iran and its auspicious fusion with Shi'ism under the Ṣafavids. The pre-Ṣafavid era was cast as a tryrranical era in a narrative lamenting the brutal oppression of Iran's Shi'a (*shiʿayān-e Irān*) at the hands of the Sunni.[20] The persecution of the Shi'a was unrelenting,

> Until finally, the radiant sun of the Ṣafavid kings shone upon Iran… It was only then that the condition of Iran's Shi'a was ameliorated in line with what they deserve… [and the Ṣafavids succeeded] in infusing Shi'ism, faith, wisdom, and other aspects of the religion of the faithful into the hearts of Iran's Shi'a.[21]

The narrative's assumption was that most of Iran's inhabitants were secretly Shi'i, yearning to be saved from the tyranny of Sunni overlords in order to truly embrace their faith. In this historical revision, Iran was not brutally conquered by the Ṣafavids, nor were its people converted from Sunnism to Shi'ism. Instead, the people were already Shi'i; the arrival of the Ṣafavids only bestowed deliverance. The idea of Iran and its inhabitants as somehow destined for Shi'ism was quite conspicuous in Efendi's narrative.

The Shi'i-inflected identity of Iran's eighteenth-century elites was perfectly encapsulated in the most common endonym: *Qezelbāsh*, Turkish for red-capped. Ṣafavid legends recounted how Ḥeydar, the father of the dynasty's founder, was instructed in a dream by Imam ʿAli to create a scarlet twelve-gored cap, symbolising the Twelve Imams, and to thusly adorn the heads of all his followers.[22] While the meaning and significance of Qezelbāsh identity

[18] Ibid, p. 9.

[19] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. I, pp. 411–419.

[20] Ibid, pp. 438–439.

[21] Ibid, p. 440.

[22] This legend, with some variations, can be found in numerous seventeenth and eighteenth-century chronicles. For example, Eskandar Beyg Torkamān, *Ālam Āra-ye ʿĀbbāsi*, ed. Iraj Afshār, (1971), Vol. I, p. 19.

changed significantly over the two centuries of Ṣafavid rule,[23] by the early eighteenth century it had become a term for those who shared a belonging to Iran and who served the Shi'i Ṣafavid state in a military, civil, ecclesiastic, or some other capacity.[24] Being Iranian and being Qezelbāsh were roughly synonymous in this context, both connoting a strong loyalty to Ṣafavid Shi'ism. Accordingly, Ṣafavid rulers often referred to Iran as the 'Qezelbāsh domain' (*velāyat-e Qezelbāsh*), and to their state as the 'Qezelbāsh state' (*dowlat-e Qezelbāsh*).[25]

State administration in Iran under the late Ṣafavids

The 'Qezelbāsh state' which ruled over Iran was organised according to a decentralised administration which preserved the autonomy and interests of many among the Qezelbāsh elites in the late Ṣafavid period. While these elites were loyal to the Ṣafavid shāh and acknowledged him to be, in theory, the highest political and administrative authority in Iran, they were prone to asserting their autonomy against the encroachment of the shāh and his agents. In other words, the Ṣafavids' grand ideological claims on Shi'i sovereignty over Iran did not translate to an equally impressive hold over the realm's state administration. On the contrary, the centre ceded considerable administrative autonomy to the Qezelbāsh elites. While Qezelbāsh identity connoted loyalty to the Shi'i sovereignty of the Ṣafavid dynasty over Iran, the Ṣafavids had to preserve that loyalty through sharing administrative power. By respecting the elites' material interests and autonomy, the centre attempted to ensure their continued support.

This section explores the decentralised structure of the Ṣafavid state by underlining the tensions between the imperial centre and the various Qezelbāsh elites in the late Ṣafavid period. It will show how large parts of Iran were under the autonomous or semi-autonomous

[23] An exploration of the evolving meanings behind the term Qezelbāsh is not purposeful here. Nonetheless, it ought to be noted that many scholars have mistakenly taken Qezelbāsh to mean ethnically Turkmen emirs, contrasting them with 'native Iranians'. This misconception of the Qezelbāsh as the 'Turkmen tribal element' can be seen most clearly in the older scholarship, particularly Savory, and more recently in Susan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran*, (London and New York, 2004). The original clans which brought the Ṣafavi order to prominence were an eclectic mix of Turkic and non-Turkic lineages, and as we shall see later on in this study, Qezelbāsh identity transcended clan affiliations (*ṭāyfeh*). See Mir Hāshem Moḥaddeṡ (ed.), *Tārikh-e Qezelbāshān*, (Tehran, 1982) as an early source which attests to this notion of Qezelbāshness throughout, or Fażli Beyg Khuzāni Eṣfehāni, *Afżal ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Kioumars Ghereghlou, (Exeter, 2015), pp. 991–995 where he mentions many Kurds and Lors in his list of Qezelbāsh poets.

[24] Mana Kia, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism*, (Stanford, 2020), pp. 149–156.

[25] Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavi, *Tazkereh-ye Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, ed. ʿAbdolshakur, (n.p., 1924), pp. 36, 46, 58; Torkamān, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 152, 369, Vol. II, p. 864, where the official court chronicle uses 'Iranian state' synonymously with 'Qezelbāsh state'.

administration of the local military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic elites, obstructing the centralisation of power in the hands of the shāh and his household. By the early eighteenth century the anaemic and decentralised administration of the state resulted in the Ṣafavids struggling to raise the necessary revenues to maintain an effective military, contributing to their collapse. The section begins by outlining the administrative institutions of the Ṣafavid state, the geographic and economic pressures under which they operated, and how the centre devolved administrative powers to Iran's elites, curtailing the ability of the centre to maintain military preparedness. The information provided on administrative organisation, centre-periphery relations, as well as military and fiscal data, will be crucial for the subsequent chapters which discuss how later states either adhered to or departed from the Ṣafavid model of state administration.[26]

Administering a vast geography and recalcitrant elites

The central administrative body of the imperial state which the Ṣafavids relied on to govern Iran was called the supreme chancellery (*divān-e aʿlā*).[27] The official who oversaw this institution on the imperial sovereign's behalf was the grand vizier (*vazir-e aʿẓam*). The chancellery carried out tax assessments; issued tax manuals; kept records on incomes and expenditures; and archived documents which allowed it to verify various fiscal arrangements such as tax exemptions and deeds of endowment. These fiscal accounts, reports, and calculations were the responsibility of the staff of the registry office (*daftarkhāneh-ye homāyun-e aʿlā*), a key department of the chancellery.[28]

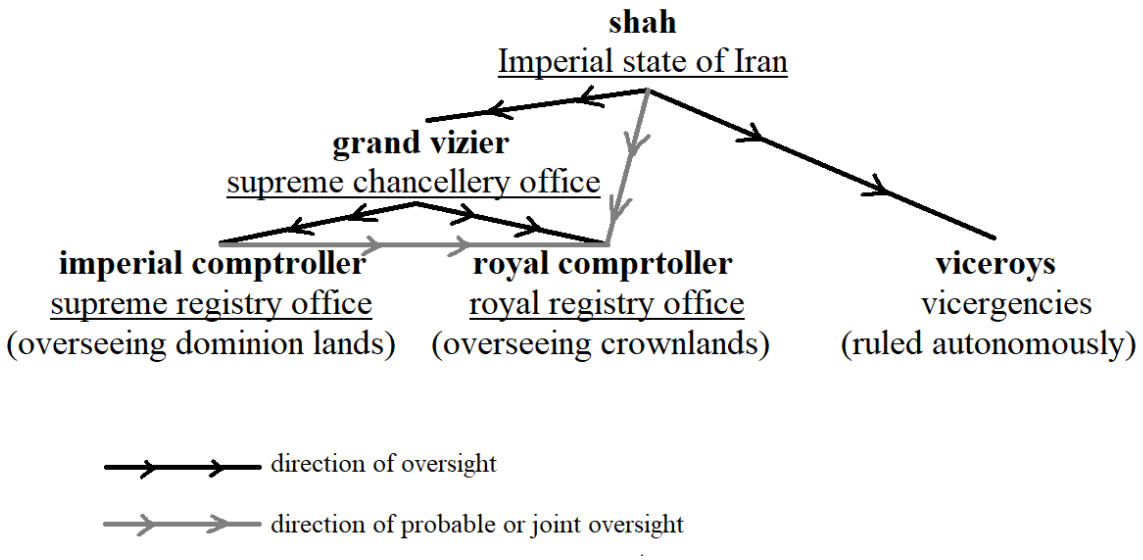
The chancellery oversaw two of the three major kinds of administrative jurisdiction in Iran: dominions (*mamlekat*, pl. *mamālek*) and crownlands (*khāṣṣeh*, pl. *khāṣṣehjāt*). While dominions were managed by the chancellery's registry office, the crownlands were managed by royal administrators. The third category consisted of Viceroyalties (*velāyat*, pl. *velāyāt*), which were not subject to the chancellery's oversight and were governed autonomously (more on these below). Directly subordinate to the grand vizier was the 'imperial comptroller of the dominions' (*mostowfi ol-mamālek*) who oversaw the registry office as the chief fiscal officer of the realm. The four dominions of Āẕarbāijān, ʿErāq, Fārs, and Khorāsān reported

[26] Specifically, see chapter two for how the Afghan Hotakids and Ṭahmāsp II Ṣafavi sought to emulate the Ṣafavids, while chapters three and four show how Nāder departed from Ṣafavid precedents and achieved completely different military and fiscal results.

[27] Referred to as the chancellery henceforth.

[28] For an overview of the administrative model in early modern Iran see Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, (Costa Mesa, CA, 2001); idem, *Fiscal History*.

their incomes and expenditures to the imperial comptroller. Each of these dominions had provincial chancelleries which were replicas in miniature of the central model. Alongside the four major dominions were the crownlands (*mamālek-e khāṣṣeh*), such as Gilān and Kermān, overseen by the crown comptroller (*mostowfi-ye khāṣṣeh*). Outside the crownlands and four dominions were viceroyalties such as Kordestān or Georgia, large regions of the realm which maintained significant political and fiscal autonomy. The grand vizier and his agents had little or no oversight on such lands. The viceroys (*vāli*) paid an annual tribute to the shāh and were bound to join the imperial army in campaigns when called upon to do so, but otherwise ruled their territory as independent hereditary dynasts in their own right.[29]



Simplified structure of Safavid state administration

There were geographic, economic, and social forces which contributed to the decentralisation of state administration in Ṣafavid Iran. The chancellery saddled a realm which was geographically averse to being run as a centralised unit. The Iranian Plateau is a mountainous, semi-arid, and water-scarce environment. The population is scattered across this rugged terrain in enclaves. Lacking major waterways, communication between the population centres was slow, laborious, and costly, resulting in limited economic and political integration between Iran's regions. As food could not be transported across significant distances and

[29] The general overview of the Ṣafavid administrative system proffered here is largely derived from the following scholars' works: Savory, 'The Safavid Administrative System', in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurance Lockhart, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 351–372; Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 69–233; idem, *Safavid Government*, pp. 1–123; Minorsky, *Taẕkereh*, pp. 24–30; Muhammad Ismail Marcinkowski (ed.), *Mīrzā Rafīʿa'sDastūr al-Mulūk*, (Kuala Lampur, 2002), pp. 325–406; Ann Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, trans. Manuchehr Amiri, (Tehran, 1339 Sh./1921).

difficult terrain, limiting each locality to its own food supply. Given that Iran's mountainous terrain was ill-suited to agriculture, this limited Iran's population growth and ensured a certain degree of isolation between each population centre.[30] The relative dearth of precious metals in the Iranian plateau exacerbated the problem as the central treasury struggled to remunerate local agents with cash salaries and usually chose to grant them autonomy over local resources instead.[31] These factors curtailed the ability of any pre-industrial state to exert control over, and to extract resources from, such a diffuse, heterogeneous, and relatively small population.[32]

Aside from the geographic and economic factors which contributed to decentralisation, there were also the social customs prevalent among the elites which expected the centre to devolve large sections of the realm to their administrative charge.[33] The Ṣafavid centre granted land revenue assignments to various military, civil, and ecclesiastical elites among the Qezelbāsh to ensure their continued loyalty. Their ideological loyalty to the Ṣafavids was thusly reinforced by the preservation of their material interests under a decentralised state. In any case, the central treasury's relative paucity in cash money meant that commanders, civil servants, and religious officials usually had to be remunerated through a grant of revenue-generating estates.

The most profitable of these land-revenue assignments were the *tiyul* and the *siyurghāl*. The *tiyul* was a life-long, non-hereditary assignment of land revenue, usually granted from dominion lands. There were slightly different forms of *tiyul*. Sometimes a *tiyul*-holder was given authority over a domain and all its revenues, which he could collect through his own agents.[34] Another common form of *tiyul* was where the holder would be entitled to a percentage of tax revenues collected by the chancellery officials in a given domain. *Tiyul*s were mostly given to military leaders who relied on their assignment(s) for the upkeep of their soldiers and equipment. Some *tiyul*s were attached to administrative offices, with the officeholder benefitting from the assignment for the duration of his service. The *siyurghāl*

[30] Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environment in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*, (Odense, 1993), pp. 15–21, 117–125; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 4–13, 140–141.

[31] Rudi Matthee, Willem Floor, and Patrick Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran: From the Safavids to the Qajars*, (London, and New York, 2013), pp. 133–135. This had precedents in pre-Ṣafavid Iran. See Maria Subtelny, 'Administration and the Delegation of Authority in Temur's Dominions', in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (1976), pp. 206–207; idem, *Timurids in Transition*, pp. 14, 230.

[32] Christensen, *Decline*, pp. 15–21, 117–125; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 4–13, 140–141.

[33] Steenberg, 'Temur to Selim', pp. 43, 47.

[34] Minorsky, *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk*, pp. 28–29.

functioned much the same as *tiyul* except that it was permanent, hereditary, and usually granted from crownlands. The majority of *siyurghāl*-holders seem to have been prominent clerics, but they were also granted to distinguished commanders or nobles, as well as members of the royal family. They became increasingly common towards the end of the empire, as fiscal resources were increasingly decentralised.[35]

One of the major beneficiaries of *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s were the military elites. The granting of *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s diverted large revenue streams from the central treasury to local commanders who were expected to maintain troops. Other than Ṣafavid commanders, many high-ranking civil servants were granted such assignments to either supplement or substitute their salaries.[36] Yields from *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s were typically manifold the value of the holder's formal salary, meaning that the centre was distributing undervalued appanages, while the holders of those appanages grew rich at the centre's expense. In addition, the holders of *tiyul* and *siyurghāl* lands frequently exploited the Ṣafavid centre's lack of control and oversight in their assigned holdings to impose their own additional taxes (*ziādeh*). These extra-legal taxes could be many times the official tax rate that the grant-holders were legally permitted to levy.[37] The losses in state revenue were exacerbated by the fact that *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s were usually exempt from most, if not all, taxes. Though holders of these appanages were sometimes obliged to contribute toward local chancellery officials' salaries or to pay an annual tribute to the centre, they mostly passed this burden on to the peasants under their jurisdiction.[38] It is probable that this fiscal burden contributed towards the impoverishment of the peasants. These appanages presented a major obstacle to centralised revenue collection, and thus, central power.

There were attempts by the centre to reform these land-revenue assignments and redirect at least some of their proceeds to the imperial treasury. In the late-seventeenth century, the centre made sporadic attempts at abolishing a number of *tiyul*s and expanding the purview of the central administration. For instance, Sheikh ʿAli Khān, the Ṣafavid grand vizier from 1668 to 1686, attempted to abolish the life-long *tiyul*s and replace them with temporary ones where each *tiyul*-holder would receive a portion of its revenues in proportion to his salary.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Examples abound throughout the *Taẕkereh* and *Dastur*.

[37] Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 129, 142–143; idem, 'Persian Economy in the Eighteenth Century', *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), p. 130.

[38] Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant*, pp. 228–229, 239; Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 45, 48–58.

The measure was calculated to bring considerable revenues to state coffers, but it was met with strong pushback from the Ṣafavid elites, many of whom were *tiyul*-holders and stood to lose vast incomes.[39] Reforms such as these met with limited success due to the vested political and economic interests which had been cultivated around these appanages. Under increasing pressure from the elites, the chancellery rescinded numerous *tiyul* confiscations.[40] One contemporary even claimed that the grand vizier hardly dared go through with the confiscations to begin with.[41] The growing entrenchment of the elites in the periphery during the late Ṣafavid period seems to have rendered the imperial centre impotent against them.

Aside from the appanages enjoyed by the military and bureaucratic elites, Iran's central administration and its revenues were also undercut by the lucrative estates held by ecclesiastic elites. As Shi'i Islam was the ideological foundation upon which the Ṣafavid state had constructed its identity and legitimacy, it was natural that it would cultivate a close relationship with the Shi'i clerics and ulema. Clerics received land-revenue assignments from the state, mostly in the form of *siyurghāl*s and pious endowments (*vaqf*), further depleting the Ṣafavid treasury.[42] As the Ṣafavid court sought to bolster its relationship with the influential clerics, it began granting them endowments from crownland estates, especially in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[43] By the reign of the last Ṣafavid ruler, Shāh Ḥoseyn, the financial and bureaucratic influence of the clerics reached its zenith, as did the number and wealth of the endowments they received from the crown.[44] Many wealthy elites imitated the late Ṣafavid rulers by giving part of their estates to form endowments. This was not purely out of pious motivations. Stephen Dale and Anne Lambton suggest that families frequently benefitted even from public endowments by stipulating in the deed that their members and descendants should be appointed as custodians. The deed would outline how the endowment's revenues were to be used, and the custodian would usually be granted a

[39] Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 229–230.

[40] Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 64–68.

[41] Minorsky, *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk*, refers to the French traveller Chardin.

[42] Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 16–18.

[43] Ann Lambton, 'wakf (III in Persia)', in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, (Brill, 1982-2002), [accessed 20/04/2021]; Kioumars Ghereghlou, review of *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, by Rudi Matthee, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 47, (2015), pp. 815–818; Seyyed Ṣadeq Ḥoseyni Eshkevari, Sheykh Moḥsen Feyż-Pur Qomi, *Fehrest-e Asnād-e Mowqufāt-e Eṣfehān*, 12 Vols., (Qom, 2009).

[44] Mansur Sefatgol, 'Safavid Administration of Avqāf: Structure, Changes, and Functions, 1077–1135/1666–1722', in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman, (Leiden & Boston, 2003), pp. 397–408.

significant cut. Custodians also had the power to mis-appropriate funds from public endowments or grow rich by investing in land or commerce. Since endowments generally enjoyed many tax-exemptions, similar to *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s, their growth had a deleterious effect on the central treasury.[45] Overall, the power of the late Ṣafavid shāhs was severely curtailed by elites who wielded considerable influence in state administration, giving them control over much of Iran's resources while debilitating the centre's ability to project power, especially military power.

Late-Ṣafavid military administration

As the elites in Iran accumulated appanages at the expense of the centre, the Ṣafavid treasury's ability to fund its military administration was curtailed. In turn, the Ṣafavids began decentralising the army to alleviate the fiscal pressure on the centre. Given the diversion of major revenue streams from the central treasury, the Ṣafavids were faced with chronic problems in financing their standing army, and military effectiveness suffered as a result. The figures on military and fiscal data in this sub-section will be used in subsequent chapters to track some of the administrative continuities and discontinuities in states formed post-1722.

The payment of soldiers' salaries, the procurement of mounts and equipment, and sustaining logistical costs were proving beyond the capacity of the central treasury. This problem grew in intensity over the course of the seventeenth century and reached new heights in the early eighteenth century. The reasons for this crisis went beyond the proliferation of tax-exempt appanages and the general decentralisation of the state, and included climatological changes, growing socio-economic upheaval, changes in global trade which adversely affected Iran, and high inflation.[46] For example, the army raised to defend Baghdad from an Ottoman attack in 1635 disintegrated over the course of the campaign due to lack of pay, accommodation, and rations. Unable to procure and maintain the soldiers' mounts and equipment, the Ṣafavid treasury devolved these costs to the soldiers themselves. The fact that the treasury also failed to pay the soldiers' salaries meant that many deserted while others went into battle demoralised and badly equipped, contributing to a decisive Ottoman victory.[47] In the Ṣafavid-Mughal war over Qandehār in 1649–53, many of the same problems resurfaced. The 40,000

[45] Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 119–125; Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. I, doc. 66, pp. 216–217; although Lambton claimed that tax-exempt endowments were the exceptions rather than the rule, pp. 225, 239.

[46] Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 115–129; James Gustafson and James Speer, 'Environmental Crises at the End of Safavid History', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (2022), pp. 57–79.

[47] Ibid, p. 117.

strong Ṣafavid army that reached Qandehār was in such poor condition that one contemporary observer thought the soldiers looked 'famished'.[48] Despite the army's successful capture of Qandehār from the Mughals, the cracks in Ṣafavid military administration were beginning to show.

Military administration had deteriorated further by the eighteenth century.[49] This crisis is reflected in the *Description of the Victorious Soldiery under Shāh Solṭān Ḥoseyn Ṣafavi*, a summary of Iran's military and fiscal data, written by Mirzā Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn while he held the office of imperial comptroller in 1716.[50] Drafted at the hands of the realm's chief financial officer, the document proffers a valuable insight into the military-fiscal organisation of Ṣafavid Iran before the Afghan conquest in 1722. The total number for the Ṣafavid military was given as 180,000, of whom 110,000 were provincial militia who served under local commanders. These troops were not given any pay from the centre, nor were they given horses, equipment, muskets, or any weaponry. Their commanders were given land-revenue assignments (*jāgir*) for their maintenance. The provincial militias were only called up at wartime, when their rations and those of their horses, were provided for by the crown. The remaining 70,000 troops were maintained by the centre as a standing army (*ḥāżer ol-rekāb*). Unlike the provincial militia, this army's pay, amounting to 100,000 *tumān*s each year, was the responsibility of the central treasury. However, the standing troops still had to provide their own horses, which were evidently too costly for the treasury to procure.[51]

Minorsky's figures, derived from military and fiscal data recorded in an early eighteenth-century administration manual called the *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk*, are complimentary to the figures provided by the *Description*. The standing army as a whole was composed of 64,800 men and received 72,000 *tumān*s annually.[52] But the provincial militias which were sustained on *tiyul*s and other assignments came to just under 60,000, which is about half the figure reported in

[48] Ibid, p. 124.

[49] For the relatively stable military system which in spite of numerous difficulties managed to field effective armies during Shāh ʿAbbās I's reign, see Assadollāh Maʿṭufi, *Tārikh-e Chahār-Hezār Sāleh-ye Artesh-e Irān*, (Tehran, 2003), pp. 658–671.

[50] This document was preserved in the history *Toḥfeh-ye Shāhi*, a lost history, and was copied in 1800 by a Qājār scribe, who also affixed data from King Fatḥʿali's reign. It has been published by Moḥammad-Taqi Dāneshpaĵuh (ed.), 'Amār-e māli va neẓāmi-ye Irān dar 1128', in *Farhang-e Irān-Zamin*, Vol. 20, (1353 Sh./1974), pp. 396–421. For Moḥammad Ḥoseyn's career, see Floor, *Safavid Government*, p. 45.

[51] Dāneshpaĵuh (ed.), 'Amār-e māli', pp. 397–399. The actual sum given is 4 crore rupees, which at the time, assuming 1 *tumān* to be 20 rupees, would give the above figure. This conversion rate was used through to the 1730s to 1740s. See Esterābādi's *Jahāngoshā* or Marvi's *ʿĀlam*.

[52] Minorsky, *Taẕkereh*, pp. 32–35. The table on p. 35 excludes the artillery core, which Minorsky himself acknowledges was revived by the eighteenth century, and accordingly, I have added that to the final count.

the *Description*. The disparity in the reported figures for provincial troops may partly have been due to the fact that the muster rolls, especially those under provincial commanders, inflated the number of troops.[53] The local commanders pocketed the revenues from their assignments while many if not most of their soldiers required no pay since they were fictional entries on the muster rolls. The centre itself was far from immune to the corruption which ate away at military finances.[54] The *Description* itself gives the following account of the poor state of affairs towards the end of Shāh Ḥoseyn's reign,

The payment of monthly salaries from the treasury to the (standing) army was deemed to be profligate. Over half the army were garrisoned throughout the realm (to live off assignments like the provincial militia), and the remainder were paid with increasing irregularity. Sometimes a month's salary would only be paid after two months, or even four or five months. At times, the army received no pay throughout the year, and after the year was over, they received the equivalent of just a few months' pay.[55]

Given such a state of affairs, it is unsurprising that Shāh Ḥoseyn's army struggled to raise the necessary sums to pay his troops during his campaign to defend Khorāsān from the Uzbeks. The military administration proved so ineffectual and corrupt that even when the required sum was finally raised, little if any of it reached the troops. Having received no pay for three consecutive years, most of these troops deserted on route to face the Uzbek army.[56] As the Polish Jesuit missionary in Eṣfehān observed in 1721, perhaps with some exaggeration, the Ṣafavids 'had no other (standing) troops to act, nor money to raise them'.[57] The late-Ṣafavid military administration, then, suffered from a chronic failure to equip and maintain its soldiers due to the central treasury's lack of funds. The responsibility for maintaining the soldiery was increasingly devolved to the local commanders, but this decentralisation only led to the further decline of military readiness.

Conclusion

In the early eighteenth century, Iranian identity was deeply entangled with Ṣafavid Shi'ism. The Ṣafavids, and many of the elites under their patronage, legitimated the dynasty's

[53] Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, p. 124; Floor, *Safavid Government*, pp. 203–211.

[54] See the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, pp. 1249–1250, 1280–1282, 1292–1293 for an insider view on the unravelling of Ṣafavid administration in the final years of their rule; Matthee, *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 114–130.

[55] Dāneshpaĵuh (ed.), 'Amār-e māli', p. 399.

[56] Floor, *Fiscal History*, pp. 231–232.

[57] J.T. Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 2 Vols., (London, 1733), Vol. 2, p. 6.

sovereignty over the imperial realm of Iran by presenting it as an intrinsically Shi'i dominion, destined to be ruled by the ʿAlid-descended Ṣafavid household. The Shi'i-inflected Iranian identity of the Qezelbāsh elites bound them in loyal service to the Ṣafavids. To ensure the Qezelbāsh's loyalty and their cooperation in protecting and administering the vast and heterogeneous lands of Iran, the Ṣafavid centre devolved local administration to the powerful Qezelbāsh elites and granted tax-exempt appanages to many of them. These elites, then, enjoyed significant political, military, and administrative powers in a thoroughly decentralised Ṣafavid state. Accordingly, the centre lacked the ability to effectively draw on the fiscal and military resources of the realm. By the early eighteenth century, the Ṣafavid state's depleted treasury was increasingly unable to support effective armies, further undermining the centre's hold over the periphery.

In the 1720s, the pressure from the periphery on the Ṣafavid centre mounted until an Afghan army laid siege to the capital and gained the abdication of the shāh. The ideological and administrative precedents of the fallen Ṣafavids came to be viewed by subsequent states either as models worthy of emulation, or alternatively, as decrepit conventions in need of abrogation.

Chapter Two
Iranianness and Otherness

Introduction

The core argument of this chapter is that Iranian identity formed a central ideological axis for the states which emerged after the Afghan conquest of Eṣfehān in 1722. The chapter shows how the notion of Iranianness was contested by various elites as they attempted to form, or help form, states which were amenable to their respective material interests. The first section will reveal that the Hotakid state formed by the Afghan victors was not the 'foreign horde' commonly portrayed in contemporary and many modern academic studies. Using Hotakid numismatics and chancellery documents, it will be argued that the Afghan dynasty identified itself as being Iranian, and thus, staked a claim to sovereignty over all Iranian lands formerly ruled by the Ṣafavids. The importance of Iran in Hotakid ideology reflected their efforts to consolidate their rule by expanding their small enclave in central Iran to include surrounding regions. The Hotakids, then, presented themselves as having replaced the Ṣafavids as the legitimate shāhs of Iran. All Iranians, Shi'i and Sunni, were called upon to submit to the new state.

Hotakid expansion was slow owing to the widespread resistance of the realm's elites who vociferously rejected the nascent Afghan state. The chapter will explore the emergent Iranian identity which took root among the Shi'i elites, fusing together a collective territorial belonging to Iran with the Shi'i faith. Many Shi'i elites drew upon this idea of Iranianness to formulate ideological discourses which sacralised Iran as a Shi'i realm whose soil had to be cleansed from non-Iranian Sunnis such as the Hotakids and Ottomans. The invariable objective of all these discourses was the establishment of a new Shi'i state. Where they differed from one another, was the exact nature of such a state. While many believed that the new state could be, or even should be, a non-Ṣafavid one, others held that Iran and the Iranians could only be saved through a Ṣafavid restoration. The Ṣafavids were no longer the unquestionable option for regaining Shi'i sovereignty over the Iranian people. The ideological and material reasons for these divergent visions of re-establishing a Shi'i state in Iran are traced in this chapter.

The latter part of the chapter will examine the restoration of the Ṣafavid state by Ṭahmāsp II, who incorporated the emergent discourse on Iranian identity into his political ideology. Ṭahmāsp and his followers presented him as the saviour of the Iranian Shi'a from the Sunni tyranny of the Afghans, whom he was destined to expel from Iran's sacred soil. The chapter draws on contemporary edicts, diplomatic correspondence, religious treatises, court historiography and poetry to show that Ṭahmāsp's supporters combined the discourses on Iranian identity with the traditional narratives of Ṣafavid ideology. Continuity with the Ṣafavid past was a core element in how Ṭahmāsp's state was legitimated to the Shi'i elites. This endeavour for continuity in the formation of the new Ṣafavid state was reflected in its administrative structures and the relationship between the centre and the periphery. Ṭahmāsp gained the subordination of Iran's local elites by offering land-revenue assignments, fiscal exemptions, and titles. Using contemporary edicts and decrees, the chapter endeavours to show that the new state was reminiscent of the old Ṣafavid model in terms of its decentralised structure, with the military, bureaucratic, ecclesiastic elites retaining, and in some cases expanding, their autonomy vis-à-vis the centre.

Chronology of Ṣafavid fall and restoration (1722–1732)

Beset by numerous long-term fiscal crises, the Ṣafavids proved ineffective in responding to Iran's economic challenges during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.[1] Droughts, famines, the relative dearth of exportable goods, continual depreciation of currency, and insufficient tax revenue despite the considerable wealth concentrated in private hands were among the major obstacles to achieving stability.[2] Furthermore, an entrenched factional model of court politics worked in concert with exploitative provincial authorities to undermine effective rule from the centre. Local governors would despoil their assigned provinces in order to send the necessary gifts to those who could advance their cause at court, or bribe those who would otherwise advocate for their demotion or removal. Others would compete to replace incumbent officials, either bribing or promising a share of the spoils to their benefactors at court after their appointment was confirmed. Such inauspicious

[1] This section, like all the other chronological overviews in the study, is to give a chronological framing of major events and processes in order to make the following arguments easier to follow. The purpose of all chronology setions in this study is to give a narrative framing for the events referred to in the rest of the analytical sections of the chapter. Instead of a large narrative exposition in the introduction I have opted for breaking up the narrative to insert at the beginning of each chapter to refresh the reader's mind and help him follow events and arguments more easily. The narrative sources consulted for this particular section include Lockhart, *Nadir*, pp. 1–64; Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 17–98.

[2] For a multi-faceted analysis of Ṣafavid collapse, see Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, (New York, 2012).

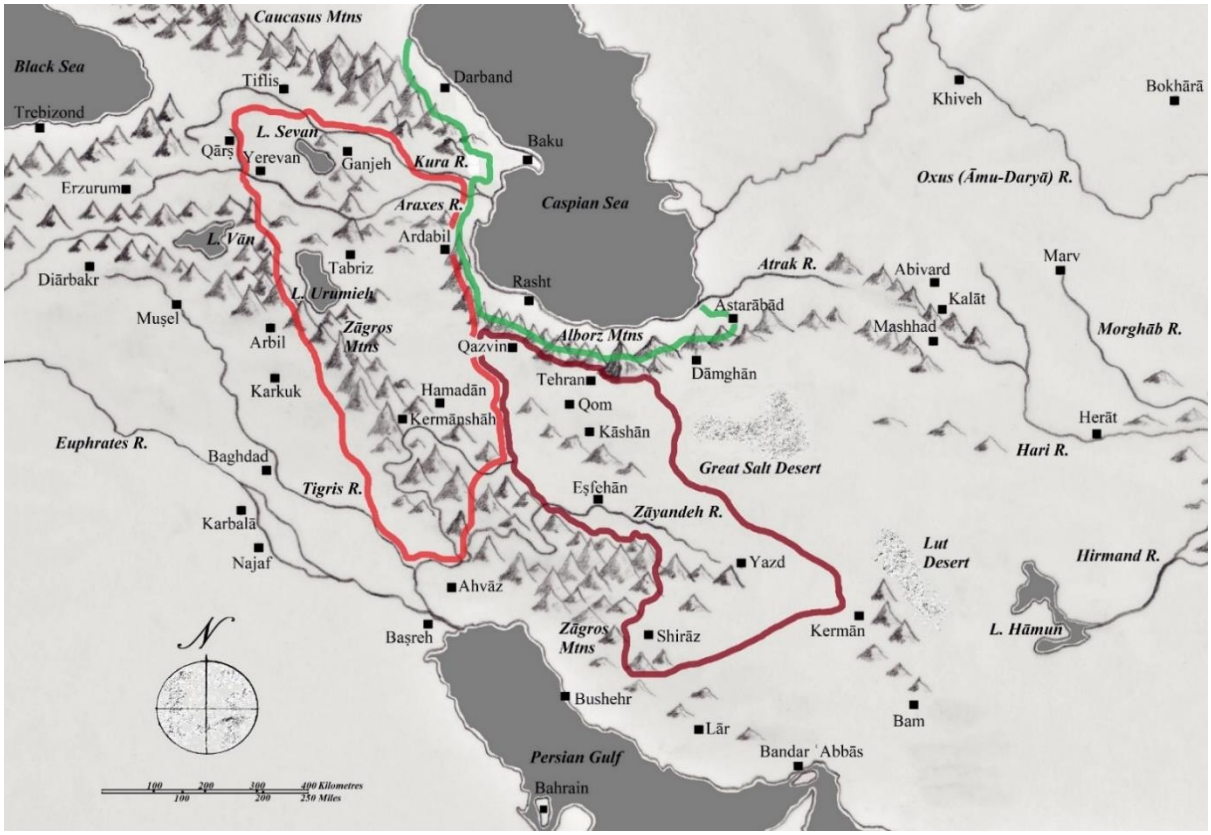
circumstances did little to ameliorate the difficulties that this corrupt central administration faced in curbing the excesses of provincial authorities, who were further emboldened by the centre's impotence. The hard-pressed and abused subjects of the Ṣafavid shāh also found that their sovereign could not despatch any armies capable of protecting them. Few if any of the internal insurrections and border raids were met with an effective military response as Iran was racked by numerous rebellions.[3]

The most pressing of these was the one in Qandehār by the Ghaljāy Afghans in 1709. After several attempts to subdue them ended disastrously, the Afghans grew in strength and boldness. In 1720 they invaded eastern Iran under the leadership of Maḥmud Hotak. The Afghans sacked Kermān and began pushing further west. It speaks to the paralysis of the Ṣafavid government that they did not contest Maḥmud's march to the heart of their empire until he was less than a day's march away from the capital, at the nearby village of Golunābād. The battle of Golunābād ended catastrophically for the Ṣafavids and Eṣfehān came under siege. On 23 October 1722, Shāh Ḥoseyn walked out of the city gates and abdicated his throne in favour of Maḥmud Hotak (r. 1722–1725). The latter rode into Eṣfehān in triumph two days later. The Ṣafavid royal household became prisoners of the victorious Afghans. Before this ignominious defeat however, one of Shāh Ḥoseyn's sons was slipped through the Afghan encirclement of Eṣfehān by a small band of Ṣafavid loyalists. Their vain hope was that this prince would gather a relief force and return to break the Afghan siege. The prince's name was Ṭahmāsp, soon to be the singular survivor out of his father's ill-fated male progeny. By 1725, Maḥmud was alarmed at the escape of another of Shāh Ḥoseyn's sons. Even though the prince in question was captured and killed, Maḥmud was sufficiently weary of the prospect of yet another Ṣafavid prince escaping that he ordered all of Ḥoseyn's sons to be massacred. Ḥoseyn himself was executed just a year later. In that same year, Maḥmud was overthrown and killed as the result of an internal struggle among the Afghans. Maḥmud's cousin, Ashraf (r. 1725–1729), was crowned the new king by the Afghans.

The removal of the Ṣafavids from power was followed by chaos across Iran. In addition to the Ottoman and Russian occupations of the western and northern regions of the country respectively, the Abdāli Afghans had rebelled in Herāt, as had the Lezgians in Dāghestān and Shirvān. Many provinces were declared independent by their local governors, while claimants to the throne emerged in almost every region. Ashraf succeeded in subduing many

[3] Ibid, pp. 197–255 for a detailed account of how the eighteenth century Ṣafavids met their demise.

Ṣafavid pretenders and autonomous chieftains around central Iran. As he expanded his area of control, he was confronted with the Ottoman army in West Iran. The Afghans won a surprise victory over the mutinous Ottoman army and were able to negotiate a peace. In return for Ashraf acknowledging Ottoman gains in West Iran and the Caucasus, the Ottoman sultan acknowledged him as the rightful shāh of Iran. This was a great diplomatic triumph for Ashraf, augmenting his legitimacy. By the end of 1728 Ashraf was in a strong position. Not only had he consolidated his hold over central Iran, he had killed several Ṣafavid claimants and pretenders. The most prominent Ṣafavid prince, Ṭahmāsp II, was easily defeated and chased all the way to North Iran. Ashraf raised another large army around Eṣfehān in preparation for expanding his dominions further north. By early 1729 it looked as though Iran's throne would remain in Hotakid hands for years if not generations to come.



Iran in the mid-1720s, displaying the territorial gains made by the Ottomans and Russians in western and northern Iran respectively. The Afghans controlled little outside Eṣfehān initially, but by 1728 Ashraf had consolidated control of central Iran. The rest of Iran was controlled by various Ṣafavid claimants or local chieftains.

Concurrent with Hotakid state formation was the attempt by Ṭahmāsp to restore the fallen Ṣafavid state. During the Afghan siege of Eṣfehān in 1722 it began to dawn on many Ṣafavid

courtiers that no relief army was coming to save them. It was decided that a young Ṣafavid prince, one of Shāh Ḥoseyn's sons, would have to slip past the Afghan encirclement to rally the provincial notables and return at the head of an army to lift the siege. The candidate they settled on was Ṭahmāsp. Accompanied by a small number of advisers and courtiers, Ṭahmāsp successfully evaded the Afghans in his escape from Eṣfehān. Ṭahmāsp and his small retinue headed to Qazvin but owing to the political tumult in the realm they were unable to rally enough men to form a significant force. Many provincial elites reserved their forces for resisting the Ottoman and Russian invasions of their lands. Others gathered forces to assert their independence and some notables even staked their own claim to kingship. For example, in Khorāsān, Malek-Maḥmud Sistāni declared himself the new sovereign of Iran, challenging both Afghan and Ṣafavid claims to the throne. The meagre forces at Ṭahmāsp's disposal did not allow him to subdue Iran's elites through force. His power over provincial authorities was negotiated and limited. Under these circumstances, Ṭahmāsp was unable to muster a relief army in time to save Eṣfehān. After their capture of the city, the Afghan leaders established the Hotakid dynasty and began hunting Ṭahmāsp.

Ṭahmāsp was chased out of Qazvin by an Afghan army dispatched to capture him. His arrival in Ottoman-occupied Āẕarbāijān was short lived as he lacked the strength to withstand the Ottomans. Ṭahmāsp fled to Tehran but was defeated once again by the Afghans who chased him all the way to Esterābād near the Caspian coast. In 1726, Ṭahmāsp and his followers invaded Khorāsān in the hopes of ousting Malek-Maḥmud and establishing a foothold in the region. Ṭahmāsp defeated Malek-Maḥmud and forced him to renounce any claim on the throne. Petty lords from across Khorāsān hastened to Ṭahmāsp's court to pledge their loyalty. One such lord was Nadr Qoli Beyg, more commonly known as Nāder. Nāder proved to be an adroit politician, gaining Ṭahmāsp's confidence. Nāder was given charge of the Ṣafavid army and instituted a far-reaching programme of military reform allowing him to take the field against the Hotakids. In 1729 Nāder utterly defeated the Hotakids and restored Ṣafavid rule over Eṣfehān. In exchange for his services, Nāder was granted the viceroyalty of Iran's eastern dominions, including Khorāsān, Kermān, and Sistān. Despite only ruling over central and southern Iran, Ṭahmāsp had regained a measure of autonomy since his triumphal re-entry to Eṣfehān. He raised his own army and marched against the Ottomans to recover Iran's western dominions in 1732. When the Ottomans crushed Ṭahmāsp's army he sued for peace, ceding half of Āẕarbāijān. Nāder seized this opportunity to decry a shameful peace and rallied support for a renewed war against the Ottomans. Nāder deposed the disgraced

Ṭahmāsp in favour of his infant son, ʿAbbās III Ṣafavi (r. 1732–1736). Appointed as regent and de facto ruler of the Ṣafavid empire, Nāder continued to accumulate power at the expense of the dynasty which he purported to serve.

The Hotakids as shāhs of Iran

Iranian and Sunni?

The idea of Iran, alongside Sunnism, formed the principles of Hotakid identity and legitimacy. According to Hotakid ideology, the conquest of Eṣfehān by Maḥmud Hotak was not the westward expansion of a Qandehārian polity into Iran but a moment of dynastic transition, presenting Maḥmud as the 'inheritor of the sovereign realm'.[4] In other words, the Hotakids laid claim to all former Ṣafavid territories across the realm of Iran. One of the earliest coins Maḥmud had minted bore the following couplet, 'The royal mint of Shāh Ḥoseyn has been vanquished ⁎ in the end, it is Maḥmud which became the shāh of Iran'.[5] Bedos-Rezak has observed that legends on coins and seals expressed an identity around a function and its territorial circumscription.[6] In this case they expressed Maḥmud's function as shāh and his corresponding territorial dominion over the realm of Iran. Thus, the Hotakids were declaring that it was not Eṣfehān that had been annexed to Qandehār's holdings, but rather that Qandehār, alongside all the other provinces in Iran, were now subject to the new shāh. The eastern province of Qandehār from whence the Hotakids hailed was quite clearly understood to be within Iran as the following numismatic imprint attests: 'Rising from the east of Iran, he minted coin like the disc of the ascendant sun ⁎ that world-conquering Shāh Maḥmud of exalted lineage'.[7] Maḥmud was portrayed as a conqueror who despite dawning from the east of Iran (Qandehār), was destined to illumine all of the realm with his kingship.

The inclusion of Iran in the legends of these royal mints distinguishes the Hotakids from all other states which had emerged after the Islamic conquest of the Sāsānian empire in the seventh century. Not since the ancient Sāsānians had any ruling household mentioned Iran in their numismatic legends. What likely motivated this unprecedented emphasis on the concept of Iran, ironically, is the fact that Maḥmud controlled so little of the realm he claimed sovereignty over. After the capture of Eṣfehān, Maḥmud's position was a precarious one at

[4] Hushang Faraḥ-Bakhsh, *Rāhnamā-ye Sekkehā-ye Żarbi-ye Irān: 500–1296 AH, 1500–1879 AD*, (West Berlin, 1975), p. 55.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Bedos-Rezak, *Ego was Image*, pp. 152–153.

[7] Ibid.

best. Shāh Ḥoseyn might have surrendered his crown and capital to Maḥmud, yet Afghan rule hardly extended beyond the 'royal abode' itself. The surrounding villages only submitted after months of indefatigable resistance, and no pledges of fealty were forthcoming from the provinces. In fact, across many of these provinces, numerous factions were formed with the explicit purpose of marching on Eṣfehān and re-establishing Ṣafavid rule. Maḥmud's hold on the capital itself was tenuous and he occasionally had to resort to massacring the inhabitants and members of the city's nobility to guard against the possibility of an Eṣfehānian rebellion.[8]

There were Ṣafavid pretenders and provincial chieftains across Iran threatening to unseat him, not to mention the challenge posed by the presence of the Russian and Ottoman troops in the country. Even at the very height of their power, the Hotakids only managed to subjugate the central regions of Iran (see map above) and were constantly challenged in their authority by at least several rival claimants at a time. The mantle of kingship might have been passed to the Hotakids, but few in the constituent regions of Iran were amenable to this transition. It is unsurprising therefore, that Maḥmud's reign saw a clear emphasis on the territorial integrity of his recently acquired realm. Maḥmud was formulating an ideology to legitimate and advance his territorial claims against his internal and external rivals.

As Maḥmud's successor, Ashraf retained the concept of Iran in his imperial ideology. In 1726, he issued an edict addressed to the inhabitants of Eṣfehān, declaring an amnesty for all conquered peoples under his rule and setting out his subjects' duties and privileges.[9] Eṣfehānians were reminded that their city was 'the royal abode, the seat of Iran's sultans, which has now become the abode of this exalted dynasty'. The political authority of the Hotakids was tied to the realm of Iran. There were numerous allusions to Ashraf's imperial authority extending far beyond the confines of the capital city. In contrast with the modesty of his territorial possessions at this time, the impression given is one of a mighty sovereign promulgating laws across Iran 'in line with the organisation of the empire and order of the provinces'.[10] The object is unmistakable. Ashraf is portrayed as rightful sovereign over Iran-Realm. The constituent regions of this realm, most of which were unyielding to his rule, owed him their submission. This spoke to one of the primary concerns, if not the primary

[8] See Floor, *Afghan Occupation*, pp. 173–204 for a detailed account of Maḥmud's reign in Eṣfehān by Dutch merchants who were resident in the city.

[9] Ḥamideh Khodā-Bakhshi (ed.), 'Bāzkhʷāni-ye Farmāni az Ashraf-e Afghān pas az Residan beh Ḥokumat dar Eṣfehān', *Ganjineh-ye Asnād*, No. 64, (2007), pp. 31–39.

[10] Ibid.

concern, of this nascent polity: neutralising the plethora of other claimants to Iran's kingship while formulating an ideology through which those rivals might be eventually reconciled to the legitimacy of Hotakid rule.

The idea of Iran also played a crucial role in how the Hotakids formulated legitimate relationships with other imperial dynasties such as the Ottomans. Despite his victory in battle, Ashraf was willing to forsake the territories occupied by the Ottomans in West Iran and the Caucasus in return for their acknowledgment of his claim to the Iranian throne. Ashraf's letter on the proposed peace treaty between him and the Ottomans described the purpose as 'the delineation of new frontiers between the dominions of Rum and those of Iran'.[11] In the actual treaty, articles seven and ten mentioned that all the territories which were conquered by Ottoman generals in their military campaigns in Iran (*safar-e Irān*) were henceforth annexed to the 'dominions of Rum'. These included large parts of Georgia, Armenia, Āẕarbāijān, ʿErāq-e ʿAjam, and Khuzestān.[12] These were territories which were traditionally conceptualised as belonging to Iran-Realm.[13] What seems to have been of vital importance to the Hotakids is their acknowledgment as sovereigns over the throne of Iran rather than territorial sovereignty over all the constituent dominions of Iran-Realm. The recognition of the Ottoman sultan went a long way in giving credence to the idea that Ashraf was rightfully seated on Iran's throne. This new-gained legitimacy paved the way for Ashraf to strengthen and expand his control in Iran's remaining dominions. Ashraf even received military assistance from the Ottomans in the form of advisors and artillery.[14] As Ashraf reassuringly wrote to the Ottoman grand vizier, 'we do not wish for anything other than humane discourse and brotherly conduct between the sultans of Rum and Iran'.[15] This diplomatic relationship, alongside all its other benefits, was primarily a ratification of Ashraf Hotaki's claim to Iran's kingship.

The effort to bolster Ashraf's kingship in Ottoman eyes was evident in the Persianate exemplars used by the Hotakid chancellery in drafting its diplomatic correspondence. In this sense, the Hotakids were quite similar to their Ṣafavid predecessors. The letters to Istanbul

[11] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 34.

[12] Ibid, pp. 44–45.

[13] See above for Arabic and Persianate literature on Iran-Shahr and its geography.

[14] Ottoman cannon were present at the battle of Murcheh-Khurt in 1729.

[15] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 52.

identified Ashraf as the inheritor of the 'Kayānid crown and throne'.[16] In the *Shāhnāmeh* tradition, the Kayānids were lauded for their defence of Iran-Realm's territories 'against the encroachment of the foreign other'.[17] By connoting themselves with the Kayānids, the Hotakids may have been underlining for the Ottoman sultan that despite cession of territories to the west, they were still heir to Iran's territories elsewhere. The promise to conquer those territories was alluded to when the letter compared Ashraf's heroic conquests with those of Alexander. Ashraf's promulgation of justice was said to evoke Khosrow Anushiravān, the Sāsānid ruler held to be an exemplar of just sovereignty.[18] All this communicated Ashraf's 'imperial star of *farr*' (*farr-e homāyun-akhtar*).[19] Thus, Hotakid diplomacy was enthused with a royal ideology constructed on the basis of Persianate kingship.[20]

At the same time, the celestial references to stars, suns, and the sky helped articulate a universal sovereignty.[21] In one letter, this is expressed in verse: 'The shāhanshāh of the ages, the khediv of our time ⁘ who holds the firmament in his hands like a bow'.[22] This celestial sovereignty was reflected in the legends on many of Ashraf's coins. For example, 'His majesty's name was imprinted upon the coin of the realm ⁘ Ashraf's coin has dawned like the sun', or 'The sun and the moon, like gold and like silver, have become resplendent with his augustness ⁘ Honour was emblazoned upon the sun as the name of Ashraf was minted upon gold'.[23] Recall that Ashraf's predecessor had the legend 'Rising from the east of Iran, he minted coin like the disc of the sun ⁘ that world-conquering Shāh Maḥmud of exalted lineage', perfectly capturing the image of a celestial sovereign and universal conqueror. While the Hotakids drew upon the themes of universal and celestial kingship, their sovereignty was simultaneously Iran-specific, as also demonstrated by the aforementioned legend. For the Hotakids, sovereignty over Iran went hand in hand with sovereignty over the

[16] Ibid, p. 59.

[17] Elhām Ḥoseyn-Khāni and Javād Emām Jomʿehzādeh, 'Tajziyeh va taḥlil-e ravābeṭ-e Irān bā bigānegān dar dowrān-e Kayāniān bar pāyeh-ye Shāhnāmeh', in *Adab-e Ḥemāsi*, Vol. 15, No. 2/28, (2019), pp. 95–120.

[18] See Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 53-55.

[19] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 59.

[20] For an overview of Hotakid acculturation into the Persianate paradigm of kingship, see M.A.H. Parsa, 'Iran's State Literature under Afghan Rule (1722–1729)', in *Professional Mobility in Islamic Societies (700–1750): New Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Mohamad El-Merheb, and Mehdi Berriah, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 182–206.

[21] A. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, (New York, 2012), pp. 28–55; Naindeep Singh Chann, 'Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān' in *Iran and the Caucasus*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2009), pp. 93–110.

[22] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 67.

[23] Borgomale, *Coins*, p. 49.

universe. Perhaps this was tied to the Persianate idea of Iran as the central realm of the world. The Ṣafavids also held this paradoxical position as sovereigns of Iran and the world. Again, this reflects the fact that the Hotakids underwent a process of acculturation to Persianate kingship.

The Hotakid dynasty's Iran-inflected sovereignty was emphasised in Ashraf's edict of 1726. Therein, he commanded his successors, the future Hotakid 'sultans of Iran and the Iranians (*Irāniān*)', to abide by his dictums.[24] A collective identity was expressed—that of the 'Iranians'—directly tied to subservience to the Hotakid dynast. It is not entirely clear whether the Hotakids considered themselves members of this collective or thought of only their subjects as Iranians. Even if we grant that the Hotakids identified as Iranians, the edict still differentiated between the Afghan self and the conquered other. The edict delineated the Afghans from the 'Persian-speaking collective' (*jamāʿat-e Fārsi-zabān*) of Eṣfehān.[25] This indicated a perceived difference between fellow Pashtu-speaking Afghans and Persian-speaking Eṣfehānians. Yet, the Hotakid state did not conceive of collectives in purely linguistic terms. This is clear from the edict's mention of the Darjazinians, who were brought to Eṣfehān from Darjazin in West Iran. They were Persian-speaking but shared a religious affinity with the Afghans as fellow Sunnis.[26] And yet, as far as the Hotakids were concerned, the Darjazinians' language did not make them part of the 'Persian-speaking collective', nor did their Sunnism make them Afghans. They were held to be a distinct group perhaps because of their geographic origin or lineage. At the same time, the Darjazinians were just as bound to the ruling dynasty as the Afghans and Persian-speakers. It seems the 'Iranians' were an all-encompassing collective which bound all of the realm's inhabitants to the Hotakid dynasty. Whether a Sunni Pashtu-speaking Afghan, Sunni Darjazinian, or Persian-speaking Shi'i Eṣfehānian, as an Iranian, one owed obedience to the Hotakid shāh of Iran, or as the edict puts it, 'Iranians... are bound to this justice-embracing covenant'.[27]

The political utility of such a collective identity is clear to see: Iranians, despite their diversity of religions and lineages, were primarily conceptualised in terms of subjecthood to the Hotakid dynasty. Hotakid political expedience and Iranian collective identity were closely aligned in this ideology. The heavily Shi'i-inflected identity of the Qezelbāsh, primarily

[24] Khodā-Bakhshi (ed.), 'Bāzkhʷāni', p. 35.

[25] Ibid, pp. 33–36, where the 'Persian-speakers' are repeatedly delineated from the Afghans.

[26] Judas T. Krusinski, *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, Vol. II, (London, 1733), p. 197.

[27] Khodā-Bakhshi (ed.), 'Bāzkhʷāni', p. 35.

conceptualised in terms of subjecthood to the Ṣafavid order and dynasty, would not have served Hotakid interests and no Hotakid document acknowledges such a collective. Perhaps the Hotakids saw Iranian collective identity as an alternative to the exclusively Shi'i identity of Qezelbāsh.

While the Hotakids' Iranian subjects were apparently not defined in terms of lineage or religious affiliation, the dynasty itself was ardent in its expression of a Sunni identity, in contrast to the Ṣafavids' vociferous Shi'ism. Ashraf's 1726 edict was marked by his seal, the legend on which claims, 'By God's decree, Ashraf became the greatest among the shāhs of the world ⁂ The servant of righteousness, the dust under the feet of the Four Companions'.[28] The Four Companions referred to the four Rāshedun caliphs—Abu Bakr, ʿOṡmān, ʿOmar, and ʿAli—who ruled over the Islamic community (*ommat*) after the Prophet Moḥammad. Unlike in Ṣafavid Shi'ism, which regarded the first three caliphs before ʿAli as usurpers, in Sunnism they were venerated alongside ʿAli as the Four Rightly Guided (*Rāshedun*) caliphs. This veneration was evident in the legends on Ashraf's coins: 'By the blessing of the shāh, who is the greatest (Ashraf) pursuer of justice ⁂ the coin of the Four Companions has been struck upon gold.[29] Parallel to how the Ṣafavids connoted their rule with the Twelve Imams, the Hotakids connoted theirs with the Four Companions to underline the change in the state's religious identity.

Ashraf's predecessor was no different. Maḥmud's royal mints featured the Four Companions in their legends just as prominently as they did the idea of Iran. The obverse of most of his coins mentioned the four by name. The couplet on one heralded the change in religion with the establishment of the new dynasty: 'By God's decree, he sealed the righteous faith (*din-e ḥaqq*) as he minted coin upon gold ⁂ may the fate of the shāh be blessed (*Maḥmud*), that refuge of faith (*din-panāh*)'.[30] The dynasty's clear expression of Sunnism did not necessarily entail Shi'i persecution. Despite the ongoing wars with Shi'i factions and the brutal suppression of Shi'i uprisings, the Hotakids strove to reconcile their newly acquired subjects to their rule. The 1726 edict acknowledged the Eṣfehānian Shi'a as Muslims, and Ashraf even legally confirmed the custodianship of some Seyyed families over Shi'i shrine endowments.[31]

---

[28] Ibid, p. 31.

[29] Moḥammad Shafiʿ Ṭehrāni, *Merāt-e Vāredāt*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol, (Tehran, 2004), p. 165; Borgomale, *Coins*, p. 49.

[30] Borgomale, *Coins*, p. 48.

[31] Parsa, 'Iran's State Literature', pp. 182–206.

It was not in the political interests of the Hotakids to cultivate an anti-Shi'i discourse, which could only alienate many of their subjects, galvanising support for their rivals. Nonetheless, the core of Hotakid military strength consisted of Sunni Afghans who had brought the dynasty to power by fighting many bloody battles against Shi'i enemies. The Hotakids might have been averse from engaging in anti-Shi'i rhetoric, but for the sake of retaining their military power at the head of the Afghans, they had to remain unwavering in their commitment to Sunnism.

In conclusion, the overthrow of the Ṣafavids by the Hotakids entailed some crucial changes in how the ruling dynasty identified itself and legitimated its sovereignty to its subjects. From their central position at the 'royal abode' of Eṣfehān, the Hotakids struggled to subdue the independent governors and Ṣafavid pretenders in Iran's periphery. The numismatic, sigillographic, and diplomatic record shows that one of the main themes of Hotakid ideology was their sovereignty over the realm of Iran. Thus, Iran's unyielding governors and rebellious chieftains owed their allegiance to their legitimate overlord. The Hotakids were pragmatists however, willing to cede large parts of West Iran to Ottoman control in order to bolster their hold on the remainder. The Ottoman sultan's acknowledgement of Ashraf as the legitimate shāh of Iran, and the accompanying military aid, allowed Ashraf to firmly establish his rule in central and southern Iran. Therefore, occupying the Iranian throne did not necessarily entail the control of all Iranian provinces. This was not radically different from the Ṣafavids, who continued to identify as Iran's sovereigns after ceding large parts of ʿErāq-e ʿArab and Kordestān to the Ottomans in the seventeenth century. The difference of course, was that the Hotakids' claim to Iran's throne was a central theme in their ideology in a way that had not been the case for the Ṣafavids or indeed any post-Islamic dynasty before them.

In contrast to the precedence of the idea of Iran, the Persianate idioms through which Hotakid kingship was articulated would have been familiar to the Ṣafavids. Whether it was Alexander, Khosrow, Fereydun, or other exemplary personas from the Persianate tradition, the Hotakids drew upon this pantheon just as the Ṣafavids had done before them. When it came to religious identity, however, there was a rupture. Coins and seals bore legends attesting to the dynasty's reverence for the Four Companions, not the Twelve Imams. While Shāh Ḥoseyn Ṣafavi described himself as the 'lowest dog of ʿAli', the Hotakids chose to honour themselves as 'the dust under the feet of the Four Companions'. The legend on one coin implied that Maḥmud's overthrow of the Ṣafavids was the 'sealing of the righteous faith' (*din-e ḥaqq*),

making Maḥmud 'the refuge of faith'.[32] The Hotakids then portrayed themselves as champions of true Islam (read: Sunnism).

They stopped short of outright hostility to Iran's Shi'a, who were the majority of their subjects. These Shi'a needed to be reconciled to Hotakid rule if the dynasty was to endure. In the Qezelbāsh, the Ṣafavids had cultivated a collective identity strongly rooted in Shi'ism, imbued with loyalty to the Ṣafavid order-dynasty and its sheykh-shāh. The Hotakids in contrast seem to have wished to nurture a collective identity which transcended the significant religious divides among their subjects. In line with the Hotakids' focus on legitimating their claim to the Iranian throne, they seem to have conceived of their subjects as 'Iranians' (*Irāniān*) to include Afghan Sunnis and non-Afghan Shi'a, all bound together under one collective identity meant to engender loyalty to the ruling dynasty.[33] The utility of this rendition of Iranian identity, then, lay in transcending denominational boundaries in a realm where the majority of the inhabitants did not hail from the same creed as their new sovereigns.

The pursuit of administrative continuity under the Hotakids

The idea of Iran also played a role in the Hotakids' efforts to organise the administrative institutions of their state on Ṣafavids models. Adherence to Ṣafavid precedents was evident in the two manuals of state administration which the Hotakids commissioned in the mid-1720s: the *Dastur ol-Moluk* (*Order of Sovereigns*) and *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk* (*Memorial for Sovereigns*). The *Dastur* was compiled between 1722–1725 by Mirzā Rafiʿ Anṣāri, an otherwise unknown former Ṣafavid bureaucrat who served under Shāh Maḥmud as the imperial comptroller (*mostowfi ol-mamālek*) in the nascent Hotakid state.[34] In the preamble, the author explained that the purpose of the work was to outline how state institutions functioned 'during the time of the preceding (Ṣafavid) sultans'. In other words, it was 'a treatise on their rules and regulations, to be submitted to the servants of the paradisiac assembly (Hotakids)'.[35] The aim of administrative continuity with the Ṣafavid past was also evident in the *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk* (henceforth referred to as the *Taẕkereh*), commissioned

[32] See above.

[33] Persian in this sense means Persian speaking, which is for example how the Eṣfehānians were described.

[34] For an overview of the *Dastur*, its authorship, and date of composition, refer to Muhammad Ismail Marcinkowski, *Mīrzā Rafīʿā's Dastūr Al-Mulūk: A Manual of Later Ṣafavid Administration*, (Kuala Lumpur, 2002), pp. 46–50.

[35] Moḥammad Rafiʿ Anṣāri, *Dastur ol-Moluk*, tr. M.I. Marcinkowski, *Mīrzā Rafīʿā's Dastūr Al-Mulūk: A Manual of Later Ṣafavid Administration*, (Kuala Lumpur, 2002), pp. 70–71, fols. 2a–2b.

between 1725 and 1729 by Maḥmud's successor, Ashraf.[36] The anonymous author of the *Taẕkereh* describes it as a treatise 'containing the regulations (*dastur ol-ʿamal*) of the service of each of the officials in the chancellery as practiced in the time of the Ṣafavid sultans. They (i.e., the regulations) are presented herein on the supreme decree (of Ashraf)'.[37] The extent to which Hotakid administration practically aligned with Ṣafavid precedents is impossible to say due to the lack of relevant evidence. Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that the Hotakids were attempting to adhere to Ṣafavid models in the formation of the administrative institutions and procedures of their state.

Both the *Dastur* and the *Taẕkereh* presented the institutional offices of the state as tied to the realm of Iran, underlining the Hotakids' claim to sovereignty over Iran's territories as formerly administered by the Ṣafavids.[38] Throughout both manuals there were repeated references to the offices and jurisdictions of Iran. For example, the *Taẕkereh* explained that 'there are four viceroyalties in the dominions of Iran' while also outlining the responsibilities of ecclesiastic authorities representing the crown 'in the provinces of Iran'.[39] This indicates that all the aforementioned jurisdictions were expected to be subject to the new Hotakid ruler, just as they had been to his Ṣafavid predecessors. The *Dastur* paid homage to the Hotakid sovereign by describing him as the 'issuer of orders for Iran's dominions', while the head of the royal guards, for instance, was introduced as 'the commander of all clans and tribes in the expansive dominions of Iran'.[40] The institutional offices of the state were presented as avenues through which the Hotakid shāh and his appointed officials implemented control over the realm of Iran. Thus, there were attempts to form a synergy between the ideological and institutional elements of the Hotakid state, with the notion of an Iranian realm as a guiding principle of that synergy.

To return to the theme of Ṣafavid continuity, there is some limited evidence to suggest Ashraf strove to build ties between the state and the Shi'i ecclesiastic elite by ratifying the appanages they once held under the preceding regime. In 1728, Ashraf issued a decree on the

[36] Minorsky, *Taẕkereh*, p. 10.

[37] Ibid, p. 41.

[38] There was an exception made for the Ottoman occupied provinces in the west, as the Hotakids were willing to compromise by ceding them to the Porte in exchange for diplomatic and military support (see above).

[39] Minorsky, *Taẕkereh*, pp. 42, 44.

[40] Anṣāri, *Dastur*, pp. 69, 103, fols. 1b, 16b.

custodianship of the Shāh ʿAbdolʿaẓim Shrine in Rey, an important Shi'i endowment with considerable revenues.[41] The decree stipulated that

> The old custodian has informed our majesty that he has a hereditary right to the custodianship [over the shrine's endowment] … The governors and tax collectors of Rey are not to impose any chancellery taxes or levies on the endowments of this blessed shrine, which is considered as the *siyurghāl* of its custodians. Under no circumstances are the custodians, their farmers, administrators, or bondsmen to be interfered with. The endowment is exempt from all chancellery taxes and duties.[42]

In line with Ṣafavid precedents, the Hotakid chancellery confirmed the appanages and fiscal exemptions held by the shrine's custodians. There are no other edicts from Ashraf on custodianships.[43] In fact, there are hardly any surviving Hotakid edicts at all.[44] Therefore, this singular edict cannot be taken as indicative of a more general policy aimed at reconciling the Shi'i ecclesiastic elite to the Hotakid state.

Hotakid discourse and practice were not necessarily aligned when it came to their adherence to Ṣafavid precedents in respecting the appanages held by Iran's elites, be they custodians or otherwise. For example, the Hotakids expropriated the lucrative endowments in and around Eṣfehān for the crown.[45] These expropriations received the blessing of some Sunni clerics. Mirzā Zaʿferān and other Afghan ulema argued that since the Eṣfehānians were *rāfeżi* ('rejectors' of the true faith), and since the Howtakids had acquired the realm through righteous conquest, all the 'towns, estates, orchards, manors, and houses are to be considered the fruits of conquest, and thus belong to the crown'.[46] This was confirmed by a contemporary resident of Eṣfehān, Father Krusinski, a Polish Jesuit missionary who wrote an eyewitness account of Afghan rule in Iran.[47] Maḥmud immediately began confiscating estates and lands from former Ṣafavid officials and nobility, adding their wealth to the royal treasury. These actions continued under the reign of his successor, Ashraf, who expropriated many

[41] Seyyed ʿAbdollāh ʿAqili, 'Farmān-e Ashraf-e Afghān va Mowqufāt-e Āstāneh-ye Ḥażrat-e ʿAbdolʿaẓim', in *Mirāṡ-e Jāvidān*, Vol. &, No. 4, (2002), pp. 71–86.

[42] Ibid, pp. 77–83.

[43] The shrine had very similar arrangements under the Ṣafavids. See ʿAqili, 'Farmān-e Ashraf'.

[44] The only other edict we have of the Hotakids is the one from 1726, discussed above.

[45] Ann Lambton, 'wakf (III in Persia)', in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, (Brill, Leiden, 1982-2002).

[46] Mohammad Hasan Jāberi Anṣāri, *Tārikh-e Eṣfehān*, (Eṣfehān, 1999), p. 26.

[47] On Krusinski, see Lockhart, *Fall of the Safavi*, appendix.

more estates, surpassing Maḥmud in his acquisitions.[48] The Hotakids' rhetoric of continuing Ṣafavid precedents in respecting the elites' appanages must have rung hollow to all the nobles and custodians who had their estates taken over by the crown.

The reasons behind the divergence of rhetoric and action may be guessed at. Perhaps, despite their efforts to revive the administrative institutions of the Ṣafavids, the Hotakids struggled to effectively use those institutions to collect taxes, leading them to extract resources through expropriations. Furthermore, they controlled a relatively small parcel of territory in central Iran which was ravaged by years of war and strife. Even if they were able to implement effective taxation, they were unlikely to raise sufficient revenues. Surrounded by enemies on all fronts, the Hotakids needed the resources to recruit and maintain soldiers. The expropriation of at least some of the elites' appanages may have been seen as a solution. Overall, the limited evidence on Hotakid state administration suggests that they strove to imitate the Ṣafavids in how they governed Iran, but the dire military and fiscal circumstances they found themselves in might have led the Hotakids to diverge from the Ṣafavid model.

A Shi'i state beyond the Ṣafavids

The Hotakids' claim to Iran's throne met with strong resistance among Iran's Shi'i elites. Their hostility toward the Hotakids, however, did not necessarily entail their support for the return of the Ṣafavids. New discourses emerged calling for the restoration of a Shi'i state over Iran without Ṣafavid involvement. While some merely signalled their readiness to look beyond Ṣafavid options to restore Shi'i rule, others were more strident, claiming that Shi'i sovereignty could only be restored under a new dynasty. There were also those who began as lukewarm supporters of the Ṣafavids only to turn against them later, opposing the dynasty's restoration. The emerging ideological discourse among these elites frequently fused Shi'ism with a territorial belonging to Iran-Realm, articulating a new collective identity for Iranians. This discourse on Iranian identity began to dominate the ideological disputes among the elites as they strove to articulate an alternative to the Hotakid and Ṣafavid states. Several sources from the 1720s are examined below in an effort to proffer an understanding of what constituted Iranianness in the eyes of contemporaries, and of how various elites inflected this collective identity to serve their own political ambitions.

[48] Krusinski, *History*, pp. 101, 166–170.

The *Mokāfātnāmeh*

The anonymously authored *Mokāfātnāmeh* (*Epistle of Reckoning*), a Persian book of verse, is one of the earliest texts which expressed disillusionment with the Ṣafavid state, blaming Iran's turmoil under Afghan rule on Ṣafavid shortcomings. The manuscript of the *Mokāfātnāmeh* is undated, but the contents reveal that the author was a Ṣafavid chancellery official who served at Shāh Ḥoseyn's court from the beginning of his reign. The work was completed sometime in 1725–26, a few years after the fall of Eṣfehān to the Afghans.[49] The *Mokāfātnāmeh*'s hostility towards the Ṣafavids was rooted in its author's stymied career. From his verse we learn that he had tense relations with several of his colleagues, including the shāh's grand vizier, who he claimed was plotting his death at one point.[50] He also related how his attempts to gain Shāh Ḥoseyn's ear were undermined by courtiers and rival bureaucrats. He bemoaned having been side-lined, and his lot did not improve after the Hotakid takeover. Not only did the author lose his title of khān in the aftermath of Eṣfehān's fall, he also seems to have been imprisoned by either the Afghans or a local chieftain.[51] In summary, the author led a frustrated and ultimately fruitless career within the Ṣafavid state. It is understandable, then, that the *Mokāfātnāmeh* explained Iran's turmoil principally through the failures of the Ṣafavid state, not the evils of the Afghan conqueror.

The *Mokāfātnāmeh* did not mourn the Ṣafavids' demise, which it understood to be a divinely ordained reckoning (*mokāfāt*), hence the title. It was the ruin of Iran, not of the Ṣafavids, which it lamented. In the chapter summarising the 'foundation and origin of the ruin', the Ṣafavids were accused of 'having forsaken Iran's honour'.[52] The line stressed what was held to be the real tragedy: the loss of Iran's honour, not Ṣafavid kingship. Thus, loyalty was expressed for the realm of Iran, not the ruling dynastic state. The *Mokāfātnāmeh* was first and foremost a reflection on 'why autumn has befallen the garden of Iran', and on discerning the 'instruments of Iran's ruin'.[53] The object of concern was Iran and how it was ruined by Ṣafavid failures. In contrast to the Ṣafavids' idea of a contiguity between their dynasty and Iran-Realm,[54] the *Mokāfātnāmeh* suggested a ruinous relationship between the two. The

[49] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviye*, Vol. III, pp. 1191, 1196–1197. The *Mokāfātnāmeh* mentions Shāh Ḥoseyn (d. 1726) as alive, while Ashraf Howtaki's succession to Maḥmud in 1725 is also acknowledged.

[50] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviye*, Vol. III, p. 1193.

[51] Ibid, pp. 1193–1194.

[52] Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', in Jaʿfariān (ed.), *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, p. 1251.

[53] Ibid, p. 1236.

[54] See chapter one above.

notion of Iran being great because of Ṣafavid kingship, à la Yazdi's geographical dictionary, was turned on its head.

In the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, the driving force behind the Ṣafavid state's failure to safeguard Iran was the ineptitude of the sovereign. Shāh Ḥoseyn's portrayal was that of a decent, mild-mannered man utterly unsuited for kingship. His cowardice and feeble mindedness were stated and restated. For example, Ḥoseyn's response to his enemies' aggression against his realm was said to have been nothing more than 'weeping' and 'praying'.[55] 'As calamities arise ⁖ people will do as his majesty does, promoting the dishonourable'.[56] Ultimately, Shāh Ḥoseyn was held responsible for the chaos: 'may he be preserved from any harm ⁖ though he threw a tranquil land into chaos'.[57]

For the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, the principal failure of the dynast formed the basis of the broader failures of the Ṣafavid state. These failures were reported as corruption among Ṣafavid courtiers, commanders, and officials; the incompetence of the grand viziers as the de facto heads of state; the endemic fiscal corruption and mismanagement of the chancellery; the internal rivalries in the chancellery for state resources; the maladministration of the army; and its consequent ineffectiveness in military combat.[58] The Ṣafavid establishment was described as seething with endemic corruption from top to bottom. There was no criticism of the decentralised structure of the state per se, but the *Mokāfātnāmeh* was nonetheless critical of the state for being unable to maintain oversight on its officials and the elites more broadly.

Rather than attacking the structure of the Ṣafavid state, the *Mokāfātnāmeh* strove to ideologically dismantle it and those identities loyal to it. That is why it denigrated the Qezelbāsh. In the late Ṣafavid period, the collective identity of the Qezelbāsh was defined by its Shi'i-inflected loyalty to the Ṣafavid state.[59] The *Mokāfātnāmeh* likened the Qezelbāsh to the enemies of Imam ʿAli, questioning their Shi'ism. In early modern Iran, the Twelve Imams were understood to personify Shi'ism while their enemies were representatives of anti-Shi'i evil.[60] The Qezelbāsh were described in the *Mokāfātnāmeh* as 'followers of ʿAmr b. ʿĀṣ ⁖

[55] Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', pp. 1235–1236.

[56] Ibid, p. 1240.

[57] Ibid, p. 1242.

[58] For a comprehensive overview and critique of the causes of collapse proposed by the *Mokāfātnāmeh* see the summary provided by Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviye*, Vol III, pp. 1212–1230.

[59] See chapter one.

[60] Maryam Moazzen, *Formation of a Religious Landscape: Shi'i Higher Learning in Safavid Iran*, (Leiden, 2018), pp. 98–110.

who uncovered himself to find mercy'.[61] This referred to an incident during the battle of Siffin (657) where ʿAli was about to cut down his foe, ʿAmr b. ʿĀṣ, but in an act of cowardice the latter uncovered his genitals so that ʿAli would take pity on his wretchedness. Too honourable to strike down a man in such an abject state, ʿAli stayed his blade.[62] In their cravenness, femininity, hypocrisy, and evil, the Qezelbāsh were cast as the contemporary iteration of ʿAli's enemies.[63] The *Mokāfātnāmeh* de-Shi'ified and thus delegitimated the Qezelbāsh. By extension, collective solidarity around Ṣafavid loyalty, which lay at the heart of Qezelbāsh identity, was implied to be antithetical to Shi'ism. For the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, the Qezelbāsh and the dynasty they upheld were not the ones to restore a Shi'i state in Iran.

The purpose of the *Mokāfātnāmeh*'s undermining of Ṣafavid legitimacy was to make way for an alternative dynastic line which could restore Shi'i sovereignty in Iran. Thus, the *Mokāfātnāmeh* intreated not to the Ṣafavid household, but the Prophetic household, especially the Twelve Imams, to save Iran and its people. That is why the author associated sovereignty directly with the Prophetic household. The Prophet was referred to as the 'shāh of the heavens' and the 'shāh of faith and justice'. This spiritual sovereignty was echoed through his and ʿAli's descendants. The eighth Imam, Reżā, was considered to be 'sultan over both worlds' and 'lord of the faith'. The eleventh Imam, ʿAskari, appears as the 'shāhanshāh over the realm of the heart'.[64] Having established the eternal and spiritual sovereignty of the Prophet's household, the *Mokāfātnāmeh* beseeched them to grant Iran a temporal sovereign: 'Bequeath the throne to one of your own household (*ṣāḥebi*) ⁖ seat upon it one endowed with wisdom ⁖ Vanquish each and every evil oppression ⁖ let the clouds of your mercy rain upon Iran'.[65] Whereas the Ṣafavids forsook the honour of Iran, the *Mokāfātnāmeh* hoped for the Prophetic household to show Iran mercy by sending forth a worthy descendant (*ṣāḥebi*). The Ṣafavids go unmentioned in the relevant chapter. This absence, taken in combination with the *Mokāfātnāmeh*'s general anti-Ṣafavid discourse, strongly implies that the new 'ṣāḥebi' need not have been a Ṣafavid at all.[66] The Ṣafavids had strove for over two centuries to embody Shi'i sovereignty in their state, based partly on their

[61] Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', p. 1290.

[62] Ibn Qotaybeh Dinevari, *Akhbār ol-Ṭavvāl*, tr. Maḥmud Mahdavi Dāmghāni, (Tehran, 1992), p. 219.

[63] See also, Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', pp. 1282–1295 for the incessant lambasting of the Qezelbāsh.

[64] Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', pp. 1234–1235.

[65] Ibid, pp. 1235–1236.

[66] At one point, the *Mokāfātnāmeh* even claims that it was Ṣafavid corruption which 'birthed the Afghan [invasion]' in the first place. See p. 1269.

Twelver Shi'i lineage. The *Mokāfātnāmeh* undercut the Ṣafavids' claim to be the worthiest descendants of the Prophetic household, ignored them in its call for a worthy descendant to be brought forth, and thereby undermined their exclusive claim to a sovereign Shi'i state in Iran.

Nadim Mashhadi

Mirzā Zaki Mashhadi (d. 1750), better known by his penname, Nadim, was a brilliant court poet during Shāh Ḥoseyn's reign. Nadim composed poetry which looked past the Hotakids and the Ṣafavids to call for a millenarian ʿAlid sovereignty over the realm. The apocalyptic call for deliverance in Nadim's verse was intimately tied to notions of Iran and Iranian collective identity. This emergent identity was articulated as inherently Shi'i, differentiating the people of Iran from the Sunni Afghan other whose ouster was regarded by Nadim as a collective Iranian duty. Nadim, then, pined for a ʿAlid millenarian revolution to save the Iranian self by establishing a new Shi'i state.

Nadim was a resident of Eṣfehān during the Afghan invasion. He departed the city after the Afghans conquered it in 1722, leaving for Najaf in Arab ʿErāq, home to the shrine of ʿAli.[67] Nadim was a devout Shi'i. The majority of his *divān* was dedicated to eulogising Shi'i Imams and retelling Shi'i history.[68] In 1724–1725, Nadim completed his *Dorr-e Najaf* (*Pearl of Najaf*), the title referring to ʿAli.[69] The work is revealing with regard to Nadim's sense of identity and his ideas on what would have constituted a legitimate state in Iran. A prima facie philosophical exploration of his own individual identity showed that Nadim regarded himself a Qezelbāsh, ostensibly holding onto Ṣafavid notions of collective belonging. 'I asked the heavens, who am I? ⁘ … [the answer came:] You are the vanguard of this war, Qezelbāsh is who you are ⁘ you are hot-headed—frenzied beyond the craze of battle—is who you are'.[70] Such an affirmation of Qezelbāsh identity was deliberately warlike, suggesting a wish to destroy the Hotakids. Nadim asked 'How can a villain be worthy of Iran's kingship? ⁘ How can a demon sit upon Solomon's throne? On the one hand there is the Afghan, scum and wretched born ⁘ and on the other, there is the sultanship over the realm of Iran'.[71] The

[67] See Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1297–1298; Āẕar Bigdeli, *Ātashkadeh-ye Āẕar*, Vol. II, ed. Mir-Hāshem Moḥaddeṡ, (Tehran, 1999), p. 655.

[68] Nadim, *Divān-e Nadim*, throughout the work.

[69] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, p. 1297.

[70] Nadim, 'Ash'ār-e Nadim darbāreh-ye fetne-ye Afghān', in *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, ed. Rasul Jaʿfariān, p. 1302.

[71] Ibid, p. 1308.

illegitimacy of the Hotakid state, and the need to fight against it as Qezelbāsh, was placed beyond any doubt.

Nadim's identification with the Qezelbāsh and his enmity with the Hotakids do not necessarily mean that he harboured Ṣafavid loyalties. On the contrary,

> It is clear from the tumult of the age ⁘ that there is nothing for me in this (Ṣafavid) dynasty ⁘ I was retainer to the shāhs of the age, alas ⁘ I cannot accept any state other than that of the master of time (*ṣāḥeb zamān*).[72]

It was not the loss of Ṣafavid kingship that enflamed Nadim's zeal, nor did he pray for a restoration of the fallen dynasty.

> If worry has taken a hold of you ⁘ take refuge at the threshold of the shāh of men (ʿAli or Mahdi?) ⁘ God will be benevolent in the face of prayer ⁘ so beseech him in prayer, oh Nadim, and let your zeal be enflamed for Iran.[73]

Similar to the author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, Nadim lamented Iran's ruin, not the Ṣafavid collapse. He yearned for the resurrection of the realm, not the dynasty.

Nadim was writing at a time when millenarian expectations had reached a fever pitch.[74] The crises towards the end of Ṣafavid rule had already encouraged such sentiments. When the Afghans took Eṣfehān and war left almost no part of the realm unravaged, many understood these events to be signs of the imminent arrival of the Mahdi.[75] As Nadim himself put it, 'Oh lord of time (*emām-e zamān*), your time is nigh ⁘ our realm seeks refuge in your sanctuary ⁘ We are driven mad in anticipation (of your parousia) ⁘ without you we are bodies deprived of souls'.[76] Nadim's Qezelbāsh identity, seemingly detached from its Ṣafavid loyalty, found meaning in this eschatological context: 'That luminous spirit (Mahdi) who has driven me to impatience ⁘ burns me in unhappy anticipation ⁘ It is the tulip that gave rise to the Qezelbāsh ⁘ I am steeped in blood-soaked yearning as I console myself'.[77] The tulip, signifying martyrdom and alluding to the Qezelbāsh (red-cap), signified Nadim's willingness to die for

[72] Nadim, *Divān*, p. 14.

[73] Ibid, p. 28.

[74] See Rasul Jaʿfariān, 'Naẓarieh-ye eteṣāl-e dowlat-e Ṣafaviyeh bā dowlat-e Ṣāḥeb ol-Zamān', in *Payām-e Bahārestān*, Vol. 3, No. 11, (2011), pp. 738–740 on the crescendo of apocalyptic expectations at the end of the Safavid period.

[75] Ibid.

[76] Nadim, *Divān*, p. 378.

[77] Ibid, p. 27.

the Mahdi. This was a fundamental departure from the pre-1722 conception of Qezelbāsh identity, strongly associated with loyalty to the Ṣafavid state. For Nadim, Qezelbāsh identity connoted loyalty to the coming state of the Mahdi.

Shi'i eschatology permeated Nadim's thinking on legitimate sovereignty over Iran and its people. While the *Mokāfātnāmeh* prayed for the Shi'i Imams to place a descendant on the throne, Nadim reserved sovereignty for the Imams themselves, particularly ʿAli. A few years after *Dorr-e Najaf*, when the Afghans had consolidated control over much of ʿErāq-e ʿAjam, Nadim prayed that

> He shall answer the call of the captives in (ʿErāq-e) ʿAjam ⁂ the master (*ṣāḥeb*) of Iran, shāh of justice, that commander of the faithful (ʿAli) ⁂ Conquest will be at hand when the gaze from his shrine ⁂ will turn eastward, by the will of the shāh, that commander of the faithful ⁂ For the sake of God, he will grace the people of Iran (*ahl-e Irān*) ⁂ in the year 1140 (1727–1728), that commander of the faithful.[78]

Three key concepts were entangled here: Shi'i millenarian sovereignty, the realm of Iran, and the people of Iran. The implication was that Iran was an inherently Shi'i realm and the people of Iran were all Shi'a, awaiting the parousia of their Imam. The connection between these three ideological concepts was reinforced throughout Nadim's verse to formulate a distinct collective identity:

> God's custodian (ʿAli), neglect us no further ⁂ … Because of their bond with you ⁂ the people of Iran (*mardom-e Irān*) have been vanquished by your enemies ⁂ We all without exception proclaim Shi'ism ⁂ if we have sinned, it is upon us, not our faith.[79]

Members of a collective imagine themselves to share certain 'orientations and expectations that lead them to expect or dread a certain common future'.[80] In the case of Nadim, he understood Iran's people, all without exception (*mā hameh dam*), to be Shi'a as a matter of course. Correspondingly, the ignominious defeat at the hands of the 'enemies' was also imagined collectively. Those among Iran's Shi'a who had comfortably entered Hotakid service or had otherwise gained power and autonomy since the conquest were ignored in this

[78] Nadim, 'Ashʿār', p. 1300.

[79] Ibid, p. 1308. See also 1299–1300, 1305 for more examples of this kind.

[80] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 72.

narrative. For Nadim, Iranians were all suffering in ignominy—'we all (*jomleh*) have suffered enough'—and yearned for apocalyptic deliverance.[81] The brutal fate that had befallen Iran's people was made to be a consequence of their Shi'ism, a defining feature of their collective identity—'Because of their bond with you (ʿAli)'. While Nadim regarded the suffering to be collectively felt, he also expected the coming parousia to impart deliverance to the collective. This is evident in the line 'although the people of the realm of Iran are doomed ⁘ they hold out hope, for they are bound to your (ʿAli's) heavenly threshold'.[82] In Nadim's poetry, contemporary crises and future hopes were shared collectively by the people of Iran.

An important element in Nadim's sense of collective identity was whom he excluded and whom he considered as the 'other'. Inclusion and exclusion are general characteristics of collective identity formation. Ascribing an identity to a collective implies unifying its members in their possession of certain characteristics. A mental border is drawn around the collective self to exclude the collective other whose members are supposed to possess characteristics distinguishing them from 'us'.[83] For Nadim, a defining characteristic of Iranians was their Shi'i faith, rendering the Sunni Afghans as natural others. The differentiation between the self and the other is apparent in Nadim's grief over the Afghan conquest:

> Did the foreign (*bigāneh*) enemy not prevail? ⁘ … Was there not an age-old religious rancour? ⁘ These dogs (Afghans) have become zealous in their faith ⁘ They bear their grudge against us through their animosity ⁘ they have turned against us in their duplicity and deceit.[84]

The Afghans' moral inferiority and enmity against 'us' was rooted by Nadim in an 'age-old religious rancour' between the Shi'i self and the Sunni other.

Nadim's hope for re-establishing a Shi'i state by vanquishing Iran's Sunni enemy led him to Shi'ify not just the people but the realm of Iran: 'The bounteous garden of Iran is blessed with the Spring of his (ʿAli's) love ⁘ he would never permit the outsider (*Khāreji*) to gain access to its inside (*dākhel*) ⁘ … He will grace the people of Iran with his aid'.[85] The use of

[81] Nadim, 'Ashʿār', p. 1308.

[82] Ibid, pp. 1299–1300.

[83] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 69; Jan Assmann, *Cultural Memory, and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (New York, 2011), pp. 116–185.

[84] Ibid.

[85] Ibid.

the term Khāreji to designate the Afghans has powerful religio-historic charge. Khāreji was the name given to members of a break-away faction which abandoned ʿAli during the Muslim civil wars (*fitna*s).[86] By designating the collective enemy as the Khārejis, Nadim attempted to form an isomorphic relationship between the historic enemies of ʿAli and the contemporary enemies of Iran. The political re-appropriation of 'Khāreji' was far from new in Iran's early modern history. In the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century, a popular genre of religious-heroic epics emerged among ʿAlid Sufis in Anatolia and Iran. These epics presented Islamic history as an eternal struggle between the followers of the Prophet's household (*ahl-e beyt*), and its enemies, generically referred to as Khārejis.[87] The Ṣafavi sufi order under Esmāʿil I came to adopt this narrative, calling for revenge against the Khāreji enemy. The Ṣafavid order identified itself with the followers of the Prophet's Household, giving particular emphasis to Shi'i Imams such as ʿAli and his son Ḥoseyn. The order's contemporary enemies, whether they be the Khanates in the Caucasus, the Āq-Qoyunlu Confederation or the Ottomans, were identified with the Khāreji enemies of ʿAli and Ḥoseyn.[88]

What was new was Nadim's use of Khāreji—the term can simply mean outsider—to territorialise an emergent Iranian identity. Yi-Fu Tuan suggests that individuals can identify with, and emotionally connect themselves to, territorial spaces. Psychological connections between people and place enables the formation of collective identities based on spatial belonging, fusing the self to 'here' and the other to 'there'.[89] Khāreji's territorial meaning is emphasised in the second hemistich where ʿAli is said to 'never permit the outsider (*Khāreji*) to gain access to its inside (*dākhel*)'. This complemented Nadim's earlier designation of the enemy as 'foreign' (*bigāne*). The implication was that the Khāreji was to be ousted to where he belonged: beyond the 'bounteous garden of Iran'. Therefore, Nadim's use of Khāreji was not merely to underline the religious enmity with the Afghans, but to also territorialise the collective self within the realm of Iran.

It is unlikely that Nadim thought of the Afghans as physically originating outside Iran. The Hotakid Afghans hailed from Qandehār, which was of course within the frontiers of Iran-

[86] For the period around the Muslim *fitna*s see Hugh Kennedy, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the 6th to the 11th Century*, 3rd edition, (Oxford and New York, 2016), pp. 43–70.

[87] Riza Yildirim, 'In the Name of Hosayn's Blood: The Memory of Karbala as Ideological Stimulus to the Safavid Revolution', in *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 8, (2015), pp. 135–143.

[88] Ibid, pp. 143–150; Navāʾi (ed.), *Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, p. 213.

[89] Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis, MN, 1977), pp. 136–160; John Agnew, 'Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science', in James Duncan and David Ley (eds.), *Place, Culture, Representation*, (London, 1993), pp. 251–271.

Realm, covering the lands between the Euphrates and the Oxus. Nonetheless, the 'people of Iran', as they appear in Nadim's discourse on collective identity, should not be confused with the actual inhabitants of Iran's territories. Straub observes that 'defining borders between insiders and outsiders, between those who belong and those who do not, between heroes and villains, is detached from any basis in (empirical) experience… [and such borders are meant to] "freely" serve the purposes of ideological manipulation'.[90] Nadim's placement of Afghans outside Iran was no more based on empirical fact than his assertions that they were duplicitous and deceitful. These assertions were part of the ideological language through which Nadim articulated the otherness of the Afghans and called for the overthrow of their state.

Overall, Nadim was an impassioned supporter of restoring a Shi'i state in Iran. The three interconnected themes of his poetry in the 1720s were Shi'i millenarian sovereignty, the realm of Iran, and the Iranian people. Iran was understood to be a Shi'i realm, and Iranians a Shi'i people, almost by definition. The Sunni Afghans, then, were inherently foreign, and their sovereignty over Iran was rendered illegitimate. His hostility to the Hotakids did not lead Nadim to support the Ṣafavids. He identified as Qezelbāsh and Iranian, but these did not connote any Ṣafavid loyalty in his mind. Instead, his Qezelbāsh-Iranian identity was grounded in a millenarian loyalty to the Shi'i Imams, the only people Nadim deemed worthy of true sovereignty. This did not necessarily mean that he expected the appearance of the Mahdi himself. Nadim may have hoped for the Imams to anoint a representative in the temporal plain to establish the millenarian state on their behalf, though he remained silent on who this representative could be. Perhaps, Nadim was keeping his options open, awaiting the rise of a new patron who would lead the millenarian struggle to form a new state in Iran. He would eventually find his man in Nāder.[91]

Neyrizi and the Sufis

Seyyed Qoṭboddin Moḥammad Neyrizi (1689–1760) was the thirty-second head of the Ẕahabiyeh Sufi order. The Ẕahabiyeh traced the spiritual lineage of its elders (*qoṭb*s) to Maʿruf Karkhi (d. 815), a Sufi saint who converted to Islam after being enlightened by the eighth Imam, Reżā. It was one of the most popular and influential Shi'i Sufi orders in the

[90] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 70.

[91] For Nadim joining Nāder and helping the latter formulate a millenarian ideology in the 1730s, see chapter three.

Ṣafavid period with followers across almost every region in Iran.[92] Neyrizi was born in a family of Sufis in Fārs but later settled in Eṣfehān. He was a witness to the Afghan siege and occupation of Eṣfehān. The trauma of the Afghan invasion prompted Neyrizi to pen several works in an effort to explain the Ṣafavids' collapse, and to offer a way forward to restoring a Shi'i state. While his earlier works called for a Ṣafavid restoration, subject to various caveats, Neyrizi later turned against the Ṣafavid cause, accusing the dynasty of having betrayed 'Iranian Shi'ism'. Similar to Nadim, Neyrizi incorporated notions of Iran and Iranian identity in his discourse on forming a legitimate state. Where Neyrizi differed was in his development of explicit hostility to the Ṣafavid restoration. For Neyrizi the enemy was not so much the Afghan, but the illegitimate Ṣafavids who had betrayed Shi'i Iran.

As a Sufi, Neyrizi felt estranged from the Ṣafavid state. From the second half of the seventeenth century, Sufi beliefs and practices were shunned by the Safavid court and its allies among the juristically-minded ulema.[93] The latter condemned the popular Sufism of the wandering dervishes as well as the more highbrow Sufism of philosophers and mystics. Both varieties of Sufism were accused of spreading moral corruption, pantheism, sexual vice, and superstition.[94] The juristic ulema went so far as to argue Sufism was a threat to Shi'i identity and equated it with Sunnism.[95] Newman suggests that the rising anxiety of the juristic ulema indicates the growing popularity of Sufism among the laymen in the late Ṣafavid period.[96] While Sufism might have been attracting followers in wider society, Sufis saw their access to political power being restricted by the court and the clerical establishment. Opportunities and privileges were taken away from Sufis as they found themselves unwelcome at court and unable to access higher posts in the Ṣafavid state.[97] Even though Sufis were once at the heart

[92] Moḥammad-Yusof Nayyeri, 'Ẕahabiyeh', in *Dāneshnāmeh-ye Jahān-e Eslām*, Vol. 19, (2014); Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1309–1313.

[93] There were elements of anti-Sufism as early as mid-sixteenth century, though these voices were relatively marginal. See Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, pp. 121–122.

[94] Ibid, pp. 113–123; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, (New Haven and London, 1985), pp. 115–116; Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 1–8.

[95] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, pp. 109; Andrew Newman, 'Sufism and anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: The Authorship of the Ḥadīqat al-Shīʿa Revisited', in *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, Vol. 37, (1999), pp. 97–98; Momen, *Introduction*, p. 116; Sajjad Rizvi, 'Whatever happened to the School of Isfahan?', in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), pp. 71– 96.

[96] Newman, 'Sufism and anti-Sufism', pp. 103–104.

[97] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, p. 124; V.B. Moreen, 'The Status of Religious Minorities in Safavid Iran 1617–61', in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (1981), pp. 121–123.

of political power in Ṣafavid Iran, by Neyrizi's time they had lost much of their political influence to the juristic ulema.

Neyrizi's Sufi grievances were woven into his explanations for why the realm had been thrown into chaos and how he and his fellow ulema, both Sufis and jurists, might save it from ruin. His *Ṭibb al-Mamālik* (*Medicine for the Empire*) was a treatise written during the early to mid-1720s purporting to diagnose the realm's 'ailments' and prescribe remedies.[98] The fact that the *Ṭibb*, along with most of Neyrizi's works, were composed in Arabic suggests that he was writing with the religious classes in mind. Arabic had had an influential place in Iran's intellectual discourses going back to the medieval period.[99] There was a renewed emphasis on Arabic as the language of religious authority in the Ṣafavid period. The erudite use of Arabic displayed intellectual competence among fellow ulema.[100] Arabic grammar and syntax were key parts of the curriculum in madrasas where it was emphasised that religious knowledge could only be gained based on the correct usage of Arabic.[101] At a time when many among the clerical establishment viewed Sufis to be misled, even heretical, Neyrizi's use of eloquent Arabic was perhaps meant to bolster his credibility and that of his works among his peers. The intended audience for the *Ṭibb* was made clear in its introduction: 'Oh ulema, this treatise is a pure, though be it bitter, truth'.[102]

The *Ṭibb* focused on how the proximity of the juristic ulema to the Ṣafavid rulers had made both corrupt, distancing the ruling elite from true Shi'i Islam. The *Ṭibb* did not grant any agency to the Afghan conquerors in explaining the Ṣafavids' collapse, stating that 'the ruin of the realm is not fundamentally due to the triumph of the enemy'.[103] For Neyrizi, it was the negligence of the shāh, fiscal corruption of the nobles, and above all, the moral corruption of the Ṣafavid ulema, which had brought on the calamity. To sanctify his arguments, Neyrizi drew on Shi'i hadiths to condemn the ulema's materialistic and servile 'obedience to the

[98] Neyrizi, 'Ṭibb al-Mamālik', ed. and trans. Rasul Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol III, pp. 1324–1354. See p. 1315 for a conclusive and more detailed discussion on dating the *Ṭibb al-Mamālik* to the mid-1720s.

[99] V. Danner, 'Arabic Literature in Iran', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 3, (1986), pp. 237–243.

[100] Nasr, 'Religion in Safavid Persia', pp. 271–286.

[101] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, pp. 203–204.

[102] Neyrizi, 'Ṭibb', pp. 1338—1339, 1343–1344. I have used Jaʿfariān's Arabic transcript and well as his Persian translation of the *Ṭibb* which is cited throughout in this section.

[103] Ibid, p. 1348.

sultan'.[104] The *Ṭibb* expressed Neyrizi resentment of the juristic ulema's political prominence in the Ṣafavid state which had shunned Sufi ulema like himself.

In contrast to the corrupt ulema's 'obedience to the sultan', Neyrizi suggested 'the cure to this disastrous situation is obedience to the word of ʿAli'.[105] Neyrizi was calling for ʿAlid authority and loyalty among his class. Naturally, the *Ṭibb*'s analyses and arguments were predominantly based on ʿAlid sermons. The single most important source for the treatise was the *Nahj al-Balāgha* (*Way of Eloquence*), the most celebrated compilation of ʿAlid hadiths.[106] There were parallels with Nadim's emphasis on ʿAli as the key to deliverance. Unlike Nadim's poems however, the *Ṭibb* did not advocate for a millenarian uprising. It put forth a practical roadmap for a return to a Shi'i state through a Ṣafavid restoration, led and sanctioned by the ulema. The ulema were called upon to elect a scion from the surviving members of the dynasty and give him their unified support. This new Ṣafavid kingship would then be inaugurated based on an ʿAlid treaty drawn up between 'the shāh, us (the ulema), and the peasantry'.[107] At a time when contemporaries, such as Nadim, were increasingly looking to the Shi'i Imams, and especially ʿAli, on questions of legitimate kingship, Neyrizi formulated a distinctly ʿAlid proposal to restore Shi'i sovereignty.

Ironically, the *Ṭibb*'s proposal, if realised, would have seen the ulema at the very heart of worldly affairs. Perhaps Neyrizi did not see his proposal as entailing 'obedience to the sultan', but rather holding him to account. Indeed, the *Ṭibb* claimed a divinely imposed responsibility for the ulema in safeguarding the realm: 'God has stated… that our responsibility is greater, and the weight of our duty all the more severe… [compared to other classes in society]'.[108] The key terms here were 'us' and 'our'. The ulema in this context included Neyrizi, and almost certainly other Sufis. Rather than the removal of the ulema from politics, Neyrizi's innovative proposal sought to reconfigure their relationship with the ruling class. In the new state, the ulema would not have been acquiescent to the Ṣafavid sovereign. They would elect him, then hold him to account according to treaty, ostensibly to ensure the realm was governed in accordance with ʿAlid principles. The *Ṭibb* as a political roadmap

[104] Ibid, pp. 1341–1342; see ʿAli Maʿmuri, 'Zaminehā-ye Tārikhi-ye Ketāb-e Kāfi bā tekiyeh bar janbehā-ye kalāmi', in *Tārikh-Paĵuhān*, Vol. 2, (2005), pp. 137–146, for the historical importance of *Kitāb al-Kāfī* in Shi'i theology.

[105] Ibid, p. 1346.

[106] See Jaʿfariān's introduction to the work in his *Ṣafaviyeh*.

[107] Neyrizi, 'Ṭibb', pp. 1347–1348.

[108] Ibid, pp. 1344–1345.

served two purposes. One was to challenge the exclusion of Sufis from the circle of politically powerful ulema. The other was to place a Sufi-inclusive version of the ulema in an unprecedentedly powerful position as kingmakers. Not even at the very zenith of the ulema's power under the Ṣafavids could they conceive of electing a shāh and holding him to account via a treaty as the *Ṭibb* called for. Ultimately, the *Ṭibb*'s ambitious proposals did not find a receptive audience. Ṣafavid restoration was achieved through different means and Neyrizi and his Sufi fellows remained as distant as ever from influential positions in the new Ṣafavid state under Ṭahmāsp II. That much is evident in his subsequent writings from the post-restoration period when he completely reversed course to condemn the Ṣafavids for betraying Iran and Shi'ism.

The turn away from the Ṣafavids is evident in Neyrizi's *Faṣl al-Khiṭṭāb* which vituperatively attacked the Ṣafavids as traitors to the Shi'i Iranian cause. The *Faṣl* was a compendium of Neyrizi's Arabic verse to which he appended many of his letters. Its composition began in the late 1720s, but it was only finished during Ṭahmāsp's official restoration (1729–1732).[109] Neyrizi lamented the fact that his *Ṭibb al-Mamālik* had been disregarded by the new Ṣafavid state and its allies among the ulema.[110] Neyrizi eventually left Iran and settled in Najaf, which is where he completed the *Faṣl*.[111] Shi'i Sufism, Iran-Realm, and the Iranian people were interwoven in Neyrizi's discourse. In a letter written to Ṭahmāsp's sheykh ol-Islam, Moḥammad-Shafiʿ Gilāni, Neyrizi claimed to have authored the *Faṣl* to 'preserve and strengthen our religion, our state, our realm, and our religious community' (*dīninā wa dawlatanā, mulkunā wa millatanā*) for the 'people of Iran' (*ahl-i ʾĪrān*).[112] This self-assigned mission echoed Neyrizi's declared goal during the Afghan occupation. In one of his earliest Afghan-era treatises, Neyrizi related his reason for putting pen to paper in the following Arabic quatrain:

> My endeavour is to reclaim our country (*bilādanā*) ⁂ and the order of our religion (*dīninā*) ⁂ So that God in his majesty may preserve ⁂ the honour of our

[109] See Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1312–1314, and 1369–1370 on Neyrizi's migration to Najaf and his authorship of the *Faṣl*. Even though Neyrizi began composing the *Faṣl* when still resident in Iran, he seems to have completed it only after moving to Najaf, sometime during Ṭahmāsp II's reign (1729–1732), and prior to Nāder's regency (1732–36) which Neyrizi does not mention. The fact that the *Faṣl al-Khiṭṭāb* came after the *Ṭibb al-Mamālik* is demonstrated by former's references to the latter.

[110] Ibid, p. 1369.

[111] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, p. 1314 dates Neyrizi's migration to ʿErāq-e ʿAjam to the late 1130s/mid-1720s at the earliest.

[112] Neyrizi, *Nāmehā*, fols. 170r, 172r.

> religious community (*millatanā*) from the enemy ⁂ To be safeguarded in our realm (*mulkanā*) ⁂ from here on out, until this sedition (*fitna*, referring to the Afghan occupation) ends ⁂ This is my goal in writing this treatise ⁂ to save the self (*al-nafs*) from the hellfire that is the enemy.[113]

The end of Afghan rule and the restoration of the Ṣafavids had not brought Neyrizi's quest to an end. The illegitimacy of the Ṣafavids meant that his efforts to save his people were ongoing. This line of thought reveals an undeniable sense of the collective self (*al-nafs*), grounded in belonging to 'our' faith and country—Shi'ism and Iran respectively.

The enemy of the collective self were the Afghans in the 1720s, but after the Ṣafavid restoration the enemy became the Ṣafavids and their anti-Sufi ulema. One of Neyrizi's correspondences which he appended to the *Faṣl* purports to be a letter he wrote to the Ṣafavid court on the brink of the Afghan conquest, warning them of the impending doom and imploring them to change course.[114] Its virulent anti-Ṣafavid tone, however, suggests the letter dates from after Neyrizi's disillusionment with restored Ṣafavid rule in 1729. The original letter, if it ever existed, has not survived. It was most likely penned or at least heavily edited by Neyrizi while he was finishing the *Faṣl* in the early 1730s. The inclusion of the letter was meant to present Neyrizi as a prescient and benevolent sage, forewarning an illegitimate Ṣafavid state of its demise. In his preamble, Neyrizi claimed his reason for writing the letter was 'the jealousy and sedition (*fetneh*) of the self-presenting ulema, moving me to try to rectify' the situation.[115] While the sedition threatening the collective self in the 1720s was linked to the Afghans, Neyrizi later linked the sedition to Ṣafavid ulema. The Ṣafavid household was held to be part of this sedition: 'these self-presenting ulema you have emulated and joined with'.[116]

The letter argued that in their alliance with the anti-Sufi juristic ulema, the Ṣafavids had betrayed their Sufi ancestors who were champions of true—meaning Sufi—Shi'ism in Iran. 'These [ulema] are the same people who cursed your blessed ancestors to whom Shi'ism in Iran owes its existence. At the time, most Iranians were sworn enemies (*nāṣebi*) of ʿAli, and

[113] Quoted in Jaʿfariān's *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol III, p. 1314, from an unpublished manuscript held in Qom's Aʿẓam Mosque Library, Collection No. 2264. The translation from Arabic is my own. As Jaʿfariān has pointed out, this treatise was written before Neyrizi's emigration to Najaf, meaning sometime in the mid-1720s.

[114] The letter is transcribed by Jaʿfariān (ed.), *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1376–1377 who takes the dating at face value.

[115] Ibid, p. 1376.

[116] Ibid.

Eṣfehānians were nothing more than Jews'.[117] The references to the *nāṣebi* and the Jewish Eṣfehānians were probably an oblique reference the ulema's ancestry, meant to delegitimate their juristic anti-Sufi stance by tying it to their purportedly ancestral anti-Shi'ism. Neyrizi's historical narrative stripped the Ṣafavids of their legitimacy by portraying them as traitors to their ancestors' greatest achievement, the Shi'ification of Iranians. Neyrizi reiterated this narrative in Arabic verse throughout the *Faṣl*, reiterating how the anti-Sufi *fetneh* of the ulema 'is plain to see as the source ⁂ of the ruinous destruction of Iran ⁂ … I wish they (Ṣafavids) had held to the religion of their forefathers ⁂ and spared their realm from discord'.[118] The dynasty had lost legitimacy by turning away from Shi'ism, bringing ruin to Iran and its people.

Ṣafavid betrayal of Shi'ism and Iran was a theme echoed in some of Neyrizi's sermons. One such sermon was 'written down the morning after' by a disciple of Neyrizi's, Jalāloddin Moḥammad, who annexed it to one the *Faṣl*'s manuscripts.[119] The sermon might have been given in Persian, or perhaps it was delivered in Arabic and only translated into Persian by Jalāloddin in an effort to reach a wider audience.[120] In any case, it is useful to see how Neyrizi's ideas were reflected in the mind of one of his disciples in the Ẕahabiyeh order, and what elements of Neyrizi's thought he remembered and deemed worthy of recording. Jalāloddin's retelling of the sermon laments the predicament of the 'people of Iran' who were subjected to the anti-Sufi rhetoric of the ulema with the backing of the Ṣafavids.

> The Ṣafavid princes joined [the ulema] in cursing and denigrating their own Sufi ancestors, ignorant of the fact that this was far removed from Iranian Shi'ism (*Tashayyoʿ-e Irāniye*)—a faith which prevailed in Iran only through the monumental efforts of Sheykh Ṣafioddin and the conquests of his crowned descendants (the early Ṣafavids). Whereas the ancestors of these so-called ulema were all either Jews or the sworn enemies of ʿAli.[121]

The founders of the Ṣafavid order and dynasty were praised for propagating the faith across Iran, and their latter-day descendants admonished for turning away from their true ancestral

[117] Ibid, pp. 1376–1377.

[118] Ibid, p. 1365. See also, pp. 1358–1360, 1362, 1366, 1369–1370.

[119] This sermon and its *esnād* is to be found in Qoṭboddin Neyrizi, *Mizān ol-Ṣavāb*, ed. Abulqāsem Khuʾi, (Salmās, 1916), pp. 576–583; but is also included in Jaʿfariān's *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1374–1376.

[120] Persian was sometimes considered a more accessible language among Iran's early modern elite. See Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, p. 204.

[121] Quoted in Jaʿfariān (ed.), *Ṣafaviye*, Vol. III, p. 1375.

faith. What is striking is that the faith, in its true form, was understood to be Iranian. Furthermore, the realm's disastrous state of affairs was thought to have been brought about by the Ṣafavids' betrayal of this 'Iranian Shi'ism' under the nefarious influence of the juristic ulema. True (read: Sufi) Shi'ism and Iranianness were entangled in this discourse. The political message of Neyrizi's sermon, for Jalāloddin at least, was that the Ṣafavids and their ulema were traitors to Iranian Shi'ism, the true inheritors of which were Sufis à la the Ẕahabiyeh.

Neither Sheykh Ṣafioddin nor Shāh Esmāʿil I would have recognised their brand of Sufism as being 'Iranian Shi'ism'. Ironically, Ṣafioddin was a Sunni Sufi, belonging to the Shāfeʿi school. The Ṣafavi order which went on to conquer Iran under Esmāʿil I was essentially an eschatological Shi'i-inflected Sufi warrior cult.[122] The claim that Ṣafioddin and Esmāʿil were engaged in spreading 'Iranian Shi'ism' would have struck the former as utterly nonsensical, and the latter as quite strange at the very least. Moazzen argues that political changes reshape cultural memories and fashion them in the image of different narratives that better suit particular interests and needs, helping to rework or even create collective identities.[123] Thus, it was in the nature of collective identity not merely to envision a shared future,[124] but to project itself, even anachronistically, back into the past to historicise and legitimate present concerns. By creating shared memories of the past, the aforementioned sermon historicised a Sufi understanding of Shi'ism which was fused with an eighteenth-century Iranian identity. The Iranian Shi'ism of the Sufis was perfectly preserved, inherited from Sheykh Ṣafioddin and Esmāʿil in its pristine form, while the juristic anti-Sufism of the latter-day Ṣafavid state was shown to be a distortion, a betrayal even.

Neyrizi was not calling upon the Ṣafavids to revert to their ancestral faith and thereby regain their lost legitimacy. As an un-Iranian and anti-Shi'i dynasty, their restored sovereignty was no longer deemed to be in the interest of Iran. Neyrizi expressed his displeasure regarding Ṭahmāsp's restoration in 1729 when he wrote 'I hoped the good of the realm (*ṣalāḥ al-mulk*) would be restored after all this corruption ⁎ yet what lay beyond the horizon was more calamity'.[125]

---

[122] For an analysis of the ideological underpinnings of Esmāʿil's rise, see Yildirim, 'In the Name of Hosayn', pp. 127–154.

[123] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, p. 113.

[124] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 72.

[125] Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol III, pp. 1369–70.

In conclusion, Neyrizi's literary works were shaped primarily by his concerns as a prominent Sufi elder. He engaged with notions of a collective self (*al-nafs*) which viewed Iran and Shi'ism as 'our' realm and faith respectively. The Iranian Shi'ism Neyrizi, and probably his numerous disciples, had in mind was deeply Sufistic. The marginalisation of himself and his community from the centres of power by the Ṣafavids and their juristically inclined ulema ultimately led him to oppose the return of the Ṣafavid state. For Neyrizi, Ṣafavid sovereignty did not equate to Shi'i sovereignty. The collective historical memory which Neyrizi constructed in his *Faṣl al-Khiṭṭāb* and in his sermons depicted the Ṣafavids as traitors to the Sufi-inclined Iranian Shi'ism of their ancestors. The sovereignty of such a misguided dynasty over 'our' realm was considered illegitimate. There were clear parallels between Nadim and Neyrizi in their discourses on identity and legitimacy. They both fused together notions of Shi'ism, Iran-Realm, and Iranians. Neyrizi echoed Nadim's sentiments regarding a territorial belonging to 'our' realm. The key difference was that Nadim's Shi'ism was steeped in eschatology, while Neyrizi's was defined by Sufism.

Malek-Maḥmud Sistāni in the *Maḥmudnāmeh*

Malek-Maḥmud Sistāni, the charismatic general who came to rule parts of Khorāsān after the Afghan takeover, was not satiated by ruling over a mere dominion. He set his eyes on restoring Shi'i sovereignty in Iran by establishing a dynastic state of his own. His discourse on legitimacy identified him as the saviour of Iran, Iranians, and the Shi'a. While the collective self was naturally Shi'i, the other was imagined to be monolithically Sunni. The similarities with Nadim and Neyrizi's ideas are apparent, but Malek introduced an innovative genealogy by claiming to be a descendant of the Kayānids. Malek argued his genealogy bound Iran-Realm and its people to his nascent dynasty.

The most valuable source for Malek's reign is the *Maḥmudnāmeh* (*Book of Maḥmud*), written in Persian verse by an unnamed Shi'i Khorāsānian in late 1724, at the height of Malek's power.[126] Jannati-Sarāb argues that the contents of the *Maḥmudnāmeh* strongly indicate that its author was an eyewitness to many of the events he described.[127] The work contains detailed accounts of Malek's fiscal reforms and diplomatic correspondences, which suggests the author had access to Malek's chancellery papers or knew someone who granted him

[126] ʿAlireżā Jannati-Sarāb, 'Sarāghāz-e Sokhan', in Anonymous, *Tajdār-e Nāfarjām: Tajgoẕāri-ye Nāfarjām-e Malek Maḥmud Sistāni dar Mashhad, bar Asās-e Noskheh-ye Khaṭṭi-e Maṡnavi-ye Maḥmudnāmeh*, ed. ʿAlireżā Jannati-Sarāb, (Mashhad, 2014), p. 14.

[127] Ibid, pp. 12–13.

access.[128] Despite the work's focus on Malek, there is nothing to indicate that he was the author's patron. The *Maḥmudnāmeh*'s tone was relatively neutral regarding the various warring chieftains of Khorāsān. It did not endorse any Khorāsānian's political claims. Ṭahmāsp II was the only leader the *Maḥmudnāmeh* acknowledged as the rightful sovereign of the realm, but given that Ṭahmāsp appears in only one of the twenty-four chapters of the book and almost as an afterthought, he was likely not the patron either. The *Maḥmudnāmeh* was probably composed at the initiative of its author who despite his support for Ṭahmāsp, adopted a relatively neutral view of Malek and other claimants. Wherever the *Maḥmudnāmeh*'s descriptions of Malek's reign can be corroborated by other sources, it proves reliable.[129] Therefore, the author's access, proximity, and relative impartiality make the *Mokāfātnāmeh* a dependable source for reconstructing Malek's political ideology.

The *Maḥmudnāmeh* began by outlining one of the foundations of Malek's claim to sovereignty. 'Come listen to the deeds of Malek-Maḥmud Khān ⁘ who hails from the lineage of the Kayānid shāhs'.[130] The genealogical claim was emphasised a few lines later, where Malek announced:

> There can be no more opportune a moment than this ⁘ for me to bring Iran under my dominion ⁘ As I am descended from the Kayānid shāhs ⁘ the Iranians are beholden to me since ages past ⁘ And as I am a Shi'i, they will in sincerity ⁘ all come together in my support.[131]

Malek's claim to have been descended from the legendary Kayānid dynasty from pre-Islamic Iran may have been motivated by several factors. First was the general appeal of the Kayānids as exemplars of imperial sovereignty in the Persianate tradition. In this sense, there was nothing necessarily Iranian about them. The Seljuqs of Rum and Akbar the Great in Hendustān both laid claim to the Kayānid legacy despite having no claim on Iran.[132] More specifically, however, the appeal of the Kayānids for Malek, as a Sistānian, might have stemmed from the legendary dynasty's strong association with the regions of Sistān and

[128] Ibid, pp. 12–16; See Anon., *Maḥmudnāmeh*, pp. 44–48, 90–94.

[129] Nāṣer Chāri, 'Moqaddameh', in Anon., *Maḥmudnāmeh*, pp. 8–10; Regarding the claims about Malek's Kayānid lineage for example, this is corroborated by Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 180; and Moḥammad-Shafiʿ Ṭehrāni, *Merāt-e Vāredāt*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol, (Tehran, 2004), p. 132; Anon., 'Aḥvāl-e Nāder Shāh', in *Ḥadiṡ-e Nāder Shāhi*, ed. Reżā Shaʿbāni, (Tehran, 1997), p. 6.

[130] Anon., *Maḥmudnāmeh*, p. 19.

[131] Ibid.

[132] See G.E. Tetley, *The Ghaznavid and Seljuq Turks: Poetry*, (London and New York, 2009), p. 5; Abulfażl ʿĀlami, *Āʾin-e Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, (Osnabrück, 1985), pp. 2–3.

Khorāsān.[133] Another factor was probably the role of the Kayānids in the *Shāhnāmeh* tradition as defenders of the territory of Iran-Realm against the encroachment of the foreign other.[134] The territorial legacy of the Kayānids may have been foremost in Malek's mind, as his ideology emphasised a sense of outside enemies besieging Iran and its people:

> The shāh of Rum has raised an army ⁘ he seeks to conquer these frontiers and domains (*marz o bum*) ⁘ The dam has broken and the Europeans (Russians) pour in ⁘ upon the hapless Iranians ⁘ Russia charges from all sides ⁘ the arrow of calamity aims for the Shi'a ⁘ from all directions kings come circling ⁘ eying the realm of Iran covetously.[135]

This underlined the anxieties about Iran-Realm's 'frontiers and domains' being violated, and the Shi'i Iranian self being left to the mercy of foreign enemies. The appeal of the Kayānids as archetypal protectors of Iran-Realm against the transgressions of the other is plain to see.

Malek made references to Rum and Russia as Iran's foes, but the primary other were the Sunni enemies. These were the Baluch, Uzbeks, Steppe Turkmen, and of course, the Afghans.[136] Despite the significant political and cultural differences between these peoples, they were imagined to be essentially the same. Just as the collective self was unified in its monolithic Shi'ism, so too was the other in its Sunnism. For example, the Steppe Turkmen and Afghans were claimed by Malek to be in alliance against the Shi'a, for 'wherever they are… they will enter into an accord with one another'.[137] There is no evidence to suggest the Afghans and Steppe Turkmen were in contact, let alone allied at any time during the 1720s. Alliances could be made based on mutual political interests rather than concerns over identity. For example, Esterābādi's *Jahāngoshā* reported that the rise of Malek-Maḥmud led the Shi'i Kurdish clans in North Khorāsān to ally themselves with the Sunni Turkmen in order to resist him.[138] Chimerical pan-Sunni alliances were part of Malek's collective identity formation which required a clear other to contrast with the unified self.[139] The threat of the

---

[133] Malek-Moḥammad Farrokh-Neĵād and Manijeh Fallāḥ, 'Paĵuheshi dar qalamro-ye joghrāfiāyi Kayāniān va Shāhnāmeh', in *Tafsir o Taḥlil-e Motun-e Zabān va Adabiāt-e Fārsi*, Vol. 8, No. 28, (2016), pp. 129–142.

[134] Elhām Ḥoseyn-Khāni and Javād Emām Jomʿehzādeh, 'Tajziyeh va taḥlil-e ravābeṭ-e Irān bā bigānegān dar dowrān-e Kayāniān bar pāyeh-ye Shāhnāmeh', in *Adab-e Ḥemāsi*, Vol. 15, No. 2/28, (2019), pp. 95–120.

[135] Anon., *Maḥmudnāmeh*, p. 91.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Ibid, p. 69

[138] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, pp. 30–31.

[139] See above for discussions on Straub, 'Personal and Collective', p. 69.

monolithic other allowed Malek to call for the Shi'i Iranians to rally under his Kayānid banner.[140] 'For whether the Afghan or (Steppe) Turkmen here comes ٭ you must stand together in unison'.[141]

In Malek's discourse, as preserved in the *Maḥmudnāmeh*, Iranians were inherently Shi'i. They shared an inherent belonging to Iran-Realm which was to be guarded against the intrusion of the mainly Sunni other, and Malek's Kayānid lineage gave him legitimate claim to restore Shi'is sovereignty over Iran and its people. Once again, Iran, Iranians, and Shi'ism were inextricably linked. The union of the three for Nadim and Neyrizi served to legitimate an eschatological uprising and reversion to Sufism respectively. For Malek, the trilinear fusion was primarily aimed at legitimating his Kayānid lineage, and by extension, his claim to being the true restorer of Shi'i sovereignty in the realm.

The discourse on Iranian identity was utilised to serve different socio-political ambitions by different actors. The restoration of a non-Ṣafavid Shi'i state in Iran-Realm was the purported goal of all these Iranians, but each had a different understanding of how Shi'i sovereignty would be realised. Their varying understandings were shaped by their varying ideological and material interests.

Ṭahmāsp II and the return to Shi'i sovereignty under the Ṣafavids

After the fall of Eṣfehān in 1722, prominent voices arose among Iran's elites to call for a non-Ṣafavid realisation of a Shi'i state. However, pro-Ṣafavid voices were far from extinguished. Supporters of Ṭahmāsp II's cause to restore his father's lost dynasty championed him as the only hope for regaining Shi'i sovereignty. These elites attested to their Qezelbāsh identity, which for them retained its connotations with loyalty and service to the Ṣafavids. For many, however, there was a symbiosis between Qezelbāsh identity and that of the Iranians. In the pro-Ṣafavid camp, to be Iranian was to be Shi'i and territorially bound to Iran-Realm. But this Shi'ism and territorial belonging were in turn tied to loyalty and service to the Ṣafavid dynasty. Despite Ṭahmāsp's renewed emphasis on Iran as his imperial realm and his engagement with an emergent Iranian identity, his political ideology was one which underlined continuity with the Ṣafavid past. Continuity was evident in Ṭahmāsp's stress on his dynastic succession from Shāh Ḥoseyn Ṣafavi, his ʿAlid lineage as the basis of Shi'i

[140] Anon., *Maḥmudnāmeh*, pp. 91–92.

[141] Ibid, pp. 67–68.

sovereignty, and his use of Ṣafavid royal titles. The restoration of Shi'i sovereignty was taken to mean the restoration of the Ṣafavid state as a matter of course.

Ṭahmāsp and his chancellery

Ṭahmāsp's articulation of his sovereignty was not fundamentally different from that of his forebears. As an ousted prince, Ṭahmāsp relied on his Ṣafavid legacy to legitimate his claim to kingship. Thus, there was significant continuity with past Ṣafavid discourses on identity and legitimacy. Ṭahmāsp's claims to kingly authority were rooted in well-established concepts of Ṣafavid ideology such as seyyed lineage, reigning on behalf of the Imams, and belonging to a Qezelbāsh collective. Nonetheless, some key elements of Ṭahmāsp's ideology were new, including his trilinear discourse on Iran, Iranians, and Shi'ism. This is illustrated in Ṭahmāsp's 1727 edict addressing the insubordinate Qājār commanders in Esterābād. According to the edict, what was at stake was nothing less than the fate of the collective self, 'for the people of Iran are plunged into crisis and besieged by enemies'.[142] The edict regarded the collective as Shi'i as a matter of course when it prayed for God to,

> Show mercy upon the Shi'a of the commander of the faithful (ʿAli), so that they may be saved from the enemies' onslaught. The purpose of our imperial majesty is but to serve these devotees by recovering the dominions of Iran, and even invading enemy lands (in vengeance) so that honour may be satiated.[143]

The edict did not present Ṭahmāsp's primary mission as restoring an overthrown dynasty. Ṭahmāsp's purpose (*manẓur*) was expressed in collective terms. He was first and foremost a divinely ordained saviour for Iran's Shi'a. The territorial dimension of the collective self comes through in the secondary goal of pursuing the enemy into his own lands (*balād-e mokhālef*). The subtext of the edict was that the Iranian Shi'i belonged to the realm of Iran, whereas their foes had to be pursued all the way back to their own lands lying outside that realm. The trilinear discourse binding Iran-Realm, Iranians, and Shi'ism together was utilised by the edict to assert a collective Ṣafavid loyalty: 'it is clear that for centuries all the people of Iran have had their eyes transfixed upon the grace offered by the exalted Ṣafavid dynasty'.[144] In contrast to Neyrizi's, Ṭahmāsp's narrative bound the Iranian Shi'a to the

[142] Masiḥ Ẕabiḥi (ed.), 'Farmāni darbāreh-ye Esterābād', in *Rāhnamā-ye Ketāb*, Vol. 12, (1969), pp. 739–740. See http://www.asnad.org/en/document/51/ accessed 10/05/2022.

[143] Ibid, p. 740.

[144] Ibid.

Ṣafavids in timeless union. However, just like Neyrizi, Ṭahmāsp was anachronistically projecting an eighteenth-century Iranian identity onto Ṣafavid history.

There were strong parallels between Ṭahmāsp and Malek-Maḥmud's trilinear discourses. Both claimants to the throne portrayed themselves as the saviours of the Iranian people whom they held to be intrinsically Shi'i and naturally tied to Iran-Realm unlike the collective enemy originating from beyond. Both were adamant that their respective dynastic claims were accepted by all Iranians as legitimate. The two rival narratives argued for different protagonists to take up the task, but the task was essentially the same: to save Iran and the Iranian Shi'a from the foreign enemy.

Ṭahmāsp's discourse on Iranian identity was sometimes given different inflections depending on the audience with which he was engaging. The diplomatic correspondence with the Ottomans, for example, saw a different articulation of Ṭahmāsp's sovereignty which de-emphasised the Shi'i element. The non-sectarian diplomatics built on precedents reaching as far back as the mid-seventeenth century. After the peace of Zuhab in 1639, Ottoman-Ṣafavid diplomacy ceased to draw upon religious and juristic concepts for the justification of hostilities.[145] Both powers focused on avoiding sectarian language and instead selected Islamic themes conducive to forming peaceful relations. There was an 'almost absolute silence on the matter of Shi'i-Sunni sectarian discord', allowing the Ṣafavid shāh to tacitly acknowledge a junior role in a brotherly relationship with the Ottoman sultan.[146] In continuity with this trend, Ṭahmāsp's correspondence with the Ottomans avoided any mention of Shi'ism, and the enemy from without was exclusively the Afghan. The aversion of any sectarian rhetoric was crucial as Ṭahmāsp sought to gain Ottoman assistance in his war against the Hotakids. Ṭahmāsp's sovereignty was expressed in terms of his legitimate succession to Shāh Ḥoseyn, and his inheritance of Iran as a Ṣafavid realm.

Ṭahmāsp sent two letters to the Ottomans around 1727 after gaining control of Khorāsān. One was addressed to the sultan, the other to the grand vizier. The structure and argument in both were identical. The letters expressed a hope that Ṭahmāsp would soon 'reign over all of Iran's dominions, having vanquished the Afghans with the help of God and the assistance of my exalted uncle (i.e., the sultan)'.[147] By acknowledging his junior role in the regal

[145] Selim Güngörürler, 'Islamic Discourse in Ottoman-Safavid Peacetime Diplomacy after 1049/1639', in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, (Leiden, 2020), pp. 479–500.

[146] Ibid, pp. 479–480.

[147] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 93–94.

relationship with the sultan, Ṭahmāsp aimed to elicit his support. Ṭahmāsp's nomination as royal heir by Shāh Ḥoseyn was explicated, giving him claim to his 'inherited realm' (*molk-e/mamālek-e mowruṡi*).[148] This communicated continuity in Ṣafavid rule over Iran, passing from father to son.

The territorial integrity of the realm was another theme in these letters. Ṭahmāsp informed the Ottoman court that he was 'engaged in rebinding the scattered folios of Iran as I re-establish myself in the dominions inherited from my exalted ancestors'.[149] Given that the Ottomans had annexed large parts of Ajam ʿErāq and Āẕarbāijān at the time, Ṭahmāsp's letters could be interpreted as a cautious warning that he was unwilling to relinquish his claims over those territories. In this context, the territoriality of Iran was defined by the frontiers of the previous Ṣafavid state, rather than the mytho-historical land stretching from the Euphrates to the Oxus. Ṭahmāsp was not claiming the Ottoman dominions of Arab ʿErāq and Diārbakr. The same letter emphasised that 'Āẕarbāijān's… custody belongs within the dominions of Iran'.[150] Despite his desire for Ottoman assistance, Ṭahmāsp was unwilling to compromise on the territorial integrity of his inherited realm. It is probable that Ṭahmāsp thought any official concession to the Sunni Ottomans would have delegitimated him in the eyes of Iranian elites. The evidence presented throughout this chapter speaks to these elites' animosity to the Sunni other and their sense of territorial belonging to Iran. The cession of Shi'i-inhabited dominions like Āẕarbāijān to a Sunni power would have posed a serious challenge to Ṭahmāsp's legitimacy.

For internal audiences, Ṭahmāsp was anxious to construct an image of a strident protector of the Shi'a in line with ideological tropes from the Ṣafavid past. This is reflected in the numismatic and sigillographic record from Ṭahmāsp's reign. His seals and coins bore the legends which consisted of the Islamic creed (*shahādatayn*) at the centre, and the names of the Prophet and Twelve Imams written along the circumference, similar to the coins of his ancestors.[151] On the flip side of the coins were couplets such as 'By God's command it prevailed ⁘ this mint of sultanship in the name of ʿAli', 'Through the magnanimity of God, coin was minted upon gold from Khorāsān ⁘ victory and succour are owed to the shāh of the faith, ʿAli Musā Reżā', and 'Ṭahmāsp the second minted coin upon sublime gold ⁘ there are

[148] Ibid, pp. 93–99.

[149] Ibid, p. 99.

[150] Ibid, p. 98.

[151] Esmāʿili (ed.), *Seals and Coins*, pp. 117–120, 164–165.

none as gallant as ʿAli, there is no sword mightier than Ẕu-l-faqār'.[152] A consistent pattern was the fusion of Ṭahmāsp's sovereignty with that of the Shi'i Imams, and ʿAli in particular. In continuity with his Ṣafavid forebears, Ṭahmāsp's legitimacy as a Shi'i sovereign was expressed as a temporal version of the absolute and spiritual legitimacy held by his Imami ancestors.[153]

Ṭahmāsp's numismatic legends echoed those by previous Ṣafavid rulers who had legitimated their Shi'i sovereignty through eschatological language. The messianic invocation of the Shi'i Imams by Ṭahmāsp was probably meant to capitalise on the heightened millenarian expectations in Iran at the time.[154] In the medieval and early modern period, Shi'i Imams like ʿAli were considered incarnations of the ṣāḥebqerān. The archetypal ṣāḥebqerān, Timur, associated himself with ʿAli to derive messianic charisma.[155] Timur's successors even established a genealogical connection between their household and ʿAli. The inscription on Timur's tombstone tells the story of how his maternal ancestor was impregnated by a ray of light appearing to her as a man who 'was one of the sons of the commander of the faithful, ʿAli b. Abu-Ṭāleb'.[156] Ṭahmāsp drew upon this Timurid-Imami conception of the ṣāḥebqerān when he minted the following legends on his coins: 'By the grace of God did Ṭahmāsp the second ⁎ strike the coin of the ṣāḥebqerān upon the world', and 'The sun and the moon are but his gold and silver ⁎ as they have become the coins of the Imam by the grace of the master of time (*ṣāḥeb-e zamān*)'.[157] At a time when contemporaries such as Nadim and the author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh* were yearning for an eschatological restoration of Shi'i sovereignty, Ṭahmāsp's coins introduced him as the realisation of that hope.

The exponents of Ṭahmāsp

Ṭahmāsp's mission to restore the Ṣafavid state found considerable support among Iran's elites. Many of them focused on continuity with past Ṣafavid notions of legitimate Shi'i sovereignty and collective identity. Such a focus was evident in the mid-1720s Khorāsānian

[152] Ibid, p. 52.

[153] See Chapter one for the Ṣafavids' use of Shi'i Imami legitimacy across their numismatic and sigillographic material.

[154] Jaʿfariān, 'Naẓarieh', pp. 738–740 as discussed above.

[155] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 37, 46–50; Christopher Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam*, (Cambridge, 2009), p. 30.

[156] Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 37–38.

[157] Esmāʿili (ed.), *Seals and Coins*, p. 52.

lyrical chronicle, the *Maḥmudnāmeh*.[158] The heading for Ṭahmāsp's chapter introduced him as 'Shāh Ṭahmāsp the second… the sultan born of sultans, the khāqān born of khāqāns, father of the victorious (*abul-moẓaffar*), may God preserve his reign'.[159] The use of such titles had been common under Shāh Ḥoseyn's coins, seals, edicts, and court chronicles. Many earlier Ṣafavids had used these appellations since the sixteenth century.[160] Their inclusion in the *Maḥmudnāmeh* leaves no doubt as to whom its author considered to be Iran's rightful sovereign. By reviving these standard Ṣafavid honorifics, the author was emphasising the enduring legitimacy of the dynasty. The seamless continuity is captured in the stanza, 'The victory-fated Shāh Ṭahmāsp ⁂ sits upon the throne according to his father's command'.[161] Ṣafavid sovereignty was not interrupted by the Afghan conquest, but transitioned seamlessly from father to son.

The *Maḥmudnāmeh* underlined certain continuities in tying the Qezelbāsh collective to Ṣafavid sovereignty. The arrival of Ṭahmāsp in Khorāsān is celebrated by the stanza, 'Gone are the days of tumult and sorrow ⁂ the fortunes of the Qezelbāsh are now revived'.[162] The succession of Ṭahmāsp to the Ṣafavid throne was considered to be the revival of the Qezelbāsh's fortune. Unlike in the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, where the Qezelbāsh were denigrated for losing Eṣfehān to the Afghans due to their cowardly un-Shi'iness, the *Maḥmudnāmeh* absolved the Qezelbāsh of any responsibility: 'There were no Qezelbāsh in Eṣfehān ⁂ there was no time for broil and battle'.[163] Instead, the Qezelbāsh were being rallied by Ṭahmāsp from across Iran after Eṣfehān's fall: 'I have resolved in manliness to take up this quest ⁂ I have gathered men from all the domains'.[164] The *Maḥmudnāmeh* did not de-emphasise Iran, but firmly re-coupled it with the Ṣafavids, who had declared a contiguity between their dynastic state and Iran-Realm since at least the reign of Ṭahmāsp I.[165] The revival of this contiguity between realm and dynasty was another part of the *Maḥmudnāmeh*'s focus on establishing continuity with the Ṣafavid past. The contiguity was assumed in stanzas like the

[158] See above.

[159] Anon., 'Maḥmudnāmeh', p. 82.

[160] Esmāʿili (ed.), *Seals and Coins*, pp. 50, 37–46.

[161] Anon., 'Maḥmudnāmeh', pp. 84–85 where Ṭahmāsp is said to claim, 'I crowned myself upon his [Shāh Ḥoseyn's] command'.

[162] Ibid, p. 85.

[163] Ibid.

[164] Ibid, pp. 85–86.

[165] See above. This trend took on new force after Shāh ʿAbbās I. See Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 177, 186.

following: ‘The rotation of the spheres threw ⁘ Iran into a ruinous fate ⁘ This dynasty’s ingrates [had come forth] ⁘ the black-faced and two-tongued’.[166] The ruin of Iran was tied to disloyalty to the Ṣafavids and their demise. The implication was that the resurgence of Iran was predicated on the restoration of the Ṣafavid dynastic state.

The *Maḥmudnāmeh* retained the Ṣafavids’ privileged claim on Imami lineage. It did not state that the Ṣafavids were merely ‘one of’ the descendants of ʿAli. The claim was much stronger: ‘You must eschew any disloyalty ⁘ for this is the lineage of ʿAli’.[167] The Ṣafavids’ seyyed lineage continued to lend them legitimacy in the eyes of many supporters. Perhaps, at a time when some contemporaries such as Nadim, Neyrizi, and the author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh* were disassociating the Ṣafavids from ʿAlid sovereignty, the author of the *Maḥmudnāmeh* felt the need to underline that it was still only the Ṣafavids who were the foremost Imami descendants, making them the most legitimate candidates for re-establishing a Shi’i state.

For Ḥazin Lāhiji, Ṭahmāsp’s Imami descent was of great significance. Ḥazin came from a family of scholars and landowners from Gilān and was a resident of Eṣfehān when the Afghans besieged the city in 1722. He lost most of his family wealth in the Afghan invasion and became a wandering dervish. In West Iran he organised militias to resist the Ottoman invasion and sought to rally support behind Ṭahmāsp to restore the Ṣafavids to power.[168] An able poet, Ṭahmāsp offered him a position at court, which he was unable to accept for unknown reasons.[169]

Ṣafavid legitimacy from Ḥazin’s perspective relied partly on their descent from the Prophetic household, but he introduced a metaphorical connection to the Kayānids as well. As argued above, the Kayānids were used by the likes of Malek-Maḥmud to evoke a sense of territorial guardianship over Iran-Realm and victory over its foreign enemies. These connotations were relevant for Ḥazin who had lost so much in the Afghan invasion, and who was actively involved in resisting the Ottoman invasion. For Ḥazin, then, Ṭahmāsp meant the realisation of an Imami-descended sovereign who could guard Iran against its foes, or as he himself put it more eloquently,

[166] Anon., ‘Maḥmudnāmeh’, p. 85.

[167] Ibid, p. 86.

[168] For an overview of Ḥazin’s life see Jon R. Perry, ‘Ḥazin Lāhiji’, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 97–98.

[169] See his decline of Ṭahmāsp’s offer in Ḥazin, *Divān*, p. 650.

> I have heard of the world-conquering shāhanshāh ⁘ who is descended from the Prophet, and is God's just shadow ⁘ That he is the arrayer of the Khosrowid realm ⁘ the ascendent of the Kay-Khosrowid realm ⁘ … You are most worthy of this commanding *farr* ⁘ this Kayānid diadem, this crown of greatness.[170]

Ṭahmāsp's divinely bestowed legitimacy (*farr*) was derived from his Imami lineage and his quest to be the arrayer (*ṭarāzandeh*) the Iran-Realm just as Kayānid sovereigns such as Kay-Khosrow had been in the past.

The territorialised notion of Iran and the outsiders' threat to its frontiers were captured more starkly in Ḥazin's subsequent ode to Iran.

> Iran-Realm is sublime heaven ⁘ its expanse covers the grandeur of Solomon ⁘ This sublime heaven is the life that is our homeland (*vaṭan*) ⁘ may it never fall to the hands of Ahriman ⁘ For as long as the sun lights the skies ⁘ may evil eyes be averted from its frontiers ⁘ … If a coward seeks out its ruin ⁘ then its manly soil (*khāk*) shall give a courageous reply ⁘ … All shook with fear in Rum and Russia ⁘ back when Kay-Kāvus sounded the drums of war ⁘ [Iran's] oldest fortress is the *ivān* of Kay-Khosrow ⁘ the Khosrowid palace is but one of its monuments.[171]

In Ḥazin's ode, the Kayānid legacy, exemplified here by Kay-Kāvus and Kay-Khosrow, was one which drove fear into the hearts of Iran-Realm's enemies. Ḥazin evoked the idea of a fortress in the stanza on Kay-Khosrow, suggesting Iran to be a Kayānid bastion withstanding intrusion from without. He prayed for the evil eyes of the Ahrimanic enemy to be everted from Iran's frontiers, meaning the demonic other is necessarily beyond those frontiers, coveting entry into the 'paradisiac realm'. Resistance to the foreign penetration of this hallowed realm was woven into the very soil of Iran which was supposed to 'give a courageous reply' to any invader. The other was everything that the self was not: foreign, profane, cowardly, and covetous. Thus, collective belonging to Iran as a 'homeland', and the struggle to expel the enemy from its territories, were sacralised.

The Kayānid-style restoration of Iran-Realm under Ṭahmāsp was referenced by other supporters of the dynasty. Naṣir Marāghe-i composed his *Naṣiḥatnāmeh* (Book of Counsel) for Ṭahmāsp in 1731, just over a year after his triumphal liberation of Eṣfehān from Afghan

[170] Ibid, p. 723.

[171] Ibid, 724.

rule.[172] The *Naṣiḥatnāmeh* compiled proverbs and advice attributed to prophets, Imams, and Iran's mythical and historical sovereigns. The book was organised chronologically, with each successive dynasty, shāh, prophet, and Imam assigned a chapter or sub-chapter. Introducing the Kayānids, the *Naṣiḥatnāmeh* described how this dynasty rose to power to answer 'the Iranian plea for deliverance'.[173] Marāghe-i, writing for a recently re-established Ṣafavid sovereign, was probably attempting a parallel here between the Kayānids and the Ṣafavids. Just as the Kayānids had once saved the Iranians by casting the enemy back beyond the realm's frontiers, the Ṣafavids under Ṭahmāsp were gracing the Iranians with their sovereignty as they ousted the Afghans.

Mana Kia argues that 'people were central to the meaning of place' across the Persianate world, and that the identity of collectives was entangled with the places in which they were conceptually situated.[174] What distinguished the self and the other was partly grounded in the place where the self and the other were thought to belong. Such a sense of belonging went hand in hand with collective characteristics which were assigned to 'us' as well as 'them'.[175] The contrast, even outright enmity, between Iran and non-Iran, Iranians and non-Iranians, was present in how Ṣafavid supporters articulated their sense of Iranian identity.

Besides Ḥazin, Moḥammad-Shafiʿ Ṭehrāni also defined his Iranianness through negative references to the other. Ṭehrāni (b. 1677) was a poet and historian whose father emigrated from Tehran to the capital Eṣfehān, and from there to the port city of Surat in West Hendustān. This was Ṭehrāni's birthplace. He never laid eyes on his ancestral hometown, nor did he ever journey to Iran.[176] Yet his poems and historical writings suggested a strong sense of belonging to an Iranian collective. Ḥazin and Ṭehrāni, then, were writing as expatriates from Hendustān. Since the sixteenth century, Ṣafavid era emigres from Iran had penned works in which they pined for Iran and sometimes denigrated Hendustān. These literary works were part of a genre called *ghorbat*, in which the poet expressed longing and nostalgia for people and places left behind, frequently accompanied by lamenting his or her current

[172] Naṣir b. Ḥāji Maʿṣum Marāghehi, *Naṣiḥatnāmeh*, Tehran University Library, Persian MS, No. 2799M. See fol. 152v for the date of the manuscript, which is the original, written by Marāghehi himself. See the notes and comments of the archivist attached to the front of the manuscript.

[173] Ibid, fol. 36r where the precise wording is '*esteghāṡat-e Irāniān*'.

[174] Kia, *Persianate*, p. 42.

[175] Straub, 'Personal and Collective', pp. 69–72.

[176] Mansur Sifatgol, 'Moḥammad Shafiʿ Ṭehrāni: Zamāneh, Zandegi, va Āṡār', in *Merāt-e Vāredāt*, (Tehran, 2004), pp. 22.

circumstances or surroundings.[177] It is tempting to situate Ḥazin and Ṭehrāni in this tradition, but their formulation of a collective identity rooted in a territorial belonging to Iran and the moral delineation of the Iranian self from the inferior others was a new discourse with no precedents in the earlier pre-1722 emigre literature.[178] The main themes which the pre-1722 emigres were concerned about were lack of patronage in Iran and the expectation that in Hendustān they could find reward for their talents. They complained of the scorching hot weather in Hendustān and the chilling cold in Iran alike. They expressed longing for their friends and family left in Iran. Sometimes their hopes for generous patronage were not rewarded in Hendustān and they denigrated it, while other times they praised Hendustān above all other realms including Iran.[179]

For example, the mid-seventeenth-century poet Ashraf Māzandarāni wrote of Hendustān as the heart of darkness. Yet, Māzandarāni associated this darkness with divine spiritual silence gained in the heart of night (*del-e shab*) which Hendustān exemplified. For Māzandarāni, 'the darkness of Hend resembles the rose garden of dreams', and 'His providence is manifest in Hendustān ⁘ God's grace is all the greater in the heart of darkness'.[180] This sacral appreciation for Hendustān is a far cry from Ḥazin's exclusive sacralisation of Iran and denigration of non-Iran as Ahrimanic. Ḥazin and Ṭehrāni's affirmations of Iranianness, then, were a post-1722 discourse centred on territorial space and collective characteristics assigned to that space and the people who inhabit it.

In the preface to his *Tārikh-e Chaqatāy*, written in 1727,[181] Ṭehrāni introduced himself through verse, 'My origins lie in the garden of Tehran ⁘ which adorns the orchard that is Iran ⁘ … Simply let there be no question here, I am Iranian ⁘ I speak the truth, for I am not Turānian'.[182] The emphatic declaration of Iranian identity expressed a host of assumptions by Ṭehrāni regarding what characterised the collective self as well as the other. Ṭehrāni's word as an Iranian was supposedly beyond reproach. He considered his Iranianness to entail his

[177] Julie Scott Meisami, 'Places in the Past: The Poetics/Politics of Nostalgia', in *Edebiyât*, Vol. 8, (1998), pp. 63–106; Kia, *Persianate*, p. 64.

[178] This eighteenth-century shift is acknowledged by Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries 1400–1800*, (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 241–242; Kia, *Persianate*, pp. 65–66.

[179] For an overview of the émigré literature in the subcontinent and the diversity of views it contained see Aziz Ahmad, 'Ṣafawid Poets and India', in *Iran*, Vol. 14, (1976), pp. 117–132.

[180] Stephen F. Dale, 'A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness: The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, (2003), pp. 204–205.

[181] Ibid, pp. 22–23, when Ṭehrāni was fifty years old.

[182] Quoted from Ṭehrāni's *Tārikh-e Chaqatāy*. in Sifatgol 'Moqaddameh', p. 20.

truthfulness. The inferior other, the Turānian, was contrasted in his dishonesty and deceitfulness to the self. Compare this with Ḥazin's perception of the self as 'courageous' and the other as 'cowardly'.

Even after Ṭahmāsp's deposition by Nāder in 1732, after which Ḥazin eventually fled Iran for Hendustān, he retained a distinct sense of the Iranian self which he differentiated from the Hendustānian other. The 'duplicitous and self-interested' nature of the Hendustānians was linked by Ḥazin to 'the effects of Hendustān's water and climate, as it is apparent that the people of this land do not seek friendship without selfish intentions'.[183] This was in contrast to the people of Iran who inhabited the 'most beneficent and perfect habitation in the known world', giving them a natural superiority innate to their realm, meaning they could never choose to live in Hendustān of their own free will. 'This understanding is shared by kings, commoners, and soldiers'.[184] Iranians, from royal to peasant, collectively belonged to a superior realm and shared superior characteristics which distinguished them from peoples from other realms. Territorial belonging and moral superiority were directly linked. While the self was constant—Iranians—the role of the other could be filled by various peoples. For Ṭehrāni it was the Turānians, for Ḥazin it was the Hendustānians, and for Nadim, 'our' enemy was the Afghan, driven by 'duplicity and deceit'.[185] Iranian identity formation in this period featured the creation of a binary in which the self was sharply delineated from the other in terms of collective territorial belonging and moral characteristics.

For Ṭehrāni, much like for Ḥazin, Shi'ism formed an important element in their support for the Ṣafavids as Iranians. Shi'i motifs permeated Ṭehrāni's history of Ṣafavid collapse and resurgence in his *Mer'āt-e Vāredāt* (*Reflections on Incoming News*), which he penned in 1730 just after Ṭahmāsp and Nāder had vanquished the Afghans and retaken Eṣfehān.[186] The continuity in Shi'i sovereignty under the Ṣafavids defined the structure of Ṭehrāni's history. It began not with recent events, but with the establishment of the Ṣafavi order under Sheykh Ṣafioddin, and the first quarter of the history is dedicated to a chronology of the Ṣafavid dynasty up to the Afghan invasion. Non-Ṣafavid claimants to the throne, whether the Hotakids or Malek-Maḥmud's Kayānids, were all attacked as usurpers.[187] Legitimate

[183] Ḥazin, *Tārikh*, pp. 271–272; Kia, *Persianate*, p. 59.

[184] Ḥazin, *Tārikh*, pp. 272–273; Kia, *Persianate*, pp. 63–64.

[185] Nadim, 'Ashʿār', p. 1308.

[186] Ibid, p. 32.

[187] Ṭehrāni, *Mer'āt*, pp. 71–102, 139, and all throughout non-Ṣafavids are described as illegitimate.

sovereignty belonged exclusively to Shāh Ḥoseyn and his son Ṭahmāsp after him. Ṭehrāni labelled the rebellions against Shāh Ḥoseyn as 'seditions' (*fetan*) perpetrated by Khārejis, bestowing sacrality to Ṣafavid rule and profanity to rebellion against it.[188] Ṭehrāni traced the origin of the 'anguish suffered by the people of Iran' to the beginning of Khāreji rebellions against the martyred (*shahid*) Shāh Ḥoseyn, using the sovereign's name to connote his execution at the hands of the Afghans with the martyrdom of Imam Ḥoseyn at Karbalā.[189] In this way, Ṭehrāni bound the people of Iran to the sacred Shi'i sovereignty of the Ṣafavids. The inception of sedition against the Ṣafavid order was corresponded to the inception of Iranian suffering. The implication was that continuity with Ṣafavid rule, represented by Ṭahmāsp's kingship, would relieve Iranians from their anguish.

Closely related to Ṭehrāni's conception of a Ṣafavid-inflected Iranian identity was his adoration of the Qezelbāsh. Ṭehrāni's description of Nāder's rise under Ṭahmāsp's banner is quite illustrative of the continued notion of Ṣafavid loyalty in Qezelbāsh identity. Ṭehrāni wrote that Nāder was first moved to act when he saw Malek-Maḥmud raising his sword against the Qezelbāsh.[190] Ṭehrāni praised Nāder for 'having been given the virtuous title and exalted moniker of Ṭahmāsp-Qoli (Ṭahmāsp's servant)'. In loyal service, Nāder led the Qezelbāsh army to victory over the Afghans, 'as the waves emanating from his sword-strikes rewatered the stream of sultanship', making Nāder 'the retainer to the royal threshold, providing succour to the (Ṣafavid) state and sultanate'.[191] For Ṭehrāni, being Qezelbāsh still involved loyal vassalage to the Ṣafavid state. Ṭehrāni's notions of Qezelbāsh and Iranian identity overlapped in this sense, reflecting Ṭahmāsp's own conception of being Iranian and Qezelbāsh which held loyalty to his dynastic state to be a defining feature.[192]

Some of Ṭahmāsp's supporters among the ulema engaged with the emergent discourse on Iranian identity in their call for religious war in the Ṣafavids' service. For example, Seyyed Moḥammad Sabzevāri, a learned jurist from Khorāsān, wrote his *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin* (*Exemplar of the Learned*) in 1727–1732 while Ṭahmāsp was fighting to recover territories from the Afghans and Ottomans.[193] The treatise was a juristic justification for engaging in military

[188] Ibid, pp. 99–100.

[189] Ibid, p. 107, 144.

[190] Ibid, p. 158.

[191] Ibid, pp. 176–177.

[192] See for example, Ṭahmāsp's letter to Esterābād's Qājārs discussed above.

[193] Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, 'Moqaddameh', in Seyyed Moḥammad Sabzevāri, *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin*, ed. Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, (Tehran, 1989), pp. 18, 25.

jihad under Ṭahmāsp's leadership, aiding in in the expulsion of Sunni enemies from Iran. By writing in Persian rather than Arabic, Sabzevāri may have sought to reach a wider audience. He even provided Persian translations next to all the Qur'anic verses and hadiths cited in his treatise, a rare choice in early modern treatises.[194] The *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin* began by explicating the author's reason for putting pen to paper: 'Because it has been several years since ill-fate and torment have plagued the followers of the Imams, specifically the people of Iran, who inhabit the abode and bastion of faith—meaning the Twelver creed. The evil infidels, particularly the Afghans, have prevailed'.[195] As the abode of the faith, Iran was an inherently Shi'i realm, and Iranians an inherently Shi'i people. The encroachment of the Sunni enemy upon this sacred abode had caused torment for all Iranians. The implication was that Iranians had a duty to expel the profane enemy from the sacred abode, and thus, Sabzevāri offered a jurisprudential explanation for why this duty was religiously incumbent upon Iran's people. The sectarian differentiation of the Iranian self from the foreign other served to rally support for Ṭahmāsp's state.

In contrast to Neyrizi who regarded the Ṣafavids as traitors to Iranian Shi'ism, Sabzevāri argued that Iranians had a Shi'i duty to help restore the Ṣafavid state. Both of these ulema engaged with notions of Iranian identity and pined for the restoration of Shi'i sovereignty in the realm. But as a Sufi, Neyrizi was angered by his marginalisation from the centres of power by the Ṣafavids, while Sabzevāri came from a distinguished family of jurists whom the Ṣafavids had assigned as tax magistrates in Sabzevār since the sixteenth century.[196] Therefore, while both Neyrizi and Sabzevāri engaged with notions of Iranian Shi'ism, their divergent material interests drove them to different conclusions regarding whether the Ṣafavid state was the legitimate protector of the collective self.

The munificent restoration of the Ṣafavid state under Ṭahmāsp

Just as Ṭahmāsp sought to restore the Ṣafavid state by emphasising ideological continuity with his forefathers, he also sought administrative continuity with the established Ṣafavid model of decentralised governance. The local elites, and the reaffirmation of the appanages they had enjoyed up to the conquest of Eṣfehān, were an important part of Ṭahmāsp's efforts to reforge the state. Ideologically, Ṭahmāsp and his supporters were presenting him to Iran's Shi'i elites as the realm's saviour and restorer. Accordingly, the administrative and fiscal

[194] Ibid, pp. 23–25. See above for the significance of Persian in reaching broader audiences.

[195] Sabzevāri, *Zeyn*, p. 40.

[196] Amin, 'Moqaddameh', pp. 7–9.

relations of the new Ṣafavid state had to reflect the interests of these elites. In order for them to pledge their loyal service to Ṭahmāsp's state, they had to become convinced of its munificence (*dowlat*). Ṭahmāsp had to confirm or re-confirm the elites in the positions and privileges which they enjoyed under previous Ṣafavid rulers like his father. This meant a return to the decentralised model of the Ṣafavid state where military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic elites where munificently granted assignments, exemptions, and titles. Thus, a major concern in Ṭahmāsp's efforts for forming a new Ṣafavid state was continuity with the past, signalling to Iran's Shi'i elites that their interests were going to be safe just as they had been under Ṭahmāsp's forefathers.

When Ṭahmāsp and his retainers escaped the Afghan encirclement of Eṣfehān in 1722, it was expected he would return shortly at the head of a relief army. The general state of turmoil gripping the country at the time made this impossible. Many provinces in the north and the west were subjected to Russian and Ottoman invasions, while many unoccupied provinces and clans were in open defiance of any central authority. Ṭahmāsp and his retinue, with little to no coercive means at their disposal, were tasked with reincorporating Iran's elites back into a Ṣafavid structure in order to raise troops and funds. Ṭahmāsp's faction was in no position to impose itself militarily or administratively since the central chancellery's staff were still being besieged in Eṣfehān. Ṭahmāsp had to build a new state from the ground up, negotiating with local elites to gain access to their military and fiscal resources. This kind of early modern state formation was primarily built on the cohesion of a loyal band of followers around a leader, not the centralisation of military and fiscal administration.[197] Ṭahmāsp's faction had to offer amiable arrangements to those it wished to subordinate by granting new land-revenue assignments; the validation of previous assignments; and the granting of titles, robes of honour, or fiscal exemptions. In essence, Ṭahmāsp had to utilise his position as a Ṣafavid sovereign to legitimate the elite's ownership over lands and titles—to emanate his munificence on his subjects and gain their loyalty in return. Acquiring the support of local commanders and military governors across Iran was a prerequisite for Ṭahmāsp, who had to offer these elites attractive terms for submission. This usually took the form of devolving local resources and administrative duties to their charge. In the following sections we will examine how Ṭahmāsp acquired the loyalty of various military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic elites for his mission to restore the Ṣafavid state.

[197] Jos Gommans, 'Warband', p. 299; Jo Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 43.

Commanders and military governors in Ṭahmāsp's state

The military and bureaucratic classes were indispensable for the formation of a new state. Some of the most promising candidates for incorporation into Ṭahmāsp's state were those who had previously served the Ṣafavids for generations. One of Ṭahmāsp's edicts, issued in early 1724, concerned a military governor in the Caucasus. Aḥmad Khān Usami was reminded of the military and chancellery services rendered by him and his 'fathers and forefathers', emphasising the need for continuity in service.[198] The reward for re-subordination to the Ṣafavids was hinted at: 'in return for those services [rendered by Usami's family], they were the recipients of sultanic bounty, and no service has ever gone unrewarded by this lofty dynasty'.[199] This point was made more explicitly further on in the edict. All those who had forsaken the Ṣafavids, could return to the fold 'so that each may receive a letter of pardon, along with robes of honour, wages, salaries, and yearly assignments (*hameh-sāleh*) bestowed from our bounteousness'.[200] Another edict, issued to Usami Khān in the same month, reiterated these same arguments, emphasising inter-generational loyalty to the Ṣafavids, and promising munificent rewards for those willing to resume service to the Ṣafavid state.[201]

Evidently, these appeals did not fall on deaf ears. A few months after these two edicts, a new one was issued, acknowledging a letter to Ṭahmāsp from Usami Khān in which the latter 'declared his obedience and informed us he is marching with his troops towards Shamākhi to do battle with the Ottomans'.[202] The edict rewarded Usami Khān with a robe of honour. It also commanded him to hold fast as two other Ṣafavid commanders from Ardabil and the Shamkhālate had been sent to aid him against the Ottomans. This meant that Ṭahmāsp had several commanders who had already pledged their service to him from neighbouring regions, allowing him to coordinate their efforts to resist the Ottoman army. The robes of honour (*khalʿat*) which these commanders received were more than just expensive items of clothing.[203] They frequently signified the bestowal of additional goods, such as Arabian horses, gem-studded weapons and armour. The value of such gifts could reach hundreds,

[198] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. II, doc. 73, p. 257.

[199] Ibid.

[200] Ibid, p. 258.

[201] Ibid, pp. 261–262.

[202] Ibid, doc. 74, p. 263.

[203] Stewart Gordon, 'Conclusions', in *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India, ed. Stewart Gordon*, (Oxford and New York, 2003), pp. 140–146.

sometimes thousands, of *tumān*s.[204] The bestowal of a robe was intended to send a message. Deserving followers were rewarded, while erring magnates who repented received a *khalʿat* to signal their renewed loyalty.[205] Ṭahmāsp sending Usami Khān a robe of honour, demonstrated the former's munificence while heralding the submission of the latter and his troops to the Ṣafavid state. The military nobility, such as Usami Khān, received support in defending their local lands from foreign Ottoman aggression. They may also have harboured ideological reasons, such as resisting the encroachment of Sunni enemies on sacred Iranian territory.

It was not always Ṭahmāsp who contacted the elite in the hopes of gaining their submission. There are several edicts which show various magnates contacted Ṭahmāsp's court in the hopes of being granted fiscal privileges or having these re-confirmed. In 1723, an edict acknowledges the receipt of a Yerevanian commander's tribute, and his 'request for royal orders confirming trade privileges for Yerevan's merchants, and the return of a property confiscated by the crown'.[206] This may have been an example of a nobleman who lost favour under the previous Ṣafavid state and was seeking to regain it under the new one. Both the commander's requests were granted. However, the edict declared that despite the commander's recent victories against the rebellious Kurds in the area, he was not to expect any more royal favours until he had captured Mākuyeh Castle and pacified the region. The arrangement, then, was mutually beneficial: the commander sent tribute to the Ṭahmāsp and fought against the locals who resisted Ṣafavid authority, while the state returned the commander's property and granted him trade permits to simulate commerce in his jurisdiction. In line with the old Ṣafavid model, Ṭahmāsp's state acted as the legitimator of the material interests of the elite, who repaid the state by offering their military services, part of their incomes as either tribute or tax, and of course, their political loyalty.

Ṭahmāsp began distributing prestigious titles and lucrative offices to enfranchise more of the elites into his state. Those who were bound to the Ṣafavids through generations of servitude could expect to be offered high positions. The edicts to Usami Khān, emphasising his family's inter-generational service to the dynasty, are examples of how Ṭahmāsp sought continuity with the Ṣafavid past. Old Ṣafavid titles were revived for some of Ṭahmāsp's

[204] Ibid; Floor, 'Khelʿat', in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2017), pp. 226–229.

[205] Ibid.

[206] Iraj Afshar (ed.), 'Aḥkām-e Marbuṭ beh Khāndān-e Saʿdlu', in *Āyandeh*, Vol. 19, No. 4–6, (1993), pp. 471–472.

courtiers who had been in Ṣafavid service 'generation upon generation'.[207] A royal order from the 1720s read 'as we have seen fit to elevate those servants who generation upon generation have served this all-ruling dynasty, Moḥammad-ʿAli Khān is hereby appointed the overseer of the imperial workshops'.[208] The title of overseer of imperial workshops was an old title attested to in Ṣafavid-Hotakid administration manuals, like the *Dastur ol-Moluk*, which recorded that the holder of said title received the astronomic salary of 600 tumāns and was entitled to a percentage of the workshop's revenues and products.[209] The distribution of lucrative titles and offices among the old Ṣafavid elite was not merely to reincorporate them into the new state. It was simultaneously a way of distributing the state's revenues and resources, and thereby rebinding the elite's material interests to those of the state.

Ṭahmāsp's state adhered to the old Ṣafavid model in how it remunerated its military and civil servants. Rather than cash salaries paid from the central treasury, commanders and officials were given land-revenue assignments and enjoyed relative autonomy in administering their local resources. For example, a commander from North Āẕarbāijān wrote to Ṭahmāsp in 1724, requesting that he be given direct charge over more revenue sources in order to raise the necessary recruits. He was granted all his requests:

> [To the petitioning commander] we bestow fiscal responsibility over the Khalaj Turks and Armenians in the region; the four towns of Zangbān, Dārbālā, Piridār-bāz, Mokhtāri-Qapānāt; and the district's crown-administered estates (*khāleṣeh*) are to be removed from the royal overseer's charge, and turned over to you, so you may collect the revenues of the (formerly) crown-administered estates and dispatch them to the imperial treasury. You are to raise troops [with these incomes granted above] … and join forces with our military governors in Nakhjavān and Marand, where you will aid them in subduing the Armenian and Kurdish rebels and in resisting the Ottomans.[210]

Unlike the typical late-Ṣafavid *tiyul* which gave the holder the right to claim a part, or sometimes all, of a district's revenues from the chancellery's tax collectors, this edict granted complete fiscal and administrative control to the recipient. All the 'fiscal responsibilities' (*motevajehāt*) for the region's Khalaj and Armenian communities, as well as the four towns,

[207] For example, Esterābādi, *Monshaʾāt*, fols. 42v–43r.

[208] Ibid, fols. 43v–44v.

[209] Anṣāri, *Dastur ol-Moluk*, pp. 118.

[210] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, doc. No. 76, pp. 270–271.

were entrusted to the commander. The revenues whose collection was previously the responsibility of a central official (royal overseer), were entrusted to the commander who could presumably charge his own administrative fees for the collections he made. The overall pattern of decentralised administration would have been familiar to older Ṣafavids, but the degree of local autonomy from the centre was reaching new heights. The reason for the accelerated decentralisation of the state was that Ṭahmāsp's political and military situation was quite dire throughout the 1720s. Compared to his Ṣafavid forebears, he was in a weaker position to negotiate with the elites, meaning that he had to devolve a larger share of the state's administration to their charge.

The decentralised structure of Ṭahmāsp's state must have been inviting to many military elites, permitting them to retain or even augment the administrative autonomy to which they had grown accustomed under the late-Ṣafavids. While the decentralised approach to state formation under Ṭahmāsp made it easier to co-opt Iran's elites, it also meant that the state's control over its subjects was necessarily precarious, even more so than in the late-Ṣafavid period. For example, an edict from 1732 demanded the commander of Yerevan province to allow the centre's tax officials to collect revenues in that region, and for the commander to join his forces with the main imperial army. The fact that the commander was disobedient, or at least prevaricating, is evident from the edict's ending: 'despite all the munificence he and his forefathers have received from our dynasty, why does he now prevaricate and endanger this state?'.[211] The cost of loyal service which some commanders imposed on the centre was egregious. Ṭahmāsp pledged the viceroyalty of Khorāsān to Nāder in exchange for him leading the Ṣafavid army to victory and the re-establishment of Ṭahmāsp's rule in ʿErāq and Fārs. In 1729, when Nāder accomplished these aims, his own military and political power had grown to such an extent that he made Ṭahmāsp concede the viceroyalty over not just Khorāsān, but Sistān, Māzandarān, Kermān, and Yazd also.[212] Other than the annual tribute he paid Ṭahmāsp in a display of political loyalty, he ruled his dominions with near-complete fiscal and military autonomy, minting his own coins and appointing his own officials.[213] The degree of decentralisation in Ṭahmāsp's state might have been unprecedented in Safavid history. Aside from the appanages of the military and bureaucratic elites, Ṭahmāsp also had to restore or expand those of the ecclesiastic elites. The incorporation of this latter group of

[211] Ibid.

[212] Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 155; Moḥammad-Jaʿfar Nāʾini, *Jāmeʿ-e Jaʿfari*, ed. Iraj Afshar, (Tehran, 1974), p. 282.

[213] See the next chapter for Nāder's takeover of the state.

elites into Ṭahmāsp's state and the consequences for state administration are examined in the following section.

Clerics and custodians under Ṭahmāsp's state

As the saviour of the Iranian Shi'a, Ṭahmāsp's state had to cultivate close relations with the realm's ecclesiastic elites, who had historically been one of the most important constituencies of the Ṣafavid state. More broadly, the state in the early modern Islamicate world was strongly connoted with faith (*din o dowlat*).[214] In the Ṣafavid context, the shāh was expected to spread the faith through his kingship and preserve the Shi'i community from the oppression of the Sunnis.[215] The expulsion of Ottoman and Afghan enemies had to be accompanied by the preservation of the material interests of the Shi'a. Much like the military and bureaucratic officials, the ecclesiastic elites looked to Ṭahmāsp's state to end Sunni sovereignty over Shi'i Iran, but also to preserve their revenue assignments, titles, and privileges in line with past Ṣafavid practices.

Many among the elite ecclesiastic classes were custodians over Iran's pious endowments, who held numerous estates and tax exemptions as *siyurghāl*s.[216] These custodianships were frequently called *siyurghāl*s because like the non-pious versions of the *siyurghāl*, they too were hereditary estates which enjoyed tax exemptions. The custodians usually came from distinguished clerical families and had *seyyed* lineage, meaning they held considerable influence among Iran's Shi'a from noblemen to peasants. The validation of custodianships and their accompanying fiscal privileges began as soon as Ṭahmāsp raised his claim to sovereignty. Similar to military governors and commanders, custodians began petitioning the court to have their old or new entitlements gain official recognition. The establishment of a Sunni dynasty in Eṣfehān probably caused unease for the custodians who might perceive a threat to their continued hold over the realm's endowments. The Afghans had expropriated many estates and endowments around Eṣfehān for the Hotakid crown.[217]

[214] Hagen, 'Legitimacy and World Order', p. 57; Abou El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, pp. 19–20; Āghājri, *Moqaddameh*, pp. 37–40.

[215] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 43, 53–55.

[216] See Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 60–71; and Ghereghlou, review of *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 815–818, for the growth of pious endowments under the Ṣafavids.

[217] Lambton, 'wakf'; Krusinski, *History*, Vol. II, pp. 101, 166–170.

The restoration of the Ṣafavid state under a prince who could preserve the custodians' material interests would have struck them as an attractive prospect. An example of this is to be found in 1724, when a large clan of seyyeds, the Jawrāmi Arabs,

> Came to the lofty court, informing us thusly: that their taxes and fiscal burdens are to be forgiven as part of their *siyurghāl* over the Ṣafih Ṣafavi mausoleum[218] in accordance with the decrees of past Ṣafavid sultans. They requested that our majesty validate their exemption from any levies or expenditures which might be imposed on them.[219]

The edict issued in response to this petition confirmed, based on chancellery documents submitted by the Jawrāmis, that they had held the *siyurghāl* since 1639. Based on these documents, the edict ratified their *siyurghāl* and declared them to be exempt from fifteen different taxes in kind 'and all other such levies'.[220] Another group of petitioners was mentioned in the edict: the Māruni Arabs, whose *siyurghāl* was also validated based on their possession of a seventeenth-century deed of assignment (*parvāncheh*).[221] These two examples underline the role played by pre-1722 chancellery documents in the state's pursuit of administrative continuity with the Ṣafavid past.

The political support of these influential custodians, and those under them, had historically been regarded as a central pillar of the Ṣafavid state. Endowments represented fiscal institutions through which the Ṣafavid *dowlat* grew deep roots in society, consolidating support from influential centres of religious authority, scholarship, and worship. Confirming or granting a custodianship over an endowment was a way of binding an influential social network to the state.[222] A deed of endowment from Shāh Soleymān (r. 1666–1694) placed twenty-seven shops under the custodian's charge for the upkeep of a madrassa, with the staff and students being implored to 'pray for the preservation of his state', a common instruction in such documents.[223] Ṭahmāsp followed in his grandfather's footsteps. In an edict, dated 1725, the appointed custodian was implored 'not to permit the endowment's retainers,

[218] This was the Queen consort of the Ṣafavid King Esmāʿil II (r. 1576–1577). She was known by her title Pari-Peykar Beygom.

[219] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, doc. No. 72, p. 253.

[220] Ibid, pp. 243–255.

[221] Ibid.

[222] Steenberg, 'Temur to Selim', p. 46; Aḥmadi, 'Tashayyoʿ va vaqf', pp. 41–62.

[223] Aḥmadi, 'Tashayyoʿ va vaqf', p. 51.

particularly the memorisers of the Qur'an (*ḥoffāẓ*), the reciters (*qorrāʾ*), servants, and Sufis to forget to offer their prayers for our imperial majesty'.[224]

Throughout 1725, Ṭahmāsp issued more edicts making custodians the exclusive beneficiaries to endowment revenues,[225] and even transferred some of the crown's estates to the endowments.[226] When he arrived in Khorāsān, he established close ties with the seyyed families in Mashhad, confirming them in various positions in the holy Rażavid shrine's endowment.[227] When the Afghans were ousted from ʿErāq, Ṭahmāsp began cultivating ties with the custodial families there too. In 1730, he issued an edict granting the custodians of Rey's Shāh ʿAbdolʿaẓim Shrine 'the same entitlements assigned to them previously… and the tax magistrates and agents of the chancellery are to know that we have renewed the endowment's former (tax) exemptions'.[228]

As Ṭahmāsp regained Eṣfehān and overthrew the Howtakids with Nāder's help, the Ṣafavid state engaged in restoring its patronage of the endowments by reconfirming custodianships and renewing their tax exemptions. Upon his triumphal entry into Eṣfehān, Ṭahmāsp appointed Ebrāhim Mirzā as ṣadr, a clerical posting which oversaw religious institutions, including endowments.[229] Given the devastation brought on Eṣfehān's endowments during the Afghan occupation, the newly appointed ṣadr was indispensable for their restoration. The ṣadr oversaw his own department, which issued *meśāl*s, or certifications of custodianship.[230]

One *meśāl* from 1731 illustrates how custodians who had been attacked and dispossessed under the Afghan occupation, petitioned the new Ṣafavid state to restore their endowments and fiscal privileges. Issued in February/March 1731, the *meśāl* reinstated the descendants of a deceased custodian of a Shi'i shrine in Eṣfehān's Golpāygān province. It mentioned that the custodianship of the shrine, and the seven plots of farmland attached to its endowment, belonged to a certain Mir Sharaf. The income of one of these seven plots was dedicated to the upkeep of the shrine, the rest going to the custodian himself. Mir Sharaf was killed during the

[224] Bert Fragner (ed), 'Ardabīl Zwischen Sultan und Schah. Zehn Urkunden Schah Ṭahmāsps II', in *Turcica*, Vol. 6, (1975), pp. 195–200.

[225] Ibid, doc. No. 6, pp. 177–225.

[226] M. Ẕabihi and M. Sotudeh, *Az Āstārā tā Esterābād*, Vol. 6, (Tehran, 1355 Sh./1975), doc. No. 2.

[227] Abulfażl Ḥasan-Ābādi (ed.), *Sādāt-e Rażavi-ye Mashhad: az āghāz tā pāyān-e Qājāriyeh*, (Tehran, 2008), docs. No. 5, 19, 29, 52, 56, pp. 336, 372–374, 393, 435, 439.

[228] Moḥammad-ʿAli Hedāyati (ed.), *Āstāneh-ye Rey: majmuʿeh-ye asnād va farāmin*, (Tehran, 1965), p. 105.

[229] Esterābādi, *Monshaʾāt*, fol. 46r.

[230] Marcinkowski, *Dastur*, p. 576.

Afghan occupation and the farms were laid to waste. The 'notables and trusted men' in Golpāygān sent a petition to the department of endowments on behalf of Mir Sharaf's two sons. It cited a past *meśāl* from 1116/1704–1705, which had recorded Mir Sharaf as the rightful custodian of the shrine. On the strength of that past document, the *meśāl* concluded that the custodianship was to be passed to Mir Sharaf's two sons, and that they were obligated to spend the income of one (out of seven plots of land) on the shrine's upkeep and use the rest at their own discretion. The endowment's overseers, servants, and workers were placed in the custodians' charge, meaning the two brothers had the authority to retain as many as they saw fit, fixing their salaries as they wished. This *meśāl* serves as an example of how the Shi'i elites were reinstated in the lucrative positions which their families had held since the days of Shāh Ḥoseyn or earlier, particularly in the field of endowments.

The state endeavoured to portray itself as the protector of Shi'i interests among not only Iran's elites, but also its commoners. In 1729, an edict was hacked onto a slab of white stone and installed in the forecourt of Kāshān's Meydān Mosque.[231] It began by declaring that 'our aim is but the expansion of the Twelver Shi'i faith. To aid the worshippers and to restore the provinces'. It denounced the extra-legal taxes which were imposed on the people of Kāshān by local officials. It ordered the chancellery's officials 'to set the levies in accordance with the actual quotas as determined by the tax assessments. Whoever imposes additional levies is no longer a Shi'i'. The fact that it was installed in a mosque where worshippers attended sermons and prayed communally shows that the edict was meant to be a public proclamation. Its abrogation of extra-legal taxation was done in a vociferously Shi'i language. The idea of the faith and state (*din o dowlat*) manifested here to protect the material interests of Kāshān's Shi'a. The reference to Ṭahmāsp's efforts to 'restore the provinces' was probably meant to underline Ṭahmāsp's mission to rid sacred Iranian territories from Sunni enemies. The public display was no doubt an attempt at binding the loyalties of the Shi'i inhabitants, especially the literate elite, to the Ṣafavid state. It is unknown to what extent the edict was adhered to by the locals. The fact that it had to be issued in the first place demonstrates that Ṭahmāsp's state had weak oversight over its provincial officials, a consequence of its thoroughly decentralised structure.

[231] This epigraph has been transcribed in Navāʾi, *Nāder*, pp. 107–108.

Conclusion

The fall of the Ṣafavid state in 1722 and the subsequent partition of Iran had profound consequences for ideological discussions on identity and legitimacy among the elites. The emergent discourse on Iranian identity was used by different actors to express alternative visions for a new state. Each of these visions reflected the ideological and material interests of its respective authors. The efforts of the Hotakids to legitimate themselves as the new shāhs of Iran, ruling over an Iranian collective composed of Afghan Sunnis and non-Afghan Shi'a, was largely rejected by the realm's Shi'i elites. Many of them were incensed that a Sunni Afghan dynasty had seized the mantle of sovereignty over the realm and they did not view the Afghans as fellow Iranians. The widespread expropriation of estates by the Hotakids, despite their claims to adhere to Ṣafavid precedents in respecting the elites' appanages, almost certainly fuelled this rejection of their state. A discourse began to emerge which integrated a collective territorial belonging to Iran with Shi'ism, delineating the Iranian self from the foreign other who was primarily identified as Sunni. As far as these elites were concerned, Shi'ism was inextricably linked to Iran and Iranianness, making it a collective duty to resist the presence of Sunni powers like the Hotakids and Ottomans on sacred Iranian soil. Iranian deliverance was only possible through the expulsion of foreign enemies and the establishment of a new Shi'i state over the realm.

While engagement with notions of Iranian-Shi'i identity were near ubiquitous, there was little consensus on what the new state would look like. The different states proposed by the elite reflected their divergent ideological and material interests. For some, like Nadim and the author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, the Ṣafavids were no longer necessary for realising Shi'i sovereignty over Iran. Nadim pined for a millenarian state to be established through the Imams' divine intervention. He was silent on the character and lineage of who would lead such a millenarian revolution in the temporal plain, leaving the possibility open that a man from a non-seyyed, and perhaps even non-aristocratic background, could be chosen by the Imams. This left his options open for seeking a new patron among the new leaders rising to form a Shi'i state over the realm. The author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh*, on the other hand, rejected the Ṣafavids as the only viable seyyeds for ruling a Shi'i state, accusing them of having forsaken Iran's honour. He beseeched the Imams to send for another line from their progeny to form a new dynastic state. Despite some early flirtations with the Ṣafavid cause, Neyrizi too became disillusioned with the Ṣafavids' restoration, arguing that they had betrayed Iranian Shi'ism. For Neyrizi, a Sufi elder, his questioning of the Ṣafavids'

Iranianness, and thus, their legitimacy, was rooted in their marginalisation of Sufis from positions of power and influential offices of the state. In this way, his ideological enmity with the Ṣafavids reflected the marginalised interests of himself and his religious class.

In contrast with all these visions for a new state, was the Ṣafavid one. Ṭahmāsp and his supporters engaged with the new discourses prevailing among the elites, articulating an ideological narrative in which he was the saviour of the Iranian Shi'a and the only man capable of ridding the realm of its Sunni foes. The incorporation of these new concepts did not lead to the abandonment of the traditional elements of Ṣafavid ideology. Similar to his forefathers, Ṭahmāsp's coins and seals attested to his identity as the foremost descendant of the Twelve Imams, and as the millenarian sovereign ruling on their behalf. For Ṭahmāsp, and many of his supporters such as Ḥazin and Sabzevāri, the introduction of Iranianness complimented rather than challenged the long-established discourses in Ṣafavid ideology.

Ṭahmāsp, then, was equating the recovery of Iranian fortune and the defeat of the collective enemy with re-establishing continuity with the Ṣafavid past. This continuity was also evident in the decentralised institutional and administrative structure of his state, with the appanages of the elites ratified and expanded. To convince the elites to join his cause, Ṭahmāsp resorted to displays of munificence (*dowlat*), offering generous terms for their subordination under his state. Local elites retained and sometimes expanded their autonomy in governing the military and fiscal assets in their jurisdictions. Military elites sought Ṭahmāsp's legitimation of their land-revenue assignments as they pledged to join efforts in fighting off Afghan and Ottoman armies. Another group of elites who developed close relations with the new state were the ecclesiastic class, many of whom were either custodians of, or involved in administering, the endowments across Iran. Ideologically hostile to Sunni sovereignty over Shi'i Iran, they viewed the Hotakids' expropriation of endowment lands as a serious threat to their interests. Ṭahmāsp ratified and sometimes expanded their custodianships and accompanying exemptions.

However, the confirmation of the custodians' tax-exempt assignments meant that major revenue streams were diverted from the central treasury. More broadly, while the confirmation of the elites' appanages by Ṭahmāsp was successful in attracting enough support for him to oust the Hotakids and regain central Iran, the restored Ṣafavid state which he ruled was weaker and more decentralised than before 1722. In other words, the restoration of the Ṣafavid state bolstered the power of the local elites relative to the imperial centre. One of the beneficiaries of this shift in the balance of power between centre and periphery was

Ṭahmāsp’s ambitious commander-in-chief, Nāder, who held the eastern half of Iran as his appanage. Unsatiated, he had an eye on expanding yet further.

Chapter Three
Nāder, the Unoriginal Saviour

For the first ten years of Nāder's career as a general, from 1726 to 1736, he was officially a vassal of the Ṣafavid household. He derived much of his legitimacy from his loyal service to the dynasty. Yet, concurrently with his support for Ṭahmāsp's restoration of Ṣafavid rule in Iran, Nāder was engaged in establishing his own power base in Khorāsān, and gradually, across the rest of Iran. Nāder wrested increasing power over the state from Ṭahmāsp, ostensibly to better serve the Ṣafavid cause. Nāder shared much in common with Ṭahmāsp in terms of ideology as he too engaged with notions of Iran-Realm, Iranianness, and Shi'ism. As Nāder accumulated military glory he began identifying himself, not Ṭahmāsp, as the divinely ordained saviour of Iran and the Iranian Shi'a. Despite this, Nāder was careful not to draw the ire of the Ṣafavids' numerous supporters by abrogating the dynasty and he retained them as useful puppets for years. During these years, Nāder and his supporters laid the ideological groundwork for disassociating both Iran and the state from Ṣafavid sovereignty. Eventually, Nāder and his supporters began claiming that he was acting in the interests of the Iranian state and people, legitimating his de facto sovereignty.

After a brief chronological overview of Nāder's rise, the chapter's first section examines his early years of vassalage to Ṭahmāsp, explaining how Nāder used his vassal status to exercise various state powers, especially military powers, on behalf of his overlord. As Ṭahmāsp's commander-in-chief, Nāder aided the Ṣafavid mission to save the Iranian Shi'i self by expelling the Sunni Afghan other. Nāder's ideology, then, was derivative of his overlord's. The second section argues that Nāder's victories against the Afghans allowed him to step outside Ṭahmāsp's shadow, and a new ideology was constructed which tied Nāder's loyalties to the Shi'i Imams rather the Ṣafavids per se. The Imams were portrayed as bestowing Nāder with a millenarian mandate to save the Iranians from foreign occupation. By implication, Nāder was beholden to the Imams and his duty was to his fellow Iranians, meaning he legitimately could act against the Ṣafavids if the need arose. The third section shows how Nāder exploited Ṭahmāsp's defeat and cession of territory to the Ottomans as a pretext for dethroning him. Drawing on his millenarian Imami mandate, Nāder seized de facto control as regent in order to recapture lost Iranian territories and free its people from Sunni oppression.

The disassociation of the Ṣafavids from the state intensified under Nāder's regency, allowing him to accumulate power as he ostensibly pursued the interests of an Iranian state.

The latter half of the chapter focuses on how Nāder's regency harnessed the ideological power of his role as the saviour of the Iranians to centralise state administration under his person. Through centralisation, Nāder undermined any attempts by other elites to challenge his hold over the state. The fourth section and fifth sections explore Nāder's increase of central revenues by reforming Iran's tax administration and expropriating land-revenue assignments. The sixth section will give an understanding of how these augmented revenues were used by Nāder to centralise military expenditures including salaries, procurement, and logistics. The result was an effective military force beholden directly to Nāder, enabling him to wage wars in pursuit of what he claimed were the interests of the Iranian state.

Chronological overview of Nāder's rise (1726–1736)

A petty warlord in the mountains to the north of Mashhad, Nāder was a peripheral figure even within Khorāsān's elite circles. He had resisted Malek-Maḥmud, the self-declared Kayānid Shāh in Mashhad, fighting several indecisive battles. Nāder's fortunes began to change with the arrival of Ṭahmāsp II in Khorāsān in 1726. Nāder took his 2,000-strong warband to welcome Ṭahmāsp as the true sovereign of Iran. After pledging his loyalty, Nāder joined his new overlord to lay siege to Malek-Maḥmud in Mashhad. After Mashhad was conquered, Ṭahmāsp's court and the army were increasingly dominated by Nāder's charisma. Nāder wrested de facto control from his overlord in military affairs and was also given the authority to raise revenues to pay his troops.

Ṭahmāsp pledged that he would give Nāder autonomous rule over Khorāsān as viceroy if he could defeat the Afghans and bring the rest of Iran back under Ṣafavid control. By instituting a series of tactical reforms in the army, Nāder was able to defeat the Hotakids in several battles in 1729–1730, regaining central and southern Iran for his sovereign while securing his viceroyalty over Khorāsān. In 1731, Nāder struck west against the Ottomans and gained a few victories but had to disengage upon hearing that the Abdāli Afghans of Herāt had begun raiding his lands in Khorāsān. In Nāder's absence, Ṭahmāsp attempted to resume the offensive against the Ottomans, with disastrous consequences. Soundly beaten, Ṭahmāsp signed a peace treaty in 1732 which ceded all possessions north of the Araxes River (the border between modern-day Iran and Azerbaijan) to the Porte. Having made short work of the Abdālis, Nāder saw the ignominious peace as an opportunity to expand his power.

Nāder declared that the peace was illegitimate, promising to resume the war and regain all lost territories. He appealed to the nobles of the realm to join him in rejecting the peace. Nāder marched on Eṣfehān where he orchestrated an assembly of nobles in which it was agreed to depose Ṭahmāsp and enthrone his infant son, ʿAbbās III Ṣafavi (r. 1732–1736). Nāder was made regent of the state, acting as the de facto shāh of Iran. Despite some setbacks in his war with the Ottomans, by 1735 Nāder had managed to drive them out of all the territories which they had annexed from the Ṣafavids since 1722. Relying on his distinguished military record, Nāder began plotting to seize the throne for himself.

Ṭahmāsp-Qoli

The earlier period of Nāder's political career as a Ṣafavid vassal bore striking parallels with Timur's rise as a vassal of the Chaghatayid Chinggisid line.[1] The comparison was one which Nāder and his supporters were keen to emphasise, and Timur's career was not uncommonly viewed as a roadmap for Nāder's ascent. Neither Nāder nor Timur could claim royal lineage; both came from relatively humble origins. Timur's legitimacy initially rested on his claim to be the loyal protector and vassal of the Chaghatayid khān.[2] Timur's pursuit of political power was justified in the context of his services to, and connections with, his Chaghatayid overlord, and so it was with Nāder and the Ṣafavid shāh. Timur and his sons married Chaghatayid princesses, connecting his lineage with that of the ruling household. While royal and imperial titles were reserved for his nominal overlord, Timur adopted the title of *gurkān* (imperial son-in-law), proclaiming its significance on coinage, chancellery documents, and patronised court literature.[3] As Timur expanded his control over Central Asia and the Iranian Plateau, he legitimated his conquests by claiming them to be the re-establishment of Chinggisid suzerainty over lost dominions.[4] These are paralleled by Nāder's early claims to be the restorer of Ṣafavid rule over lost Iranian lands. As Timur accumulated conquests, the

[1] Beatrice F. Manz, 'Tamerlane's Career and its Uses', in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2002), pp. 12–14; idem; 'The Empire of Tamerlane as an Adaptation of the Mongol Empire: An answer to David Morgan, "The Empire of Tamerlane: An Unsuccessful Re-Run of the Mongol State?"', in *Journal of the royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, Vol. 26, No. 1–2, (2016), p. 290; Sholeh Quinn, 'Notes on Timurid Legitimacy in Three Safavid Chronicles', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (1998), pp. 149–158.

[2] Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship*, p. 157; Sheila S. Blair, 'Timurid Signs of Sovereignty', in *Oriente Moderno*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (1996), p. 558.

[3] Ibid, p. 157; Manz, 'Empire of Tamerlane', p. 285.

[4] John E. Woods, 'Timur's Genealogy', in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, eds. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), pp. 106–109; Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship*, p. 157.

grandeur of his accomplishments presented their own legitimating logic.[5] The attainment of military victory was of paramount importance to legitimating political power, precisely because it was understood to be a consequence of divine favour—referred to as *qut* in the Turco-Mongol tradition and as *dowlat* in the Perso-Arabic world.[6] Increasingly, Timur was seen as legitimate due to his own *qut-dowlat* as demonstrated by his conquests rather than just his loyal vassalage to the Chaghatayid line. Nāder followed many of these Timurid precedents in constructing the ideological foundations of his legitimacy. Much like Timur, Nāder initially derived his mandate from his Ṣafavid overlord, but increasingly attained legitimacy in his own right as he accumulated military glory.

The numismatic evidence from the mid-1720s demonstrates Nāder's efforts to publicise his subservience to Ṭahmāsp II. In 1727, after killing his rivals at court, Nāder was appointed as the commander of the royal guards (*qurchi-bāshi*). His authority reached far beyond the purview of his official position. As de facto military leader of Ṭahmāsp's army, Nāder was given the mandate to raise troops and to collect revenues to pay them.[7] Ostensibly, he was even given permission to mint his own coins. In medieval and early modern Islamicate societies, the striking of coinage was recognised as a marker of sovereignty.[8] There were examples, however, of non-imperial authorities and vassals who held the right to issue local coins in their own name. Nonetheless, they were usually obliged to acknowledge their imperial overlord by name.[9] Nāder was no different. In 1727, the legend on his first coin read, 'Perhaps my fortunate steps tread upon the high heavens ⁘ for the shāh has designated me Ṭahmāsp-Qoli Khān'.[10] Ṭahmāsp-Qoli was Turkish for 'Ṭahmāsp's servant'. All the soldiers, retainers, scribes, and traders in Nāder's camp held coins in their hands which explicitly testified to the loyal obsequiousness of their general to Ṭahmāsp. Nāder's mandate was based directly on his subservience to his Ṣafavid overlord.

[5] Manz, 'Tamerlane's Career', p. 4; Markiewicz, *Crisis of Kingship*, p. 158.

[6] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 124; Iver B. Neumann and Einar Wigen, 'The Legacy of Eurasian Nomadic Empires: Remnants of the Mongol Imperial Tradition', in *Legacies of Empire*, ed. Sandra Halperin and Ronen Palan, pp. 102–103.

[7] Mostowfi, *Zobdat*, p. 148.

[8] C. E. Bosworth and R. E. Darley-Doran, 'Sikka', in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden, 1997), Vol. 9, pp. 591–599; Michael Bates, 'Methodology in Islamic Numismatics', *As-Sikka: The Online Journal of the Islamic Coins Group* 2.3 [accessed 27/05/2022] http://www.islamiccoinsgroup.50g.com/

[9] Stephen Album, *Marsden's Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*, (New York, 1977), pp. 13–16; Paul Balog, *The Coinage of the Ayyubids*, (London, 1980), pp. 24–25.

[10] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 7.

Nāder made excellent use of the military and economic resources he gained access to as Ṭahmāsp-Qoli.[11] By 1729, he led a vigorously drilled army to a series of victories against the Afghans, re-enthroning Ṭahmāsp in Eṣfehān. While Ṭahmāsp took over control of central ʿErāq and Fārs, he bestowed Khorāsān to Nāder as a viceroyalty. In Iran, just as in other Turco-Mongol polities, the attainment of military glory was understood to be a clear indicator of divine favour, enabling one to wield power over the state.[12] These successes allowed Nāder to strike a new legend on his coinage which reflected his growing legitimacy, but still bound him to the Ṣafavid sovereign. His coins from 1729 onwards were graven with the couplet: 'Through the munificence of God, I am most prodigious (*Nāder*) in bestowing the crown ⁘ there are none as gallant as ʿAli, there is no sword mightier than Ẕu-l-faqār'.[13] Nāder was no longer the mere servant (*qol*) of Ṭahmāsp, but the divinely ordained ʿAlid warrior who had bestowed Ṭahmāsp the crown (*tāj-bakhsh*). Unlike the previous coinage, the new one mentioned Nāder by name while it only referred to Ṭahmāsp indirectly as the object of Nāder's munificence. By implication, sovereignty emanated from Nāder, legitimating his wielding of it on behalf of the shāh.

The central protagonist in the quest for the restoration of the Ṣafavid state was no longer Ṭahmāsp, but Nāder himself. This shift in protagonists is evident when one compares Nāder's coinage to Ṭahmāsp's. Previously, 'Ṭahmāsp the second minted coin upon sublime gold ⁘ there are none as gallant as ʿAli, there is no sword mightier than Ẕu-l-faqār',[14] but by 1730, Nāder was the true wielder of the sword of Ẕu-l-faqār—the true ʿAlid warrior who had restored the Shi'i sovereignty of the Ṣafavids. Ṭahmāsp was supplanted. The implication was that Nāder, due to his sacred conquests in service of the Ṣafavid line, had legitimate claim to power within the state he had restored.

In the ideological paradigm that Nāder was articulating based on the decentralised nature of the Ṣafavid state, there was an implicit understanding that Nāder held the right to exercise sovereignty on Ṭahmāsp's behalf. Nāder asserted his shared power over the state by associating himself with several markers of imperial sovereignty: striking coins in his own name, donning the imperial aigrette (*jeqqeh*), and inter-marrying with the imperial household.

[11] For the administrative reforms in Nāder's early career see the later sections in this chapter.

[12] Joseph Fletcher, 'Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire', in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 3/4, No. 1, (1979–1980), p. 243; Jack Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 124.

[13] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', pp. 7–8.

[14] Esmāʿili, *Seals and Coins*, p. 52.

Ṭahmāsp had pledged Nāder his sister's hand in marriage should he succeed in liberating Eṣfehān from the Afghans. After the triumphal entry into Eṣfehān, Nāder married Ṭahmāsp's elder sister, Princess Rāżieh-Begum. Nāder also secured the marriage of his son Reżā-Qoli to Ṭahmāsp's younger sister.[15] Similar to Timur, Nāder bound his own lineage to the imperial one through marriage. The entrance of Nāder into the imperial household granted him permission to don the aigrette on the left side of his cap.[16] The imperial aigrette adorned the heads of imperial household's leading members, distinguishing them from all their peers.[17] The shāhanshāh himself wore the aigrette on the right side of his crown or cap, indicating his supreme sovereignty, while someone like a crown-prince might be permitted to wear it only on the left side, indicating his lesser sovereignty.[18] Through adopting titles such as Ṭahmāsp-Qoli, forming marital bonds to the Ṣafavid household, sharing imperial symbols such as the aigrette with Ṭahmāsp, and striking coin in his own name, Nāder was legitimating his exercise of sovereignty on his overlord's behalf.

Such a political discourse meant that Ṭahmāsp was not unilaterally and unambiguously sovereign. Even though Nāder was careful not to compromise his Ṣafavid credentials by making an outright claim to sovereignty over the state (*ṣāḥeb-dowlati*), his ideological discourse invited others to come to that conclusion by themselves. Mirzā Mehdi Esterābādi, an astute Ṣafavid scribe, had understood what Nāder was hinting at when he wrote a letter in 1729 congratulating Nāder on the liberation of Eṣfehān.

> 'He is such a master of the state (*ṣāḥeb-dowlati*) that his dagger scorched the doomed enemies… and it is incumbent upon all to pray in gratitude for his munificence (*dowlat*)… It is our hope that he will continuously conqueror the expanse of the state (*ʿarṣeh-ye dowlat*) and be fortunate in his battles to come'.[19]

Nāder was praised for restoring Ṭahmāsp in his 'hereditary realm' (*molk-e mowruṡi*), but the letter used the term *dowlat* only in association with Nāder. *Ṣāḥeb-dowlati* could mean mastery over the state, possessing divine fortune, or bestowing munificence. Esterābādi was

[15] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 120–121; Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 8.

[16] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 8.

[17] See Moḥammad-Zamān Khodāyi, Ṣādeq Karimi, and Mehdi Yār-Moḥammadi, 'Negāhi beh seyr-e taḥavvol v namāyandegi-ye boteh va jeqqah', in *Tāḥqiqāt-e Farhangi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2008), p. 123.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 186–187.

using *ihām*, a literary technique where a word is used to communicate serval meanings simultaneously. The letter's last reference to *dowlat* engaged more directly with the idea of a state ruling over a territorial expanse, as Esterābādi expressed his hope that Nāder, not Ṭahmāsp, would continue to recapture territories belonging to the Ṣafavid state. In line with Nāder's own discourse, the letter identified him as the main protagonist in the restoration of the Ṣafavids and deftly granted him 'mastery over the state'. Evidently, Nāder was impressed. Esterābādi entered Nāder's service as his personal secretary and historiographer a few months after he penned the letter.[20]

Nāder's ideology, similar to that of his overlord, was influenced by the emergent discourse on Iranian identity which entangled Twelver Shi'ism with a sense of collective territorial belonging to Iran—a sacred realm in need of being cleansed from (usually) Sunni foreign enemies. While Ṭahmāsp portrayed himself as the saviour of Iran and the answer to Iranian pleas for deliverance, Nāder and his supporters proposed that he was the actual saviour. The latter narrative legitimated Nāder's wielding of sovereignty over the Ṣafavid state on Ṭahmāsp's behalf.

The earliest evidence which points to Nāder's fusion of pro-Ṣafavid and Iranian discourses can be found in his correspondence with the Ottomans in 1729–1730. Nāder's first two diplomatic letters to the Porte expressed his loyalty to Ṭahmāsp while underlining his efforts to order Iranian affairs.[21] The letters introduced Nāder's ambassador to the Porte, Moḥammad-ʿAli Shāmlu, and called on the Ottomans to desist from aiding the Afghans. Ṭahmāsp was introduced with all his imperial honorifics and Nāder's vassalage was in no way implicit: 'for may the lives of us servants all be sacrificed in his exalted name'.[22] Nāder claimed to be acting as 'the deputy of his sultanship (Ṭahmāsp), who has entrusted us with the principal affairs of the eternal state'.[23] In this capacity, 'the attention of that lord (Nāder) is fixed on consolidating the Ṣafavid state'.[24] Nāder was attempting to convince the Ottomans that it was he who held de facto sovereignty, and that the Ottomans had to correspond and reach an understanding with him.

[20] See Navāʾi's biography of Esterābādi, *Nāder*, p. 174; Anvār, 'Moqaddameh', xi.

[21] Naṣiri (ed.), *Asnād*, pp. 69–74, 75–80 dating from 1730.

[22] Ibid, p. 70.

[23] Ibid, p. 71.

[24] Ibid, p. 73.

Both letters associated Nāder's de facto mastery over the state with service not only to the Ṣafavids, but to Iran and the Iranians. The Afghans were described as an 'inferior people who have for generations been nothing but subjects of Iran, wailing under the swords of this eternal state's soldiery'.[25] Thus, the Ṣafavid state was destined to rule all Iran and to subjugate the Afghan enemy. The letters were anxious to communicate to the Ottomans that Iranians had lost no honour due to the Afghan conquest. The fall of Eṣfehān was not due to the Afghans' military triumph over Iranians, 'for it is clear that the real cause behind the predicament of Iran and the Iranians has been the perfidy of neighbouring sovereigns', an oblique reference to past Ottoman support for the Hotakids and perhaps Russia's opportunistic occupation of the North.[26] The expression of a proud Iranian identity came through in the letter's introduction of Nāder's ambassador, 'the noblest man in Iran and the greatest of the noble Iranians, Moḥammad Khān Shāmlu, who has long been a retainer to the (Ṣafavid) dynasty and an unwavering trustee to this divinely bestowed state'.[27] What distinguished the ambassador, according to the letter, was his Iranianness and his long record of loyal service to the Ṣafavid state.[28] Overall, the letters connect Iranian identity with loyalty to the Ṣafavid state under Nāder's deputised leadership.

Nāder, bolstered by his annihilation of the Hotakids, used the diplomatic channels that he opened with the Ottomans to officially demand they return all the lands which they had recently annexed in Iran.[29] When the Ottomans ignored the demands of his ambassador, Nāder prepared for military confrontation. The irredentist demands were linked to the territorial conception of Iran-Realm. Nāder apparently sought an augury from Ḥāfeẓ's *divān*, coming across an auspicious stanza: 'Oh Ḥāfeẓ, you conquered ʿErāq and Fārs with your fine poetry ⁘ come now for it is time for Baghdad and then Tabriz'.[30] This alluded to Nāder's recapture of ʿErāq-e ʿAjam and Fārs from the Afghans, and heralded his imminent conquest of Ottoman-held Āẕarbāijān (Tabriz) and ʿErāq-e ʿArab (Baghdad), restoring Iran-Realm's mytho-historical frontier to the west by reaching the Euphrates. Ḥāfeẓ's poems were repurposed for expressing an irredentist desire to expel the enemy and recover lost dominions.

[25] Ibid, p. 72.

[26] Ibid, p. 77.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid.

[29] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 115.

[30] Ibid, pp. 123–124.

Some in the officer corps displayed a heightened sensitivity regarding the territorial sacrality of Iran. This is evident from Moḥammad Kāẓem Marvi's chronicle, the *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi* (*Nāderid World-Arrayer*). Even though Marvi himself only officially entered Nāder's service in 1736, his father had served as an officer under Nāder since the late 1720s, and Marvi drew from his father's papers to write the *ʿĀlam*.[31] Marvi started writing the *ʿĀlam* in the early 1740s at the latest and finished his final draft in 1753, a few years after the fall of the Nāderid empire in 1747.[32] He was a vociferously proud Iranian who championed Nāder's rise and his own role in Nāderid conquests.[33] Regarding the events of 1730, Marvi claimed that men from Iran's Ottoman-occupied provinces fled to Nāder's camp, lamenting the Ottomans' transgressions.[34] He wrote that 'when the cries of these men reached the nobles and peoples across Iran's dominions, they answered the call to arms. Recruits, young and old, streamed into the camp every day'.[35] The romanticised image which Marvi portrayed is somewhat suspicious. Nonetheless, it is clear that for Marvi and perhaps for many of his fellow officers, a fight to recover Iranian territory from the enemy bore strong resonance. Nāder leveraged the territorialised sense of Iranian collective identity to re-establish and even expand the Ṣafavid state's dominions to the west.

Nāder, then, emphasised the territorial integrity of Iran in legitimating his new military campaigns. These campaigns allowed him to accumulate further military glory, demonstrating to his contemporaries that he was the subject of divine favour, thereby reinforcing his own personal legitimacy. In turn, this allowed Nāder to wrest greater sovereignty over the Ṣafavid state and initiate new campaigns. When the Abdāli Afghans of Herāt attacked Nāder's viceroyalty in Khorāsān in the Summer of 1730, he suspended his Ottoman campaign and force marched his army east to confront the Abdālis. Nāder's ideological discourse remained essentially the same. Laying siege to Herāt, Nāder had Esterābādi write a letter informing the Abdālis that

> The recent upheavals had caused a majority of the provinces to abandon the path of obedience and to rebel. The Afghans [of Herāt] are but one example of this. But at this time, praise be to God, the dominions of Iran have been

[31] On Marvi's history, see Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi, 'Moqaddameh', in Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi, *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi*, (Tehran, 1985), pp. three–ninety-five.

[32] Ibid, pp. twenty-seven–twenty-nine.

[33] Ibid, pp. twenty-three–twenty-seven.

[34] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, p. 125.

[35] Ibid.

> rebound under the sovereign (*ṣāḥeb*), and all those who were once defiant are now obedient once more.[36]

While Nāder was not explicitly claiming to be the *ṣāḥeb* under which Iran's territorial integrity had been re-established, he was doing so implicitly. Ṣafavid loyalists could not point to this as treachery since Esterābādi's ambiguous wording still allowed for the admittedly tortured interpretation that *ṣāḥeb* was a reference to Ṭahmāsp.

Drawing upon a territorialised sense of Iranian identity and fuelled by his uninterrupted military victories, Nāder continued to augment his authority. Eventually, Nāder was in a position to challenge Ṭahmāsp outright and to impose himself as the sole de facto sovereign over the state.

From Ṭahmāsp-Qoli to the 'servant of the Eight and the Four'

By 1731, Nāder had established an immaculate record of military success. He had defeated the Hotakids in four major battles and restored his overlord in the old Ṣafavid capital of Eṣfehān. After subduing ʿAjam ʿErāq and Fārs, Nāder had then driven the Ottomans out of Āẕarbāijān and West Iran. When the Abdāli Afghans in Herāt broke their peace treaty by raiding Khorāsān, Nāder marched east and subjugated them as well. In sharp contrast, Ṭahmāsp was defeated by the Ottomans in 1731 and forced to sign a humiliating peace treaty. In these auspicious circumstances, Nāder's record as an undefeated conqueror allowed him to discard his previous image as Ṭahmāsp-Qoli and to proclaim his servitude to the Shi'i Imams in an eschatological discourse. Nāder and his supporters portrayed his sovereignty over the state as millenarian in nature, ascribing him the Timurid title of ṣāḥebqerān. Nāder's ʿAlid-Timurid discourse on supplanting Ṭahmāsp as the true ṣāḥebqerān was inextricably tied to his quest to save Iran and the Iranian people. The territorial sacrality of Iran remained an important theme, but it was increasingly accompanied by Nāder's claims to free Iranians from the shackles of foreign captivity (*esārat*), lending greater emotional appeal to his campaigns. By claiming that his millenarian wars were in faithful service to the Shi'i Imams, Iran, and the Iranian people, Nāder set the ideological foundations to seize ever more power over the state.

[36] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 195.

Millenarian saviour

After Nāder's conquest of the Abdālis in Herāt, he ordered a mausoleum to be built for his family. He also established an endowment (*vaqf*) in July 1732, dedicating the revenues from several of his estates to the maintenance of the mausoleum. The preface to the deed of endowment indicated that Nāder was no longer identifying as the servant of Ṭahmāsp or even of the Ṣafavid dynasty, but was instead portraying himself as the faithful servant of the Twelve Imams, on a millenarian quest to save Shi'i Iran.[37] The deed introduced Nāder as the 'loyal servant of ʿAli's household and… the defender of Shi'i lands (*belād*) and of the Shi'a, Nāder-Qoli Khān, viceroy of Khorāsān and ruler of the realm of Iran'.[38] There was no acknowledgement of a Ṣafavid overlord and the millenarian sovereignty over Iran was granted ever more nakedly to Nāder himself, who as 'the ṣāḥebqerān… is worthy of the imperial aigrette and coinage of sovereignty'.[39] It was no longer Ṭahmāsp but Nāder who wore 'the diadem of fortune, status, and state (*dowlat*)'.[40]

The derivation of millenarian sovereignty from the Imams was emphasised after Nāder returned to Mashhad from his victorious campaign against the Abdālis and ordered major renovations to the shrine of the eighth Imam, ʿAli Musā Reżā. The dome was coated in gold, as was one of the main *iwān*s of the shrine.[41] The gold-coated *iwān* bears an inscription, dated 1732, which celebrates Nāder as the patron of the renovations.[42] Shi'i shrines were the loci that served to validate ideas and ideals that Iran's ruling elites wished to construe for posterity and provided a valuable medium for disseminating ideological narratives.[43] The inscription allowed for Nāder to disseminate his ideology among Shi'i pilgrims from across Iran in one of the faith's holiest sites. The inscription consisted of a *qaṣideh* composed by Nadim, who had since the mid-1720s called for an eschatological ʿAlid uprising to save Iran

[37] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 433–442.

[38] Ibid, p. 435.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, p. 202.

[42] I saw this *iwān* when I visited the Rażavid shrine during my doctoral fieldwork in January 2019. It has been transcribed in several works, for example Tavaḥḥodi, *Ṣāḥebqerān*, pp. 907–908.

[43] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, p. 38; S. Hoelscher and D.H. Alderman, 'Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship', in *Social and Cultural Geography*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (2004), pp. 347–356.

and its people, and evidently, had found his saviour in Nāder.[44] The themes in the *qaṣideh* are reminiscent of those in Nāder's endowment-deed from the same year, but Nadim gave greater precedence to Nāder's role as the millenarian saviour. This was not only reflective of the eschatological themes in Nadim's poems from the 1720s, but the burgeoning millenarian expectations among the Shi'i elites at the time.[45] The *qaṣideh* began by emphasising that Nāder's servitude was to none other than the Imams: 'He is a servant at the threshold of the sultan, ʿAli Musā Reżā ⁂ The dog at the threshold of the commander of the faithful (ʿAli) is Nāder-Qoli ⁂ in all endeavours his faith is placed in God'. In line with Nadim's earlier poetry, eternal sovereignty belonged to the Imams, while Nāder was implied to wield temporal sovereignty on their behalf.

The derivation of sovereignty was hinted at eloquently:

> The virtue of his (Nāder's) sight is fixed upon the cupbearer at the lake of Kowṡar (ʿAli) ⁂ the bottom of which is coated in gold like a narcissus ⁂ By virtue of being related to him (Nāder/ʿAli), the Afshār of the world ⁂ will remain distinguished among the people of Iran until judgement day.

Nāder, then, was not merely a simple servant of the Imams. He beheld ʿAli in the afterlife, suggesting a spiritual bond. Nadim's masterful *ihām* upon the word 'Afshār' yields two meanings from the second line. The first is that all the Afshār Turkmen, were forever distinguished among their Iranian peers due to being Nāder's fellow clansmen. In Turkish, however, *afshār* means deputy or partner. Thus, the other meaning of the line was that through his connection to ʿAli, Nāder was his deputy in this world, and therefore, the ʿAlid sovereign destined to rule over all Iranians.

The latter half of the *qaṣideh* engaged with millenarian notions explicitly. Nāder's rise meant that 'His justice has united the lion and the gazelle in one field ⁂ For as long as his resolve is erected in Qezelbāshness… ⁂ the wind will continue to billow, and the turning of the age is upon us'. Peace between animals, such as the lion and the gazelle, was an established part of the imagery of millenarian sovereignty in the early modern Islamicate world.[46] Furthermore, Nāder's Qezelbāshness was not tied to Ṣafavid loyalty, but to his resolute leadership of the

[44] Refer to the previous chapter for an analysis of Nadim's poetry in the 1720s. We know absolutely nothing about the circumstances under which Nadim joined Nāder, just that he must have done so sometime after Nāder's liberation of Eṣfehān in 1729 (see Riāḥi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 928, n. 9.)

[45] Refer to the previous chapter.

[46] Ebba Kock, 'The Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus, or the Album as a Think Tank for Allegory', in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 27, (2010), pp. 277–311; see also Moin, *Millenarian Sovereign*, p. 36.

ʿAlid army, bringing forth the apocalypse. Thus, Nadim rooted Qezelbāsh identity in an ʿAlid millenarian mission to save Iran, echoing his earlier poetry from the 1720s (see above). Overall, the Rażavid inscription placed Iran and its people under Nāder's ʿAlid-inflected millenarian sovereignty.

Claims of Nāder being the millenarian sovereign of the age were not limited to official documents and patronised inscriptions. Many among the Iranian elites responded positively to Nāder's claims. Among them were Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi and Almās Khān Kandulehi who gave Nāder a millenarian mandate from Timur and the Shi'i Imams. Timur and the Imams were strongly connoted in the minds of early modern contemporaries who viewed them as varying avatars for the figure of the ṣāḥebqerān.[47] Whether it was Timur or one of the Imams, the bestowal of the millenarian mandate was expressed by both Marvi and Kandulehi through dream narratives. Establishing a legitimate mandate through any genealogical connection was out of the question since Nāder was neither a seyyed nor a descendant of Timur. Instead, dream narratives were useful to Marvi and Kandulehi in that they allowed for the construction of a mandate for Nāder based on the transmission of esoteric qualities, in this case, millenarian charisma.[48]

Marvi dedicated a chapter in his chronicle to a dream-like sequence in which a young Nāder found Timurid treasure in the natural fortress of Kalāt.[49] After camping on a hill nearby Kalāt for the night, Nāder, referred to as the 'ṣāḥebqerān-commander', was woken by a light emanating from the foot of the hill. Nāder followed the light to a mountain pass. As he ventured deeper into the mountain, it began to shake with a thunderous roar. Nāder came across a dragon guarding a well. After slaying the dragon, he found the well to be filled with treasure. The inscription on the well was left by none other than Timur, promising 'he who enters here shall be the prodigy (*Nāder*) of the age and the ṣāḥebqerān'.[50] Timur's inscription told of how he had conquered vast dominions by the force of his sword, but when he came to Kalāt he was mysteriously moved to accept the negotiated surrender of Kalāt. He was later plagued by regrets as Kalāt had been the only point in his career where he had triumphed by means other than force of arms. He requested his astrologers to investigate the meaning

[47] See above for the connotation, specifically, Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 37–38.

[48] Arthur F. Buehler, *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*, (Columbia, 2008), pp. 82–83; Kia, *Persianate Selves*, pp. 138–139; Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 123, n. 79.

[49] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 14–17.

[50] Ibid, p. 15.

behind this mysterious occurrence. After a few days they returned to Timur and told him that in three hundred years, there will be another world-conqueror 'in the same vein as you' which will pass through here. Thus, Timur decided to leave behind the inscription 'to convey my will (*vaṣiyat*) to that beloved', giving Nāder advice on just rule and world sovereignty.[51] The dream narrative had the old ṣāḥebqerān, Timur, consciously pass the mantle of universal sovereignty to the new ṣāḥebqerān, Nāder.

Marvi's story was strongly reminiscent of popular folk tales regarding Imam ʿAli, the other avatar of the ṣāḥebqerān persona. In the fifteenth-century epic, *Khāvarānnāmeh*, ʿAli's mythical exploits were lauded in Persian verse, depicting the Shi'i Imam as defeating evil kings and demons. These tales were widely disseminated across early modern Iran and manuscripts of the Khāvarānnāmeh were circulated through the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries.[52] In one tale, ʿAli encounters a dragon nestled atop a mountain and engages it in combat. After cutting down the dragon, a treasure chest is revealed to ʿAli containing Solomon's diadem, whereupon he reflects on the nature of universal sovereignty.[53] Marvi's tale of Nāder embarking on a dragon-slaying quest would have evoked ʿAlid connotations in the minds of early modern contemporaries in Iran. Nāder, then, was portrayed as heir to the legacy of both ṣāḥebqerāns.

Another contemporary dream narrative was related by a contemporary Kurdish poet, Almās Khān Kandulehi (1706–1777?), from Kermānshāh in West Iran. Despite his prolific literary output, not much is known about his life. During the 1730s and 40s he composed the *Jangnāmeh* (*War-Epistle*), a chronicle of (Hawrami) Kurdish verse recounting Iran's history from the Afghan invasion to the death of Nāder.[54] The earliest manuscript is dated 1734–1735, which shows Kandulehi was writing and already disseminating his *Jangnāmeh* during Nāder's regency.[55] He was an exceptionally xenophobic Iranian Shi'i who lauded Nāder's conquests of the other. The main theme of the *Jangnāmeh*, as indicated by the title, was the glorification of Nāder's wars.[56] It is unknown if Kandulehi had a patron or composed the

[51] Ibid, p. 16.

[52] Saʿid Anvari, 'Introduction' in Ibn Ḥesām Khusefi Birjandi, *Khāvarānnāmeh*, ed. Saʿid Anvari, (Tehran, 2002), pp. 6–20.

[53] Ibn Ḥesām Khusefi Birjandi, *Khāvarānnāmeh*, ed. Saʿid Anvari, (Tehran, 2002), pp. 68–69. For other tales in which ʿAli slew dragons see pp. 51, 54, 79.

[54] Maẓhar Advāyi, 'Moqaddameh', in Almās Khān Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh-ye Nāder*, ed. Maẓhar Advāyi, (Tehran, 2017), 10–112 on the life and works of Kandulehi.

[55] Moṣṭafā Derāyati, *Farhangestān: Noskhehhā-ye Khaṭṭi-ye Irān*, Vol. 10, p. 840.

[56] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 115, v. 50 in the preface sets the tone for the rest of the work.

Jangnāmeh at his own expense and initiative. The fact that he composed it in Kurdish, coupled with his stridently Iranian and anti-Sunni rhetoric, indicates that he was not aiming for a wide audience beyond the Shi'i Kurdish elite in his home province of Kermānshāh.

In Kandulehi's dream narrative, it was the Imams that granted Nāder his mandate for millenarian sovereignty when he beseeched Imam Reżā to aid him in saving the Iranians from the foreign enemy. For Kandulehi, Iranian identity played a prominent role in Nāder's attainment of his mandate. Accordingly, when Nāder sat at the Rażavid shrine's threshold, he lamented that

> I am distraught for the people of Iran ⁘ their suffering is as a thorn set against my heart ⁘ All ʿErāq has been destroyed and the rest of Iran carried into captivity ⁘ they have been subjected to the treacherous ire of those from outside (*khārej*) ⁘ Faith and religion are fading away ⁘ Iranian fate (*nard-e Irāni*) has been beset by wretchedness ⁘ … Oh lord of Iran, wickedness prevails everywhere ⁘ the flame of the Iranians has been extinguished.[57]

The sacral territoriality of Iran was underlined by Nāder's desire to 'rid your (the Imams') soil from the Khārejis… and expel them from the realm of Iran'.[58] The sanctity of the Shi'i Imams was infused into the very soil of Iran and the souls of its (true) inhabitants. Nāder's sincere concern for his fellow Iranian Shi'a moved him to tears, pleading to the Imams to make him the instrument of their righteous deliverance.

As Nāder slept at the shrine's threshold, the Imams appeared to him in his dream and 'They said "oh Nāder, God is with you ⁘ you are the vassal (*dast-neshān*) of the Eight and the Four ⁘ … Go forth and guard the creed of (Shi'i) Islam ⁘ conquer your way through to foreign lands and punish the traitors"'.[59] The expression 'the Eight and the Four' refers to the Twelve Imams but gives emphasis to the Eighth Imam at whose shrine Nāder was granted his holy mandate to cleanse the sacred soil of Iran from foreign enemies. The eschatological nature of this mandate is made clear from the line on Nāder's awakening: 'as he rose up, the Mahdi appeared'.[60] Kandulehi's narrative complimented Nāder's official ideology quite well. Once again, the Iranian Shi'a were tormented at the hands of the foreign enemy which had

[57] Ibid, p. 204, vv. 596–598, 606.

[58] Ibid, p. 205, vv. 612–613.

[59] Ibid, vv. 621, 623.

[60] Ibid, p. 206, v. 635.

transgressed against Iran's sacred territory, with Nāder appearing as the millenarian saviour. Kandulehi even went a step further than Nāder by directly associating him with the Mahdi. Both Kandulehi and Marvi, neither of whom were even under Nāder's patronage, granted him a mandate beyond the Ṣafavids. Such ideological developments among Iran's elites were conducive to Nāder's bid to depose Ṭahmāsp and seize full control of the state.

Deposing Ṭahmāsp to save Iran's faith and state (*din o dowlat*)

In the early 1730s, Nāder built upon the ideological discourse of millenarian deliverance by presenting himself as the saviour of Iranians from foreign captivity and a liberator of their lands from foreign occupation, while the Ṣafavids were portrayed as hapless rulers who had forsaken Iranian captives and territory. The implication was that Nāder ought to be given yet more power over the state in order to pursue irredentist military campaigns and to free the Iranians taken captives by the enemy.

Captivity had a strong resonance in Shi'i history and identity.[61] After Imam Ḥoseyn and his followers were killed in the battle of Karbalā, his surviving family members were taken captive and humiliated by the Umayyads. Ḥoseyn's family retained their honour and dignity by remaining indefatigable in the face of their captivity, and the episode would later form an important part of Shi'i collective memory.[62] For the Shi'a, ʿAli represented not only an exemplary conqueror, but also an honourable warrior who sought the liberation of captives. He told his followers that 'he whom God has bestowed with might, must use it to free those in captivity'.[63] In early modern Iran, political movements, including the Ṣafavids, presented their military-political struggles as the continuation of the Shi'i Imams' struggle against Sunni tyranny, 'placing the past in linear continuity with the present'.[64] By striving to liberate fellow Shi'a from Sunni captivity, it was possible to claim that one was continuing the Imams' holy struggles.

After the partition of Ṣafavid Iran in 1722, many among the Shi'i elite referred to their realm and people as having been taken captive by the Sunni enemy, and the yearning for release

[61] Seyyed-ʿAli Mir-Sharifi, *Sarnevesht-e Asir dar Eslām*, (Tehran, 2016), especially Part I, chapters four and five.

[62] Ibid; Momen, *Shi'i Islam*, pp. 30–33.

[63] Mir-Sharifi, *Sarnevesht-e Asir*, pp. 5–7.

[64] Moazzen, *Forming a Religious Landscape*, p. 110.

from Sunni captivity was an element in the emergent identity of the Iranians.[65] Nāder engaged with this discourse in formulating his ideology in the early 1730s. He presented his struggle to free Iranian captives from the domination of Sunni enemies as the continuation of the ʿAlid household's struggle against captivity. Thus, the millenarian mandate Nāder claimed from the Imams was further legitimated by how he used that mandate to continue their sacred struggle. This augmented ideological discourse allowed Nāder to seize greater power over the state, eventually deposing Ṭahmāsp and exercising imperial sovereignty as regent of the state (*vakil ol-dowleh*).

The right political circumstances for Ṭahmāsp's deposition came about when he suffered an ignominious defeat from the Ottomans in 1731, while Nāder was conquering Herāt in the east. Despite their decisive victory, the peace terms offered by the Ottomans were relatively lenient, annexing only the Caucasian provinces down to the Araxes River.[66] Nāder capitalised on Ṭahmāsp's defeat and cession of territory to further his own influence through calling for the recommencement of hostilities. The call for war was a pretext to remove Ṭahmāsp from the throne, but Nāder needed to build some consensus among his fellow elites before he could do so. In Turco-Mongol political culture, the attainment of power and sovereignty was viewed as a 'collective elitist arrangement', necessitating at least the appearance of a consensus among the nobility.[67] What legitimated one's claim to power among his peers was not exclusively his lineage or seniority, but qualities such as ambition, charisma, political acumen, and above all, military genius.[68] In 1732, Nāder had his secretary, Esterābādi, draft letters to 'all the domains of Iran', calling upon the realm's governors and commanders to reject the peace treaty and prepare for war.[69] Esterābādi began his letters by giving an account of Nāder's conquest of the 'Abdālis of Herāt who were set to flight by the swords of the courageous ghāzis'.[70] The first idea which Esterābādi placed in the minds of Iran's elites was

[65] For authors writing on Shi'i and Iranian captivity in the 1720s and 1730s see Seyyed Moḥsen Ḥoseyni and Susan Nikju, 'Maḥannatnāmeh Afghān', in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (2019), pp. 48–76; Nadim, 'Ashʿār', pp. 1300, 1304, 1308; Neyrizi, 'Ṭibb', p. 1351; idem, 'Faṣl', p. 1368; Ṭehrāni, *Mer'āt*, p. 103.

[66] Lockhart, *Nadir Shah*, p. 57.

[67] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 36.

[68] Ibid, pp. 36–38.

[69] The blueprint for these letters is preserved in Esterābādi's *Monsha'āt*, but the transcript of specific letters has also been found. For example, the one to the governor of Fārs is transcribed by Qoddusi, *Nādernāmeh*, pp. 546–551, and I myself found a transcript of the letter to the governor of Qazvin, held at the Golpāygāni Library in Qom, No. 34.117. The transcripts of the letters to the governors of Fārs and Qom are near identical.

[70] Navāʾi (ed), *Nāder*, pp. 198–199, 210–211.

the stark contrast between Nāder's military genius and Ṭahmāsp's hapless defeat, suggesting that divine favour lay with the former.

The letters then turned to the recently ratified peace which placed Iran's border with the Ottomans at the Araxes, rejecting it as utterly void 'because it makes no mention of our foremost objective: the freeing of Iran's captives (*estekhlāṣ-e osarā-ye Irān*). This most important of matters has been ignored'.[71] It is unclear whether the term captive was being used exclusively to refer to the prisoners taken by the Ottoman army in their recent victories, or as is more likely, Nāder included those Iranians living north of the Araxes under Ottoman rule as captives. In any case, the quest to free the captives was made a sacred collective duty as Esterābādi quoted a hadith from the Prophet: 'know that all of you bear responsibility, and all of you are answerable with regard to those under you'.[72] This saying is found in many Shi'i hadith collections.[73] Given this holy dictum, 'our duty is to lift the shadow of evil from the heads of Muslims and to purge the evil from the dominions, not to dither in our work for Iran (*kār-e Irān*)'.[74] The work for cleansing Iran and freeing Iranian captives from the enemy was framed as a Twelver pilgrimage, with the letters promising that Nāder would imminently depart the Rażavid shrine in Mashhad and march to the ʿAlid shrine in Najaf.[75] Esterābādi made eloquent use of Ḥāfeẓ's *divān*, likening his patron to 'Ḥāfeẓ, if you faithfully walk the path of the household ⁘ then it will lead you to guardianship over Najaf'.[76] Guarding Iran-Realm, stretching from Khorāsān to Arab ʿErāq, was connoted with guardianship over the Imams' shrines, from Khorāsān's Rażavid shrine to Arab ʿErāq's ʿAlid shrine. Esterābādi aligned the restoration of Iran's sacred territorial integrity with Nāder's loyal service to the Imams.

The 'foremost objective' of freeing Iranian captives was tied to Nāder's pilgrimage to the shrine of Najaf: 'As all our prayers for the release of Muslim captives are directed to his (ʿAli's) singular threshold, we will march our victorious army from the Rażavid shrine to the pivot (*kaʿbeh*) of our purpose (ʿAli's shrine)'.[77] Esterābādi built upon ʿAli's association with

[71] Ibid, pp. 200, 212.

[72] Ibid.

[73] To name a few: Majlesi's *Beḥār ol-Anvār*, Vol. 72, p. 38; Deylami's *ʾErshād ol-Qolub*, Vol. I, 184; Shaʿiri's *Jāmiʿ al-Akhbār*, p. 119.

[74] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 212.

[75] Ibid, pp. 200–201, 213.

[76] Ibid, pp. 201, 213.

[77] Ibid, pp. 200–201, 213.

freeing captives,[78] turning Nāder into ʿAli's instrument in freeing Iranians from Ottoman captivity.

In Esterābādi's letters from 1732, the work for Iran, including the returning of territory and captives, was to be carried out by Nāder at the head of the Qezelbāsh, indicating the evolving meaning behind this collective identity and the loyalties it connoted. Iranianness and Qezelbāshness were being synonymised. Just like Iranian identity, Qezelbāsh identity was territorialised within Iran's sacred frontiers, and was being used by Nāder to defy the authority of the Ṣafavids. The peace treaty was summarised as granting the Ottomans all lands to the north of the Araxes River while 'restricting the Qezelbāsh to this side'.[79] Apart from the principal reason for why this treaty was void—the continued captivity of Iranians—a secondary reason was 'because these aforementioned borders (*sonur*) are against both God's will and the interest of the eternal imperial state'.[80] The Qezelbāsh, then, were supposed to regain their previous borders in line with God's will and the interest of the state. Their previous triumph under Nāder's leadership against the Afghans meant that they were equal to the task:

> There are none left in these frontiers and domains (*marz o bum*) ⁘ of the Afghans, only the echo of their lament remains ⁘ On the field of battle so many Afghans were hunted down ⁘ that the spear tips were all made red ('*Qezelbāsh*') with their blood ⁘ … I (Nāder) now wish to make a pilgrimage to ʿAli's shrine ⁘ to march in support of our captives ⁘ We shall take revenge against the Ottomans ⁘ we shall crush the ancient enemy'.[81]

The Qezelbāsh had cleansed Iran from its Afghan enemy, and the letter implied they were ready to do the same with the Ottoman enemy by marching on Najaf on the banks of the Euphrates, Iran-Realm's western frontier. Qezelbāsh identity, much like Iranian identity, was infused with a deep sense of animosity towards the Sunni other. In the letters, what made a Qezelbāsh was the blood of Afghans on his spear tip and the pursuit of vengeance against the 'ancient' Ottoman foe. Overall, to be Qezelbāsh was to support Nāder's quest to return Iranian captives and territory. It did not connote remaining loyal to a the Ṣafavid sovereign who had forsaken Iran and its people to the enemy.

---

[78] See above.

[79] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 199, 212.

[80] Ibid, pp. 200, 212.

[81] Ibid, p. 215.

The state itself was disassociated from the Ṣafavids. The state in the early modern Islamicate world was strongly connoted with faith: the notion of *din o dowlat*.[82] In the Ṣafavid context, the shāh was expected to spread the faith through his kingship and preserve the Shi'i community from the oppression of the Sunnis.[83] Therefore, Ṭahmāsp's cession of several Shi'i inhabited provinces to the Ottomans posed a challenge to his authority over faith and state. This represented an opportunity for Nāder and Esterābādi to decouple Ṭahmāsp, and the Ṣafavids more broadly, from faith and state. In Esterābādi's letters from 1732, the peace ratified by the Ṣafavid shāh was considered to be 'against the interest of the eternal imperial state' as it did not assure the return of Iranian captives and territory.[84] Why accept the Ṣafavid shāh's ignominious peace when 'today, the enemy is as weak as the Shi'a are mighty, and the supporters of this eternal state (*dowlat*) are ascendant, heralding triumph for the blessed faith (*din*)'.[85] Nāder's rejection of the Ṣafavids' peace treaty with the Porte was described by Esterābādi as being 'for the sake of faith and state'.[86]

Nāder's deposition of Ṭahmāsp and his assumption of the regency was also framed as being in the interest of Iran's faith and state. Following the Turco-Mongol tradition, Nāder was keen to present himself as taking these actions in line with the elite's council and consensus, hoping to lend the dethronement some legitimacy in the eyes of the elite. Esterābādi's history records how Nāder called an assembly (*kengāsh*) of notables made up from Eṣfehān's elites and his own Khorāsānians.[87] Nāder reminded them that if they did not recommence hostilities with the Ottoman enemy, 'the result will only be great corruption (*mafāsed*)'. He then asked the assembly how they could hope to fight a war when the shāh was himself opposed to their cause and aligned with that of the enemy.[88] Esterābādi recorded the assembly's probably apocryphal reply: 'The harmony of the state of Iran (*dowlat-e Irān*), once destroyed by potent enemies, has been restored through the might of that lord (Nāder), while his majesty the shāh has proven himself to be lacking in judgment, devoid of fortune, and ultimately, bereft of any

[82] Hagen, 'Legitimacy and World Order', p. 57; Abou El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, pp. 19–20; Āghājri, *Moqaddameh*, pp. 37–40.

[83] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 43, 53–55.

[84] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 200, 212.

[85] Ibid, p. 212.

[86] Ibid, p. 201.

[87] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 187.

[88] Ibid.

worthiness for sovereignty (*sarvari*)'.[89] The letters Nāder had Esterābādi write to Iran's governors, announcing the deposition of Ṭahmāsp, align closely with what is found in his official history.[90] Other chronicles written under Nāderid patronage, such as the *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, parroted Esterābādi's narrative.[91] The narrative was that the realm's nobles had acknowledged Ṭahmāsp to be unable to preserve the interest of Iran's state, making him unworthy of sovereignty. Of course, the same went for preserving the interest of the faith. Ṭahmāsp's sovereignty was said to lead to 'great corruption'—corruption (*fesād*) having religious overtones.[92] Nāder, by virtue of his military genius and his past victories against the enemy, was the one to preserve the faith and state of Iran.

By associating the state itself more directly with the idea of Iran, Nāder gave himself ideological room to manoeuvre against the Ṣafavid dynasty, wresting ever greater sovereignty from them. Nāder was capitalising on the emotive discourse which had emerged among the realm's elites on Iranian identity. Nāder's official narrative on the preservation of Iran's faith and state was designed to speak to that collective sense of identity by promising the military expulsion of foreign enemies from Iran-Realm's sacredly Shi'i territories and the liberation of fellow Iranians from Sunni captivity. In other words, Nāder's ideology addressed many of the anxieties embedded in Iranian identity at the time, facilitating his rise to the regency and the attainment of de facto sovereignty over the state in 1732.

As regent, Nāder patronised new literary works and adopted new legends on his coinage and seals to retrospectively re-write his past, distancing him from his earlier pro-Ṣafavid rhetoric. Prior to his regency, Nāder had spent close to eight years professing service to the Ṣafavid state and household as Ṭahmāsp-Qoli. His ideological shift to serving the ʿAlid household by preserving the faith and state of Iran required his previous image to be revised. In the same year as Nāder assumed the regency, he commissioned Moḥammad-ʿAli Ṭusi to versify his heroic deeds in the style of the *Shāhnāmeh*, and to revise Nāder's early career in line with his new ideological requirements.[93] Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh* portrayed Ṭahmāsp and his father to have

[89] Ibid.

[90] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 217–218 and 219–220.

[91] Mostowfi, *Zobdat*, pp. 158–159. Mostowfi finished his history in 1741, prior to Esterābādi's history, but he took his narrative from Esterābādi's letters (see previous note).

[92] Oliver Leaman, *Islamic Philosophy*, (Cambridge, 2009), pp. 140–141.

[93] Amanat, 'Shahnameh', pp. 297–298.

been drunkards, incapable of sovereignty.[94] Ṭahmāsp was a pathetic and impotent figure fleeing the enemy when Nāder gave he him refuge for the 'sake of the Iranians' (*bahr-e Irāniān*).[95] Ṭahmāsp beseeched Nāder to fight the enemy, for if he failed to intervene, 'this prince (Ṭahmāsp) will be taken prisoner ⁘ our people, men and women alike, will be made captives ⁘ They will leave neither faith nor state (*din o dowlat*) ⁘ nor so much as the name of the Iranians in their wake'.[96] It transpired that from the beginning, Nāder was acting out of loyalty to Iran's faith and state and to his people. His service to the Ṣafavids was almost incidental. In Ṭusi's narrative, the state was bound to Iran rather than the Ṣafavid dynasty, and similar to Esterābādi's official narrative, the interest of Iran's state was in cleansing Iran-Realm from enemies and freeing fellow Iranians held in foreign captivity. Only then could 'we bear witness to the return of the state ⁘ as we return with honour to the illustrious homeland (*vaṭan*)'.[97] Thus, Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh* revised Nāder's early career to cast him as having been the loyal servant of the Iranian state all along. The original image of Nāder as 'consolidating the Ṣafavid state' was suppressed. Nāder's defiance and deposition of Ṭahmāsp was made sensible in light of Nāder's supposedly unchanging objective: the pursuit of the Iranian state's interests.

In Ṭusi's revision of his patron's rise, Nāder was acknowledged by all his peers as the saviour who possessed the divinely bestowed fortune and munificence (*dowlat*) which could realise the interests of the Iranian state. When Nāder ousted the Hotakid Afghans, the nobility proclaimed that 'by the grace of your munificent state ⁘ have Iranians been granted life anew'.[98] Reflecting Esterābādi's official narrative, Ṭusi justified Nāder's removal of the inauspicious Ṭahmāsp to have taken place by a consensus reached among the realm's elite, 'as the large company of Iranian nobles ⁘ came from Tabriz, Qazvin, and Eṣfehān ⁘ … [they addressed Nāder as] The auspicious promulgator of justice ⁘ whose fortunate state is enduring in this universe ⁘ … There are none equal to the task but you ⁘ answer the call of Iran by your munificent state'.[99] Apparently, Nāder only removed Ṭahmāsp and took charge of Iran's state by the unanimous demand of the Iranian nobility.

---

[94] Moḥammad ʿAli Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh-ye Nāderi*, ed. Aḥmad S. Khānsāri, (Tehran, 1960), p. 30, v. 682. For an overview of this work see Amanat, 'Shahnameh-ye Naderi', pp. 295–318.

[95] Ibid, p. 36, vv. 798, 812.

[96] Ibid, vv. 815–816.

[97] Ibid, pp. 45–49, specifically v. 1061.

[98] Ibid, p. 73, v. 1690. Also see v. 1686.

[99] Ibid, pp. 98–99, vv. 2264, 2270, 2291.

Nāder's official ideology overstated the consensus among the realm's elites regarding the legitimacy of his dethronement of Ṭahmāsp and assumption of the regency. In at least one quarter, Ṭahmāsp's removal led to rebellion against Nāder's nascent regency. The Lor clans killed Nāder's newly appointed governor and refused to recognise the dethronement, leading to their swift subjugation.[100] Even though this was an isolated incident, there is evidence to suggest many across Iran merely acquiesced to Nāder's takeover of the state and were sceptical of his claims to be selflessly pursuing the interests of Iran and of the collective self. Mirzā Moḥammad, a tax official at the time, recorded a different version of events in his journal. Nāder, acting out of 'duplicity, proclaimed the sultanship in ʿAbbās's name while he himself took up the reigns of sovereignty'.[101] A descendant of the Ṣafavids, writing in 1792, recalled that in the assembly Nāder had called, 'some agreed with him that Ṭahmāsp was unworthy of sovereignty, while others sealed their lips in silence'.[102] The infant ʿAbbās was only enthroned to maintain a veneer of legitimacy, but ultimately, 'this was done to advance his own (i.e., Nāder's) purpose'.[103] Those whose interests were not served by Nāder's takeover of the state proffered narratives which challenged the idea that he had assumed the regency through a legitimate consensus.

Except for Esterābādi's, there are no surviving first-hand accounts of the assembly at which Ṭahmāsp was dethroned. However, the travelogue of the Ottoman musician, Ārutin Ṭanburi, comes close. Ṭanburi was part of the Ottoman diplomatic mission which travelled to Iran in 1737 and he spent the subsequent years in various Iranian cities and Nāder's camp.[104] Ṭanburi related 'what the Eṣfehānian Qezelbāsh narrated to me' regarding the assembly held in their city in 1732, just a few years prior to Ṭanburi's arrival in the country and his recording of events in 1737–1738.[105] While it is not certain that the people Ṭanburi talked to had indeed been present at the assembly, his account can be illuminating with regard to how Iranians relatively close to the events remembered and made sense of Nāder's takeover of the

[100] Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 244.

[101] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh-ye Mirzā Moḥammad, Kalāntar-e Fārs,* ed. ʿAbbās Eqbāl, (Tehran, 1984), p. 10.

[102] Marʿashi Ḥoseyni, *Majmaʿol-Tavārikh*, p. 82.

[103] Ibid.

[104] For an overview of Ṭanburi's history, see Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi (ed.), *Seṣāratnāmehhā-ye Irān*, (Tehran, 1989), pp. 99–110.

[105] Ārutin Ṭanburi, 'Tārikh-e Ṭahmāsb-Qoli Khān', in Moḥammad Amin Riāḥi, *Sefāratnāmehhā-ye Irān*, (Tehran, 1989), pp. 99, 152.

state. According to Ṭanburi's sources, Nāder invited 'all the nobles' of Iran to Eṣfehān.[106] At one point Nāder appeared before the attendants and asked them if they knew why he had summoned them. When they answered in the negative, Nāder went inside the palace only to return later, carrying a semi-conscious (possibly poisoned) Ṭahmāsp on his shoulder. Nāder asked whether they truly thought it possible to 'govern the country and retake our land from the enemy with such a shāh?'. Ṭanburi was told that 'not a single person spoke, and all stood motionless in silence'.[107]

Ṭanburi's sources gave an account of the assembly which was a far cry from Nāder's official narrative which portrayed the attendants as vociferous in their calls for him to take charge of Iran's state. Apparently, it was Nāder himself who broke the silence, informing the assembly that they should allow him to keep Ṭahmāsp under supervision so that 'together we may drive our enemies from our land, and then we may reinstate our shāh once he has matured. All those present accepted these words'.[108] In this telling of events, it appears that Iran's elites were merely acquiescent to Nāder's takeover of the state and his dethronement of Ṭahmāsp. Nāder may have initially presented the dethronement as only a temporary suspension of Ṭahmāsp's reign. The assembly may have only conceded de facto sovereignty to Nāder on the understanding that he would re-enthrone Ṭahmāsp as soon as he had recovered Iran's territories and captives.

Even some among those who accepted Nāder's takeover of the state to have been in the interests of the Iranian state found his dethronement of Ṭahmāsp less than palatable. In Kandulehi's account of the assembly, Nāder 'approached the threshold [of Ṭahmāsp], who was of immaculate lineage : in deference he prostrated himself upon the dust'.[109] The Ṣafavid dynasty was held in high esteem. Even though Nāder was praised for his efforts to restore Iran's frontiers and save its people, he was admonished for his pride which led him to conspire against his Ṣafavid overlord.[110] Nāder, 'in malice and cruelty ⁖ bound Ṭahmāsp in ignominy'.[111] Despite the fact that Kandulehi saw Ṭahmāsp's dethronement as illegitimate, he nonetheless regarded Nāder's takeover of the state to have been in the interests of Iran:

[106] Ibid, pp. 152–153.

[107] Ibid, p. 153.

[108] Ibid.

[109] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 282, v. 1180.

[110] Ibid, vv. 1183–1188.

[111] Ibid, v. 1189.

‘The creed of the outside (*khārej*) was thus vanquished ⁎ and the faith and religion of Iran was promulgated once more’.[112] Kandulehi admired Nāder’s ability to cleanse Iran-Realm’s sacred territory from the foreign enemies of the faith. As such, he did not begrudge Nāder de facto sovereignty over the state. Nonetheless, the outright removal of Ṭahmāsp was a transgression against the ‘immaculate’ Safavid dynasty. Perhaps, Kandulehi desired Ṭahmāsp to have been retained in his ancestral position as shāh, no matter how nominally.

Marvi was as ambivalent as Kandulehi regarding the dethronement of Ṭahmāsp. Marvi claimed that upon hearing of Ṭahmāsp’s defeat against the Ottomans, Nāder began summoning governors and officials from across Iran, presumably to manufacture a consensus and march on Eṣfehān with a clear mandate to depose the shāh. However, ‘not a single person presented himself to that lord’.[113] In contrast to Ṭusi’s narrative, where Iranians from across Ṭahmāsp’s dominions flocked to Nāder to solicit his intervention, Marvi’s narrative suggests the nobility, at least outside Nāder’s base in Khorāsān, were not so keen on abandoning their sovereign. Marvi portrayed the assembly which dethroned Ṭahmāsp in Eṣfehān as choreographed by Nāder, whom he accused of poisoning Ṭahmāsp.[114] He defended Ṭahmāsp from accusations that he was a traitor to Iran because of his shameful peace with the Ottomans. In an apocryphal speech which Marvi ascribed to Ṭahmāsp, the deposed shāh exclaimed

> I am bewildered that you (my followers) have all acquiesced to his (Nāder’s) sultanship and call our majesty a traitor while you hand him the reigns of kingship. There will be a reckoning once he establishes his sovereignty over Iran’s people, for he will subjugate them such that it shall be a lesson to you all.[115]

For Marvi, then, Ṭahmāsp was no traitor. But the very fact that he argued against such a designation shows that it was conceptually meaningful for a dynast to be a traitor to the state and the realm. Loyalty was no longer exclusively owed to the dynasty. The Ṣafavid dynasty itself owed loyalty to the Iranian state.

[112] Ibid, v. 1197.

[113] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, p. 225.

[114] Ibid, pp. 230–232.

[115] Ibid, p. 232.

Like Kandulehi, Marvi still thought of Nāder's regency as being in the interest of Iran's faith and state, despite the illegitimate removal of Ṭahmāsp. In his account of Nāder's military council prior to setting out to recover Iran's western dominions, Marvi records a rousing and probably apocryphal peroration in which Nāder incited his fellow Iranians (*ṭāyfeh-ye Irān*) to avenge the dishonour they had suffered at Ottoman hands.[116] After Nāder's address, 'the rank and file replied that "for as long as we draw breathe, we will never shirk our duty. We stand ready to sacrifice everything for the sake of faith and state"'.[117] Nāder's deposition of Ṭahmāsp might have been an unnecessary transgression in Marvi's view, but he still regarded Nāder to be in a legitimate struggle worth sacrificing for. It is difficult to imagine he was in a minority among his fellow officers and men. Nāder's official ideology might not have been accepted in its entirety by his followers, but major elements of it were sufficiently convincing to allow him to consolidate his hold over the state. Ṣafavid sympathies did not disappear overnight, though those who harboured them were in some cases ambivalent supporters of Nāder's takeover of the state.

It is important to recognise that Nāder never explicitly challenged the Ṣafavid claim to the throne at any time during his regency. Ṭahmāsp's deposition was followed by the coronation of his son, ʿAbbās. Retaining an infant Ṣafavid as his puppet, Nāder sought to alienate the dynasty from the practical application of sovereignty over the state. Evidently, Nāder sensed enough pushback among the realm's elites to eschew the outright overthrow of the Ṣafavids. Such a usurpation was, for the time, out of the question.

During his regency, Nāder no longer derived much of his legitimacy from the Ṣafavids, but he himself had evidently not accumulated enough legitimacy to do away with them altogether. While he was the de facto sovereign of the state, he was still acting as regent (*vakil*) to the infant shāh. The legends on the new coinage read 'He minted coin upon gold with God's favour ⁘ the shadow of the truth, ʿAbbās the third, the second ṣāḥebqerān'.[118] The title of ṣāḥebqerān could only be meaningful if it was connected to an impressive record of military conquest, demonstrating God's bestowal of a millenarian mandate.[119] Thus, proclaiming the three-month-old child to be the millennial sovereign and the second coming of ʿAli-Timur would probably have struck most contemporaries as ridiculous. This suited

[116] Ibid, pp. 235–236.

[117] Ibid, p. 236.

[118] Esmāʿili, *Seals and Coins*, pp. 52, 121–122.

[119] See above for the connection between the title and military success.

Nāder perfectly, forming part of his efforts to subtly undermine the Ṣafavids' legitimacy. In this vein, the coinage minted in Iran's east, which Nāder still retained as his personal viceroyalty, made no mention of ʿAbbās at all. Nāder decreed that the true shāh over Khorāsān was Imam Reżā.[120] Thus, the newly adopted legend read 'Coin was minted upon gold in Khorāsān by God's grace ⁎ victory and succour are owed to the shāh of the faith, ʿAli Musā Reżā'.[121] This was part of Nāder's effort to redirect his contemporaries' allegiances from the Ṣafavids to the Imams. The seal Nāder adopted during his regency described him not as ʿAbbās-Qoli, but as the servant of the Imams: 'There are none as chivalrous as ʿAli, there is no sword mightier than Ẕu-l-faqār ⁎ By God's grace I am the prodigy (*Nāder*) of the age, servant of the Eight and the Four'.[122] To wield sovereignty over the state, Nāder no longer required a mandate from any member of the Ṣafavid household, for he acted directly on behalf of the household of the Imams.

The seal's reference to the Twelve Imams was not merely an affirmation of Nāder's Shi'ism. It implicitly suggested that he, unlike his infant puppet, was the true millenarian sovereign of the age. In Persianate historiography, the number twelve was associated with the 'lord of the age' (*ṣāḥeb ol-zamān*).[123] The fact that the seal also referred to the 'Nāder of the age' leaves little doubt that Nāder was articulating a Shi'i-inflected millenarianism. In contrast to ʿAbbās, Nāder's astonishing record of uninterrupted military conquest gave real weight to his discourse. Furthermore, by referring to ʿAli in the first line, and implicitly referring to Reżā and Mahdi in the second, the legend might have been designed to evoke an eschatological connection between the Rażavid and ʿAlid shrines. If so, this would have been in line with the letters Nāder had Esterābādi write to Iran's nobles in the build-up to his overthrow of Ṭahmāsp. In the letters, the connection drawn between the two shrines was partly in allusion to Nāder's quest to restore Iran's territorial integrity, from Khorāsān all the way to Arab ʿErāq, all in the service of the Imams.[124] Perhaps, the legend on Nāder's seal was meant to compliment his wider ideological discourse, presenting him as the millenarian sovereign of the age, fighting from Khorāsān all the way to Arab ʿErāq for Iran's faith and state.

[120] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 11.

[121] Esmāʿili, *Seals and Coins*, p. 53.

[122] See for example edicts in Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, pp. 20, 22.

[123] Shohleh Quinn, *Persian Historiography across Empires: The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*, (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 89–90.

[124] See above.

The beginnings of a centralised state in Iran

Nāder legitimated his takeover of the state by pursuing what he claimed were Iranian interests, which he defined as the resumption of war with the Ottomans to regain Iran's sacred territories and liberate its people. Driving the Ottoman armies from Iran's western dominions required control over significant military and fiscal resources. To achieve this, Nāder embarked on a centralisation programme which saw the drafting of new tax assessments for the central chancellery, increased oversight on local officials and their accounts, and the expropriation of land-revenue assignments. The resultant boon in revenues supported the establishment of a centralised military administration. The salaries, mounts, equipment, and logistical costs of the army were made the responsibility of the treasury, ensuring an effective fighting force which could defeat the Ottomans. The centralisation of the fiscal and military institutions of the state enabled Nāder to fulfil his ideological objective of freeing Iranian territories and captives. The centralisation of power also served to prevent other members of the nobility from drawing on local military and fiscal resources to challenge Nāder's control over the Iranian state. As someone who had exploited the decentralised structure of the Ṣafavid state to topple his overlord, Nāder was keen to centralise the state under his person to prevent another ambitious upstart from doing the same to him.

Centralisation of revenues

Nāder began centralising the fiscal administration of the state upon his assumption of the regency. He took charge of the central treasury and the imperial workshops, and appointed governors and chancellery officials throughout the dominions of Iran.[125] An example was Mirzā Shafiʿ, whom Nāder appointed as the chief secretary of Āẕarbāijān's chancellery office in 1732. In Āẕarbāijān, the state first centralised administrative oversight and intelligence and then the flow of revenue streams. The decree announcing the appointment reveals that Nāder was seeking an accurate picture if the fiscal assets in the dominion for the purposes of taxation. The decree instructed Mirzā Shafiʿ to draft new files on the dominion's tax records and revenues as well as records on military provisions, 'so that he may submit these accounts

[125] Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 161. This is confirmed by Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 244. These were ʿErāq, Fārs, and Āẕarbāijān, which alongside Nāder's viceroyalty of Khorāsān, were traditionally the four major administrative dominions of Iran subject to the central chancellery. The four dominions covered much greater territories than their cultural boundaries and encompassed most of Iran's geographic expanse. See chapter one on the administrative setup of the Ṣafavid chancellery which Nāder inherited.

for our deputies' inspection when we arrive in that quarter'.[126] This implies that either new tax assessments were being carried out, or more probably at this stage, local chancellery archives were being consulted to draw up tax assessments.

By 1733, the centre was receiving reports on Āẕarbāijān's accounts from Mirzā Shafiʿ. An edict from June that year acknowledges the receipt of the 'fiscal statement on the accounts of Āẕarbāijān's chancellery', proof that Nāder's decrees were being adhered to.[127] These statements contained a breakdown of the taxable assets in the dominion, as the edict instructs Mirzā Shafiʿ 'to collect the chancellery's tax revenues according to the (aforementioned) fiscal statements... dispatch your officers (*ẓābeṭān*) to the following provinces… [list of Āẕarbāijān's provinces]… so they may collect the assessed tax revenues'. The revenues were set aside for the central treasury, which was later to pay the military salaries in Āẕarbāijān.[128] Across these two edicts, Nāder tasked the local chancellery with registering taxable assets in Āẕarbāijān, had the centrally appointed deputies inspect those registers, and ordered the chancellery staff to collect revenues from those registered assets for the central treasury.

In early modern Eurasian states, the accumulation of fiscal data through tax assessments was a prerequisite for centralising revenue collection. Without such assessments, revenue collection was inefficient.[129] For example, in the first year of the regency, taxes in Eṣfehān were levied arbitrarily as the need arose, leading to great consternation for its inhabitants. According to the VOC staff stationed in Eṣfehān, the poor understanding of Nāder's agents with regard to the tax base in the province was demonstrated by the fact that the official sent to collect revenues there declared that 'he merely wanted the annual revenue and nothing else, meaning as much as had been fixed in the days of Shāh ʿAbbās I (r. 1588–1629)'.[130] By 1733, Nāder had ordered a new tax assessment of Eṣfehān province, and taxes were levied accordingly.[131] In the absence of reliable fiscal records and up-to-date tax assessments, the chancellery had to resort to imposing tax quotas from over a century past. Furthermore, their ignorance on the distribution of wealth and income in the province ensured that some sectors

[126] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh o Joghrāfiā dar Dār ol-Salṭaneh-ye Tabriz*, (Tehran, 1981), pp. 258–259.

[127] Ibid, p. 258.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Yun-Casalilla, 'Introduction', pp. 14–18.

[130] Floor, *Rise*, pp. 35–36.

[131] Ibid, pp. 36–37.

were taxed disproportionately, while others, particularly those with better socio-political connections, were left relatively unmolested despite their wealth.[132]

According to the eighteenth-century history, Āṣef's *Rostam ol-Tavārikh,* Nāder had begun ordering tax assessments during Ṭahmāsp's reign, while he controlled Khorāsān and several other eastern provinces as viceroy.[133] As he gained control of Iran's other dominions during his regency, Nāder had new assessments carried out, some of which took years to finalise. Regarding these new assessments, Āṣef wrote that

> It is known that the fiscal registries assembled by Nāder are the most accurate and comprehensive records compared to previous sovereigns. During the reign of the great khāqān Ṭahmāsp II, that lord (Nāder) ordered that the dominions of Iran be subjected to a thorough audit and assessment. Much work and fastidiousness went into this endeavour which lasted seven years.[134]

As Nāder restored Iran's lost dominions, he ordered successive assessments of their fiscal assets to enable more efficient taxation by the centre.

In Āẕarbāijān, comprehensive assessments were carried out in the second year of Nāder's regency. In the summer of 1733, a new edict was issued to Mirzā Shafiʿ, setting out how he and his officials were to draft a new assessment of the dominion.

> Based on the old fiscal records which reveal the items of (fiscal) interest in each neighbourhood, a new list is to be drafted, name to name, neighbourhood to neighbourhood. This document is to be affixed with a seal and passed on to Moḥammad Shafiʿ for keeping. In this way, no taxes may be applied without proper documentation, and no taxes may be collected without Moḥammad Shafiʿ's register, filing, and seal. He has ultimate authority over the files and ledgers, and none are to disobey him.[135]

Therefore, records were updated and improved over time, as the centre consolidated its hold over the periphery. An important issue which was voiced in the edict was the corrupt practices of local officials who imposed their own dues on taxpayers. In fact, this edict was

[132] This problem was observed by VOC officials not only in Eṣfehān, but in Fārs, and Kermān where they held representatives, see ibid, pp. 28–39, 109–128, 180–183.

[133] See Āṣef's *Rostam ol-Tavārikh* was written between the years 1779–1785, completed in 1794, and submitted to the Qājār king in 1831. See pp. 52–53 therein.

[134] Ibid, p. 325.

[135] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, pp. 257–258.

issued the same month in which Nāder's tax collectors were dispatched to Eṣfehān for the collection of 24,000 *tumān*s but ended up collecting an extra 26,000 *tumān*s to line their own pockets. The Garrison commander was so incensed that he went to Nāder's camp and lodged a complaint in person.[136] The edict might have been issued, at least in part, to ensure similar corrupt practices did not occur in Āẕarbāijān, 'to prevent even a single coin paid by any of the taxpayers to go unaccounted for'.[137] There is no way of gauging whether the edict had the desired effect.

The aforementioned edict sets out the standard regulations (*dastur ol-ʿamal*) for collecting revenues in Iran's dominions. As such it allows for the reconstruction of the precise administrative procedures which the state used to verify that a dominion's revenues were being collected in full, without any deficits, as proscribed by its regulations. In Āẕarbāijān's case, the two most senior civil servants were Loṭfʿali Beyg, the dominion's deputy and his colleague to whom the edict is addressed, Moḥammad Shafiʿ, the chief secretary of Āẕarbāijān's chancellery office. All of Āẕarbāijān's accounts had to be supervised and authenticated by these two centrally appointed bureaucrats. All accounting was to take place in the chancellery building in Tabriz, under the supervision of Loṭfʿali, who had access to all the staff's accounts. This was so that embezzlement and corruption could more readily be identified. Any time an official took money from the treasury, it had to be verified (*taṣdiq*) by Loṭfʿali. An expenditure certificate was issued, to which the officials affixed receipts taken from the persons receiving the funds. In the case of a commander's salary, for example, the commander would sign a receipt (*qabż*) for the official who handed him his pay from the treasury. Officials were instructed to take receipts when paying salaries.[138] These certificates, on the strength of their corresponding receipts, were authenticated by Loṭfʿali's seal, who transcribed them in his ledger. Loṭfʿali was also required to submit a report outlining his officials' expenditures to the imperial court for Nāder's personal inspection.[139] Nāder's personal secretaries would then be able to cross-check the ledger in which the sealed certificates were filed against the expenditure reports dispatched by Loṭfʿali and see whether these were consistent with the treasury's contents.[140]

[136] Based on VOC reports summarised in Floor's *Rise*, p. 29.

[137] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, p. 257.

[138] See discussion of salary payments later in this chapter.

[139] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, pp. 257–258.

[140] On the inspectors dispatched from the centre, see the subsequent sub-chapter.

There was another check on Loṭfʿali's accounting. The chief secretary, Moḥammad Shafiʿ, operated as the centre's fiduciary (*vakil*) and kept a close eye on Loṭfʿali's revenue collections and expenditures. As previously stated, the edict outlined how Āẕarbāijān's tax assessment, 'name to name and neighbourhood to neighbourhood', was given over to Shafiʿ's charge. Without his authority and seal, no taxes could be collected. This was to 'ensure that the files in your (Shafiʿ's) ledger are consistent with Loṭfʿali's files on chancellery incomes and expenditures, in which case you are to authenticate them by affixing your seal, so that our (the centre's) auditors may verify these accounts'.[141]

Layered in this administrative structure are progressive stages of authentication tied to the centre and its direct fiduciaries. Loṭfʿali verified and authenticated the accounts of incomes and expenditures drafted by his officials, all of whom were to do their accounting in the office under his direct supervision 'as set down in the regulations'.[142] These incomes and expenditures were then copied into Loṭfʿali's ledger. Shafiʿ, the centre's chief fiduciary at the chancellery office, consulted his own ledger containing an assessment of all the legal incomes and expenditures of Āẕarbāijān. If Loṭfʿali's ledger aligned with his own, then Shafiʿ would authenticate it with his seal. Lastly, the auditors who were periodically dispatched from the supreme chancellery would examine all these documents and see whether they corresponded to the contents of Āẕarbāijān's coffers.

This represented a significant effort to centralise the state's fiscal administration under Nāder's regency. The centre kept extensive records on taxable assets, and regulated revenue collection on that basis. Furthermore, it developed an elaborate system of regulating the outflow of collected revenues from its treasury. However, the case for innovation should not be overstated. In terms of his overall approach to fiscal administration, Nāder did not effect a revolution. The entangled web of mutual checks and balances was not a fundamentally new approach. They were rooted in Ṣafavid administrative practices, which required multiple officials to corroborate, cross-check, and verify each other's accounts and documents.[143] There were no new fiscal organisations established to operate under a new economic or administrative philosophy. A Ṣafavid bureaucrat from the seventeenth century would have found Nāder's chancellery institutions recognisable. The radical difference was in the

[141] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, p. 257.

[142] Ibid.

[143] Minorsky, *Taẕkereh*, p. 140. See the two administrative manuals of the *Taẕkereh* and *Dastur* for the intricacies of Ṣafavid bureaucracy, and Floor's more approachable summary in his *Fiscal History*, pp. 69–104, especially, 70–71.

regulations under which those institutions operated. The centre's unprecedented monitoring of local officials and their accounts might very well have been something which an old Ṣafavid bureaucrat would have found unrecognisable.

Land-revenue assignments under the regency

Alongside the reform of revenue assessment and collection, the state began centralising control over the realm's land-revenue assignments by removing their tax exemptions or even expropriating them. The edict issued to Āẕarbāijān's chancellery office in 1733 outlined the various taxes which were to be collected and the estates to be expropriated: the *tiyul*s belonging to the governors; the old annual entitlements (*hameh-sāleh*s); the *siyurghāl*s; the revenues formerly allocated to Āẕarbāijān's viziers; the yields of crown-administered estates (*khāleṣehjāt*); and the agrarian yields from estates belonging to religious endowments, were all to be expropriated (*ẓabṭ va estekhlāṣ*) for the chancellery.[144] The expropriation of *tiyul*s is confirmed by a petition from 1733 which was sent to Nāder by an Āẕarbāijānian nobleman who wrote about a local tax dispute 'ever since the abrogation of all *tiyul*s'.[145] The expropriation of many land-revenue assignments and the removal of tax-exemptions for those which remained were measures which contrasted sharply with Ṭahmāsp's approach to state formation.

The centralisation of the assignments almost certainly angered many among the commanders and magnates who had previously held *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s. Unlike the Ṣafavids, however, Nāder did not rely on commanders for providing military forces and their salaries. The centre recruited, maintained, and paid its own forces, including its commanders (see below). The payment of these salaries placed a fiscal burden on the treasury which could hardly be balanced by centralising control over revenues alone. The expropriation of assignments by the state was a sensible course of action especially since it no longer relied on assignment holders for military resources.

One category of assignments remained relatively untouched during Nāder's regency. Pious endowments and the fiscal privileges granted to their custodians generally continued to be respected by the state. Nāder's ideological commitment to an explicitly Shi'i conception of Iran's 'faith and state' required amicable relations with the Iranian ecclesiastic elites.

[144] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, pp. 256–257.

[145] Andras Barati, 'An Early Decree of Nādir Shāh Concerning the *vaqf* of Ardabil', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 53, Nos. 5–6, p. 964.

Alienating these elites by acting against their sacred custodianships would have undermined Nāder's discourse on a holy war to bind Iran-Realm from the Rażavid shrine in the east to the ʿAlid shrine in the west. Therefore, the lucrative estates tied to endowments around Iran's shrines and madrassas were considered by Nāder to have been off-limits to his centralising reforms.

An illustrative example of the amiable relations which Nāder cultivated with the custodial class during his regency can be found in the case of Shirāz' Shāh-Cherāq endowment. When Nāder's army entered Shirāz for the first time, one Mirzā Sharifi informed Nāder that the local tax magistrate had confiscated some estates belonging to the Shāh-Cherāq endowment. As custodian of the endowment, Sharifi requested Nader to restore the estates to his charge.[146] Not only were the estates restored, Sharifi even received a robe of honour, and 1,500 *tumān*s were released from the treasury for renovating the Shāh-Cherāq shrine. In addition, a large golden chandelier was gifted to the endowment to be installed therein.[147] When Nāder returned to Fārs in 1734, he gifted another sum to the custodians and made a separate contribution towards ongoing renovations there. Nāder and his retinue spent the last day of Ramadan at Shāh-Cherāq as Mirzā Sharif's guests, though the cost of the feast was ordered to be paid by the treasury.[148] In the same year, Nāder had many of the mosques and madrassas in Fārs rebuilt and renovated, and gifts were distributed among the seyyeds, ulema, and clerics.[149] In 1735, Nāder issued an edict which expanded and consolidated the endowments under the custodian of the Rażavid shrine in Mashhad.[150] Nāder was communicating to the ecclesiastic elite that their interests were going to be preserved under his regency.[151]

At least some custodians trusted that the state under Nāder was indeed a protector of their interests as much as Ṭahmāsp had been. They petitioned Nāder to authenticate their ownership over estates, to restore their tax exemptions, or to reassign their hereditary wages (*vaẓifeh*) for serving at the endowments. For example, in 1732, an edict was issued in

[146] Seyyed Abul-Qāsem Foruzāni, 'Nāder Shāh Afshār dar bārgāh-e Aḥmadi', in *Faṣlnāmeh-ye ʿElmi-Pajuheshi-ye Shiʿe Shenāsi*, Vol. 38, (2012), p. 244.

[147] Ibid, p. 245.

[148] Ibid, p. 251.

[149] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, p. 349.

[150] Zahrā Ṭalāyi, 'Taʾammoli dar eṣṭelāḥ-e sarkā-e feyż āṡār', in *Pājuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 4, (2019), p. 110.

[151] Garthwaite (ed.), *Khans and Shahs*, Appendix, pp. 2–9.

response to the petition of three seyyeds whose family had held the custodianship of an endowment in Bāb-e Ḥeydar, a town in Ajam ʿErāq. Based on 'past edicts issued by (previous) Ṣafavid sultans', their custodianship was authenticated, they were exempted from paying tribute, and their tax exemptions were restored. They were also given salary assignments (*vaẓifeh*) of a hundred *tumān*s each year, which they recouped from chancellery officials who paid them out of the central treasury.[152] When it came to the fiscal interests of the ecclesiastic elites, Nāder's policies seem to have been more or less aligned with those of Ṭahmāsp and other Ṣafavid rulers before him. Ideological reasons prevented Nāder from pursuing an absolutist centralisation of the state.

Centralisation of expenditure

The centralisation of revenues and estates across Iran were needed to cover the state's growing military expenditures. In contrast to the Ṣafavid model which devolved the costs of military administration to local commanders, Nāder's regency saw the state begin to support many of the army's costs from the central treasury. The ambitious campaigns Nāder was waging against the Ottomans, one of the world's foremost powers at the time, required a regularly paid and well-equipped army. The Ṣafavid model, as demonstrated in chapter one, was wholly incapable of procuring such an army. Not only did Nāder strive to pay his soldiers cash salaries, he made the unprecedented decision to pay for their mounts, weapons, and equipment.

The centralisation of military expenditure served not only to ensure military effectiveness, but also carried political and ideological benefits. As soldiers and commanders received salaries directly from the centre, the commanders were prevented from entrenching themselves in localities by paying their troops from revenues generated by *tiyul*s or *siyurghāl*s. The centralisation of assignments, revenue collection, and expenditures bound the loyalty of the officers and men to the centre instead of the local military elites. As the saviour who was destined to regain all of Iran's lost territories, Nāder sought to place all other Iranian warriors under his central command. It was from the ṣāḥebqerān whom everyone else was to receive their pay, equipment, and orders.

The departure from Ṣafavid precedents in military administration came as soon as Nāder assumed the regency. Marvi's father served Nāder during his regency as a military clerk, and Marvi draws on his father's papers for his account of Nāder's campaigns in this period,

[152] Garthwaite (ed.), *Khans and Shahs,* Appendix, pp. 2–9.

revealing the change in military salaries and procurement.[153] As Nāder set out west to confront the Ottomans in 1732,

> He ordered the soldiers to renew their weapons and equipment, and whomever was in need of a new uniform, was granted it from the (royal) department … and it was determined that upon the army's entry into Kermānshāh, the salaries and annuities of the army would be paid out of the central treasury (*khazāneh-ye ʿāmereh*) … since a warrior takes heart when his weapons and his horse are ensured (*mażbuṭ*—as in provided by the state) … and any warrior which was in need of provisions and gear for the campaign, recouped all his wants from the royal department.[154]

The royal and central treasury were used synonymously since Nāder had removed any distinction between the two upon becoming regent.[155] In any case, the centralisation of military expenditure is evident from the above passage.

Whether the troops were garrisoned in home territories or campaigning against the Ottomans, Nāder tried to make it an established practice to pay the army with cash salaries. For example, in 1733, an edict was issued to the chancellery officials of Āẕarbāijān, informing them that 'the revenues raised by [the centre's tax collectors] will provide the necessary cash for covering military expenditures; You are to report back to us on the payment of these salaries. Regarding these payments, you are to obey the set and written instructions'.[156] The reference to these practices being 'based on the written regulations' (*ḥasb ol-moqarrar ol-masṭur*) suggests that they were general. Even when troops were on campaign in enemy territory, coffers were transported to the army on the march by chancellery officials alongside military escorts.[157] The regular payment of military salaries was evidently something which Nāder took seriously, binding the soldiery's loyalty to the centre.

---

[153] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vols. I and II, pp. 99, 132, 670, and see Riyāḥi's introduction to the work also.

[154] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 246–247.

[155] Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 161; Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 244, both sources acknowledge that Nāder took over the royal departments and coffers as the regent of the state.

[156] This edict's transcript is contained in the appendix of Nāder Mirzā's *Tārikh o Joghrāfiā*, p. 258, who held it in his family archives.

[157] Lārudi, *Pesar-e Shamshir*, pp. 335–336.

As a rule, the procurement of weaponry, equipment, and horses was made the responsibility of the central treasury.[158] Military procurement made expenditures rise exponentially. For example, horses alone cost around ten to twenty *tumān*s,[159] far exceeding the annual salary of the common soldier, which was somewhere between three to five *tumān*s depending on the battalion with which he served.[160] Even junior officers and soldiers in elite units such as the eternal guards (*hamisheh-keshikān*), received about a dozen *tumān*s, meaning their entire annual wage would be enough to maybe purchase a horse of average quality.[161] Shouldering the costs of procurement was a financially costly departure from Ṣafavid military administration, which struggled even with the payment of regular salaries and left the procurement of mounts to the soldiers and commanders themselves.[162]

The debilitating costs of procurement were made apparent in 1733, when Nāder's army was all but destroyed in battle against the Ottomans. Marvi, whose father served in this campaign, described how the reconstitution of the army led to the exhaustion of Nāder's coffers. Nāder ordered that the costs of purchasing new horses, beasts of burden, weaponry, equipment, uniforms, rations, and provisions should be written down and submitted to the imperial registry office so that the agents of the central treasury could release the necessary funds.[163] The treasury paid out all the sums in cash until its coffers, which held just over 200,000 *tumān*s at the outset, were emptied. When the last unit of 500 men submitted its invoice for 10,000 *tumān*s, there was no cash left to pay them. Matters were only resolved at the last minute, when one of Nāder's generals arrived at camp in tandem with a recently collected levy of 30,000 *tumān*s.[164] Marvi estimates that 140,000 horses and beasts of burden were distributed to the soldiers.[165] Despite the exorbitant cost, the utility of the new military administration was demonstrated clearly when Nāder's reconstituted army routed the Ottomans a few months later, regaining the initiative in the war.[166]

---

[158] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, p. 29, shows that this persisted until the end of the Nāderid empire in 1747.

[159] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 208; Floor, *Rise and Fall*, p. 38.

[160] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 481; Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 333; European accounts such as the VOC reports and Jonas Hanway's *Account* also confirm these figures.

[161] Abraham Kretats'i, *The Chronicle of Abraham of Crete*, ed. George A. Bournoutian, (Costa Mesa, California, 1999), p. 118.

[162] See chapter one.

[163] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 296–297.

[164] Ibid, pp. 297–298. The figure of 200,000 *tumān*s comes from Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 208.

[165] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, p. 297.

[166] For an overview of the campaign of 1733 in Ottoman ʿErāq, see Lockhart, *Nadir*, 65–79.

Overall, given that Nāder's takeover of the state was in large part legitimated by the attainment of military victories, the maintenance of his army's effectiveness was of paramount importance. His deposition of Ṭahmāsp, assumption of the regency, and resumption of the war with the Ottomans were predicated on his ability to regain Iranian territories and captives by force of arms. In ideology and in practice, military superiority was indispensable to Nāder's process of state formation. Thus, for Nāder, the military's exorbitant costs were worth centralising.

Conclusion

The decentralised nature of Ṭahmāsp's state meant that he had to share considerable power with his elites, including ambitious vassals like Nāder. Drawing on the Turco-Mongol and Timurid precedents, Nāder articulated a mandate which saw him wield state power on his overlord's behalf, raising troops and revenues. At the outset, Nāder, or Ṭahmāsp-Qoli as he was referred to at the time, derived almost all his legitimacy from subservience to the Ṣafavid household. This changed with his victories over the Afghans and the conquest of Ajam ʿErāq and Fārs. In the Turco-Mongol tradition, the attainment of military glory was understood to demonstrate divine favour, bestowing political legitimacy. Slowly but surely, Nāder stepped out of Ṭahmāsp's shadow, claiming to be the servant of the Shi'i Imams rather than the reigning shāh. Despite remaining nominally loyal to the Ṣafavid state, Nāder usurped Ṭahmāsp's role as its saviour. Nāder drew on the prevailing discourse on Iranian identity to justify his growing power within the state. The divinely ordained millenarian hero to 'consolidate the Ṣafavid state' by saving Iran and the Iranian Shi'a was identified as Nāder. From an ideological and military perspective, Ṭahmāsp was relegated to playing second fiddle.

Ṭahmāsp's attempt to re-assert himself ended in disaster, leading to Nāder's de facto control over the state. When the Ottomans defeated Ṭahmāsp's offensive and forced him to cede territory in 1731, the loss of divine favour, and thus legitimacy, provided the pretext for his removal. Nāder despatched letters to commanders and governors across the realm, decrying the peace as antithetical to the interests of Iran's faith and state. To preserve those interests, it was necessary to resume the war against the Sunni enemy until all Iranian lands and captives had been freed. In the assembly of elites held in Eṣfehān in 1732, Nāder argued that Ṭahmāsp's kingship was only in the interest of the enemy. He orchestrated Ṭahmāsp's dethronement, ostensibly for the sake of the 'state of Iran'. The object of loyalty then, was not the dynasty, but the realm and the state ruling over it. It had become ideologically

conceivable for a dynast engage in treason. Even those who disagreed with Ṭahmāsp's dethronement, like Marvi, felt the need to argue that Ṭahmāsp was not a traitor, showing that ultimate loyalty was no longer reserved for the reigning dynast. The interests of the Iranian state—freeing Iranian territory and captives—came first, and Nāder cajoled the assembly to grant him the necessary authority to preserve those (read: his) interests.

The preservation of Iranian interests, then, required the defeat of the Ottomans, no small feat. To achieve this goal, Nāder required significant control over the military and fiscal resources of Iran. Substantial revenues were needed to shoulder equally substantial military expenditures. The fiscal administration of the state was centralised by carrying out numerous tax assessments and reconfiguring administrative procedures to give Nāder greater oversight and control over revenues. Many of the lucrative *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s held by Iran's elites were returned to chancellery control. The augmented revenues pouring into the central treasury were used for the centralisation of the military. Soldiers and commanders were bound to the state which ensured that their salaries, weaponry, mounts, and equipment were covered by the treasury. Centralising expenditure helped to increase military effectiveness, a prerequisite for driving out Ottoman armies from occupied territories. In this sense, Nāder's centralising reforms were meant to enable him to preserve the interests of Iran's faith and state. By 1735, he had proved successful in that endeavour, having regained all the territories and captives which the Ṣafavids had lost since 1722. Nāder's achievements gave him the pretext for the establishment of de jure control over the state.

Chapter Four
Nāder Shāh and the ‘Iranian State’

By 1735, Nāder’s military victories had led to the recovery of all the territories lost by the Ṣafavids since the Afghan conquest in 1722. Capitalising on his military strength and reputation, Nāder put plans into motion for usurping the crown. This chapter analyses how Nāder drew on the discourse on Iranian identity to legitimate his abrogation of the Ṣafavids and the founding of his own dynastic state. The first three sections of the chapter concern Nāder’s organisation of a grand assembly of the realm’s notables. They shall examine his use of that assembly as a platform to elicit a consensus among the elites that he had acted as the divinely ordained saviour of Iran’s faith and state, freeing Iranians from foreign oppression. The implication was not only that all Iranians were indebted to him, but that he was the worthiest among his peers for sovereignty. Through ritualistic practices at the grand assembly, Nāder tied his authority to the services he had rendered to Iran and its people, arguing that his legitimacy derived not only from divine providence but the unanimous support of his fellow Iranians. The coronation saw new royal mints and seals introduce Nāder as the Iranian saviour and sovereign, framing the shāh and his people as part of one collective self. The discourse on Iranian identity, then, had come to serve as the ideological foundation of the Nāderid state, which came to be used interchangeably with the ‘Iranian state’ by Nāder and his officials.

A key manifestation of Nāder’s ideological claim to saving Iran’s faith and state and to being the custodian of the Iranian people was his centralisation of fiscal and military administration. Drawing primarily on contemporary edicts and decrees, the latter part of the chapter examines the methods and consequences of Nāder’s centralising endeavours across three sections. The first shall examine the meticulous oversight the Nāderid state established over Iran’s fiscal accounts, reforming tax assessment and collection to increase the revenues flowing to the central treasury. The second section will focus on the continued effort to augment the centre’s revenues through the expropriation of land-revenue assignments held by military and bureaucratic elites. Instead of being remunerated by appanages, Nāder had these elites paid out of the central treasury. The appanages of the ecclesiastic elites were targeted as well, with many estates tied to endowments being expropriated. Nāder argued that the elites’ lucrative estates were needed to cover the costs of the expanding military, which fought for

the interest of Iran's faith and state, legitimating the expropriations. The third and last section will examine how the military administration was reformed as the boon in revenues were used to meet the growing costs of the army, almost all of which was burdened by the central treasury. By centralising military expenditure, including salaries, procurement, and logistics, Nāder was not only constructing an effective standing army, he was attempting to bind the loyalty of the common soldier to himself rather than the local commanders. In contrast to its Ṣafavid predecessor, then, the Nāderid state held a thoroughly centralised hold over the military and fiscal resources of Iran.

Chronological overview of Nāderid Iran's imperial rise (1736–1746)

After Nāder became regent in 1732, he prepared for the renewal of war with the Ottoman empire over, demanding the Porte hand over all territories annexed under the treaty signed by the deposed Ṭahmāsp. Entering Arab ʿErāq, Nāder routed every Ottoman force on his way to Baghdad. When ʿOṡmān Pāshā routed Nāder's army on the banks of the Tigris, Nāder reconstituted his forces in two months and reinvaded Arab ʿErāq. ʿOṡmān and his army were utterly destroyed, forcing the governor of Baghdad to sue for peace without consulting the Porte. Nāder then marched back into Iran to make short work of the rebels in Fārs. When he later marched into Ottoman-held Āẕarbāijān, he laid siege to all the major citadels and fortresses in the region, prompting a large Ottoman relief army to march into Armenia. It had hardly crossed the frontier when Nāder intercepted it with his vanguard, scoring another astonishing victory. Hopeful of gaining his alliance and fearful of facing him in battle, the Russians handed over the remaining provinces they held along the Caspian littoral. The Georgian kingdoms of Kartli and Khākheti were conquered. Despite the approach of winter, Nāder invaded and subdued Dāghestān.[1]

To contemporaries, Nāder's aura of invincibility must have appeared divinely ordained. The military triumphs were so striking that even Ḥazin, the pro-Ṣafavid partisan who left Iran rather than live under Nāder's regency, lauded the conqueror for having 'fought many an arduous battle against Rum, gaining victory in every encounter… (and eventually) none of the lands in the realm of Iran remained under their occupation'.[2] While Nāder had not reached the Euphrates, he had conquered enough of Iran to be able to claim he had restored it,

[1] The chronological overview here is derived from Lockhart, *Nadir*, pp. 65–256; Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 99–274 and will provide the narrative background for this and the subsequent chapter.

[2] Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 267; Kia, *Persianate*, p. 43.

even in the minds of some of his most ardent detractors. All the lands lost since the fall of Eṣfehān in 1722 had been recovered.

The military glory attained by Nāder in his Ottoman wars formed the foundation for his usurpation of the crown. He called a *qurultāi*, an imperial assembly of the realm's notables, where he announced his intention to retire to Khorāsān and live a simple life. He asked those present to elect a new shāh from either the Ṣafavid household or from among themselves. The outcome of the *qurultāi* was hardly in doubt, with Nāder being crowned shāh on 8 March 1736. Nāder promised the notables at the *qurultāi* that he would conquer Iranian territories which had been lost generations ago under the Ṣafavids. His irredentist ideology promised the reconquest of Afghan-ruled Qandehār and hinted at future campaigns to regain Ottoman-ruled Arab ʿErāq and Diārbakr should a lasting peace with the sultan prove illusive. Nāder appointed Reżā-Qoli as the crown-prince and deputy ruler of Iran, leading his army east towards Qandehār. After a long siege which lasted almost a year, Qandehār fell to Nāder in 1738. Many Afghans were taken into Nāderid service. On the pretext of chasing Afghan fugitives, Nāder entered Mughal Hendustān. In 1739 he drew up his army opposite that of the Mughal emperor Moḥammad Shāh (r. 1719–1748). The battle was a resounding victory, with Moḥammad Shāh being made a vassal of Nāder, who thus became a true shāhanshāh. All lands to the west of the Indus were henceforth considered part of Nāder's empire. The Mughal treasury was transferred to Nāder as tribute, and when the people of Delhi rose up against Nāderid troops they were massacred and their city was looted. Having established the Mughals as his tributaries, Nāder marched north to consolidate his hold over his new domains along the Indus.

1740 saw the Nāderid armies invade Central Asia. The king of Badakhshān became Nāder's vassal, as did the rulers of the Khānates of Bokhārā and of Khiveh. Tribute was collected all the way up to the frontiers of Kāshghar. The lands south of the Oxus were annexed to Nāderid Iran, while those to the north were considered its new tributaries. Unlike the more monetary form of tribute flowing to the imperial treasury from Hendustān, the Central Asian Khānates primarily offered large contingents of soldiers to serve in the imperial army. Tens of thousands of Uzbeks, Tartars, and Turkmen swore fealty to the Nāderid empire. In the Persian Gulf, Nāder's lieutenants conquered most of ʿOmān and were consolidating the empire's hegemony in the region.

Despite the empire being at its zenith, many among Iran's old nobility were discontent with Nāderid rule. They had had their military and fiscal powers severely restricted by Nāder's

centralising reforms. They also resented the influx of Afghan and Uzbek officers and men into the imperial army. In 1741, as Nāder made his way through the jungles of Māzandarān on route to a new war in Dāghestān he was shot by an assassin. The failed assassination attempt was apparently organised by a clique of Iranian officers in league with Nāder's son, Reżā-Qoli. Clearly, there were those among the Iranian nobility who were eager to end Nāder's reign. The inauspicious turn for Nāderid rule persisted when the imperial army marched into Dāghestān to subdue the recalcitrant clans of the region. The aura of invincibility which Nāder had cultivated for years was shattered by Dāghestānian guerrillas who avoided set-piece battles and assailed the oversized imperial army through mountain passes and thick woods. The war led to heavy taxes and exactions from Iran, stoking greater discontent.

After almost two years of brutal fighting, Nāder managed to gain the nominal submission of the main Dāghestānian leaders, allowing him to withdraw from the fruitless war. In 1743, Nāder turned his attention to the Ottomans who had refused to recognise the Ja'fari creed as the fifth school of Islamic jurisprudence. Advancing territorial claims against Arab ʿErāq and Diārbakr, Nāder invaded the Ottoman empire with the largest army he had ever assembled, a great many of whom were non-Iranian and Sunni. Nāder's army met no resistance in the field as the Ottomans took refuge behind their city walls and awaited his siege. Many cities fell, but Baghdad and Mosul continued to resist. After taking Najaf, Nāder ordered renovations to the Imam ʿAli shrine and called a council of Shi'i and Sunni ulema from across his empire. The council found the Ja'fari proposal to be legitimate and called upon Sunnis to accept the adherents of the Ja'fari school as fellow Muslims.

While Nāder prosecuted his Ottoman war and oversaw his Islamic council in Najaf, numerous rebellions broke out across Iran, including in Āẕarbāijān, Shirvān, Fārs, and the Caspian littoral. To deal with these rebellions, Nāder terminated his Ottoman offensive and turned east, intent on making a bloody example out of the rebels. The brutality of the imperial army's suppression of the uprisings did little to discourage further strife. Meanwhile the Ottomans saw an opportunity to take the offensive against Nāder. This was a mistake. In 1745, the main Ottoman army was checked at the border and destroyed while Nader sent his second son, Naṣrollāh, to crush another Ottoman army near Mosul. The Porte was ready for peace. Nāder was equally receptive to a peace deal which could allow him to focus on the rapidly destabilising situation in his own empire. The rebellions in Iran had put Nāder in such a precarious position that he was willing to forgo his condition that the Ja'fari creed be

accepted as legitimate by the Ottoman sultan. A peace treaty was signed by both sides in 1746.

Taking sovereignty as the '*Nāder-e Irān*'

The *qurultāi* of Moghān

After the re-conquest of Iranian territories lost by the Ṣafavids, Nāder made a bid for absolute sovereignty over the state. He called a *qurultāi*, summoning nobles and officials from across Iran's dominions to the Moghān plain in East Āẕarbāijān. In Turco-Mongol political culture, the *qurultāi* was an assembly of senior political and military leaders that discussed the accession of a new ruler, the formation of policy, and the distribution of loot or land.[3] The *qurultāi* did not entail a genuine election of a ruler from a pool of equally viable candidates. It chiefly served to legitimate the de facto power wielded by the singular candidate who had demonstrated his possession of divine favour through military conquest.[4] Similar to Nāder's assembly (*kengāsh*) in 1732 which had resulted in Ṭahmāsp's dethronement, his *qurultāi* of 1736 was less a genuine consultation of the realm's elites than it was a carefully orchestrated affair inducing those present to acquiesce to Nāder' seizure of yet more power. Nonetheless, Nāder and his advisers seem to have been adamant to give his election as genuine an appearance as possible. They recognised the *qurultāi* for the important collective ritual that it was.

Xavier Márquez argues that well-executed rituals can produce what he refers to as 'emotional amplification': the intensification of emotional attachments to the symbols used in the ritual and the strengthening of the participants' commitments to those symbols.[5] Thus, rituals around a specific leader, like the *qurultāi*, amplified a 'sense of belonging to a particular community united around the leader'.[6] Such leader-centric rituals, with all the symbols and narratives they encompassed, accentuated the sacrality of the collective self and the profanity of the other;[7] This delineation was integral to the 'spatial consolidation' of the collective self

[3] Bat-Ochir Bold, *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the Medieval History of Mongolia*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2001), p. 83; Hope, *Power, Politics*, p. 45.

[4] Neumann and Wigen, 'Legacy of Eurasian Empires', p. 103.

[5] Xavier Márquez, 'The Mechanism of Cult Production: An Overview', in *Ruler Personality Cults from Empires to nation-States and Beyond: Symbolic Patters and Interactional Dynamics*, ed. Kirill Postoutenko and Darin Stephanov, (New York, 2021), p. 31.

[6] Ibid, pp. 31–32.

[7] Alexey Tikhomirov, 'Father if the People, Face of the Nation: The Premodern and Modern Foundations of Ruler Personality Cults', in *Ruler Personality Cults*, p. 121.

which was situated in a sacred realm while the other was constrained to the profane lands lying beyond.[8] As a ritual, the *qurultāi* at Moghān was meant to ideologically consolidate the Iranian elites' connection to Nāder as their saviour who, acting in the interest of state and faith, had restored the sacred territories of Iran, expelled its enemies, and freed fellow Iranians from foreign captivity. Indebted to the Nāder of Iran (*Nāder-e Irān*), the people of Iran (*ahl-e Iran*) were naturally expected to elect him as their sovereign.

There are two surviving accounts of the *qurultāi* which were penned by those directly involved. One is by Esterābādi, who played an important role in orchestrating and conducting the proceedings.[9] The most detailed eye-witness account, however, is found in the Armenian chronicle of Abraham Kretats'i, written less than a year after the event at the author's own initiative.[10] He was the catholicos of the Armenian church, gaining Nāder's acquaintance during the latter's 1734–1735 campaign against the Ottomans in the Caucasus. Kretats'i displayed an open hostility to the Ottomans, whereas he was quite sympathetic to the Iranians, whom he referred to by the lexical cognate of *Arya*.[11] His use of this cognate probably reflected his familiarity with the contemporary discourse on Iranian identity. In any case, Kretats'i was awed by Nāder, and the latter treated the catholicos with respect.[12] Despite Nāder's passing affection for him, Kretats'i did not enter Nāder's inner circle. Like all the other attendees, he was not informed of the exact purpose of the *qurultāi* to which he had been invited to. Kretats'i's account gives a non-official parallel to Esterābādi's.

Kretats'i recalled that Nāder's heralds 'invited us to an open field' and ordered that each khān and his people were to assemble in their own separate groups on the Moghān plain. People gathered in groups of fifty to a hundred, asking one another as to the purpose for which they had been summoned. Nāder then sent forth a seven-man delegation, including the chief secretary, Esterābādi, and one of Nāder's court-poets, Nadim, who had evidently climbed quite high in Nāder's service.[13] The delegation stood in one place and ordered the heralds to

[8] Ibid, p. 126.

[9] See below.

[10] See George A. Bournoutian, 'Introduction', in Abraham Kretats'i, *The Chronicle of Abraham of Crete*, ed. George A. Bournoutian, (Costa Mesa, California, 1999), pp. 1–9.

[11] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 36, 39. Needless to say, this term has nothing to do with the racial category of Aryan that came about in modern Western culture.

[12] Ibid, pp. 103–104, for one example of their numerous meetings.

[13] Ibid, p. 88.

invite each group over separately. For each group, the delegation read out a document which Kretats'i's chronicle paraphrased:

> The great khān (Nāder) has decreed that you go and confer with each other. Decide whom you wish to rule over you and the country…. For he (Nāder) is old and weary from years of fighting. With the help of God, he has rid Persia (Iran) of its enemies. He has crushed and driven them out of the country. He wishes to leave for Khorāsān to settle down in his castle and to pray for himself and you.[14]

Esterābādi's history contains what is perhaps a version of the original document which he was reading out to the various groups at the *qurultāi*:

> In a time when the key to the conquest of all the dominions was lost, it was the fortunate arms of that majestic lord which retrieved the honour of the Iranians and wielded the sword by which the oppressive hand of the others (*aghyār*) was removed… [Nāder wishes to retire to Khorāsān, and the khāns must now confer on whom they wish to be shāh] for we have done all that honour requires of us, having freed their provinces and their captives from the Afghans, Russians, and Ottomans.[15]

Both these accounts show that the opening manoeuvre at the *qurultāi* was to remind all those present that it was Nāder's God-given military genius which had revived Iran by expelling its enemies and freeing its captives. Iranians, then, owed the restoration of their honour and their realm's territorial boundaries to none other than Nāder.

Curiously, neither Kretats'i nor Esterābādi made any explicit mention of Shi'ism, nor did they present the enemies of Iran as inherently Sunni. The enemies were understood to have been foreign and in need of expulsion, but there was no sectarian element anymore. The reasons for this would become clear on the second day of the *qurultāi*. On the first day, however, Nāder's claim to being the saviour of Iran and its people took centre stage, stripped of its former sectarian language. The implication was that all Iranians were indebted to Nāder. The Nāderid chronicle, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, put it more explicitly by claiming that 'Iran's people owed a great debt (*hoqūq-e ʿaẓimeh*)' to their champion.[16] The *qurultāi* ritual

[14] Ibid, pp. 88–89.

[15] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, pp. 266–268.

[16] Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 166.

began by attempting to instil a sense of indebtedness among the Iranians to their saviour-leader.

The pressure placed on the attendees was more than just ritualistic. For at least some participants, the *qurultāi* was pervaded by an atmosphere of terror. Esterābādi, who strove to present the support for Nāder as genuine and unanimous, omitted this from his history. Kretats'i, however, acknowledged that 'for our own safety', and 'fearing we would be suspected of vacillating, we rushed and returned an hour earlier' than required, ready to proclaim their unanimous support for Nāder's ascendance to the throne.[17] What is absent from both accounts is that Nāder set the stage before the *qurultāi* by having two noblemen executed on spurious grounds. Pro-Ṣafavid authors, such as Ḥazin and Ḥoseyni, claimed that this was to hint at the consequences of defying Nāder.[18] The representatives of the VOC later heard from the Eṣfehānian participants at the *qurultāi* that Nāder's henchmen 'were ready to kill all those present if they had not elected him shāh'.[19] While that may have been an exaggeration, several sources attest to Nāder's lieutenants and fellow Khorāsānians mingling with the attendees, encouraging and perhaps intimidating them to elect Nāder to the throne.[20] Hanway, who collected his information from Iranians in the early to mid-1740s, came to the conclusion that every sensible man could see through the disguise of Nāder wishing to retire to Khorāsān, but in spite of their indignation, they were too fearful to support another candidate.[21]

The likes of Esterābādi and Kretats'i portrayed everyone to have been in accord over Nāder's accession.[22] There were, however, a few courageous men who defied their peers' sheepish acquiescence. Ṭanburi, who collected his information from Iran's inhabitants during his travels along with the Ottoman embassy in the late 1730s, wrote that 'some of the ulema, khāns, and beys asked: How is such a thing possible given that the shāh (ʿAbbās III) is still alive and well? How can someone so cavalierly become a shāh when he is not even of royal descent (*shāhzādeh*)?'.[23] The most vocal opponent of Nāder's accession was a senior cleric,

[17] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 89, 142.

[18] Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 268; Ḥoseyni, *Majmaʿ*, p. 83; see also Kashmiri, *Bayān-e Vāqeʿ*, p. 20.

[19] Floor, *Rise*, p. 53.

[20] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 14; Ṭanburi, *Tārikh*, p. 155.

[21] Jonas Hanway, *Historical Account of the British trade over the Caspian Sea*, (London, 1753), Vol. IV, p. 124.

[22] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, p. 89.

[23] Ṭanburi, *Tārikh*, p. 155.

Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Mollābāshi, who others apparently looked to for moral strength in resisting Nāder's designs.[24] He was overheard by Nāder's spies to have claimed 'whoever seeks to abrogate the Ṣafavid dynasty, his progeny will be wiped away from the world'.[25] He was taken to Nāder, whom he defied by remaining immovable in his commitments, leading Nāder to have him strangled. Apparently, the killing of Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn intimidated the other grandees, preventing them from mentioning the Ṣafavids.[26] Ṭanburi's history further reported that 'all those who were opposed (to Nāder's accession) were put to the sword', meaning that Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn was not the only one to vocalise his disapproval or to suffer its consequences.[27] Ḥoseyni, a Ṣafavid descendant, did not claim anyone other than the cleric was killed, but that several of the attendees fled the *qurultāi*.[28] While many were avid supporters of Nāder's enthronement, many others were merely acquiescent, and a few had the courage to openly resist the usurpation.

On the second day of the *qurultāi*, Kretats'i joined the other attendees in a large circle with Nāder's seven-man delegation at the centre. Ignoring the voices of dissent from the previous day, the delegation informed those present that Nāder would only agree to ascend the throne under three conditions.[29] First, all attendees had to renounce the Ṣafavid dynasty, and never give support to any of its scions under any circumstances. Second, they had to acknowledge Nāder's line as the only legitimate line for dynastic sovereignty, and to swear eternal obedience to it. Third, they had to cease the cursing of the first three Rāshedun caliphs prior to ʿAli, and to cease extremist practices such as self-flagellation during the mourning of Ḥoseyn's martyrdom in the month of Moḥarram.

The third condition was explicated thusly: 'for it is because of these actions that streams of blood have flowed between the two people (Shi'i and Sunni) who read the Qur'an—between the state of Iran and Turkey (Ottoman empire), and have caused the captivity of many'.[30] This last condition was a complete departure from Nāder's earlier ideological discourse which held that waging war on the archetypal Sunni enemy, the Ottomans, was in the interest

[24] James Fraser, *The History of Nadir Shah*, (London, 1742), p. 117–119.

[25] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 455.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ṭanburi, *Tārikh*, p. 155.

[28] Ḥoseyni, *Majmaʿ*, p. 83.

[29] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, p. 90.

[30] Ibid.

of Iran's state and faith. At the *qurultāi*, it suddenly transpired that it was peace which was in the interest of both states, and both people were described as belonging to one faith, sharing the same Qur'an, Prophet, and prayer (*namāz*).[31] There was nothing amounting to a call to convert to Sunnism, but the delegation conveyed Nāder's demand for letting 'them (Sunnis) follow their rite and we (Shi'a) ours and thus cease abusing each other'.[32] The third condition contained a promise to strive for greater rights for Iranians making the Ḥajj pilgrimage.[33]

Kretats'i had understood the core message of the third condition read out by Esterābādi and his six colleagues at the *qurultāi*: the interest of Iran's state and faith were in renouncing seditionist excesses such as ritual cursing (*sabb*) and vocal rejection (*rafż*) of the first three caliphs before ʿAli, allowing for a Shi'i-Sunni reconciliation. Esterābādi's official version of the proclamation in his chronicle began by reminding all that Iran had always been in religious harmony with its neighbours in Rum, Hendustān, and Turān. This was changed with the establishment of the Ṣafavid dynasty under Shāh Esmāʿil I, who 'based on the interests of his own state'—that is to say, not the interests of Iran's state—promulgated *sabb* and *rafż* among the people, leading to the 'soil of Iran (*khāk-e Irān*) being drenched in the blood of sedition and corruption (*fetneh va fesād*)'.[34] If the Iranian people wanted Nāder to take up the mantle of sovereignty, then they had to give up extremist Ṣafavid practices and 'acknowledge the exalted (sixth) Imam, Jaʿfar b. Moḥammad al-Bāqer, as the head of their creed (*sar-maẕhab*)'.[35] The profane enemy which was plaguing the sacred soil of Iran-Realm was no longer the Sunni Afghan or Ottoman enemy, but the extreme Ṣafavid practices which caused seditious wars between Iran and its neighbours in the first place. Nāder's kingship would save Iran by restoring its faith through the non-sectarian Jaʿfari creed, reconciling Shi'i and Sunni, and thus achieving a lasting peace with fellow Muslims.

The introduction of Ja'farism, which took its name from the sixth Imam al-Jaʿfar, was not a departure from Twelverism to either Sixer Shi'ism or Sunnism. It was a re-envisioning of Twelver Shi'ism as a fifth school of thought alongside the four Sunni schools of thought in Islamic jurisprudence.[36] The Ja'fari creed did not involve any real theological innovations. It

[31] Ibid, pp. 90–91.

[32] Ibid, p. 91.

[33] Ibid, p. 91.

[34] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 269.

[35] Ibid.

[36] See Tucker, 'Nadir and Ja'fari Madhhab', pp. 163–165. The other four schools are the Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'i, and Maliki.

was a sufficiently ambiguous proposal to allow Nāder to present himself as still Shi'i among his fellow Iranians, and as Sunni among his Sunni subjects and neighbouring sovereigns. In practice, Ja'farism entailed no more than the eschewing of the most visible and divisive rituals of Twelver Shi'ism: *sabb o rafż*, and self-flagellation in ceremonies commemorating Imam Ḥoseyn's martyrdom. There was no abandonment of any fundamental tenet of Shi'ism.[37] Marvi for example, continued to view Nāder as a champion of Twelver Shi'ism after his coronation, and Hanway observed that those who opposed the introduction of the Ja'fari creed need not have bothered since 'it would remain as they found it'.[38] Al-Suwaydi, a Sunni theologian who debated Nāder's clerics in 1743, was equally unconvinced that any real change had taken place.[39] Conversely, many Sunnis under Nāder's rule came to view him as one of their own, and some even thought of him as a champion of Sunnism.[40] It is quite likely that Nāder introduced the Ja'fari creed in order to facilitate his later expansion into Sunni lands. One of the pledges Nāder made during the *qurultāi* was the conquest of Qandehār, and he probably already had designs on expanding into Hendustān and Turān.[41] The subjugation of these predominantly Sunni lands as a Shi'i conqueror would have been unnecessarily difficult. The confessional ambiguity of Ja'farism may have appealed to Nāder as a discourse which allowed for imperial sovereignty over Shi'i as well as Sunni populations.[42]

The elders at the *qurultāi*

An important aspect of the *qurultāi* ritual was the consultation of the realm's elders, whose honoured opinions and experiences were to inform the election of a new sovereign.[43] In old Mongol terminology, the elders were referred to as the *aqanar*, meaning 'older brothers', though it signified senior leaders rather than kin. In the Persian texts, an *aqa* was usually referred to as a *pir*, meaning elder.[44] The *aqanar* or *pirhā* were expected to offer the throne to

[37] ʿAbdi, 'Andisheh-ye Taqrib', pp. 33–44; Tucker, 'Nadir and Ja'fari Madhhab', pp. 176–178.

[38] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vols. I and II, pp. 480, 886; Hanway, *Historical Account*, Vol. IV, p. 127.

[39] Rasul Jaʿfariān, Aḥmad-Reẓā Khežri, and Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Rafiḥi, ''Abdollāh Suwaidi va revāyati Salafi az kongereh-ye taqrib-e Nāder Shāh Afshār dar Najaf', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Tārikh-e Eslām*, Vol. 9, No. 32, (2017), pp. 53–71.

[40] See my upcoming article 'The Imperial Legacy of Nader in Transoxiana (Turan) as Reflected in Early Manghit Chronicles' in *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* on how the Uzbeks viewed Nāder as a fellow Sunni and a champion against the Shi'i Qezelbāsh.

[41] Parviz Fatḥollāhpur, 'Tashayyoʿ dar dowreh-ye Nāder Shāh Afshār', in *Shi'eh Shenāsi*, Vol. 16, (2006), pp. 57–96.

[42] Ibid, pp. 64–94.

[43] Hope, *Power, Politics*, pp. 46–49.

[44] Ibid, p. 47.

the worthiest candidate who would repeatedly decline their offer in a 'ritual demonstration of humility' before finally acceding.[45] This process was meant to underline that the sovereign was elected upon the unwavering and unanimous insistence of the realm's elders.

Kretats'i's observations of the second day of the *qurultāi* confirm the role of the elders in the ceremonial discussions leading up to Nāder's election to sovereignty. After outlining Nāder's three conditions, the delegation asked everyone to confer with one another, and on the third day everyone was invited to a grand reception by Nāder. After lunch, Kretats'i sat with his own group among the other attendees, and then Nāder addressed the *qurultāi*.[46] Kretats'i observed Nāder initiate the ritualistic process by giving an expostulating speech on the numerous reasons for his refusal of the crown.[47] He asked the grandees to elect someone else and leave him to his solitude in Khorāsān, 'for I have no more strength to battle and drive out enemies'.[48] Nāder's supporters among the grandees remained steadfast, 'the khāns insisted, begged, flattered, implored, and persuaded him not to abandon them or the country'.[49] Nāder questioned whether they truly spoke for all those present, telling them 'I know that among you there are many who are not satisfied with me'. This was a disguised call for his supporters, and those grandees who had hitherto remained silent, to contradict Nāder and insist on the unanimity of their election.

Kretats'i recalled that the khāns responded by saying 'God has given you the power to rule over the land. Everyone is indebted to you and shall obey your every command', whereupon Nāder relented, accepting the crown.[50] The public ritual at Moghān followed the traditional model of the *qurultāi*, with the realm's elders electing Nāder as the only worthy candidate, and insisting upon his enthronement in spite of his reticence. Onlookers and participants were meant to see the investiture of monarchic power through the unanimous council of their most distinguished peers. Nāder had not taken the throne by force, but through legitimate consensus in the Turco-Mongol tradition of sovereignty.

As a military officer, Marvi was familiar with the Turco-Mongol tradition, and thus the central role of the elders in a *qurultāi*. Marvi's account of the *qurultāi* came from his father

[45] Ibid, p. 50.

[46] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, p. 91.

[47] Ibid.

[48] Ibid, p. 92.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.

who attended in person and it may be instructive in how Nāder's *qurultāi* was remembered and related among the officer class.[51] In his history, Marvi focused on one specific exchange between an elder, Bābā Khān Chāpushlu, and Nāder. Bābā Khān was an old lieutenant of Nāder's who had served in almost all his major battles up to that point.[52] When Nāder reiterated his intention to retire to Khorāsān and give the throne to whoever was elected at the *qurultāi*, Bābā Khān, 'as an erudite man of great wisdom', declared that he would not accept any other sovereign than Nāder.[53] Nāder was reportedly incensed, asking 'you mean to compel me into kingship?'. Bābā Khān remained steadfast in his position, causing a furious Nāder to order a rope to be placed around Bābā Khān's neck. Even under threat of death he did not relent. Nāder had the rope removed, declaring in frustration: 'the people of Iran are shamelessly stubborn'.[54] The implication of this closing line in what was surely a choreographed incident was that Bābā Khān did not speak merely on behalf of the attendees at the *qurultāi*, nor even his fellow elders, but on behalf of all the people of Iran.

The subsequent day, Nāder's delegation beseeched 'Iran's chiefs and commanders' to elect another candidate, but they refused, 'we stand ready to sacrifice ourselves for the sake of state and faith (*dowlat o din*). Whatever his blessed commands or conditions, we accept them obediently'.[55] In this version of the *qurultāi*, the realm's Iranian elders unanimously elected to have the Ṣafavids superseded by the Nāderid dynasty and accepted all of Nāder's conditions for his accession, including the adoption of Ja'farism. For Marvi, and perhaps many of his fellow officers, the elders at the *qurultāi* acted for the sake of Iran's state and faith. Thus, state and faith were aligned with the Nāderids and Ja'fari Shi'ism.

Official Nāderid historiography also used the *qurultāi* to present the realm's elders as having placed both state and faith under Nāder's charge. In his history, Esterābādi summarised the elders' position by quoting a line from Ḥāfeẓ's divān: 'How could we turn away from the threshold of the elder of Moghān ∴ the auspicious state lies in his abode, and through its gate lies the path to deliverance'.[56] In Ḥāfeẓ's poetry the elder of Moghān (*pir-e Moghān*) was an

[51] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 481.

[52] Ibid, Vol. I, pp. 112, 254, 279.

[53] Ibid, p. 455.

[54] Ibid, p. 456.

[55] Ibid.

[56] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 268.

allegory for the head of a religious order.[57] Thus, Nāder was the head of the faith. The state resided in his abode, an allusion to Nāder's dynastic household. The poem was repurposed by Esterābādi to express the elders' support for the establishment of Nāderid dynastic control over the state and to imply their acceptance of the Ja'fari creed. Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh* was much more direct about the elders' alignment of the faith with Nāder's Ja'fari creed, with them declaring that 'there was never, nor shall there ever be, a greater service to the faith ⁘ than the promulgation of the Ja'fari creed'.[58] Another Nāderid chronicler, Mostowfi, wrote that the elders had confirmed divine providence, overseeing the 'abrogation of the Ṣafavid state and the dawn of the God-given Nāderid state'.[59]

The Nāderid and the Iranian state were understood to be one and the same. Diplomats and court officials in Nāderid service viewed themselves as working for the 'Iranian state'.[60] Nāder declared to an Ottoman ambassador that he sought peace with the Porte 'to safeguard the status and honour of the Iranian state'.[61] As Nāder believed his actions to have always been in the interest of the Iranian state, it is natural that he would have regarded it as coterminous with the Nāderid state. In any case, those working under Nāder's patronage depicted the *qurultāi*'s elders as having called for the founding of the Nāderid dynasty for the sake of Iran's state and faith. For these elites, Iranian (read: their) interests were served by the abrogation of the Safavids and the formation of a new dynastic state under their patron.

Signing and sealing the *möchälgä*

The acceptance of Nāder's conditional enthronement by the elders was finalised and consummated in the final stage of the *qurultāi* by drafting a treaty to be signed and sealed by all the notables in attendance. Kretats'i, who bore witness to the drafting of the document and would be one of the nobles to affix his seal to the finalised version, attested to the meticulous efforts involved in negotiating the contents: 'they revised and corrected it again and again,

[57] Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Bayāt, 'Pir-e Moghān, negāhi naqd-guneh', in *Ketāb-e Māh-e Din*, Vol. 10, (1998), pp. 12–15.

[58] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 136, v. 3170.

[59] Mostowfi, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, p. 166.

[60] See for example the diplomat, ʿAbdollāh Beyg, who in 1743 told the Baghdādian jurist, al-Suwaidi, that he was an ambassador from the *dawlat al-Īrāniyya* (ʿAbdollāh Suwaidi, *Ḥujaj al-Qaṭʿiyya li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya*, (Cairo, 1905), p. 9; and the courtiers who served Nāder described to Āṣef how the *dowlat-e Irān* sought peace with the Ottomans in 1743 (Moḥammad-Hāshem Āṣef, *Rostam ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Moḥammad Moshayyeri, (Tehran, 1973), pp. 216–218).

[61] Neẓif Efendi, 'Sefāratnāmeh-ye Neẓif Efendi', in Riāḥi (ed. and tr.), *Sefāratnāmehhā*, p. 188.

until the agreement conformed' with Nāder's and the elders' wishes.[62] In the Turco-Mongol tradition, such a treaty was referred to as a *möchälgä*, a binding pledge of loyalty collected from the nobility during a royal accession or some other moment of political transition.[63] Even though the term *möchälgä* was rarely used by the early modern period, the institution persisted in Timurid and Ṣafavid Iran under different Perso-Arabic labels such as *ʿahdnāmeh*, *peymān*, and *khaṭṭ*.[64] Most contemporaries referred to the treaty drafted at the *qurultāi* of Moghān as an *ʿahdnāmeh*. This was the term used by Esterābādi, who oversaw the drafting and editing of the document.[65] Nonetheless, others like Marvi and Ḥazin used the Persianised version of the Mongolian original, *mochalkah* or *mochalkā*.[66]

The creation of the *möchälgä* was far more than a mere formality to neatly end the *qurultāi*'s proceedings. In rituals, emotional commitments and loyalties to symbols and agreements were intensified by the production of communicative artifacts expressing such commitments.[67] The signing and sealing of an artifact like the *möchälgä* by the participants at Nāder's *qurultāi* constituted the final ritualistic stage of binding the loyalty of Iran's elites to the Nāderid state. In fact, the *möchälgä* was written from the perspective of the first-person plural, 'we' (*mā*), referring to 'the people of Iran' (*ahāli-ye Irān*).[68]

The *möchälgä* began with revising the history of Iran since the foundation of Ṣafavid rule, when Esmāʿil I promulgated *sabb o rafż* in the interest of 'his own state', leading to seditious wars within the Islamic world.[69] The result was that 'the work of Iran' (*kār-e Irān*) was thrown into disarray, with Afghans, Russians, and Ottomans partitioning the realm and taking its people captive, 'we were separated from (our lands) everywhere, and the dust of hopelessness settled on the heads of Iran's people'.[70] The signatories to the *möchälgä* were

[62] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 92–93.

[63] Subtelny, 'Binding Pledge (*Möchälgä*)', pp. 9–29.

[64] Ibid, pp. 9–14.

[65] Tavaḥḥodi, *Nāder*, p. 659.

[66] The term can be found in several sources, for example, Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 447; Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 268.

[67] Márquez, 'Mechanisms of Cult Production', p. 31; Roy Rappaport, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge, 1999).

[68] The original document is still extant, preserved at the Museum of Ancient Iran in Tehran, though many of the seals have been torn and some of the text is no longer legible. Its transcript was published in the journal *Tusheh*, Vol. I, No. 2, (1948), pp. 254 and also in Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 221–223.

[69] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 221.

[70] Ibid, p. 222.

made to recognise that the interests of the Ṣafavid state were antithetical to the interests of Iran and its people. The saviour was then introduced: Nāder, who 'ignited the brazier of his victorious state from the horizon of Khorāsān unto the darkness which had engulfed the oppressed'.[71] After driving the foreign enemies out and returning Iran's captives, Nāder was said to call a *qurultāi* attended by 'all the peoples of Iran, from the wise to the ignorant, from the lowly to the great, young and old, Turk and Tājik'.[72] Thus the *möchälgä* was not written from the perspective of the elders or even all those physically present at the *qurultāi*, but from the perspective of all Iranians.

After conferring on the election of a new sovereign,

> We, the people of Iran, concluded that we have suffered all that we have because of the fires of sedition stoked by the Ṣafavid state, which forsook the frontiers to the enemy and abandoned us to our wretched fate. They proved unable to guard and secure us. We were only granted our freedom (*āzād-kardeh*) by that blessed lord (Nāder) who saved us from the clutches of the enemy, giving new life to our decrepit body. Thus, we all willingly, vocally, and unanimously elected him to the sultanship. We pledged to abrogate our servitude to the Ṣafavid dynasty; to renounce the innovations of *sabb o rafż* which were introduced by the Ṣafavid state; and to submit to the righteous Ja'fari creed which has always been accepted as part of the Islamic faith.[73]

The *möchälgä* which Iran's notables signed and sealed in 1736 had them declare that the Ṣafavid state was seditious and hostile to Iran and its people. The notables gave their written acknowledgment that Nāder had undone Ṣafavid evils by saving the collective Iranian self from foreign captivity, and by restoring the frontiers of the realm. The document upon which they fixed their personal and family seals affirmed their indebtedness to Nāder, leading to their unanimous election of him to the throne, as well as their embrace of his Ja'fari proposal. Thus, the *möchälgä* formed a very public pledge of loyalty to the Nāderid dynastic state and its ideological foundations. For many among the *qurultāi*'s attendees, affixing their seals to such a document, not only on behalf of themselves but on behalf of all fellow Iranians,

[71] Ibid.

[72] Ibid, p. 223. The notion that all Iranians had elected Nāder to sovereignty was repeated in official narratives thereafter, including in subsequent letters written to provincial governors after the coronation. For example, see Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, Doc. No. 5, pp. 28–29 which claims 'all of Iran's inhabitants, noblemen, and elders assembled together in Moghān'.

[73] Navā'i (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 223.

probably accentuated their sense of responsibility and commitment to the ideological narratives presented therein. Even those who did secretly harbour Ṣafavid sympathies might have thought twice before betraying such a public pact—a pact drawn up between 'all the peoples of Iran'.

Building on the ideas expressed in the *möchälgä*, some of the nobles at the *qurultāi* went onto ideologically fuse Nāder's imperial sovereignty over Iran and Iranians. Shortly before the formal coronation, Kretats'i attended a reception at which the vizier of Āẕarbāijān read out a panegyric poem he had composed in honour of the soon-to-be-crowned shāh. 'He minted coin upon gold and the claim of sultanship upon the world ⁘ the just Khosrow, Shāh Nāder-Qoli, the world-conqueror ⁘ … Praise be to God, our monarch is the Nāder of all Iran ⁘ God is companion to each of his subjects'.[74] This must have impressed Nāder or some of his advisors since the poem was used as the basis for the legend minted on his first coin celebrating the commencement of his reign. They read: 'He minted coin upon gold and the claim of sultanship upon the world ⁘ the Nāder of Iran-Realm and world-conquering Khosrow'.[75] Nāderid ideology was not formulated in a vacuum, removed from the influence of the elites to whom it was meant to appeal and in whose eyes it was meant to cultivate legitimacy. In this case, the Āẕarbāijānian vizier's poem conveyed the idea of Nāder as a universal conqueror whose sovereignty emanated from Iran, and the Nāderid chancellery, recognising that the poem complimented the official ideology, collaged a couplet out of it for the legend on its coinage. Thus, Nāderid ideology was not a projection onto Iran's elites, but was at least on several important occasions, the outcome of a symbiotic relationship between the ideas of Nāder and the Iranian elites.

The connection between sovereign and subject was made all the clearer in the imperial seal Nāder adopted and used until the end of his reign, adorning each and every edict and letter he ever issued as sovereign. Identification between a ruler and the people whom he rules serves to legitimate his authority and his commands. Subservience to one of 'our people', as opposed to one who is 'not one of us', is regarded as the preferrable option.[76] Imperial seals, as objects denoting both identity and authority, could position a ruler in a specific territory

[74] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 99–100.

[75] Eftekhāri (ed.), *Sekkeh-Shenāsi*, p. 69.

[76] Barker, *Legitimating Identities*, pp., 32, 35.

and among a particular community, legitimating his rule over his people and his realm.[77] The imperial seal adopted after the coronation in 1736 read:

> As the seal of state and faith came undone ⁖ in the name of the Nāder of Iran,
> God restored order (*Negin-e dowlat o din rafteh bud chun az jā ⁖ be nām-e Nāder-e Irān qarār dād Khodā*).[78]

Every official and every subject who encountered any Nāderid decree or correspondence was able to see that it was the Nāder of Iran (*Nāder-e Irān*) who ruled over the people of Iran (*ahl-e Irān*). As the chapter-heading in Esterābādi's chronicle put it, Nāder's acceptance of the crown meant his 'Acceptance of the Custodianship over the People of Iran (*Masʿul-e Ahl-e Irān*)'.[79] It is unsurprising then that many contemporaries, both within and without Iran, thought of the new ruler as the 'Iranian Nāder' and the 'Iranian high king' (*Nāder-e Irāni* and *pādshāh-e Irāni*).[80] His sovereignty was not merely over a realm and its subjects. Nāder's sovereignty was over his realm and his people alongside whom he shared a belonging to that realm. The seal's legend described this sovereignty as one granted by God, sacralising the connection between Nāder, Iran, and his fellow Iranians. According to the seal, then, the sacral Iranian-inflected sovereignty of Nāder was what saved Iran's state and faith, both of which were thenceforth under his custodianship.

The seal was quite unlike any other in Iran's history.[81] For the first time in over a thousand years, the concept of Iran was reintroduced to imperial sigillography, demonstrating its central role in the Nāderid state's ideology. Explicit references to Shi'ism from the Ṣafavid era were discarded in favour of a reference to 'the faith', alluding to Shi'ism's revision into the non-sectarian Ja'fari creed. The seal could speak to Iranian identity without alienating non-Shi'i subjects. This was of great value given Nāder's expansionist drive into Sunni lands almost immediately after his coronation.

---

[77] Bedos-Rezak, *Ego was Imago*, pp. 152–157.

[78] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, p. 145, and virtually all edicts issued 1736–1747.

[79] Esterābādi, *Tārikh-e Jahāngoshā-ye Nāderi*, ed. ʿAbdol-ʿAli Adib Borumand, (Tehran, 1991), p. 269.

[80] These are relatively common in the chronicles. See for example, Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 716–718, 727–729; Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, pp. 450, 465, vv. 2679, 2773; The chronicles of *Toḥfat ol-Khāni* and *Tāj ol-Tavārikh* also use such designations. See my paper, 'Imperial Legacy of Nader'.

[81] Not even any imperial Sāsānian seals reference Iran. For Sāsānian and pre-Islamic seals in general see Moḥmmad-Reżā Najāriān and Fāṭemeh Shir-Salimiān, 'Barresi-ye mohrhā-ye pādshāhān va shāhzādegān az pish khaṭṭi tā Sāsāni', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Irāni*, Vol. 12, No. 23, pp. 165–183.

To be Iranian in the Nāderid era

Setting aside the discussion on state formation, this section offers a digression on the characteristics of eighteenth-century Iranian identity, delineating it from the national Iranian identity which emerged in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The purpose of this section is to dispel some of the common misconceptions the modern reader might have of the notion of Iranianness discussed in the present study. Iranian identity in the Nāderid era was primarily espoused by the elites of an imperial realm, men who were poets, courtiers, bureaucrats, or officers. Though these elites included the peasants in their collective sense of Iranianness, there is almost no evidence to suggest the peasants themselves recognised let alone internalised the collective identity prevailing among the upper classes. On the other hand, the national identity which was disseminated in modern Iran reached the overwhelming majority of the population, who were indoctrinated with a collective sense of self via mass media and a national curriculum, especially during the twentieth century.[82]

Nāder and his contemporaries conceived of belonging to the 'capacious expanse of Iranian dominions' (*mamālek-e vasiʿ ol-masālek-e Iran*) or the 'vast realm of Iran' (*molk-e vasiʿ ol-fażā-ye Irān*),[83] stretching from the Oxus to the Euphrates, and as we shall see, he strove to re-establish those frontiers during his reign. The nation-state of Iran, on the other hand, has been sharply delineated from its neighbours such as Iraq and Azerbaijan. These 'other' nation-states have come to be considered as lying outside the borders of Iran geographically, ethnically, linguistically, and culturally. The Iraqis are Arab, and the Azerbaijanis are Turk, as opposed to the national self which is imagined as ethno-linguistically Persian at its core.[84] Furthermore, nationalism in Iran was inspired by Euro-centric ideas of an Aryan race and the notion of a primordial linguistic purity through which Persian supposedly preserved this Iranian (Aryan) race from the onslaught of the Islamic Arab and Turk others.[85] A defining

[82] Afshin Marashi, *Nationalising Iran: Culture, Power, and the State 1870–1940*, (Seattle and London, 2008), pp. 86–109.

[83] See for example, Nāder's *fatḥnāmeh*, in Shaʿbāni (ed.), *Ḥadiṡ*, p. 101.

[84] Reza Zia-Ebrahimi, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation*, (New York, 2016), pp. 18–40; Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, 'Colorblind or Blinded by Color? Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Iran', in *Sites of Pluralism: Community Politics in the Middle East*, ed. First Oruc, (London, 2019), pp. 153–180, particularly p. 164 on the Arab/Persian binary.

[85] Ibid, pp. 215–222; Kia, *Persianate*, pp. 97–100, 123–126 on the fetishisation of language in modern nationalist identities.

characteristic of Iranian nationalism was a desperation for connecting the collective self to European civilisation, from where it derived many of its ideas.[86]

Eighteenth-century Iranian identity had no conception of ethnicity, race, anti-Islamic sentiment, Persian (or any other) monolingualism, and certainly did not idolise Europe or derive its sense of self from it. Iranianness was inclusive of countless lineages and languages, none of which took primacy over the others. Modern nationalist thought, with its tendency to map one language to one community and vice versa, has obscured the intense multilingualism of pre-nationalist societies.[87] Communities, and especially the elites within them, frequently conversed in a plurality of languages and many of their co-linguists lay outside the community.[88] In other words, language was far from determinant of who was considered part of the collective self. In the eighteenth century, some of the most impassioned affirmations of Iranian identity were sometimes in Kurdish, Arabic, or Turkish.[89] It was in his preferred language of conversation, Turkish, which Nāder told the Ottoman ambassador that his aim was to 'safeguard the status and honour of the Iranian state' (*Irān dowletinin ʿerz ve shaʾni ṣiānetineh dahi ehtemām-e bi-shomār oluneh*).[90] Nāder was far from a lone voice. The eighteenth century saw many of the *Shāhnāmeh*'s legendary tales of Iranian sovereigns and champions, from Kay-Khosrow to Rostam, and of their victories over foreign enemies in Turān and Rum, being circulated orally in Turkish.[91]

Iranianness, then, was expressed in a multitude of languages, but also by men who hailed from a congeries of lineages (ethnicity would be a misleading term in this context).[92] Nāder

[86] Marashi, *Nationalising Iran*, pp. 6–11; Zia-Ebrahimi, *Emergence of Iranian Nationalism*, pp. 125–146.

[87] Francesca Orsini, Sara Marzagora, and Karima Laachir, 'Multilingual Locals and the Literary Circulation before Colonialism', in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (2019), pp. 63–67.

[88] Ibid; Francesca Orsini, 'Whose Amnesia? Literary Modernity in Multilingual South Asia', in *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, Vol. 2, (2015), pp 266–272.

[89] For Kurdish, see Kandulehi; For Arabic, see Neyrizi; and for Turkish, see the monumental Turkish inscriptions discussed in the following chapter.

[90] Nāder's words were recorded verbatim by the Ottoman ambassador Mosṭafā Neẓif Efendi, who included his conversations with the shāh in his official ambassadorial report (*sefāratnāmeh*), a copy of which can be found in Istanbul's Fatih Millet Kutuphanesi, MS. No. 824. The report was transcribed in its entirety by the eighteenth-century Ottoman historian Soleymān ʿEzzi, *Tārikh-e ʿEzzi*, (Istanbul, 1785), fols. 85r–90v, and see fol. 88v specifically for the above quote. For a Persian translation refer to 'Sefāratnāmeh-ye Neẓif Efendi', in Riāḥi (ed. and tr.), *Sefāratnāmehhā*, p. 188.

[91] One such compendium of these *Shāhnāmeh* tales in Turkish, dated to 1164/1750 by the scribe, has been rediscovered by Sajjād Āydenlu, 'Muʿarrefi-ye yek ṭumār-e naqqāli-ye kohan beh zabān-e Torki', in *Āyineh-ye Mirāṡ*, Vol. 6, (2018), pp. 129–149. Refer to pp. 131–133 for a list of the stories included in the compendium.

[92] See Mana Kia's *Persianate*, pp. 97–145 for her forceful arguments demonstrating the distortions which arise from importing this modern Western concept into discussions on eighteenth-century identity. Following her

introduced his ambassador to Istanbul, a Shāmlu Turkmen of the Bigdeli clan, as the 'most exalted of Iranian nobles'.[93] The grandees who signed the *möchälgä* of Moghān on behalf of the Iranian people hailed from lineages such as Ṭāleshi, Āchmi, Lori, Bakhtiāri, Afshār and Qājār Turkmen.[94] Going beyond the perspective of the state, the fact that Iranian identity encompassed disparate lineages is evident from the elites who espoused it. Marvi described how an entire army descended into mourning when one of its senior commanders, an Afshār Turkmen, was killed, 'for he was the refuge of the Iranians'. The mourning soldiers were from units of Afshār and Qājār Turkmen, Khorāsānian Arabs, and Kurds.[95] Similarly, Kandulehi described an Iranian division (*tip-e Irāni*) as 'drawn up from Kurds, Lulu (Arabs), Qājārs, and Afshārs'.[96] Four Kurdish generals who deserted the imperial camp after Nāder's assassination in 1747 told an Ottoman ambassador that Nāder had received his comeuppance for turning on his fellow Iranians and siding with the Afghan and Uzbek contingents in the imperial camp.[97] Clearly, there was no singular lineage which lay at the core of the Iranian collective in an analogous manner to how Persian ethnicity lies at the core of modern Iranian nationalism.

Marvi's fellow officers relayed to him a heated exchange between Nāder's ambassador, Hāji Khān Kurd, and an Ottoman Pāshā.[98] The Pāshā, speaking in Turkish, said that 'Iranians have their hands tied in self-adornment and pampering'. Haji Khān, outraged by the insinuation that his people were effeminate, replied in the same language, 'from the (Ottoman) Sultan's swordsmen to his champions, all are in the habit of keeping young boys (for sex)'. The conversation then switched to Persian as the incensed Pāshā told Haji Khan that 'if you were not an ambassador, you would have your punishment placed right next to you (i.e. have your severed head placed next to your decapitated body)', to which Haji Khān, also switching to Persian, replied: 'I dare you to do your worst'.[99] Even if one takes the account to be apocryphal, one would still have to acknowledge that Marvi, himself a Khorāsānian Qājār,

---

lead, I have stuck to 'lineage' as socio-literary construction of the early modern Turco-Persianate world in which Nāderid Iran was situated.

[93] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 269.

[94] For a comprehensive list of the attendees and signatories at Moghān refer to Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 71–75.

[95] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 598–600.

[96] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 508, vv. 3354–3356.

[97] Reḥmi Tātār, 'Sefāratnāmeh', in Riāḥi (ed.), *Sefāratnāmehhā*, p. 233.

[98] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 1064.

[99] Ibid.

cast a Chemeshgazek Kurd as a multilingual protector of the collective self. The Iranians, then, hailed from many lineages and spoke many languages, none of which were given any clear centrality or precedence over the others.

Another characteristic of the collective sense of Iranianness which emerged in the minds of the eighteenth-century elites was that it did not necessarily connote loyalty to a specific state or dynasty, in sharp contrast to the heavily Ṣafavid-inflected Iranian identity expressed by the elites in the preceding two centuries. Marvi's history, informed by oral accounts given by officers returning from Nāder's Indian expedition, contains a story which is particularly illuminating with regard to the political loyalties which the elites associated with their collective identity. In the aftermath of Nāder's victory over the Mughal army at the battle of Karnāl (1739), the highest-ranking prisoner was a Mughal general by the name of Saʿādat Khān, a Khorāsānian adventurer who had come to Hendustān and managed to rise through the ranks of the Mughal imperial establishment. Nāder apparently admonished Saʿādat, telling him that 'given that you yourself are one of Iran's people (*tu az marmodem-e Irān*), you ought to have intervened (in our favour against your Mughal overlord)'.[100] In response, Saʿādat recounted all his long years of loyal service to the Mughal emperor. He argued that if he were to betray the Mughal emperor at such a critical juncture, he would only have brought shame (*nang*) upon all Iranians (*jamāʿat-e Irāni*), as thenceforth, 'if at any time someone from our aforementioned dominions (Iran) were to come to this dominion (Hendustān), they would be assailed with accusations and their integrity questioned by the people of Hendustān'. Thus, Saʿādat Khān's actions were in keeping with Iranian honour and the interests of his fellow compatriots residing in Hendustān.

It is interesting that Nāder's reception of Saʿādat's response was said to have been positive, for 'the words of Saʿādat Khān were very much to his liking'. This is rather suspect given that Nāderid ideology insisted that Iranian identity and loyalty to the Nāderid state were inextricably linked. In any case, putting aside positivist interpretations of this narrative, one can glean that the officers who retold it to Marvi did not equate Iranianness with loyalty to a particular sovereign or even dynastic state. It was purportedly Saʿādat Khān's Iranianness which led him to honour his oath to the emperor of Hendustān and to join battle against 'his own Iranian pādshāh' (*pādshāh-e Irāni-ye khud*). For his Iranian-inspired display of integrity, the *Nāder-e Irān* praised and even rewarded Saʿādat Khān.[101] In conclusion, while the elites

[100] Ibid, Vol. II, pp. 728–729.

[101] Ibid.

in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had strongly associated their sense of belonging to Iran with loyalty to the ruling Ṣafavid dynasts, many eighteenth-century elites did not view their Iranianness as necessarily entailing loyalty to the Nāderids. (The final chapter of this study explores why many of these elites later came to regard the overthrow of the Nāderid state as a collective Iranian duty).

Nāder's relentless centralisation of the Iranian state

As the saviour of his fellow Iranians and as the man who reigned over the realm by the unanimous election of 'all the peoples of Iran', Nāder's ideology facilitated his continued centralisation of the Iranian state, concentrating administrative powers in the hands of himself and his inner circle. In the early modern period, the ruler's personal oversight on local officials and their activities in various regions helped to ideologically and administratively bind those regions into a cohesive realm.[102] As the 'Nāder of Iran' (*Nāder-e Irān*), the new shāh began consolidating his hold on the 'state of Iran' (*dowlat-e Irān*) through a series of centralising reforms. He outlined many of these reforms to the nobility after his coronation at the *qurultāi* of Moghān. In the Turco-Mongol tradition, a new ruler was expected to define for the *qurultāi*'s grandees what was referred to as 'the ordinances of the realm' (*moḥemāt-e mamālek*), publicly describing the policies and appointments of the new state.[103] Usually, it was used to cultivate good relations with the elites by granting them a generous share of political, military, and administrative power. In other words, it ratified the decentralisation of the state.[104] Ironically, Nāder used the *qurultāi* at Moghān to announce his centralisation of powers and offices.

The military and chancellery offices of the state were placed under Nāder and his personal secretary, Esterābādi, accumulated unprecedented levels of oversight and responsibility.[105] For instance, the offices of military courtiers such as the head of the royal slaves (*qoller-āghāsi*) and the head of the royal guards (*qurchi-bāshi*), both of which had land-revenue assignments tied to them,[106] were discontinued. These assignments were taken over by the

[102] Alexey Tikhomirov, 'Father of the People', p. 126; Clifford Geertz, 'Centres, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power', in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, edited by Sean Wilentz, (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 13–38.

[103] Hope, *Power, Politics*, pp. 51–53.

[104] Ibid, p. 52.

[105] Shaʿbāni, *Tārikh*, Vol. II, pp. 584–585; Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 241.

[106] Anṣāri, *Dastur*, pp. 198–200; Minorsky (ed.), *Taẕkereh*, p. 86.

centre.[107] All formations were directly answerable to the shāh, who frequently commanded units down to the sub-battalion (*fowj*) level.[108]

Just as middlemen were cut out from the military hierarchy, so too were civil servants from the bureaucracy. In his capacity as imperial secretary (*monshi ol-mamālek*), Esterābādi absorbed the responsibilities of several other offices which were abrogated. One such office was that of the royal scribe (*majles-nevis*), who in the Ṣafavid period acted as the chief secretary to the shāh; drafted all the diplomatics and treaties; was the court historian; oversaw a network of chroniclers (*vaqāyeʿ-nevis*) throughout the realm; and sorted petitions regarding crownlands.[109] All these responsibilities were absorbed by Esterābādi, who himself wrote that he was 'obliged to be in permanent attendance to his majesty at court and on campaign'.[110] As opposed to the Ṣafavid imperial secretary who answered to the head of the chancellery, i.e. the grand vizier, Esterābādi answered exclusively to Nāder. In fact, Nāder abrogated the office of grand vizier to assume direct control over the chancellery, placing him in intimate contact with not just the secretaries, but the comptrollers and fiscal officers across the realm.[111] This meant Nāder oversaw the four imperial comptrollers who reported to him on all the accounts in the four major dominions of Iran: Āẕarbāijān, Khorāsān, Fārs, and ʿErāq-e ʿAjam.[112]

The centralisation of administrative powers was concomitant with the continued centralisation of tax revenues and expenditures. According to Marvi, the expansion of responsibilities held by the centre was accompanied by the restriction of responsibilities held by provincial governors (*ḥokkām*) and local revenue officers (*żābeṭān*). These two groups were no longer to have any say in determining either incomes or expenditures. They were merely to collect taxes according to what was prescribed in the centre's tax assessments. All

[107] This has already been pointed out by Arunova and Ashrafian, *Dowlat*, p. 74.

[108] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 457; In the battle of Karnāl (1739) for example, Nāder commanded individual *pānṣadbāshi*s.

[109] See Floor, *Safavid Government*, pp. 55–58. Under the Ṣafavids, it was the office of the *majles-nevis* which overshadowed that of the *monshi ol-mamālek*. See ibid, pp. 50–55; Marcinkowski, *Dastur*, pp. 338–339.

[110] Esterābādi, *Sanglākh*, Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, No. 860, fol. 1v; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, p. 457, confirmed this.

[111] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 457.

[112] Ibid. The only viceroyalties which continued were the Kingdom of Kartli in Georgia, the Kalāt Khānate in Baluchestān, and later, the kingdom of Balkh, and the Shamkhālate of Dāghestān. All other territories fell into one of the four dominions. E.g., Darband, Shirvān and Armenia were all considered part of the dominion of Āẕarbāijān, while Esterābād and Kermān were considered part of Khorāsān, administratively speaking. See Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 75. For the fact that crown properties (*khāṣṣeh*) were administered by the supreme chancellery, see the 1739 edict in Navāʾi, *Nāder*, pp. 410–413.

their expenditures had to be carefully authenticated and the revenues they collected were to be surrendered to the chancellery officials (*ʿommāl*). The incomes and expenditures of the provinces were made the responsibility of the 'scribes and comptrollers of the supreme chancellery. All accounting procedures were to take place under the supervision of chancellery officials and fiduciaries appointed from the imperial court'.[113]

The new regulations mentioned by Marvi were confirmed in an edict drafted by Esterābādi in August 1740, setting out how Āẕarbāijān's revenues were to be accounted for. Even though it was specifically addressed to the officials in Āẕarbāijān, it discusses the chancellery's 'usual regulations'.

> In accordance with the usual regulations, after the centre's deputies and chancellery officials enter any of the provinces of Āẕarbāijān, the local revenue officers and clerks must clarify for them the province's accounts on incomes, expenditures, arrears, and surpluses. They are to surrender (to the officials) these records, which must be affixed with the correct seals. The scribes of the imperial comptroller, and the scribes of our deputies, are to make copies of these accounts for our inspection… According to regulations, as soon as they arrive in Tabriz, all scribes must from the very first thing in the morning go to the (local) registry office. There they will engage in their work, and it must not be permitted for anyone to work separately in his own house. When travelling to the provinces to deal with their accounts, everyone will make themselves present at the registry office of that given province first thing in the morning, where they will carry out their chancellery duties transparently.[114]

The phrase 'in accordance with the usual regulations (*ḥasb ol-moqarrar ol-maʿmul*)' indicates that Iran's other dominions may also been subject to the same regulations, with local revenue officers being tightly monitored by chancellery officials, and deputised inspectors (*vokalāʾ*) dispatched from the centre.

In continuity with Nāder's regency, the collection of fiscal data was a major component to his centralisation of the state's fiscal administration. Oversight was maintained not only through the dispatch of deputies and audits by chancellery officials, but also by the regular

[113] Ibid, p. 457. These general regulations seem to have grown out of the regulations Nāder set down in the 1733 edict issued to Loṭfʿali Khan and Mirzā Shafiʿ in Āẕarbāijān during his regency (see above).

[114] al-Maʿi (ed.), *Korrāseh*, p. 601.

submission of accounts back to the centre. The centre's foremost civil servant in Āẕarbāijān, the imperial comptroller Mirzā Shafiʿ, was instructed to send reports on each province to Nāder. The edict required Mirzā Shafiʿ's scribes to draft files on each province, incomes, expenditures, surpluses, and arrears, 'for he must keep these files and bring them forth for our royal inspection'. The files were ordered to be transcribed in separate ledgers by both the deputies and the local officials.[115] Under the Ṣafavids, it was the duty of a provincial official, the *ẓābeṭeh-nevis*, to transcribe the incomes and expenditures of the province, and to establish whether they were in surplus or in arrears.[116] Under Nāder, these accounts were verified and transcribed by several centrally appointed chancellery officials, including the imperial comptroller and the deputised inspectors, who sent their transcripts to the centre 'for our inspection'. The edict decreed that the aforesaid transcriptions of provincial accounts were to take place under Shafiʿ's direct supervision, so that

> if anyone is questioned in regard to anything, they must be able to answer. Let there not be a state of affairs which will lead to the deputies having to make excuses based upon the illegibility of documents and the vizier and scribes to come pleading with excuses, for all will be interrogated and reckoned with.[117]

Evidently, the centre was anxious to keep a close eye on the fiscal accounts and to have its appointees verify them at multiple stages, ensuring no incomes were misappropriated and no unnecessary expenditures took place, either of which would have cost the central treasury.

In each dominion, it was not just the imperial comptroller that was asked to present accounts for inspection. The provincial comptrollers under his jurisdiction were also to submit their accounts to the centre separately. For example, when a new provincial comptroller was appointed over Yerevan in 1737, he was ordered to keep transcripts on all the province's fiscal files, so that 'when he enters the supreme registry office, he will clarify all the province's revenue accounts'.[118] In this way, the centre received a constant stream of fiscal information from its imperial comptrollers, provincial comptrollers, deputies, and inspectors, allowing it to cross-check and corroborate their accounts.

---

[115] Ibid.

[116] Floor, *Fiscal*, 77; Anṣāri, *Dastur*, 113; *Taẕkereh*, pp. 112–113.

[117] Al-Maʿi (ed.), *Korrāseh*, p. 601.

[118] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, doc. No. 9, p. 41.

Accurate fiscal information was a pre-requisite for the audits held by the centre. During the Ṣafavid era, the chancellery's expenditure department (*sarkār-e towjih*) was responsible for auditing the provincial accounts.[119] The accumulation of vast amounts of fiscal information by the Nāderid centre meant that Nāder and his fiduciaries could carry out audits themselves. In 1741, the Russian empire's permanent resident in Iran observed,

> As Nāder passed through the cities and dominion of his realm, he periodically sojourns for three to five days at a time as he audits the accounts of local commanders and governors, particularly those accounts concerning revenues dedicated to the central treasury. His audits examine these accounts meticulously.[120]

In Nāder's absence, audits would usually be overseen by a close confidant or a member of the imperial family. For example, an edict from 1741 informed Āẕarbāijān's officials that

> Our most illustrious son, Reżā Qoli Mirzā, has from the beginning of this (fiscal) year been engaged with overseeing the incomes of all Āẕarbāijān, touring each of its provinces alongside the (centre's) deputies and the provincial vizier… We have deemed that our son, after having verified the accounts [of Āẕarbāijān] and ensured that all have executed their duties as prescribed, must join the royal confidant (*moqarreb ol-ḥażrat*), Mirzā Bāqer, and bring a scribe from each province to appear before our royal threshold where they will be required to turn over the accounts. They (meaning the scribes) will be punished and dismissed from their posts if their accounts are found wanting.[121]

The regular and thorough audits of the Nāderid state relied on the fiscal information it accrued from its numerous channels, allowing for corroboration and verification by the centre.

In comparison, Ṣafavid oversight over the realm's fiscal accounts was weak. The Ṣafavids had a conspectus comptroller (*mostowfi-ye kholāṣeh*) who was tasked with the verification of accounts belonging to various provincial officials, and who supervised the collection of

[119] Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 78.

[120] Quoted from Arunova and Ashrafian's *Dowlat*, p. 103.

[121] Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh*, pp. 260–261.

taxes.[122] This office was established sometime in the 1650s during the reign of ʿAbbās II (r. 1642–1666), but it seems to have lasted only a few months before it was scrapped. As the eighteenth-century *Dastur ol-Moluk* puts it, the office was 'neither customary, nor persisting', and was abolished after only eight months as 'it transpired that the appointment was without any benefit'.[123] It is indicated that this was due to the general state of disorder reigning through the chancellery's accounts.[124] In contrast, the consolidation of fiscal information by the Nāderid state allowed for regular and rigorous audits, and the central supervision of tax collection.[125] The edict from 1741 shows that the first round of Āẕarbāijān's audit was to be carried out by Reżā Qoli and the centre's deputies which attended him. A secondary round was to be carried out at the imperial court in Nāder's presence, where the accounts of each Āẕarbāijānian province would be checked against the records accumulated by the supreme chancellery. In general, the multiple levels of oversight sought to ensure revenues flowed smoothly into the central treasury without local agents skimming off the top.

Nāderid edicts might give the impression that administrative practices from the Ṣafavid past were reformed overnight. However, in the early modern world, administrative edicts and administrative realities did not always align. Decrees and regulations were sometimes tools to pursue more stable, centralised control in the face of realities which were in constant flux.[126] In the Nāderid context, the local revenue officers and officials resisted the centralisation of revenue streams outlined in Nāder's edicts. Under the Ṣafavids, the local bureaucratic elites had enjoyed limited oversight from the centre, allowing them to misappropriate a significant part of the revenues earmarked for the treasury.[127] Time and again, the Nāderid state was confronted with local officials who had flouted its regulations, embezzled funds, and imposed their own dues on the taxpayers. The Draconian penalties instituted by Nāder did not fundamentally alter the problem. For example, in 1739, when the revenue officers in southern Fārs were revealed to have misappropriated funds belonging to the treasury, Nāder's deputies

[122] Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 79.

[123] Marcinkowski, *Dastur*, p. 160.

[124] Ibid, pp. 160–161. Also see Marcinkowski, *Dastur*, pp. 340–342; and Floor, *Fiscal*, pp. 79–80.

[125] The edict in Nāder Mirzā (ed.), *Tārikh*, pp. 260–261 makes clear that the imperial comptroller toured each of Āẕarbāijān's provinces with several provincial officials (selected by the centre) to supervise tax collection before moving on to the next province.

[126] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', p. 51; Dumolyn and Van Steenbergen, 'Studying Rulers', pp. 115–118.

[127] Behruz Reżāyi-Manesh, 'Tārikh-e edāri-ye Irān dar ʿaṣr-e Ṣafavi', in *Ketāb-e Māh-e Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, No. 153, (2011), p. 16; see also see Floor, *Safavid Government*, pp. 209–213; idem, *Fiscal History*, pp. 231–232.

caught and interrogated them, forcing them to return the embezzled sums. When the centre was informed of the affair, it ordered all transgressors to be executed and replaced with new appointees.[128] In 1741, Nāder reviewed the accounts of the chancellery officials in Khorāsān. The results were apparently unsatisfactory, as many of the officials were put to death.[129]

In 1743, Nāder entered Tabriz and began reviewing the accounts of Āẕarbāijān. After the audit revealed discrepancies, a number of revenue officers and chancellery officials were tortured, blinded, and their estates expropriated. Many among the chancellery staff were executed and their posts given to new appointees.[130] Hanway witnessed one such execution during his 1744 stay at Nāder's camp: 'A person who had collected taxes was complained of by the peasants, of whom it appeared he had made greater exactions than he had accounted for to the shāh'.[131] 1746 saw a similar massacre of local revenue officers and officials across Fārs, Kermān, and Khorāsān.[132] The Nāderid state never managed to bring Iran's fiscal administration under complete central control. Local bureaucratic elites put up a dogged resistance to the centre's regulations which limited their incomes.

Where the Nāderid state succeeded was in its establishment of a centralised fiscal administration which had the necessary data to detect misappropriated revenues and investigate unbalanced accounts. Paradoxically, all the above examples are testament to the fact that the Nāderid state did indeed possess the necessary structures, oversight, and information to investigate local accounts, bringing missing revenues to light. When central audits revealed local administrators 'to have misappropriated chancellery tax revenues, they were tortured; new (tax) assessments were drawn up for each province, and tax collectors were assigned to gather the (missing) sums'.[133]

Continued expropriation of land-revenue assignments

The centralised hold on fiscal information played a role in the Nāderid state expanding its revenues through taxing or outright expropriating Iran's land-revenue assignments. Accurate information on these assignments was yielded through tax assessments and audits. Mirzā

[128] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 687–688.

[129] Ibid, p. 827.

[130] Ibid, p. 870.

[131] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 174.

[132] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, pp. 22–26; Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 484–486.

[133] Marvi. *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 1035.

Moḥammad's journal lamented how his wealthy family became a victim of Nāder's expropriations:

> When the audit reports of Shirāz reached the Nāderid court, it was revealed that the endowments and *siyurghāl*s of Fārs had not been paying their [full share of] taxes. It was decreed that all the endowments were to be confiscated and the *siyurghāl*s' eight-year arrears in unpaid taxes were to be recouped … this caused great consternation in my uncle, who was made to pay the exorbitant taxes, and whose endowments were all confiscated.[134]

The *Fārṣnāmeh-ye Nāṣeri* confirmed that *tiyul*s and endowments of Fārs were expropriated.[135] Therefore, the expansion of fiscal oversight not only facilitated the collection of unpaid taxes, but also formed the prelude to expropriation in some cases.

Centralisation of *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s had begun during Nāder's regency and evidently continued through his reign. An edict from 1739 demonstrated that *tiyul*s, just like *siyurghāl*s, had lost their tax-exempt status.[136] Consequently, the centre sought to ensure *tiyul*s were economically productive to maximise the tax yield. For example, in an edict from 1745, a Bakhtiāri lord was chastised when revenue officers reported that some of the lands under his *tiyul* remained uncultivated. He was warned that 'none of his *tiyul* lands are to remain uncultivated'.[137] The state collected taxes from its *tiyul*s and kept a close eye on how they were run. Generally, however, it remained averse to granting land-revenue assignments, continuing to expropriate them in large numbers. The policy was explicated by Nāder in a conversation with the Mughal emperor which was recorded by a contemporary source: 'In the first place you must seize all the *ʿomrehs* and *jāgirs* (Mughal equivalents to *tiyul* and *siyurghāl*) and pay each soldier according to his rank with cash out of the treasury'.[138]

Aside from *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s, endowments represented a profitable target for Nāderid expropriations. In a departure from his regency, Nāder no longer respected the fiscal interests of the custodians. The reversal in his policy on endowments was related to Nāder's religious reforms. Having introduced Ja'fari Shi'ism as the new creed of his state, Nāder no longer

---

[134] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, p. 13.

[135] Fasāʾi, *Fārsnāmeh*, Vol. I, p. 544.

[136] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 410–413; Arunova and Ashrafian, *Firmans by Nādir Shāh Afshār (1736–1747) as a Source for Historic Studies*, (Moscow, 1960), p. 15.

[137] Garthwaite (ed.), *Khans and Shahs*, Appendix, pp. 11–15.

[138] Fraser, *History*, pp. 206–207.

relied on Iran's traditional ecclesiastic classes to legitimate a Ṣafavid Shi'i state. Nāder had not forgotten that it was a pro-Ṣafavid cleric who led the resistance to his election at the *qurultāi*. As the Nāderid state was attempting to root out what it perceived as extremist Ṣafavid Shi'ism, the clerics who had enjoyed close ties with the former dynasty were treated with hostility.

The acrimonious relationship between the Nāderids and the Shi'i custodians was reflected in the state's approach to the latter's fiscal interests. The new approach was revealed in a widely reported narrative of Nāder's meeting with Eṣfehān's *ṣadr*, who was the chief religious officer of the realm and overseer of endowments.[139] Enquiring after the incomes which the clerics accrued from these endowments, Nāder asked the *ṣadr* to what purpose the ulema were hording this wealth. When the *ṣadr* replied that it was through the prayers of his class that 'faith and state' (*din o dowlat*) were preserved, Nāder retorted

> If your prayers were effective, then surely it would have rid this state and people from the blight of its enemies and the Afghans would not have conquered you. In fact, the enemy are defeated only through the sword-strikes of the holy warriors, and it is they who have set the affairs of faith and state in order. Therefore, it is imperative we dedicate these incomes for the recruitment and training of the army.[140]

This perhaps legendary encounter serves to underline the fact that there was a new conception of faith and state under the Nāderid dispensation. Rather than the ecclesiastic elites, it was the soldiery, the 'Iranian faith-companioned ghāzis' (*ghāziān-e k'aṣḥāboddin-e Irāni*), that were the protectors of faith and state.[141] This laid the ideological foundation for a corresponding shift in the fiscal organisation of the realm: the endowments and exemptions of the custodians had to be abrogated by the state to pay and maintain its armies.

The estates belonging to endowments were either placed under chancellery administration (*khāleṣeh*) or converted into crown properties (*khāṣṣeh*). In either case, the revenues streamed into the central treasury. For example, Shāh ʿAbdolʿaẓim Shrine's endowment which had had all its privileges confirmed during Ṭahmāsp's reign, saw all its estates taken over by the

[139] The following narrative is taken from Moḥammad-Mehdi b. Moḥammad-Reżā Eṣfehāni, *Neṣf-e Jahān fi Taʿrif-e Eṣfehān*, ed. Manuchehr Sotudeh, (Tehran, 1990), pp. 256–257; Fraser's *History*, pp. 121–122; Otter's *Safarnāmeh*, p. 137.

[140] The wording is taken from Eṣfehāni's *Neṣf-e Jahān*, pp. 256–257.

[141] For the relatively common descriptor of Nāder's troops see for example his fatḥnāmeh in Shaʿbāni (ed.), *Ḥadiṡ*, pp. 103, 108.

Nāderid crown.[142] Many more examples of such expropriations can be found in the second volume of the regional history, *Fārsnāmeh-ye Nāṣeri*, compiled in the mid-nineteenth century based on papers provided from Fārsian noble families. Its author composed an encyclopaedic listing of Fārs's households, providing details on their estates and endowments, most of which were reported to have been expropriated under Nāder's reign.[143]

Of course, such expropriations went far beyond Fārs. In Eṣfehān, the custodians of endowments were increasingly worried about their estates being expropriated. After a tax assessment was completed in 1738, the chief custodian of the endowments in Eṣfehān and the brother of the Friday prayer leader had their endowment deeds inscribed next to the mosque entrance as a way of publicly declaring their resistance to any expropriations. Both were bastinadoed to death.[144] It seems there was a deliberate attempt on the part of the Nāderid state to despoil the custodians and financially strengthen itself at their expense. Anṣāri wrote that

> If one part of an estate was registered as an endowment, they (the chancellery officials) would write up the entire property [for taxation/confiscation?] … Some became so desperate as to rewrite the deeds of ownership and pass them onto a neighbour rather than have their endowment confiscated. Any unfortunate who was identified as the owner of an acre of land would be assailed by tax collectors who, under the pretence of collecting Nāderid *alef*s (taxes), would at the very least have his eyes gouged and nose cut off … Nāderid tax assessments registered most farmlands as part of endowments in order to confiscate them for the crown. It was as if there was no differentiation between endowments and crownlands.[145]

It is clear that Nāder's expropriation of estates tied to endowments was met with considerable anger among the custodians. Similar to the local bureaucrats across Iran's provinces, the ecclesiastic elites were also angered by Nāder's centralising policies.

---

[142] ʿAqili, 'Farmān', p. 72.

[143] Fasāʾi, *Fārsnāmeh*, Vol. II, pp. 958, 1220–1221.

[144] Anṣāri, *Tārikh-e Eṣfehān*, p. 27.

[145] Ibid. Anṣāri was writing in the early twentieth century and his tone with regard to the Nāderid era is polemical. Nonetheless, contemporary sources align very well with his account, and like Floor, I have deemed his information reliable.

Khorāsān's custodians experienced similar treatment. In Neyshāpur, Nāder confiscated four entire towns under the endowment of a wealthy local magnate.[146] The wealthiest and most prestigious shrine in Iran, the Holy Rażavid shrine in Mashhad, had most of its endowments expropriated.[147] In the case of major endowments such as the Rażavid shrine in Mashhad, the Nāderid state established closer oversight on their accounts, monitoring its remaining assets. In the case of the Rażavid shrine department (*sarkār-e feyż āśār*), the institution in charge of the shrine's administration, its revenues were diverted to the central treasury. Simultaneously, the institution's expenditures became the responsibility of the centre, which sought to regulate and minimise costs by establishing a set budget for the shrine.[148] An edict from 1737 instructed the custodian to have the institution's expenditure statements sealed and sent to the centre 'for the comptrollers of the supreme chancellery to transcribe them and have them ready in their archives for (future) inspection'.[149] Based on these expenditure statements, funds were to be released from the central treasury for the custodian to recoup his costs.[150] These measures proved effective. In the subsequent year, the custodian was shown to be making false expenditure claims. The edict from 1738 acknowledged the custodian's apology, patronisingly asking him 'what worth are worldly possessions?'. The custodian was forgiven and reminded to submit the shrine's accounts to the centre 'in line with the regulations set by his imperial majesty'.[151] Thus, even those ecclesiastic institutions which were not completely stripped of their estates had their accounts placed under close scrutiny by the state.

The revenues of the central treasury were augmented under the Nāderid state by measures such as the centralisation of tax collection, prevention of misappropriations, curtailment of non-military expenditures, removal of tax exemptions, and the expropriation of estates. Other factors also contributed to increased revenues. For instance, the tax rate was increased. Based

[146] Fasāʾi, *Fārsnāmeh*, Vol. II, p. 1045.

[147] ʿAli S. Kāshāni, and Kāẓem J. Kalāteh, 'Mowqufāt-e motavaliān-e Āstān-e Qods-e Rażavi az Ṣafaviyeh tā pāyān-e Qājāriyeh', in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 1, (2013), p. 65, drawing on Moʾtamen's *Tārikh-e Āstān-e Qods*, p. 200.

[148] Kāshāni and Kalāteh, 'Mowqufāt', pp. 65–66; ʿAli S. Kāshāni and Reżā Shaʿbāni, 'Taʾśir-e siāsathā-ye vaqfi-ye Nāder Shāh va ʿAli Shāh Afshār bar kāhesh yā roshd-e mowqufāt-e Āstān-e Qods-e Rażavi', in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh*, Vol. 9, No. 34, (2014), p. 84.

[149] 'Farmān', Document No. 35185/2 in the Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Mashhad, Iran (hereafter cited by Doc. No.)

[150] Ibid.

[151] 'Farmān', Document. No. 35185/1 in the Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Mashhad, Iran (hereafter cited by Doc. No.).

on contemporary Russian residents in Nāderid Iran, Arunova and Ashrafian demonstrate that various taxes increased manifold. For example, customs tax was doubled; One of the Armenian provinces had its taxes raised twofold; and the estates tied to the endowment of Etchmiadzin Cathedral saw their taxes more than double under Nāder.[152] Anṣāri, based on papers from custodian's family archives, suggested a more modest increase in the tax rate for endowments, 'between a quarter to a third'.[153] According to the VOC residents in Eṣfehān, Nāder's coronation was followed up by an announcement that the province's tax burden would be doubled.[154] There are no surviving Nāderid documents which outline precisely which tax categories were subject to increases and to what extent. Nonetheless, what evidence there is suggests that there was a significant increase in tax rates, though the specifics remain elusive.

Generally, it seems that revenues were increased significantly compared to the Ṣafavid era. We of course do not have Nāderid records which breakdown overall revenues and expenditures year from year. The supreme chancellery's records were all burnt immediately after Nāder's assassination.[155] However, there are well-placed sources which shine light on how specific corners of Iran experienced a growth in revenues. For example, Marvi writes that his home province also yielded a greater income. 'According to the chancellery statements which the revenue officials took to the imperial court, Marv's revenues amounted to over 24,000 *tumān*s, which far exceeds the revenues collected under the Ṣafavids'.[156] Mirzā Moḥammad, one of Fārs's revenue officers, reported the dominion's collected revenues in 1746 as 375,000 *tumān*s, a three-and-a-half-fold increase since the early 1720s.[157]

Military expenditure in the Nāderid empire

Similar to Nāder's regency, his reign saw the centralisation of revenues support the increase in various military expenditures. The central treasury continued to pay the salaries of its

[152] Arunova and Ashrafian, *Dowlat*, pp. 92, 93, 94, 95. 109, 113.

[153] Anṣāri, *Tārikh-e Eṣfehān*, p. 27.

[154] Floor, *Rise*, p. 36.

[155] Reḥmi Tātār, 'Sefāratnāmeh', p. 237.

[156] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 615.

[157] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, pp. 25–26. Due to the recent string of rebellions, and massacres in Fārs, this sum was reduced to 250,000 *tumān*s by Nāder. For the income of Fārs as recorded in a Ṣafavid administrative manual from the 1720s, see Minorsky, *Taẕkerat*, pp. 106, 174–186. Even if we take into account the discounted sum of 250,000 *tumān*s which was granted due to the ravages of Taqi Khān's rebellion, this would still be close to a twofold increase from the Ṣafavid period.

military and civil servants until the collapse of the empire in 1747.[158] The costs of Nāder's army mounted as it grew in size, from 100,000 during his regency to twice that figure by the early years of his reign.[159] The Nāderid imperial army reached its zenith in the mid-1740s, after the conquest of Hendustān and Turān. Marvi gave a breakdown of troop numbers in 1743, using figures taken from two military clerks of the supreme chancellery in charge of the muster rolls drafted in preparation for the war against the Ottomans,

Khorāsān	65,000
ʿErāq-e ʿAjam	45,000
Fārs & the Persian Gulf	50,000
Āẕarbāijān & the Caucasus	60,000
West Iran (ʿAlishokr)	25,000
Turān (Transoxiana)	60,000
Kābol & Hendustān	70,000
Total:	**375,000**

The imperial army in 1743.[160]

While the numbers on the muster rolls may have been higher than the actual number of troops, the difference would not have been significant.[161] These figures were recorded after a thorough military review of the imperial army, where provisions and equipment were distributed under Nāder's own supervision. Furthermore, Marvi himself began his career as a military clerk and was well placed to judge the authenticity of the figures he received from his two colleagues working at the central chancellery.[162] The fact that he judged them to be authentic means that these figures cannot be easily dismissed.

[158] For military salaries see Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vols. II and III, pp. 611–612, 615, 634, 833, 1094; Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, pp. 27–28; Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, docs. No. 30, pp. 110–111. For bureaucratic salaries, see Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 457; Nāder Mirzā's *Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, pp. 255–256, 259–260; Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, docs. No. 9, 24, 26, 27, 38.

[159] Michael Axworthy, 'Awkwardness of Nader Shah', in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism, and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), pp. 45–47.

[160] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 887–888.

[161] Axworthy suggested a difference of no more than 10–15 percent, 'Awkwardness', p. 45, the Nāderid state developed meticulous records on its troops, who would be regularly matched to individual soldiers during military reviews (see below). Overall, the figures are reliable.

[162] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 888.

In an edict from June 1739, after the conquest of Hendustān and just prior to the invasion of Turān, it was revealed that the main imperial army counted 320,000 soldiers among its ranks.[163] The addition of Marvi's figure of 60,000 Turānian soldiers, which would be added by 1741, brings the total to 380,000. This aligns near-perfectly with his numbers for the overall troops in the main imperial army under Nāder in 1743, taken from two clerks present at the army's military review. Besides the imperial army, there were other Nāderid contingents which were simultaneously engaged in campaigns in ʿOmān, Baluchestān, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, in addition to garrison forces around the empire. While these latter forces would have probably been far smaller than the main imperial army, they would not have been an insignificant force, altogether probably numbering in the tens of thousands.[164] Even though the 1743 campaign was probably when the empire's forces reached their numerical zenith, the imperial army remained a colossal force throughout the 1740s. The British traveller Jonas Hanway was present at Nāder's camp in 1744, and counted 168,160 troops in various corps, though he estimated the imperial army to be around 200,000 in total.[165] Again, to this one must add all the other Nāderid armies of various sizes across the empire. On might dismiss the figures given by the Nāderid chancellery and Marvi on the basis that they were exaggerating troop numbers to underline the grandeur of the empire. But Hanway was quite hostile to Nāder, and his numbers still indicate a figure in the low hundreds of thousands.

While Nāder raised the quantity of the men under arms, he did not compromise on quality or military efficacy. The empire's multitudinous armies were not only paid and supplied at the centre's expense, but they were also subjected to centralised military drill and training to ensure their effectiveness. This was at least the case for the Iranian troops. Esterābādi wrote that the recruits Nāder took from various clans across Fārs, ʿAjam ʿErāq, and Āẕarbāijān in the 1730s were placed under his own drillmasters to 'provide instruction in military tactics (*fonun-e sepāhigari*)… and they drilled (*mashq*) them until each recruit rivalled Rostam in his mastery of cavalry tactics'.[166] The centrally appointed instructors were Nāder's sergeants (*yasāvol*s). In 1737, the Russian ambassador, Kalushkin, reported that ten sergeants recruited 1,000 young Eṣfehānians into the imperial army. After the clerks had 'supplied their

[163] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, doc. No. 16, pp. 65–66.

[164] The average size of an army which fought separately from the imperial army in the 1740s was usually around 10,000–20,000 according to Marvi who participated in many such campaigns.

[165] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, pp. 170–171.

[166] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 140.

uniforms, muskets, and horses, they were turned over to those same ten sergeants for military training'.[167] Kretats'i, who spent a considerable amount of time with the Nāderid army on campaign, mentioned that both the infantry and cavalry were subject to 'constant strict drills', and recorded a speech given by Nāder to a gathering of his officers where he emphasised the value of continuous training.[168]

Alongside the centralisation of salaries, military training, procurement, and logistics, the establishment of military industries drove up expenditure. The new reliance on gunpowder weaponry, in particular artillery, required an industrial base to satisfy the demands of the imperial army. Nāder had little to build on from the Ṣafavid era, when Iran had a very limited capacity for the manufacture of artillery and ammunition. The Ṣafavids cast cannon and mortar on an ad hoc basis, usually when the army settled down for a siege. The few artillery pieces which were manufactured in the small arsenals scattered around Iran were fit only for supplementing fortifications.[169] Nāder had to establish an industrial capacity to satisfy the needs of his armies. Despite unsubstantiated claims by some scholars, it should be pointed out that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest Nāder received support from Europe in setting up military industries.[170]

Nāder constructed two military industrial hubs in Iran: Marv and Kermānshāh. These were well situated to logistically aid campaigns launched in Central Asia and the Ottoman empire respectively. Marvi's history is an excellent source of information on the industrial centre at his home city of Marv as he was promoted to the rank of 'vizier of the artillery, the gunsmithy, the armoury, and the stables'. He also oversaw Marv's accounts for the manufacture of ordnance and the associated logistics involved, working closely with the commanders of the artillery and the gunsmithy.[171]

Based on Marvi's description, the costs of operating the industrial centre at Marv seem to have been colossal. In 1744, the empire prepared for a punitive expedition in Turān. Marvi's details of these preparations reveal the sheer volume of materials transported to and processed at Marv, enabling the production of ordnance and ammunition. The governor of

[167] This is also taken from Arunova and Ashrafian, *Dowlat*, pp. 152–153, who quote from Kalushkin's private reports.

[168] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, pp. 103, 118.

[169] Floor, *Safavid Government*, pp. 234–235; see also Matthee, 'Unwalled Cities', pp. 389–416.

[170] For example, see Stephanie Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, (New York, 2014), p. 46. The singular exception was the shipwright set up on the Caspian coast by a renegade Englishman.

[171] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 977, 1085.

Fārs was ordered to send ninety tonnes of gunpowder to Marv while the governor of Kermān was ordered to send ninety tonnes of lead. Khorasan was to deliver nine hundred tonnes of cast iron for the purpose of manufacturing ammunition for cannon and mortars. Additionally, sixty tonnes of copper and tin were to be sent to the cannon foundries at Marv as material for casting bronze cannon and mortars.[172] Bronze pieces were considered of higher quality and safer to use than pieces made of cast iron, but they dramatically increased the costs of manufacture.[173] Two engineers were dispatched to oversee the casting of seventy cannon and mortars along with 14,000 cast iron balls as ammunition. The high levels of production prompted orders to be sent for other centres in Iran to dispatch more raw materials The costs of transporting such great numbers of heavy ammunition across long and difficult distances cannot be reliably estimated but is certain to have been significant. To this, one must add the costs of productions once all the necessary materials had been assembled.[174]

Much less is known regarding the other military industrial hub in Kermānshāh. However, given that it was meant to support military operations against the Ottomans, it almost certainly would have been of a comparable scale to its counterpart in Marv. In 1747, it had manufactured and stored over 1,500 cannon of assorted calibres, approximately six hundred siege mortars, and 1,800 tonnes of gunpowder. It was also a centre for the production, repair, and maintenance of ordnance and their carriages. There are no monetary figures in the sources available to us on the associated costs of establishing or running these military industrial centres, but it is certain to have been considerable.[175]

The industrial capacity of the Nāderid state allowed it to increase the number and quality of ordnance at the disposal of its armies compared to the preceding Ṣafavid period. For example, at the battle of Golunābād (1722), the Ṣafavid army of 42,000–50,000 was provided with twenty-four cannon, most of which were old pieces stripped from fortress defences.[176] That roughly amounted to a single cannon per 2,000 soldiers. In contrast, a Nāderid army in 1745 contained 16,800 men with sixty cannon, meaning roughly one per 300 soldiers.[177] This proportion of ordnance to soldiers seems to have been fairly consistent. Another army, this

[172] Ibid, pp. 911–912.

[173] Gabor Ágoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire*, (New York, 2005), p. 189.

[174] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 912.

[175] Abul-Ḥasan Golestāneh, *Mojmal ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Modarres Rażavi, (Tehran, 1965).

[176] Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, p. 45.

[177] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 966–970.

one in 1746, was recorded as having forty pieces to accompany 12,000 men, again meaning one per 300 soldiers.[178] An increase in artillery pieces meant an increase in artillerymen, and the Nāderid state ensured that its rapidly expanding artillery formations were provided with adequate training to put their guns to effective use. Nāder ordered his artillery officers to take recruits outside city walls to a training field and drill (*mashq*) them every single day until they became completely proficient.[179]

The industrial, organisational, and tactical measures taken by the Nāderid state seem to have borne fruit on the battlefield. Even against the empire's most formidable enemy, the Ottomans, Nāderid artillery performed meritoriously. In Nāder's last major battle with the Ottomans at Bāghāvard in 1745, a large-scale artillery duel took place between the Iranian and Ottoman gun batteries. The result was an overwhelming defeat for the Ottoman gunners who saw many of their pieces destroyed in the counter-battery fire, where the Iranian gunners were said to have fired with greater accuracy and rapidity.[180] Of course, the field artillery was already of exceptional quality going back to Nāder's regency. At the first battle of Bāghāvard in 1735, Abraham of Crete, who was present at the encounter, reports that the Ottomans merely managed two or three volleys from their cannon, whilst their Iranian counterparts fired at least 300 rounds. This was about three times as many as fired by the Ottomans.[181] Other opponents who were not as well-equipped in terms of artillery, the Central Asian Khānates for example, were at a steep disadvantage when faced by Nāderid cannon and were usually made short work of, as at the battle of Qarshi (1738), where a much smaller Iranian army routed an Uzbek force by the intelligent combination of musketry and cannonade.[182] The inordinate costs and organisational efforts taken up by the Nāderid state paid dividends in maintaining its military superiority over its neighbours.

Another major military institution to which the Nāderid state allocated significant funds and resources was the navy, which had no real Ṣafavid precedents. During his regency, Nāder had to resort to asking the English and Dutch East India Companies for aid in some of his

[178] Ibid, pp. 1136–1138.

[179] Ibid, p. 912.

[180] Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, p. 268 drawing upon the Greek traveller Vatatzes account of the battle; Hanway, *Account*, Vol. IV, p. 252 also mentions the counter battery engagement.

[181] Kretats'i, *Chronicle*, p. 39, since the Ottomans had forty cannon, meaning they fired eighty to hundred-and-twenty rounds.

[182] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 1138–1139; for an Uzbek account of the battle of Qarshi see Moḥammad Vafā Karminagi, *Toḥfeh-ye Khāni*, Abu Rayhan Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, No. 16, fols. 25r–28v.

campaigns against the Ottomans at Baṣreh. The campaigns against ʿOmān were also reliant on the European companies lending their ships to Nāder's forces. In 1741, the empire began setting up the infrastructure to build its own navy in the Persian Gulf, with a shipyard near Bushehr and a naval cannon foundry at Bandar ʿAbbās.[183] These efforts had to be supplemented with purchases made from the Dutch, the English, and other naval powers in the Gulf, leading to the formation of a large navy. By 1744, the imperial navy consisted of some thirty warships, and a larger number of smaller craft.[184] Even though the construction of new warships was partially outsourced to shipwrights in Surat, efforts were also made to establish a shipwright, this time on the Caspian coast, under the supervision of a renegade Englishman.[185] Owing to the lack of suitable timber in southern Iran, timber was transported about 1,000 kilometres from Māzandarān over the rugged terrain of the Iranian plateau to the Persian Gulf.[186] The costs of this domestic naval programme are impossible to estimate. However, the cost of purchases made from the East India Companies is a matter of record, with most warships bought at sums approaching 10,000 *tumān*s.[187] At what can only be assumed to have been exorbitant costs to the central treasury, the Nāderid empire became a naval as well as a land power, projecting power throughout the Persian Gulf.

Conclusion

The remarkable military victories Nāder achieved during his regency reinforced his claims of being a divinely ordained saviour of Iran and the Iranian Shi'a, providing the pretext for his usurpation of absolute sovereignty. The ideological bedrock of that usurpation was provided by the Turco-Mongol tradition of electing rulers, involving various ritualistic elements such as the *qurultāi* and the *möchälgä*. Nāder and his close associates, Esterābādi in particular, used these Turco-Mongol rituals to construct a narrative of an Iranian people who yearned for the sovereignty of their most illustrious peer, the *Nāder-e Irān*. Despite the reservation of many of the grandees attending the *qurultāi*, all became signatories to a document which attested that the Ṣafavid state had brought nothing but ruin to Iran and that all Iranians were in unanimous favour of electing Nāder to restore faith and state under a new dynasty. The

[183] Willem Floor, 'The Iranian Navy in the Gulf during the Eighteenth Century', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1987), p. 49.

[184] Ibid, pp. 50–52.

[185] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 46.

[186] Axworthy, *Sword*, p. 229.

[187] Peter Good, *The East India Company in Persia: Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2022), pp. 97–126. Even though some could be as cheap as 1,000 *tumān*s.

coronation was in many ways the consummation of Nāder's ideological discourses throughout his regency.

The key ideological difference between Nāder's discourse on Iranianness prior to and after his coronation was the Ja'fari creed, representing a desire to reconcile sectarian differences which remained central to Iranian identity. Ja'farism was by no means a departure from Shi'ism, at least as far as Nāder's Iranian audience was concerned. It was an imagined return to the true Shi'ism of the pre-Ṣafavid era, before it became corrupted with extremist practices such as *sabb o rafż*, leading Iran's neighbours to despoil it and enslave its people. By abandoning anti-Sunni rituals, Nāder was supposedly protecting Iran's faith and state while restoring the unity of the Islamic world. For Sunni subjects and neighbouring sovereigns, however, Nāder encouraged the perception that he was in the process of converting his subjects to Sunnism. The dual inflections of the Ja'fari creed reflected Nāder's need to legitimate his state in the eyes of two constituencies: the Iranian Shi'a, and the non-Iranian Sunnis whose number grew with each imperial conquest (see subsequent chapter on these).

As the saviour sovereign of Iran, claiming unanimous loyalty from his fellow Iranians, Nāder drew on his identity and legitimacy to centralise the Iranian state. This granted him unprecedented control over the fiscal and military resources in Iran. He increased central oversight on fiscal administration to augment the revenue streams pouring into the treasury. Most of the appanages, including those associated with endowments, were expropriated by the centre. Acting against the fiscal interests of the custodians was made possible since they were no longer deemed to be the primary protectors of the faith and state as they had once been under the Ṣafavids. That role was taken up by Nāder's expanding military forces which could be sustained on the revenues generated from the estates held by Iran's custodial families. The augmented revenues derived from centralising Iran's fiscal administration and appanages were needed to cover the spiralling expenditures of the Nāderid military. The state not only provided its soldiers with salaries, mounts, equipment, and training, it also spent vast sums on maintaining the military industries to produce the muskets, artillery, and ammunition needed for gun-powder warfare. The enormous military expenditures taken on by the Nāderid state paid dividends in ensuring its military superiority against its foes. In the 1740s, Nāder commanded one of the most powerful land forces in the world.[188] The Nāderid army acted as

[188] Kaushik Roy, *Military Transition in Early Modern Asia, 1400-1750: Cavalry, Guns, Governments and Ships*, (London, 2014), p. 75; Michael Axworthy, 'The Army of Nader Shah', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, (2007), p. 635.

an engine of imperial state formation by conquering lands far beyond Iran's frontiers, subduing numerous Turco-Persianate sovereigns to Nāder's shāhanshāhic authority. It is to the imperialisation of the state to which we now turn.

Chapter Five
Shāhanshāh over Iran and Turān

Sovereignty over Iran, an imperial realm imagined to be at the centre of the world, had long connoted a broader sovereignty which encompassed all other realms on earth. To rule over Iran was not merely to be a shāh but a shāhanshāh whose universal imperium suffused all other sovereigns.[1] Such notions of universal empire had been a part of the discourse on Ṣafavid sovereignty, but they came to have greater relevance under Nāder as he began conquering lands far beyond Iran's mytho-historical frontiers, becoming the overlord to vassals who themselves were considered emperors. The ideological discourse on universal imperialism seems to have started when Nāder invaded Mughal Hendustān, establishing Moḥammad Shāh as his vassal in 1739. This discourse was only reinforced as Nāder vassalised other royal figures in Sindh, ʿOmān, Badakhshān, Bokhārā, Khiveh, and so on. The conquered rulers and territories beyond Iran's frontiers came to be administered through a decentralised network of tributaries and vassals under Nāder's shāhanshāhic authority.

This chapter will explore the ideological discourses on Iranian identity used by the Nāderid state to legitimate for internal audiences its conquest of non-Iranian lands. It will also explain the concomitant efforts by the Nāderid state to construct a complimentary ideology of universal imperium which presented Nāder as the shāhanshāh and ṣāḥebqerān of the Islamic world, helping to legitimate his rule to the growing number of non-Iranian subjects in the empire. Finally, the chapter will examine the Nāderid state's use of such ideological foundations to extract resources from non-Iranian lands through tribute paid by its imperial vassals. The decentralised system of tribute collection which the Nāderid state imposed on its non-Iranian vassals brought it money, manpower, and materials. In turn, the collection of tribute cemented Nāder's ideological claims to universal empire.

The chapter is organised into four chronologically organised sections on Nāder's conquests of Qandehār (1738), Hendustān (1739), Turān (1740), and Rum (1743), with one additional section focusing on Nāder's imperial ideology as presented in his monumental inscriptions. Each section tracks the development of Nāder's different ideological narratives which legitimated his imperial conquests for various audiences. For internal audiences, the

[1] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', pp. 107–108. See Chapter One for a more comprehensive discussion.

campaigns were framed as serving Iranian interests by recovering the mytho-historical frontiers of Iran-Realm, avenging Iranian honour through prevailment over historic rivals, and freeing fellow Iranians who had been taken captive in previous wars. For general audiences, including the empire's growing non-Iranian subjects and vassals, Nāder focused on millenarian discourses on universal sovereignty, modelled on Timur.

To serve the narrative of universal dominion over neighbouring sovereigns, Nāder constructed a new dynastic entity called the Turkmenid clan, which included his own dynasty alongside the other royal households of the Islamicate world. As foremost ruler of the Turkmenid clan, Nāder claimed imperial supremacy over his lesser brothers in neighbouring realms, who as his vassals, owed tribute to their elder brother. Nāder's authority over his Sunni brothers and their mostly Sunni subjects was facilitated by his use of the Ja'fari creed in an attempt to quell sectarian tensions which may have undermined his imperial authority. Ja'farism was meant to communicate a Sunni identity for Nāder to neighbouring Turkmenid rulers and their peoples, and a Shi'i identity to fellow Iranians. Thus, the chapter argues that the Ja'fari creed served to reconcile the Iranian Shi'a and non-Iranian Sunnis in Nāder's empire.

Imperial vengeance against Qandehār

Beginning with the Hotakid shāhdom of Qandehār, Nāder's imperial campaigns were often legitimated as a manifestation of Iranian vengeance. Nāder was partly drawing on the Turco-Mongol tradition, which frequently viewed wars of imperial conquest as 'wars of vengeance'.[2] It was considered legitimate, a duty even, for leaders to launch wars for offences against their person or their people. Examples of such leaders were Chinggis Khān and Timur.[3] When a Khʷārazmid governor executed Chinggis Khān's plenipotentiaries and merchants, the khān responded by invading the Khʷārazmid empire 'to take revenge'. Timur's early career saw him lead many raids to avenge offences against his honour, and many of his later imperial campaigns were also framed as wars of vengeance.[4] The exaction of vengeance through imperial conquest bolstered the reputation of a leader and legitimated

[2] Larry V. Clark, 'The Theme of Revenge in the Secret History of the Mongols', in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization II*, ed. Larry Clark and Paul Draghi (Bloomington, Indiana, 1978), pp. 33– 57.

[3] Hodous, 'Inner Asia', p. 26.

[4] Ibid, taken from the *Secret History*.

his imperial acquisitions by confirming not only his military genius but God's support for his cause to satiate his or his people's offended honour.[5]

In Nāder's case, the theme of vengeance was tied to the notion of Iranian identity.[6] In 1737, in an assembly of Iranian commanders, apparently attended by Marvi's father, Nāder made a speech. He told his commanders that they had succeeded in cleansing the realm of Iran from enemies only through the aid of God and the Twelve Imams.[7] He then recounted the crimes of the Ghaljāy Afghans who had 'murdered and enslaved' the people of the realm and how their leader, Ḥoseyn Ghaljāy (r. 1725–1738), had the temerity to strike royal coins in his own name. Nāder pledged to his commanders that he would 'topple Ḥoseyn the Ghaljāy from his throne into a coffin'.[8] Ṭusi confirmed the overall message in his royally patronised *Shāhnāmeh* which had Nāder promising to 'exact vengeance by the unrelenting sword' for 'although Qandehār is today not part of Iran-Realm ⁘ I will march upon it as though I have no home other than Qandehār'.[9] In line with the official ideology of the Nāderid state, there was no sectarian anti-Sunni motif in Ṭusi's verse. The emphasis was placed on what the Afghans had done to Iranians and the vengeful reincorporation of Qandehār into Iran-Realm. Some elites such as Kandulehi, lying outside the circle of Nāderid patronage, also viewed Nāder's campaign as a 'war to recapture the provinces of Iran', but the element of anti-Sunni sectarianism was not discarded.[10] Nāder was said to be after a religious vengeance for Iran (*qeṣāṣ-e Irān*). He declared to the Qandehārians that 'by the aid of the Eight and the Four ⁘ I will make such an example of you that it will echo through the ages ⁘ I will achieve retribution for the Iranian captives [you took] ⁘ and my fearless men will assist me in doing so'.[11] The campaign was not to satisfy Nāder's personal ambitions, but to satiate Iranian honour. The war, then, was in the interests of the collective self rather than just those of the shāh.

[5] Ibid.

[6] This was usually rendered as *enteqām*, *kin*, *qeṣāṣ*, *siāsat* or *tanbih* in the sources.

[7] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 480–481.

[8] Ibid, p. 480.

[9] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 139, vv. 3234–3236, 3238.

[10] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 269, v. 1078. The chapter on 'Nāder's Second War Against the Afghan' narratively fuses his 1731 and 1737–1738 campaigns into the same conflict.

[11] Ibid, vv. 1086–1091, 1166 refers to Qandehār directly.

Among the Iranian elites, Nāder's war was often interpreted as revenge (*enteqām*) for the Ghaljāy Afghans' offences against Iran and its people.[12] In contrast to the Nāderid state, however, it seems some of the elites were still inspired by the notion of Shi'i-Sunni enmity with the Afghan other and saw the Twelve Imams as blessing their quest for vengeance. Marvi's narrative had Nāder begin his speech on the Qandehār campaign by referencing the Twelve Imams and Kandulehi was all the more explicit in giving a Twelver mandate to the war against Sunni Qandehār. These were projections onto the Nāderid state. Nāder himself would not have explicitly engaged in any sectarian rhetoric given his need to appear Sunni to Afghan observers and future Qandehārian subjects. Nonetheless, he may have tolerated or even tacitly encouraged anti-Sunni sentiment among his Iranian officers to consolidate support for his irredentist war of vengeance.

The accounts of Marvi and Kandulehi suggest that Nāder's discourse on Iranian identity had not fundamentally changed for internal audiences. In internal correspondence, Nāder still portrayed himself as a faithful Shi'i warrior to his fellow Iranians, and he continued to underline his dedication to the Twelve Imams, particularly the Imams ʿAli and Reżā. The continued discourse on Iranian identity was not limited to the Nāderid state's rhetoric of vengeful conquest. When one of the custodians of the Rażavid shrine was caught misappropriating funds, Nāder scolded him in a letter declaring that 'our imperial majesty and all the Iranian people are willing to give our lives for the shrine of that lord (Imam Reżā)—what worth is this worldly domain [for you to have abased yourself in this scandal]?'.[13] Nāder and all his fellow Iranians were thusly bound in righteous servitude to the Eighth Imam. This is strikingly similar to discourses from Nāder's regency.

Nonetheless, as Nāder pushed into Sunni Afghan lands like Qandehār, he could ill-afford to revive the sectarian elements in Iranian identity. Once imperial vengeance was exacted, there needed to be a reconciliation between Iranian and non-Iranian subjects in the conquered territories. Lasting sectarian tensions were an impediment to this reconciliation, and thus, to the empire's long term interests. This is where the utility of Nāder's Ja'fari creed becomes apparent, allowing him to speak to Shi'i and Sunni constituencies in a non-sectarian language. In the eyes of Iranians, the introduction of Ja'farism was not seen, and was not meant to be seen, as a shift away from Twelver Shi'ism. In the eyes of the empire's non-Iranian subjects, the Nāderid state strove to build a credible picture of itself as Sunni,

[12] The word *enteqām* is used by Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 143, v. 3328 and Ṭehrāni, *Tārikh*, p. 48.

[13] Doc. No. 35185/1 of Rażavid Library, dated Dec 1738/ Jan 1739.

precluding the state from making official proclamations which may have been construed as explicitly Shi'i, let alone anti-Sunni. Thus, while Nāder himself and those under his patronage eschewed explicit anti-Sunni language which could undermine the state's official Ja'fari creed and its imperial expansion, many of Nāder's followers did not change in their view that Iranianness entailed hostility to the Sunni other. Despite Nāder's best efforts to suppress the sectarian element in Iranian identity, for men like Kandulehi and Marvi, the imperial vengeance against Qandehār was a manifestation of the sectarian enmity between the self and the other. The Nāderid state was drawing on an ideological discourse over which it did not have full control.[14]

Shāhanshāh and crown-bestower in Hendustān

During the siege of Qandehār, Nāder had despatched contingents from his army to subdue regions to the east and the south of the city, conquering Baluchestān and Ghazni.[15] After the fall of Qandehār, Nāder began formulating a pretext to invade Mughal Hendustān. In the Turco-Mongol tradition of waging wars of vengeance, a leader had the right to 'pursue fugitive rivals' into neighbouring realms.[16] Accordingly, Nāder had Esterābādi draft a letter to the Mughal ruler, requesting Moḥammad Shāh appoint one of his generals to prevent the Afghans' escape into Mughal territory.[17] There was some truth to the idea that Afghans had been taking refuge in Hendustān. Ḥazin, who resided in Hendustān from 1734 onwards and had no motive to engage in pro-Nāderid propaganda, observed that many Afghans moved to Hendustān and entered Mughal service as soldiers and even as high-ranking officials.[18] What is seriously doubtful however, is that they continued to pose a credible threat to Nāderid Iran. The flight of Afghans to Hendustān served as a useful pretext for imperial expansion.

In any case, Nāder expressed his dismay at the hesitance of the Mughals to establish an ambassadorial mission to cooperate in rounding up the Afghans but he assured Moḥammad Shāh that he did not have any designs on his territories and was in fact seeking an alliance with the Mughals.[19] This reconciliatory approach was perhaps meant to obfuscate Nāder's intentions of conquest and to sow discord and indecision at the Mughal court. Finding the

[14] For the eventual resurgence of the sectarian

[15] Marvi's *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 495–542 gives a detailed account of these campaigns.

[16] Hodous, 'Inner Asia', p. 26; Thomas Allsen, 'Prelude to the Western Campaigns: Mongol Military Operations in the Volga- Ural Region, 1217– 1237', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, Vol. 3, (1983), pp. 5– 23.

[17] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 395–396.

[18] Ḥazin, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, p. 276.

[19] Ibid, p. 396.

Mughals unresponsive, Nāder took Kabul, which received no assistance from the court in Delhi, paralysed with indecision. In Aug/Sep 1738, Nāder sent another letter to the Mughal court assuring Moḥammad Shāh that 'my taking of Kabul has only been for the sake of seeking an Islamic accord with you, for I never imagined that the scum of the Deccan, the Marathas, would dare exact tribute from an Islamic sovereign'.[20] This was in reference to the Maratha victory over the Mughals in preceding year, forcing the latter to pay an indemnity and to cede the province of Malwa.[21] Nāder protested that he had come to Hendustān in Islamic solidarity with the Mughal dynasty against the Maratha infidels (*koffār*), whom he promised to 'despatch to the depths of hell'.[22] For the Mughal audience, Nāder had crossed into Hendustān to seek Islamic vengeance against the Marathas.

Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh*, meant for an Iranian audience, articulated a Shi'i Islamic vengeance against the Maratha infidels (*koffār*). Nāder pledged to

> March my banners in the realm of Hendustān ⁘ I shall pray as a sultan in the lands of Sindh ⁘ I shall engulf the people of Lut in the fire of vengeance ⁘ and turn Somnath Temple into a mosque ⁘ … I shall make the infidels pay tribute to Muslims ⁘ and promulgate the Twelver faith.[23]

The reference to the people of Lut, and in particular, the Temple of Somnath, imbued the vengeance with an Islamic sacrality. In Persian historiography, the legendary sack of Somnath Temple by Maḥmud of Ghazni (r. 998–1030) came to exemplify Islamic conquest against heretical foes.[24] The Nāderid invasion of a Muslim-ruled empire was revised by Ṭusi to be an Islamic war against the infidels. But Nāder's vengeful conquest was not just in service of Islam, it was in service of promulgating Twelver Shi'i Islam. While Ṭusi avoided describing his patron's vengeance against the Qandehārian Afghans in explicitly Shi'i terms as it would have undermined Nāder's non-sectarian Ja'fari ideology, the shift to a Hindu enemy allowed Ṭusi to remind his Iranian audience of the Nāderid state's Shi'i credentials. In other words, Iranian identity was permitted to entail a Shi'i-inflected enmity with the other so long as that other was not Sunni. Vengeful conquest against Afghans or Mughals on the basis

[20] Ibid, p. 398.

[21] N. Jayapalan, *History of India 1206–1773*, (New Delhi, 2001), p. 247.

[22] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 398.

[23] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 139, vv. 3235–3238.

[24] Jamal Malik, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History*, (Leiden, 2008), pp. 88–90.

of their Sunnism was not in sync with official Nāderid ideology, but vengeance against Hindus in solidarity with fellow Muslims was a different matter.

Nāder's polite and conciliatory intrusion into the Mughal empire was probably meant to facilitate the establishment of master-vassal relations between Nāder and Moḥammad Shāh once victory was achieved. Victory came on the 24 February 1739 on the plain of Karnāl, with most of the senior Mughal commanders either killed or captured and Moḥammad Shāh blockaded in his own camp. The Mughal emperor was brought before Nāder who reiterated his noble intentions in coming to Hendustān. Nāder marched to Delhi with his Mughal counterpart in tow. In exchange for confirming his Mughal vassal on the throne of Hendustān, Nāder was ceded the Mughal treasury and all lands to the west of the Indus in addition to receiving periodic tribute from Delhi.

It was a momentous conquest which made Nāder a truly imperial figure. In the Turco-Persianate world, claims to imperial paramountcy over other sovereigns were encoded in titles such as shāhanshāh, sultan over all sultans (*solṭān-e salāṭin*), great khān (*khāqān*), and crown-bestower (*tāj-bakhsh*).[25] Sometimes these titles were used generically, but there were occasions when they were deployed purposefully to differentiate an imperial overlord from the lesser rulers beholden to him.[26] Nāderid chancellery officials were informed that they were henceforth strictly to use the title of shāhanshāh to refer to his majesty.[27] Ṭehrāni, writing in Hendustān in 1742 for a Mughal patron, recorded that Moḥammad Shāh was obliged to refer to Nāder by the exclusive title of shāhanshāh, while the latter referred to Moḥammad Shāh by the royal title of *aʿlāḥażrat* (high lord).[28] These titles were confirmed in a Mughal transcript of the treaty drawn up between Nāder and Mohammad, referring to them as the 'shāhanshāh of the world' and the '*aʿlāḥażrat*' respectively.[29] Nāder's sovereignty was universal while that of his vassal was derivative and local.

Nāder's elevation in status was accompanied by the necessary ideological discourses to legitimate his newfound authority as a universal sovereign. Nāder renewed his claim to the legacy of Timur as the archetypal millenarian world-conqueror, the ṣāḥebqerān. While

[25] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', pp. 125–126.

[26] Ibid, p. 126; Hodous, 'Inner Asia', p. 24.

[27] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, pp. 22, 42; Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 23.

[28] Ṭehrāni, *Tārikh*, p. 230.

[29] Anand Rām Mokhleṣ, *Badāyeʿ ol-Vaqāyeʿ*, in *Manshur ol-Vaṣiyat va Dastur ol-Ḥekmat*, ed. Seyyed Ḥesāmoddin Rāshedi, (Sindh, Pakistan, n.d.) p. 66.

Nāder's ʿAlid-Timurid discourse prior to his coronation had articulated an image of him as the millenarian Shi'i saviour of Iran and Iranians from the Sunni enemy, from 1739 onwards Nāder drew on the ʿAlid-Timurid model to articulate his imperial ambitions for millenarian world-conquest. The coinage and the *fatḥnāmeh*s which he issued from Hendustān indicate the shift in Nāder's ideology to emphasise millenarian and universal motifs.

The *fatḥnāmeh* (despatch of conquest) was a genre of chancellery literature which gave an account of the sovereign's military victories, frequently imbuing them with millenarian motifs underlined by Qur'anic verses and hadiths.[30] Their distribution among the empire's officials and nobility meant that they were a powerful tool of disseminating and legitimating the state's ideology.[31] Nāder's Hendustānian *fatḥnāmeh*s, though directly addressed to the crown-prince Reżā-Qoli, commanded his son to distribute transcripts to all of Iran's provinces.[32] It is reasonable to assume that a significant part of the Iranian nobility were exposed to their contents, making the *fatḥnāmeh*s an indispensable source for studying how the Nāderid state communicated its imperial-eschatological ideology to an internal audience. Nāder had Esterābādi write a *fatḥnāmeh* in late February not long after Moḥammad Shāh was taken captive at the battle of Karnāl.

The *fatḥnāmeh* begins by extolling the virtues of the Prophet and 'the *lā fatā* knight of the battlefield', ʿAli.[33] *Lā fatā* referred to the well-known hadith, 'there are none as chivalrous as ʿAli and there is no sword mightier than Ẕu-l-faqār', which was often used in this period to acknowledge the ʿAlid exemplar of millenarian warriorship.[34] The Shi'i millenarianism was revealed more explicitly in the subsequent Qur'anic verses. The thirty-seventh verse from Surat al-Raḥmān heralded the day of judgement 'when the firmament is split, turning rose-red like fiery oil'.[35] Salvation in the apocalyptic age lay in ʿAli's progeny, 'meaning Ḥoseyn and the other immaculate Imams, for their miraculous munificence "is as the light in the lantern"

[30] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 32–33.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Esterābādi, 'Fatḥnāmeh-ye Hendustān', in *Ḥadiṡ*, ed. Shaʿbāni, p. 110; Navāʾī (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 407. The first *fatḥnāmeh* gave a meticulous account of the military expedition, while the second gave a lengthier account of Moḥammad Shāh's recoronation.

[33] Esterābādi, 'Fatḥnāmeh', p. 101.

[34] See above for the hadith's use in millenarian discourse by Ṭahmāsp II and Nāder during his regency.

[35] Esterābādi, 'Fatḥnāmeh', p. 101.

(Q 24:35) illuminating the East and the West'.[36] The *fatḥnāmeh* began by clearly grounding its millenarian discourse in Shi'ism to appeal to an Iranian audience back home.

The *fatḥnāmeh* then sifted ʿAlid and Timurid references into its narrative on Nāder's march into Mughal territory. At the Khyber Pass, Nāder's advance was halted by a contingent of Afghans under the governor of Kabul. One of the famous battles in Shi'i historical memory was the battle of Khyber (628), in which ʿAli led the victorious fight against a Jewish tribe after they had breached an agreement with the Prophet. References to Khyber came to be associated with ʿAlid courage and conquest.[37] The identical name allowed the *fatḥnāmeh* to link the ʿAlid and Nāderid conquests of Khyber together. A Timurid element was inserted in the narrative as Nāder's generals informed him of a secret mountain trail 'leading behind the Khyber Pass, which was used by the ṣāḥebqerān, Timur, during his invasion of Hendustān'.[38] Nāder wasted no time, leading an elite contingent of 'victorious faith-companioned Iranian warriors' through the pass.[39] Thus, Esterābādi's literary excellence had Nāder following in the footsteps of both ʿAli and Timur, leading Iranians to a millenarian conquest of Hendustān. The Shi'i overtones given to Nāder's millenarian triumph confirm that this *fatḥnāmeh* was meant for Iranian audiences.

For general audiences, on the other hand, references to Iran and Shi'ism were eschewed. The new Nāderid coins minted in Delhi in 1739 would be circulated far and wide, among Shi'a and Sunnis, Iranians and non-Iranians. Accordingly, the legend could not afford to speak to only one constituency in Nāder's burgeoning empire. The new coins bore the legend: 'He is sultan over the sultans of the world ـ the shāh of all shāhs, Nāder the ṣāḥebqerān'.[40] It neither mentioned Iran nor did it contain any references which could be construed as either Shi'i or Sunni. The emphasis was on the universality of Nāder's millenarian sovereignty as the new ṣāḥebqerān.

Nāder had become the Timurid overlord to Moḥammad Shāh, a man who, problematically, was an actual descendant of Timur. Furthermore, Moḥammad was widely acknowledged in his own right as the imperial overlord of Hendustān. Nāder's new relationship with the

[36] Ibid, pp. 101–102.

[37] L. Veccia Vaglieri, 'Khaybar', in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition*, IV, pp. 1137–1143.

[38] Esterābādi, 'Fatḥnāmeh', p. 103.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Eftekhāri (ed.), *Sekkeh-Shenāsi*, p. 85; Nāder's battle axe bore the same inscription, and is today held at the National Museum in Janpath, New Delhi.

Mughal household posed a genealogical problem: One of the longest reigning and most illustrious households in Asia had become the vassal of a man descended from shepherds. Similar to Timur, Nāder developed a new genealogical tradition for his dynasty. Timur had traced his ancestry to Qarāchar-Noyān, a companion and relative of Chinggis Khān.[41] In Timurid ideology, Qarāchar-Noyan was reimagined to be the senior advisor and even custodian to the Chinggisid household, giving descendants like Timur the right to act in the same capacity.[42] Nāder Shāh's genealogical tradition differed in that he did not wield power on behalf of any other dynasty than his own. The Nāderids saw themselves as an imperial dynasty subservient to no other. One might suppose that Nāder manufactured an illustrious ancestor to match his dynastic ambitions, but his humble origins were quite well-known, making it difficult to fabricate a credible ancestry which tied him to anyone of significance.[43] Rather than a genealogical chain connecting identifiable fathers and sons, Nāder opted for a more nebulous concept on dynastic connection which sought to avoid bringing unnecessary attention to his low birth. That concept was realised in the Turkmenid clan.

Elder of the Turkmenid dynastic clan

Nāder's discourse on the Turkmenids (*Torkmāniyeh*) has been misunderstood in the scholarship as a discourse on ethnicity or race. Tucker uses models such as the 'invention of tradition' and 'imagined communities', used by scholars to explain the development of Europe's ethnic and national identities, to describe Nāder's invention of a Turkmenid ethnos destined to rule the Islamic world.[44] Others have assumed Nāder to have been engaging in pan-Turkism, a racial-linguistic ideology which emerged in the late nineteenth century.[45] Notions of ethnicity and race are misleading conceptual tools for analysing early modern Turco-Persianate identities, including dynastic ones.[46] Rather than ethnicities or tribes, medieval and early modern rulers thought in terms of 'aristocratic lineages' which were

[41] Manz, 'Tamerlane and Symbolism', pp. 110–111.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Hanway observed that Nāder's subjects were very aware of their sovereign's lowly origins, Vol. I, pp. 150–151. This is confirmed by Kashmiri, *Bayān*, pp. 5–7, who entered Nāderid service in 1739 and got his information from various Nāderid officials and officers.

[44] Tucker, *Nadir Shah*, p. 10 refers to Eric Hobsbawm, Terence Ranger, and Benedict Anderson's works.

[45] See for example Kioumars Gherghlou, 'A Forgotten Money Heist: The 1746 Mission of Nadir Shah's Chief Merchant in Russia Revisited', in *Iran*, (https://doi.org/10.1080/05786967.2020.1829983), p. 8; Maqṣud-ʿAli Ṣādeqi, and Manijeh Kāẓemi Rāshed, 'Nāder Shāh, mashruʿiyat va shureshha-ye ejtemāʿi 1726–1740' in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 8, No. 15, (2017), p. 161. For an overview of pan-Turkism see Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, (Bloomington, 1995).

[46] Kia, *Persianate*, pp. 1–27, 98.

constantly negotiated based on changing political circumstances.[47] For Nāder and his contemporaries, genealogy functioned as a system of ideological knowledge and power which did not necessarily emphasise actual ancestry.[48] Accordingly, the Turkmenid lineage to which Nāder laid claim was legitimated not through reference to common biological descent with co-ethnic Turks or Turkmen, but through 'testimony, text, companionship, and recognition' by fellow dynasts.[49] Thus, I argue that Nāder's discourse on Turkmenid lineage was an inherently dynastic one, meant to limit imperial sovereignty to his own household and three others in the Islamic world, namely the Chinggisids in Turān, the Mughals in Hendustān, and the Ottomans in Rum. It would have been absurd for Nāder to envision the Turkmenids as an ethnic community, cavalierly granting millions of Turkic-speaking peoples access to dynastic sovereignty.

The roots of Nāder's discourse on Turkmenid lineage can be found in the *möchälgä* of Moghān, signed by the realm's notables. Therein, they testified that the Ṣafavids had come to power by taking the 'dominions of Iran from the Turkmen and the Afshār'.[50] Nāder's accession, then, was not a usurpation by the son of a mere shepherd but a return to the previous dynasty. Nāder anachronistically associated his own clan with the Turkmen dynasty of the Āq-Qoyunlu who had ruled West Iran before the Ṣafavids. He purposefully never mentioned the Āq-Qoyunlu by name, as he wanted to associate Turkmen dynastic sovereignty over Iran with his own clan. Nāder was not claiming that he was heir to the mantle of sovereignty because he was an ethnic Turkmen like the Āq-Qoyunlu. Such a claim could be made by millions. He was supplanting the Āq-Qoyunlu with his own royalised lineage which he situated in a broader constellation of royal lineages called the 'Turkmenid clan' (*il-e Torkmāniyeh*), used interchangeably with 'Turkmenid dynasty' (*dudmān-e Torkmāniyeh*). The diplomatic correspondence with the Porte demonstrates that the Nāderid and Ottoman dynastic lineages were considered to be branches of a larger genealogical tree. Nāder described himself as the 'champion of the illustrious Turkmenid dynasty (*dudmān*)' while referring to his Ottoman counterpart as the 'scion of the Turkmenid dynasty (*selseleh*)'.[51] Thus, Nāder was a 'brother' to the Ottoman sultan.[52] As a supra-dynastic entity,

[47] Ali Anooshahr, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires*, (New York, 2018), Chapter 6.

[48] Kia, *Persianate*, p. 131.

[49] Ibid.

[50] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 221.

[51] Naṣiri (ed.), *Asnād*, pp. 147–148.

the Turkmenid clan could ideologically include Nāder's nascent dynasty among the much more established dynasties of the Turco-Persianate world. Furthermore, rather than tracing genealogy vertically from sons to fathers, thereby underlining Nāder's undistinguished descent, the Turkmenid discourse allowed for forming genealogical ties horizontally between dynastic brothers, focusing attention on Nāder's contemporary supremacy over his peers.

The Turkmenid discourse came to full fruition during Nāder's imperial conquests of Hendustān and Turān, permitting him to bestow crowns (*tāj-bakhshi*) upon his vassal brothers as the 'elder' (*bozorg*) of their clan. In an edict Nāder issued in the Spring of 1739, he declared to his son Reżā-Qoli that 'as our imperial majesty is the elder of the Turkmenid clan, and the great shāh (Moḥammad Shāh) is also of that clan, we have deemed fit to grant him the seal of sultanship over Hendustān… by virtue of our crown-bestowing generosity'.[53] The Mughal emperor was obliged to vindicate this narrative in the peace treaty he signed. The chronicle of Anand Rām Mokhleṣ (d. 1750), the representative of the Mughal grand vizier at Moḥammad Shāh's court during Nāder's conquest, contains a transcript of the Nāderid-Mughal peace treaty.[54] Written from the perspective of Moḥammad Shāh, the treaty begins by recounting the victorious entry of the 'shāhanshāh of the world and sultan over all sultans of the age' into Hendustān.[55] Moḥammad Shāh acknowledged Nāder as the 'elder of the Turkmenid clan' who on account of their brotherly connection through the Turkmenid tree (*dowḥeh*), bestowed Moḥammad with sultanship over Hendustān.[56] The Turkmenid clan was not just a genealogical tree which placed Nāder' dynasty alongside its counterparts from other Islamic realms. As the elder, Nāder wielded universal sovereignty over the lesser branches of the Turkmenid dynastic tree, in this case, the Mughals.

Imperial tribute and Iranian interests

The ideology of universal rule served to legitimate the Nāderid state's extraction of local resources through a system of tribute collection, with Nāder's vassals dispatching money, men, or material to the central treasury. Nāder's bestowal of crowns to his vassal brothers was part of a process of imperial state formation which viewed the realms of the Islamic world as the joint property of the Turkmenid clan, and thus, as the elder of that clan, Nāder

[52] Ibid, p. 149.

[53] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 410.

[54] B. Ahmad, 'Anand Ram Mokles', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, p. 1.

[55] Mokhleṣ, *Badāyeʿ*, pp. 66–69.

[56] Ibid, p. 67. The Mughals are referred to therein as both Timurids and Gurkānids.

sought decentralised control over the realms ruled by junior brothers. This had precedence in the Chinggisid-Timurid tradition of dynastic imperium which viewed 'the empire as the joint property of the Chinggisid clan, which meant ongoing decentralisation' while the 'core' territories remained under centralised control.[57] The early modern Ottomans also distinguished between their empire's core territories, administered directly, and their imperial tributaries who retained varying degrees of sovereignty and administrative autonomy.[58] Similarly, as Nāder continued to centralise the military-fiscal administration of Iran, he simultaneously formed a decentralised imperial network of tributaries beyond Iran's frontiers by bestowing crowns to vassals. This constituted what Viorel Panaite refers to in the Ottoman context as the 'tribute-protection exchange' where a tributary (*haracguzar*) despatches men, money, and goods to an imperial overlord in exchange for the latter's support and protection (*himayet o siyanet*).[59] In addition to material benefits, the collection of tribute was an essential tool for the projection of imperial power, reinforcing the state's claim to universal dominion.[60]

The conquest of Hendustān offered the Nāderid empire its greatest tributary. In exchange for Nāder's crown-bestowal, Moḥammad Shāh was obliged to open the doors to his treasury and offer its contents as tribute.[61] The exchange underlined the overlord-vassal relationship between the two sovereigns. As Ṭehrāni put it, the transfer of wealth from the Mughal to the Nāderid treasury was a transfer from the 'shāhi order' to the 'shāhanshāhi order'.[62] Rather than looting, the Nāderid state saw itself as forming a legitimate tributary relationship which augmented its military and fiscal strength while simultaneously legitimating its imperial hegemony. In addition to the Mughal ruler, his governors and vassals were also made to pay tribute to the shāhanshāh. For example, Esterābādi wrote that the governor of Awadh sent his agents back to his province to collect and despatch his assigned sum of tribute for the Nāderid

[57] Michal Biran, 'The Mongol Imperial Space: From Universalism to Glocalisation', in *The Limits of Universal Rule: Eurasian Empires Compared,* eds. Yuri Pines, Michal Biran, and Jörg Rüpke, (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 231–235.

[58] Kołodziejczyk, 'What is Inside', pp. 421–432.

[59] Viorel Panaite, 'Power Relationships in the Ottoman Empire: Sultans and the Tribute-Paying Princes of Wallachia and Moldovia (16th–18th Centuries)', in *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Européennes,* Vols. 37–38, (1999–2000), pp. 47–48, pp. 48–51.

[60] Matthee, 'Zar-o Zur', p. 41.

[61] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 328.

[62] Ṭehrāni, *Tārikh,* pp. 224–225.

treasury.[63] Esterābādi's account is corroborated by a contemporary Mughal history written in 1740.[64] The sum total of tribute which entered imperial coffers in 1739 is difficult to estimate. As the imperial secretary, Esterābādi had every reason to inflate the figures to project an image of imperial grandeur. He claimed that the treasury received 7.5 million *tumān*s in cash as well as vast quantities of jewels, gems, treasures, and other material assets.[65] Other contemporaries, from anti-Nāderids to relatively neutral observers, estimated an overall value of 35 to 50 million *tumān*s was taken in tribute.[66] We can only be certain in that the Nāderid state raised a colossal sum.

The largest payment of tribute was the one made upon conquest in 1739. Smaller payments continued thereafter. For years after Nāder's departure, he was still sending ambassadors to collect tribute from the Mughal emperor and his governors. Sindh and Bengal are cases in point. The Mughal chronicler Mokhleṣ reported that the ruler of Sindh was paying 10,000 *tumān*s each year after having turned over 110,000 *tumān*s upon Nāder's conquest of his dominion.[67] Two years after the conquest of Hendustān, in 1741, Nāder was still sending his agents to Bengal to collect annual tribute.[68] That Bengali tribute was being paid is confirmed by Mohammad Shāh's courtiers having advised him to write to Nāder asking for an exemption so that the Bengal revenues could instead be used to support the necessities of the Mughal court in Delhi.[69] There is nothing in the sources to suggest that his request was granted. Moḥammad Shāh was himself hard pressed to keep up tributary payments, once having to resort to the aid of Delhi's traders and some court nobles, to put together 100,000 *tumān*s.[70] The annual tribute paid in cash by Moḥammad Shāh was frequently accompanied by rare treasures, as was the case in 1743.[71] Mughal vassals, such as the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the governors of Awadh and Bengal, continued to pay tribute well into the 1740s.[72] In

[63] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 333.

[64] Anon., *Tārikh-e Mohammad Pādshāh*, British Library, Persian MS. Or. 1677, ff. 67r–68r. We know the history was written in 1740 because the author describes receiving daily news of Nāder's conquest of Central Asia on f. 93r.

[65] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 333.

[66] See Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, p. 10, n. 39.

[67] Mokhleṣ, 'Badāyeʿ', pp. 81–84.

[68] Alam, *Crisis*, p. 51.

[69] Ibid, pp. 51–52.

[70] Ibid; Mokhleṣ, *Taẕkareh-ye Mokhleṣ*, pp. 104–106.

[71] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 383.

[72] Ibid, pp. 361–362; Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 97.

early 1740, Esterābādi reported that the Mughal emperor wrote to his vassals in Lahore, Multan, and Sindh, informing them to henceforth pay tribute to Nāder, not Delhi.[73] Contemporary Mughal sources confirm that Nāderid embassies continued to travel to Delhi to collect tribute all the way to the very end of the empire in 1747.[74]

The riches and tribute gained from the conquest of Hendustān was in turn used to serve the ideological claims of the Nāderid state regarding its pursuit of collective Iranian interests. The state attempted to share the fruits of conquest with its Iranian subjects back home, giving them a stake in the preservation of the Nāderid order. The tribute from Hendustān allowed Nāder to issue an edict in the Spring of 1739 suspending half a dozen major taxes for three years in Iran.[75] The rationale behind the tax break was given as the following: 'All our subjects, in particular the people of Iran who have placed all their lives and possessions at the service of our threshold since the dawn of the Nāderid state, shall be protected under the shadow of our imperial majesty'.[76] The link between the Nāderid state and Iran's people was emphasised, and the benefits accrued by the state from its recent imperial conquest were portrayed as being conferred upon Iranians.

The restoration of Iran-Realm's frontiers was heralded as an important achievement of the conquest. Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh* read 'that the frontier of Iran and Hend (Hendustān) ٭ is the Indus (Atak) River and the domain of Sindh', legitimating Nāder's conquest on an irredentist basis.[77] Edicts sent to governors in Iran explained that 'as the lands on this side of the Indus River formerly belonged to the dominions of Iran', the Mughal emperor had relinquished sovereignty over them to Nāder.[78] The irredentist achievement was not directed exclusively at internal audiences. Nāder's letter to the Ottoman sultan informed him that all lands up to the Indus 'have been annexed to the guarded dominions of Iran'.[79] The annexations were ratified in the peace treaty with Moḥammad Shāh, annexing all dominions west of the Indus to the

[73] Ibid.

[74] Moḥammad-Bakhsh Āshub, *Tārikh shahādat-e Farrokh-Siyar va Jolus-e Moḥammad Shāh*, British Library, Persian MS. Or. 1832, fols. 298r–301v.

[75] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 410–413. Arunova and Ashrafian tried to downplay the significance of this tax break by arguing it was not far-reaching enough.

[76] Ibid, p. 411.

[77] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 157, v. 3678.

[78] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, pp. 65–66, doc. No. 16.

[79] Naṣiri (ed.), *Asnād*, p. 109.

‘sublime Iranian state’.[80] In the transcripts preserved in Mokhleṣ’s history, the same dominions were acknowledged to be ceded to the ‘Nāderid state’.[81] Again, the interchangeability of Iranian and Nāderid is evident when it came to state affairs. The choice between them depended on the audience and the context for discussion. Just as the discourses on vengeance and the millenarianism conquest of Hendustān were put in Iranian terms to appeal to an internal audience, the annexation of territory was also coached in irredentist terms. The beneficiary of the conquest was presented as the state of Iran, and the Nāder of Iran was said to munificently share the fruits of his conquest with his people. It was in this ideological context that a Khorāsānian officer like Marvi, who happened to be serving in distant Āẕarbāijān during Nāder’s invasion of Hendustān, could project the collective Iranian self into this glorious conquest, ‘for in short, the triumphant Iranian heroes compelled the Hendustānian soldiers to turn tail and flee’.[82]

Shāhanshāh and crown-bestower in Turān

The conquest of the khānates of Turān, also commonly referred to as Turkestān or Transoxiana (*Māvarāonnahr*), was another significant step towards universal sovereignty. Nāder’s invasion of the Bokhāran Khānate and his vassalisation of its ruler, Abulfeyż Khān, proved to be almost no military contest at all. In part this was due to the Iranian victory two years prior, in 1738, when Reżā-Qoli had crushed Abulfeyż Khān’s army at Qarshi, to the north of the Oxus. The crown-prince was only prevented from marching on Bokhārā because Nāder deemed it inadvisable to open a new front while he was conquering Qandehār and preparing for an expedition in Hendustān.[83] When Nāder crossed the Oxus at the head of the main imperial army in 1740, surrender seemed the rational course of action to many. In Esterābādi’s words, ‘since Abulfeyż Khān saw that his Turkestānian army of Turkmen and Uzbeks was impotent in the face of (Nāder’s) shāhanshāhic magnificence, he saw no other option than to submit’.[84]

[80] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 409.

[81] Mokhleṣ, ‘Badāyeʿ’, pp. 68, 70.

[82] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 728.

[83] Axworthy suggests that Nāder may have wanted the credit for Bokhārā’s conquest for himself, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 190–193.

[84] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 350.

Kashmiri, who served in the imperial army as a clerk, was present at the ceremonial greeting between Nāder and his new vassal.[85] He recorded that Abulfeyż Khān was escorted to the imperial tent outside Bokhārā by Nāderid officers. Upon his entrance, the princes Reżā-Qoli and his cousin ʿAli-Qoli both stood up then bowed to the Turānian khān, but Nāder 'deemed fit only to return the *salām*, remaining seated'.[86] This communicated to all onlookers the unequal relationship between shāh and shāhanshāh. The fact that Abulfeyż's title was actually khān was remedied by Nāder's bestowal of a new title, making his vassal 'Shāh Abulfeyż Khān'.[87] The new title signified the process of crown-bestowal, establishing Abulfeyż and the realm of Turān as tributaries to Nāder. Ṭusi, who accompanied Nāder on his Turānian conquest as a senior courtier, expressed the establishment of imperial authority in the following manner: 'As he (Nāder) bestowed honour upon that land ⁘ the khāns of Turān-Realm ⁘ Took up the burden of paying homage ⁘ as they gave tribute and received the crown'.[88]

Nāder's bestowal of a crown upon the Bokhāran khān took place within the context of the Turkmenid clan of dynasts. In the peace treaty drawn up by Esterābādi, the 'crown-bestower of the realms of Hend and Turān' was once again acknowledged as the 'elder of the Turkmenids, who shows reverence for the great dynasties' of the Islamic world.[89] Nāder's universal sovereignty was now extended to two major realms beyond his own as the sovereigns of both Turān and Hendustān owed their crown to his munificence. In exchange, Abulfeyż 'transferred all the regions south of the Oxus River (*Amu Daryā*), which had previously been held by the sultans of Turān, to the Nāderid state'.[90] This was more than just the fulfilment of an irredentist ambition to realise Iran and Turān's frontier as the Oxus. It showed that the Nāderid state thought of its direct sovereignty as being limited by Iran-Realm's frontiers, beyond which it projected a form of indirect sovereignty upon lesser shāhs and junior members of the Turkmenid clan who occupied non-Iranian realms. Marvi, who served in the imperial army during the conquest of Turān, reported that several courtiers

[85] Kashmir, *Bayān*, pp. 69–71.

[86] Ibid, p. 71.

[87] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 352.

[88] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 194, vv. 4548, 4550. See Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 72, for Ṭusi's presence at Nāder's court.

[89] A transcript of this treaty is contained in the manuscript *Fotuḥāt-e Nāderi*, Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Persian MS. No. 41563, ff. 50v–51v, which is an excerpt of Esterābādi's court chronicle, augmented with the chancellery documents which he drafted. It was kindly donated to the library by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei a few years ago.

[90] Ibid, fol. 51r.

advised Nāder to appoint new rulers in the region, but Nāder replied that 'the realm of Iran is sufficient for me'.[91] The discourse on the Turkmenids, then, was an ideological vehicle for indirect rule over the non-Iranian realms in the Nāderid empire. This ideological framework did not apply to minor shāhdoms and sultanates such as Badakhshān and ʿOmān. Only the rulers of the three other imperial realms of Turān, Hendustān, and Rum were considered part of the Turkmenid clan.

In Turān, just as in Hendustān, indirect administration took the form of tributary relations. In the early modern Turco-Persianate world, tributaries to an imperial entity could offer money, material, men, or a combination of the three. In Ṣafavid Iran, rich provinces on the Caspian littoral used to pay a fixed sum of money to the Ṣafavids while the relatively poor regions of Lorestān and ʿArabestān were required to send war horses and supply cavalrymen to the Ṣafavid army in times of war.[92] In the neighbouring Ottoman empire, the Crimean Khānate administered itself while offering tens of thousands of soldiers to serve the imperial army in both Europe and Asia.[93] Thus, an imperial state could collect tribute from a vassal by drawing on its military manpower.[94]

Similar to the Crimean khānate, the Turānian khānates possessed little wealth that they could offer their imperial overlord. Kashmiri compared the lands he saw during the campaign to his native Hendustān, remarking on the relative poverty of Turān. He suggested that Naāder had spent much more money in conquering the region than he could extract from it in tribute.[95] Nonetheless, what Turān lacked in prosperity it made up for in an abundance of warriors. From the Khānate of Bokhārā, 20,000 Uzbek riders were recruited into the imperial army.[96] The sources do not reveal whether these soldiers were maintained at the expense of the imperial treasury or the khānate. Marvi observed a military review of Uzbek battalions in 1740 where 'their horses and equipment were examined' by Iranian officers, but he did not reveal if they were assigned new equipment or allocated salaries.[97] There is an edict from

[91] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 797; Riāḥi, 'Moqaddameh', sixty-three.

[92] Matthee, 'Zar-o Zur', pp. 51–57.

[93] Mária Ivanics, 'The Military Co-operation of the Crimean Khanate with the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *European Tributary*, pp. 279–291.

[94] Mária Ivanics, 'Military Co-operation', pp. 275–300; Kołodziejczyk, 'What is Inside', pp. 421–430.

[95] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, pp. 72–73.

[96] Ibid, p. 74; Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 351; Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 25; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 801 claims 40,000.

[97] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 997.

1742 which ordered officials in Āẕarbāijān to verify the muster rolls for the Uzbek contingent, instructing the treasurers that the 'military review and the muster roll (*tumār*)' were to be used as the basis for paying salaries and distributing equipment and rations.[98] The Nāderid state seems to have maintained at least some of its Turānian auxiliaries at its own expense, but the fragmentary evidence is far from conclusive.

Despite serving alongside Turānian auxiliaries in the same army, many Iranians retained their previous animosity towards their new comrades, and the campaigns in Turān were frequently legitimated as vengeful conquests, particularly among internal audiences. Marvi viewed Nāder's conquest of the Bokhāran and Khʷārazmian Khānates as the vengeful 'conquest of the Turānians' by the 'champions of Iran-Realm'.[99] While the relatively peaceful submission of the Bokhārans meant that the Nāderid state largely eschewed vengeful rhetoric in its case, the dogged resistance of the Khʷārazmians brought the discourse on vengeance to the fore. The Khʷārazmian khān had been attempting to raid Khorāsān, quite unsuccessfully, throughout the 1730s. In 1740, the khān escalated hostilities to a new level when he executed Nāderid ambassadors who had demanded his submission as a vassal.[100] Nāder resolved to make an example of Khʷārazm.

This discourse on vengeance was no longer exclusively for internal consumption but was even directed at the Khʷārazmians themselves. Esterābādi's peace treaty, signed by 'all the grandees and officials' of the conquered khānate, began by stating that 'since times long past, the Uzbeks of Khʷārazm have been the source of seditious transgressions against Iran's boundaries (*ḥudud-e Irān*), and they became deserving of our retribution and vengeance'.[101] This alluded to the centuries-old raids into Khorāsān by the Uzbeks and Steppe Turkmen of Khʷārazm. What drove the vengeful conquest of the khānate was understood to be its historic transgressions against Iran's sacred frontiers. Ṭusi placed the vengeance in the context of the *Shāhnāmeh*, presenting it as the latest confrontation in the age-old legendary wars between Iran and Turān.[102] The khān was cast as Afrāsiāb, the renowned shāh of Turān, while Nāder was the legendary champion of Iran, Rostam. The execution of the khān and the bloody rout of his army demonstrated the superiority of Iran's hero: 'If you do not possess the

[98] Lārudi, *Pesar-e Shamshir*, pp. 335–336.

[99] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 790.

[100] Lockhart, *Nadir*, pp. 185–196.

[101] Esterābādi, *Fotuḥāt*, f. 56v.

[102] Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, pp. 64–66. The Ṣafavids drew on the tropes of the *Shāhnāmeh*, but it served their Shi'i ideology, whereas the Nāderid era saw it served an explicitly Iranian ideology.

constitution of Rostam ⁕ do not set foot upon the field of battle, O Afrāsiāb'.[103] But Ṭusi also sifted historical revisionism into his narrative by claiming that the Iranians' massacre of the Khʷārazmians was in retaliation 'for what Hulāku's did to the Baghdādians'.[104] Ṭusi emphasised the territorial expansiveness of Iran-Realm by including the Baghdādians as fellow Iranians, while he underlined the legitimacy of the vengeance by having the khān inherit the guilt of Baghdad's massacre by a Turānianised Hulāku.

A manifestation of vengeful conquest in Turān was the carrying off of Turānians into captivity while freeing Iranians from theirs. Kashmiri observed that the chief herald of the imperial army was tasked with taking 7,000 Khʷārazmian men and women into captivity, later marching them to Khorāsān, 'so that they may know the worth of freedom (*āzādi*) and the bitterness of captivity'.[105] Whether this order was executed or not, the discourse on avenging captivity was evidently present in the imperial camp. The natural corollary to this discourse was the freeing of Iranians from Turānian captivity. The peace treaty proclaimed that 'not a single Iranian captive is to be bought or sold. Wherever Iranian captives are discovered, they are to be released'.[106] In his official history, Esterābādi claimed that local authorities were made to cooperate with Nāderid officials who freed 12,000 Iranian captives, providing them money and rations for the journey back to Iran at the expense of the Nāderid treasury.[107] Ostensibly, Esterābādi was exaggerating the number of freed captives. Kashmiri, who was one of the officials in charge of organising the release and provisioning of the captives, put their number at 7,000.[108] He confirmed that Nāder had assigned half a *tumān* to each freed person and that rations were also provided at the expense of the treasury.[109] However, the march to Khorāsān was arduous for many of them. Some perished from the cold, while others, hearing of the 'misery in Iran' decided to return to Khʷārazm. Apparently, even some among those who reached Khorāsān were disappointed and regretted the journey.[110] Despite Kashmiri's negative portrayal, it is plausible that most of those who were given their freedom would have felt grateful to the Nāderid state. From an ideological

[103] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 194, v. 4543.

[104] Ibid, p. 193, vv. 4538–4539.

[105] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 89.

[106] Esterābādi, *Fotuḥāt*, 57r–57v.

[107] Idem, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 359.

[108] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 89.

[109] Ibid.

[110] Ibid.

perspective, the Nāderid state had revived its discourse on freeing Iranians from foreign captivity. Similar to Hendustān, Nāder sought to legitimate his imperial conquest of Turān to internal audiences by demonstrating that Iranians were benefitting from it. The conquest of Hendustān had brought tax-breaks, that of Turān had brought freedom for captive brethren.

Monuments to the shāhanshāh of the world

By 1741, Nāder had reached the height of his prestige as a universal conqueror. In the words of Esterābādi, 'the dynasty of Timur is but a sword which he has sheathed in his scabbard, and the dynasty of Chinggis has been bound by his chain'.[111] Nāder commissioned two monumental epigraphs after his return to Khorāsān, expressing his universal imperium. One was a poem inscribed on Nāder's mausoleum in Mashhad, and the other was a poem inscribed on the side of the mountain pass leading into his natural fortress, Kalāt. Monumental epigraphs in the early modern Islamic world were a medium through which the imperial state could communicate its ideology to the public. Such epigraphs formed part of the sovereign's quest for legitimacy in the eyes of the people who were expected to convene in those public places.[112] Accordingly, the location and language of epigraphs were crucial to the effective communication of imperial ideology.[113] Some adopted an epic tone, matching the reigning sovereign's recent military conquests with legendary exploits by past figures from the Turco-Persianate history.[114] Some epigraphs connected the sovereign with past figures through imagining new genealogical connections.[115] A third Nāderid inscription at the ʿAlid shrine in Najaf, dated to 1743, shall be discussed separately in the following section on Nāder's imperial campaign against the Ottomans.

The Nāderid mausoleum in Mashhad

Nāder's mausoleum was constructed next to the Imam Reżā shrine, one of the most popular sites of Shi'i pilgrimage, indicating that the epigraphic poem was directed primarily to a Shi'i

[111] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 26.

[112] Pouye Khoshkhoosani, 'Written Representation of Temporal Power in Safavid Material Culture', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1–2, (2021), p. 12; Markus Ritter, 'Monumental Epigraphy in Iran', in *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1–2, (2008), pp. 13–37.

[113] Khoshkhoosani, 'Written Representation', p. 12; Roberta Giunta and Viola Allegranzi, 'Ghaznavid, Qarakhanid, and Seljuq Monumental Inscriptions and the Development of Royal Propaganda', in *The Seljuqs and their Successors*, ed. Sheila Canby, Deniz Beyazit and Martina Rugiadi, (Edinburgh, 2020), pp. 118–120.

[114] Viola Allegranzi, 'Quoting the Shāhnāma in Monumental Epigraphy', in *Before Archaeology: The Meaning of the Past in the Islamic Pre-Modern Thought*, ed. Leonardo Capezzone, (Rome, 2020), pp. 132–133.

[115] Ibid, p. 138.

Iranian audience. It was already finished by the time he returned to Mashhad in 1741.[116] The inspiration for the new mausoleum seems to have either come from Seljuq tombs in Marv, which Nāder visited on his way to Mashhad, or from Timur's tombstone which Nāder had brought back from Samarqand.[117] Nāder sent the tombstone back to Samarqand, apparently declaring he would have a grander tombstone built for himself.[118]

The court poet, ʿAbdorrazzāq Tabrizi, known by his penname Nashʾeh, was tasked with composing an ode in Turkish.[119] Given the sacred location of the tomb, it might have been expected that either Arabic or Persian would be used. The use of Turkish was a departure from past epigraphic practices in Iran and Central Asia which almost exclusively used Persian or, particularly for religious contexts, Arabic.[120] The inscription on Timur's tombstone, for instance, was in Arabic.[121] Turkish may have been chosen for its association with martial valour in Iran.[122] The seventeenth-century Italian traveller, Pietro della Valle, was told by Ṣafavid commanders that Persian was soft and refined, 'but Turkish is manly and fit for warriors; therefore, the shāh speaks with the commanders of the state in Turkish'.[123] The choice in language would not have restricted its audience to military men. Contrary to popular misconceptions regarding early modern Iran, Turkish was 'so common among all classes in Iran as to be the lingua franca'.[124] Alongside Persian, Turkish was prevalent in Iran's large cities, such as Mashhad, and as one contemporary European traveller observed, it was 'almost considered shameful for a respectable man not to know Turkish'.[125] Therefore,

[116] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', pp. 26–27. It is unknown when and under what circumstances this mausoleum was destroyed, but it may have been demolished under the Qājārs in the nineteenth century.

[117] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 827; Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 26–27, who claims Nāder ordered an expansion of the mausoleum on the other side of the Rażavid shrine.

[118] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 827.

[119] Not much is known of Nashʾeh, see Riāḥi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 927, n. 7; the mausoleum no longer exists, and I have taken the text of Nashʾeh's poem from his *Divān-e Fārsi o Torki*, Library, Museum, and Documents Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the I.R. Iran, Persian and Turkish MS. No. 14761, fols. 6v–8v. It is dated 1155 (1742–1743).

[120] Sussan Babaie, 'Epigraphy: Safavid Iran and Later Inscriptions', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 8, (1998): 498–504; Ritter, 'Monumental Epigraphy', pp. 13–20.

[121] Denis Aigle, *The Mongol Empire between Myth and Reality*, (Leiden, 2014), p. 122.

[122] Willem Floor and Hasan Javadi, 'The Role of Azerbaijani Turkish in Safavid Iran', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4, (2013), p. 573.

[123] Ibid, p. 573; quoting from Pietro Della Valle, *Les Fameux Voyages*, Vol. 2, p. 10.

[124] John R. Perry, 'The Historical Role of Turkish in Relation to Persian of Iran', in *Iran and the Caucasus*, Vol. 5, (2001), p. 194.

[125] Floor and Javadi, 'Role of Turkish', pp. 573–574; quoting from Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum. Fasciculi V*, (Tehran, 1976), p. 144.

the location and language of the epigraph was probably meant to communicate the military virtues of Nāder to as broad an audience among the Iranian Shi'a as possible.

The inscription on the tombstone introduced Nāder as the shāhanshāh and universal sovereign before beginning its historical narrative 'On the day that the immaculate realm of Iran ⁎ saw ʿErāq fall into the hands of the Afghans ⁎ and the lands of Khorāsān fall subject to Malek-Maḥmud ⁎ while Tabriz and other domains were captured by Rum'. The discourse on Nāder being the saviour of a territorialised collective self was reiterated for pilgrims who read how 'He encompassed (regained) the boundaries of Iran ⁎ in this age, he preserved eternal righteousness (*ḥaqq*) at its centre', evoking the notion of *Nāder-e Irān* at the heart of his realm, keeping an all-encompassing and paternalistic eye on its sacred frontiers.[126]

The ode then enumerated Nāder's conquests of other realms, legitimating his claim to universal sovereignty by stressing the vastness and multitude of the territories under his authority.[127] Imperial conquests were infused with a sense of vengeance for the collective self. Nāder had avenged Iranian captives by subjugating their captors.

> It was by divine providence that he took the Turk sultans (*selātin-e Türkü*) captive ⁎ it was destiny that insisted upon their demise ⁎ … A thousand grateful prayers, for the falcon of his state ⁎ has taken the Afghan, Uzbek, and Tatar, captive in its talons ⁎ … Regarding the magnificence of this sovereign, suffice it to say that he compelled even the Ottoman sultan to return Iranian captives.[128]

Turk and Tatar, in this context, referred to the Turkestānians (Turānians), and did not include all Turkic-speaking people of which Nāder and many Iranians were themselves a part.[129] Avenging Iranians and liberating them from foreign captivity through imperial conquest was already an established theme of Nāderid ideology as articulated to mainly internal audiences. Wrathful vengeance and the restoration Iran were inextricably linked in the inscription, just as they had been in many of Esterābādi's writing where Nāder was described as the 'Iran-

[126] Nashʾeh, *Divān*, fol. 7r.

[127] Karateke, 'Legitimising', p. 45.

[128] Nashʾeh, *Divān*, fol. 7v.

[129] For the medieval and early modern delineation between Turk/Mongol/Tatar and Turkmen see Joo-Yup Lee, 'The Historical meaning of the Term Turk and the Nature of Turkic Identity of the Chinggisid and Timurid Elites in Post-Mongol Central Asia', in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1–2, (2016), pp. 101–132; Kia, *Persianate*, pp. 131–132.

restoring wrath of Iran' (*Irān-ṣowlat-e Irān-ārā*).[130] The recurrence of such themes, given the audience for the inscription, speaks to their enduring presence in Nāder's efforts to legitimate himself in the eyes of his fellow Iranians.

The last third of the poem engaged with Shi'i themes. The proximity to the Rażavid shrine was said to emanate a heavenly aura into the mausoleum.[131] The Eighth Imam was claimed to have aided Nāder in this world and would guide him in the next: 'Reza aids him in both worlds ٭ as his obliging instrument, (Nader) has the right to rest beside him', and Imam ʿAli was implied to be waiting for Nāder at the lake of Kowṡar to welcome him to paradise.[132] There was an enduring connection with the Eighth Imam in Nāder's ideology, going back to his early career as a Safavid general. Perhaps, he was attempting to underline his continued loyalty to the Shi'i Imams for his Iranian subjects. Maybe as increasing numbers of Sunni auxiliaries were incorporated into the imperial army, Nader wanted to reassure his Iranian subjects that he and the Nāderid state remained Shi'i. To conclude, Nāder was portrayed exactly as he wished to be seen by internal audiences. Ideological discourses such as those on the Turkmenid clan and the Ja'fari creed, meant for neighbouring dynasts and non-Iranians Sunni subjects, were omitted. Instead, Nāder appeared as the saviour of Iran-Realm and its people, freeing and avenging them through conquering foreign enemies. He had been aided by the Shi'i Imams in these vengeful conquests which had made him shāhanshāh over the world, and they awaited him in paradise.

[130] Mehdi Esterābādi, *Dorreh-ye Nādereh*, ed. Seyyed Jaʿfar Shahidi, (Tehran, 1962), p. 176.

[131] Nashʾeh, *Divān*, fol. 8r.

[132] Ibid.

The Nāderid inscription at Kalāt. (Source: Author, field-research in Iranian Khorāsān, Jan 2019).

The Kalāt-e Nāderi inscription

The inscription at Kalāt was completed not long after the Nāderid mausoleum in Mashhad, perhaps in 1742.[133] The inscription was a Turkish ode by an otherwise unknown poet, Golbon. The choice in language again suggests that it was meant to communicate martial prowess and engage with as broad an audience as possible. However, only a very limited number of people would be permitted anywhere near the inscription. Kalāt was chosen as Nāder's imperial treasury and stronghold partly because of its inaccessibility. Apart from members of the Nāderid household and the royal guards tasked with attending them, not many others would have seen the epigraph. Nāder may have intended it to have been an articulation of his ideology for the Nāderid household and its future dynasts. Kalāt, as the only fortress to have withstood Timur's siege, was perhaps chosen as the location of the epigraph to suggest that the founder of the Nāderid dynasty was not only somehow connected to the first ṣāḥebqerān, but had also surpassed him.

The main theme of the ode was the divine source of Nāderid sovereignty. In keeping with the Turco-Persianate tradition of millenarian sovereignty, Nāder's imperial authority was placed in congruence with his sacral authority.[134] The connection between the imperial and the sacral was made explicit by the following line: 'It is impossible to say whether this shāhanshāh is a prophet (*peyāmber*) ٭ or an angel (*melekeh*) in the form of a man'.[135] Nāder's universal sovereignty was not associated with any specific territories. Neither Iran nor any other realm was mentioned, maybe to emphasise the universality of Nāderid authority and keep the possibility of expansion into new realms open in the future. The latter part of the ode connected Nāder's imperial status to divine providence: 'All blessings have been bestowed upon the shāhanshāh ٭ from the munificence of God'. Nāder was imagined as the intermediary through which divine sanction could be accessed by shāhs, as Nāder bestowed crowns upon their heads just as God bestowed the shāhanshāhic crown upon his.

In a departure from previous discourses on Nāderid genealogy, the inscription connected Nāder's shāhanshāhic sovereignty to his descent from Timur. Nāder might have been influenced by Timur's tombstone which also manufactured a genealogy. The inscription on

[133] Qoddusi, *Nādernāmeh*, p. 640 suggests 1150/1742–43 onwards.

[134] Moin, *Millenarian Sovereign*, throughout; Fischel, *Local States*, pp. 244–245.

[135] I have referred to the transcript of the ode found in Khosravi (ed.), *Kalāt-e Nāderi*, pp. 57–58.

Timur's tombstone traced his lineage back to a female ancestor he supposedly shared with Chinggis Khān, claiming that she was impregnated by a ray of light descended from ʿAli.[136] The Timurids were given an ʿAlid-Chinggisid lineage which was based on esoteric connections rather than an actual chain of descent. Similarly, the inscription at Kalāt claimed Nāder was 'related (*nisbet*) to the magnificent household of Timur ⁂ on this account, he is known to the world as shāhanshāh'. The Nāderids were given a Timurid lineage, legitimating their universal sovereignty as latter-day ṣāḥebqerāns. Ṭusi's *Shāhnāmeh* confirmed the genealogical innovation: 'As our forebears (*niākān*) are from the Turkmenids ⁂ our lineage reaches back to the ṣāḥebqerān'.[137]

Interestingly, the Nāderid genealogical model contradicted the Timurid one, where Turk (Mongol) lineages were considered separate from Turkmen lineages.[138] Despite the Nāderid and Timurid genealogies contradicting one another, they both utilised the same approach to manufacturing ancestry. The Nāderids tied themselves to Timur through symbolic connections rather than fabricating a chain of decent, just as the Timurids had connected themselves to ʿAli and Chinggis Khān. Compared to the inscription at Nāder's mausoleum, the one at Kalāt articulated shāhanshāhic sovereignty from a dynastic perspective, reflecting its intended audience. The members of the Nāderid household who read the inscription were informed that it was the dynasty's God-given mission to promulgate universal sovereignty across the world, a mission they had inherited from the first ṣāḥebqerān.

The new imperial war against Rum

Laying claim to imperial sovereignty over the two realms of Hendustān and Turān, Nāder began military preparations against his powerful neighbour to the west, the Ottoman empire.[139] For internal audiences, Nāder invoked the irredentist ideology of Iran-Realm to legitimate territorial claims on Ottoman lands east of the Euphrates River. For general audiences, he presented his quest to force the Ottoman caliph to recognise Ja'farism as a legitimate Sunni school of thought, arguing that this was in the interests of Islamic unity. This section explores how Nāderid ideology developed during the war against the Ottoman empire in 1743. It examines how the Nāderid state laid the diplomatic groundwork during the early

[136] Aigle, *Mongol Empire*, pp. 122–130; Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, pp. 37–38.

[137] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 157, v. 3673.

[138] Lee, 'Historical Meaning of Turk', p. 129.

[139] Axworthy has indicated that Nāder's intentions for subjugating all the sovereigns of the Islamic world, including the Ottoman sultan, may have formed as early as his regency, *Sword of Persia*, p. 124.

1740s while it was still waging war in Dāghestān. It then explores the ideological use of Ja'farism in the context of the Ottoman war as Nāder attempted to articulate a non-sectarian religious ideology to compliment his claims to universal sovereignty among both the Shi'a and the Sunnis.

A war for the sake of Islam or Iran?

Peace negotiations with the Ottomans had begun since before Nāder's coronation in 1736. Despite the fact that military hostilities had ceased and Iranian captives had been returned, an actual peace treaty proved elusive.[140] This was due to Nāder's insistence that the Ottoman caliph formally accept Ja'farism as a fifth school of Sunnism.[141] One of the major points of tension between Nāderid and Ottoman negotiators was the call to establish a fifth *rokn* (prayer location) at the Ka'ba for congregational prayer by the Ja'faris alongside the adherents of the four other schools. This would have legitimated Nāder's religio-political ideology at the heart of Islam, posing a challenge to the Ottoman caliphate's credibility in the eyes of the Ottoman ulema and subjects who broadly regarded Ja'farism as merely a version of the same Shi'i heresy.[142] In the words of a contemporary Ottoman poet, 'for one who is a Qezelbāsh Iranian in this way ، becoming a Sunni is not possible'.[143] Negotiations continued for years as Nāder embarked on his imperial conquests in the east, but seemed to breakdown altogether when Nāder returned west to invade Dāghestān in 1741. The Ottomans sensed, quite correctly as it turned out, that Nāder was preparing to invade their territories in Arab ʿErāq after he had finished with Dāghestān.

The pretext for a vengeful conquest of Dāghestān had already been provided when Nāder's brother, Ebrāhim, had been killed in an ambush by the Dāghestānians in November 1738, as Nāder was invading Hendustān. The month after the ambush, local Caucasian lords received letters from Nāder promising to make an example of Dāghestān once he returned from his expedition.[144] In 1741, Nāder made good on his promise. The conquest of a destitute, mountainous people promised neither the glory attained in Turān, nor the riches in

[140] Olson, *The Siege of Mosul and Ottoman-Persian Relations, 1718-1743*, p. 106 on the return of Iranian captives.

[141] Tucker, *Nadir*, pp. 78–81.

[142] Muhammet Habib Saçmali, 'Sunni-Shiite Political Relations in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century and Early Modern Ottoman Universal Caliphate', PhD Dissertation, (UC Davis, 2021), pp. 464–473.

[143] Quoted from M. Nureddin Özel, 'Ambassadors, Spies, Captives, Merchants, and Travellers: Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736–1747', MA Thesis, (İstanbul Şehir University, 2018), p. 292.

[144] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, p. 58.

Hendustān. Fighting Dāghestānian guerrillas proved deleterious to Nāder's treasury, and each successful ambush against his troops eroded his aura of invincibility. By 1742, Nāder was in the process of settling for the nominal submission of the main Dāghestānian chieftains in order to extricate himself and save face. It was during this time that he began preparing pretexts for an invasion of the Ottoman empire, where he hoped to gain access to prosperous lands and to recover his military reputation by fighting set-piece battles.

Nāder's war with the Ottomans in 1743 differed from his wars in Hendustān and Turān in that he did not utilise a discourse of vengeful conquest. Instead, Nāder struck a relatively conciliatory tone, beseeching the Ottoman sultan, Maḥmud I (r. 1730–1754), to formally accept the Ja'fari creed as the fifth school of Sunnism for the sake of Islamic unity. Given that over a third of the imperial army in 1742 were Sunni non-Iranians,[145] and that the target of invasion—Ottoman ʿErāq—was a mostly Shi'i region under the sovereignty of a Sunni caliph, the Nāderid state had to negotiate a complex array of identities among its constituencies. As it waged war against the caliph, the Nāderid state used Ja'farism as its main discourse to retain legitimacy in the eyes of its Sunni and Shi'i subjects.

Ja'farism and the notion of Iranian territorial integrity were central to legitimating the invasion of the Ottoman empire and the push towards the Euphrates River. Prior to his invasion, Nāder had Esterābādi draft two letters to be sent to the Porte in 1742. The first demanded the Ottomans despatch two of their senior ulema to Iran to discuss the legitimacy of the Ja'fari creed and to finally settle the issue for the sake of peace within the Islamic world.[146] The Ottomans, having grown in confidence after defeating the Hapsburg-Russian alliance in the war of 1735–1739 and seeing Nāder's invasion of Dāghestān flounder, struck a defiant tone.[147] Maḥmud refused to send any ulema, and so Nāder began to lay the ideological foundations for an invasion of the Ottoman empire. Esterābādi wrote a second letter to the sultan, outlining a quadripartite vision of the Islamic world formed of the realms of Iran, Rum, Turān, and Hendustān, 'and from these four, Iran was ruled by Turkmenid sultans, as is attested to in the histories which record the boundaries (*ḥudud o sonur*) between Emir Timur and your exalted (Ottoman) forbears'.[148] The boundaries Esterābādi was

[145] Axworthy, 'Army of Nader', pp. 639–640; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 887–888.

[146] Saçmali, 'Sunni-Shiite', pp. 486–489.

[147] For the Ottomans' European war see Virginia Aksan, *Ottoman Wars: An Empire Besieged 1700–1870*, (New York, 2007), pp. 83–128.

[148] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 312.

referring to were those determined by the Euphrates River. This is evident from the assertion that 'when the sultanship of Iran fell to the Ṣafavids, Balkh was lost to the Uzbek sultans, Kābol was lost to the sultans of Hend, and Arab ʿErāq, Diārbakr, and parts of Āẕarbāijān were lost to the Ottoman state'.[149] The threat was that Nāder would reclaim the lands east of the Euphrates just as he had all the other lost dominions.

In Turān and Hendustān, Nāder had utilised his Turkmenid discourse to express a shāhanshāhic authority over the shāhs of those realms, but in 1743, he repurposed his Turkmenid-Timurid lineage for a 'hereditary' (*mowruṡi*) claim to Iran-Realm's lost dominions to the west. Even though the Turkmenid ideology was used to advance territorial claims against the Ottoman sultan, Nāder did not, at this early stage of the campaign, attempt to situate the sultan in an inferior position to himself. In other words, the Ottoman sultan was not lowered to a lesser Turkmenid shāh, a junior brother, who owed homage to Nāder as the shāhanshāhic elder of the clan. Nāder continued to refer to his Ottoman counterpart as the 'caliph of Islam', presenting himself as at least religiously supplicant to Maḥmud. The authority, and therefore the onus, to establish an Islamic peace by recognising Ja'farism was with Maḥmud.[150] Nāder presented himself as willing to compromise, forgiving the dominions of Diārbakr and Arab ʿErāq as 'there would be no need for (retaking) these in a world of Islamic unity'.[151] Knowing full well that Sultan Maḥmud would not accede to his demands on Ja'farism, Nāder was placing responsibility for the coming war on Ottoman shoulders.[152] Once the Ottoman's rejection of Islamic unity was publicised, Nāder would be left with no choice but 'to march into your land—in a most brotherly manner—to establish a thorough dialogue between us'.[153] Given his record of previous conquests, he had every intention of annexing Ottoman lands up to the Euphrates and of marching on Istanbul to bestow a crown on Maḥmud's head, thereby completing his shāhanshāhic dominion over the Islamic world as the elder of all Turkmenid dynasts. His opening ideological manoeuvres, however, were designed to show him as conciliatory, drawn into conflict by the Ottomans' obstinacy against his own peaceful inclinations.

---

[149] Ibid.

[150] Saçmali, 'Sunni-Shiite', pp. 486–489.

[151] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 313.

[152] I differ with my colleague Saçmali, 'Sunni-Shiite', p. 489 who argues that 'it would be fair to assume that Nāder would have concluded peace' if his demands were met. Nāder knew they wouldn't be and he counted on an Ottoman rejection to press forward with a new conquest.

[153] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 314.

In 1743, Nāder led the largest army he ever commanded into Arab ʿErāq.[154] The imperial army met little resistance in the field as the Ottomans withdrew behind city walls. While Muṣel, Baghdad, and Baṣreh held out, most other cities, including the Shi'i shrine cities of Najaf and Karbalā in the south, fell without much resistance. Nāder focused on the siege of Muṣel, which put up stiff resistance. It was at this juncture that troublesome news arrived from Iran. Rebellions had broken out all across the realm, from Āẕarbāijān and Esterābād in the north, to Fārs and the Persian Gulf in the south (see subsequent chapter on these rebellions).[155] What promised to be Nāder's most glorious conquest was halted not long after it had commenced, not so much due to Ottoman actions as developments in Iran. As he began siphoning off contingents of his army to quell the rebellions back home, Nāder sought to secure peace with the Ottomans. He marched to Najaf, determined to salvage a religio-political victory out of his campaign by organising a council on Ja'farism attended by ulema from across his empire.

Islam and empire at the council of Najaf

For Nāder's ideological purposes, Najaf proved an ideal location to outline his discourses on both Ja'farism and Iranian identity. Sitting on the banks of the Euphrates, Najaf held immense symbolic value. An early modern ruler's travels through his realm and his sojourns in symbolic locations constituted an important ritual of knitting disparate territories under his imperial authority.[156] By holding a grand council at Najaf, Nāder was probably signalling his irredentist triumph in having reached the western frontier of Iran-Realm. Just as importantly, Najaf was home to the shrine of ʿAli, allowing Nāder to give his religious discourse both Sunni and Shi'i inflections for his two Muslim constituencies; ʿAli was the fourth and last of the Rāshedun Caliphs revered by Sunnis, just as he was the first of the Twelve Imams revered by the Shi'a. Imperial courts in the early modern Turco-Persianate world organised religious debates attended by learned members of various sects, ostensibly to establish the validity of one sect over the other, or more commonly, to achieve a harmonious understanding between them.[157] The achievement of inter-sect harmony was meant to legitimate the imperial order

[154] For an overview see Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 249–254.

[155] The nature of these rebellions and the disintegration of the Nāderid state are explored fully in the subsequent chapter.

[156] Tikhomirov, 'Father of the People', p. 126.

[157] For example, see Audrey Truschke, 'Dangerous Debates: Jain responses to theological challenges at the Mughal court', in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 5, (2015), pp. 1311–1344; Sajjad Rizvi, 'Polemics and Persecution at the Mughal Court: a Shiʿi Debate at the Time of Akbar', paper presented at Aligarh Historians' Society Workshop at Indian History Congress 2015, pp. 1, 12.

and to bind each of the sects to the universal authority of the emperor.[158] At Najaf, Nāder positioned himself between the two Islamic denominations as an imperial unifier, while signalling to each group that he was one of their own. The underlying political purpose was transparent: Given the growing number of Sunni subjects and soldiers under Nāder's authority, an ecumenical consensus by the ulema on the legitimacy of the Ja'fari creed was hoped to diffuse sectarian tensions in the Nāderid empire and to present it as a force for Islamic unity.

The most detailed account of the council of Najaf is that of ʿAbdollāh Suwaidi (1692–1761), a prominent Sunni cleric from Baghdad.[159] He wrote the *Ḥujaj al-Qaṭʿiyya li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya* (Definitive Proofs for the Reconciliation of Islamic Sects) in 1743, the same year he participated at the council.[160] Suwaidi became involved in the council when Nāder requested the Ottoman governor of Baghdad to send a representative for the Ottoman ulema to participate in the council.[161] When Suwaidi reached the imperial camp, he was given an audience with Nāder, who explained the purpose of the council thusly:

> In my empire, the sects of the Turkestānians and the Afghans accuse the Iranians of being heretics (*kuffār*). Verily, heresy is most repugnant, and it is intolerable that sects in my empire accuse one another of heresy. Therefore, I appoint you as my representative to ensure any beliefs and practices which constitute heresy are abandoned, and to bear witness to all [the discussions among] the three sects and their resulting agreement. You are to report back to me.[162]

Nāder presented the council to the Sunni ulema as an opportunity to conclusively root out heresy among the Shi'a. As Suwaidi declared to a fellow Sunni scholar at the council, 'the shāh has commanded the abrogation of all the beliefs and practices of the Iranians which constitute disbelief'.[163]

Suwaidi noted that there were three major groups of ulema at the council: twenty Shi'i ulema from across Iran's dominions; eight Sunnis from Afghanistan; and seven Sunni ulema from

[158] Rizvi, 'Polemics and Prosecution', p. 12.

[159] On the life and works of Suwaidi, see Jaʿfariān, Khežri, and Rafiʿi, 'ʿAbdollāh Suwaidi', pp. 59–61.

[160] Ibid.

[161] Suwaidi, *Ḥujaj*, pp. 6–9.

[162] Ibid, p. 11.

[163] Ibid, p. 12.

Transoxiana (Turān).[164] The Sunni ulema outlined the main practices which they regarded as heretical: the rejection and ritual cursing of the first three caliphs (*sabb o rafż*). The leading Shi'i cleric repeatedly reassured his Sunni counterpart that they had abandoned such practices, to which the latter replied 'then they (Ja'fari Shi'a) are Muslims who bear the same rights and responsibilities as ourselves'.[165] After a consensus had been established, one of Nāder's officials informed the ulema that a proclamation would be drafted to which all were to affix their seals and signatures.[166]

The proclamation was drafted by Esterābādi, who fused the main ideological discourses of the Nāderid state with the notion of Islamic unity supposedly achieved at the council. The proclamation began by acknowledging the legitimacy of the succession by the first three Rāshedun caliphs before ʿAli, followed by the standard Nāderid narrative on history, which viewed the rise of the Ṣafavids as the beginning of seditious discord within the Islamic world.[167] The purpose was to show that the Iranian Shi'a no longer committed *rafż* by rejecting the legitimacy of the first three caliphs before ʿAli. The *sabb o rafż* promulgated by the Ṣafavids was said to have led to the partition of Iran's dominions by foreign invaders and the oppression of its people. Once again, Nāder was heralded as the divinely ordained saviour who 'cast out the darkness from the expanse of Iran'.[168] The Iranians then unanimously elected him as the shāh based on the condition that all heretical Ṣafavid practices would be expunged, all would revert to true Ja'farism (there was no explicit mention of Shi'ism), and peace would be made with the Ottomans.[169]

The proclamation then moved onto the council at Najaf, organised by Nāder 'to put out the fire of sedition among the Muslims'.[170] Three segments follow, each from the perspective of the Iranian, Afghan, then Turānian ulema. The Iranians acknowledged the legitimacy of the Rāshedun caliphs, condemned Ṣafavid *sabb o rafż*, and embraced the Ja'fari creed as the fifth school of Islamic jurisprudence. All three groups of ulema concurred that the Ja'fari creed was a legitimate Islamic school of thought, embracing the 'Iranian creed' (*firqat al-Īrāniyya*)

[164] Ibid, pp. 18–19.

[165] Ibid, pp. 20–21.

[166] Ibid, p. 21.

[167] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 328–329.

[168] Ibid, p. 330.

[169] Ibid, pp. 330–331.

[170] Ibid. p. 333.

as part of Islam.[171] This phrase may have been meant to communicate to Iranian audiences at Najaf that Nāder had won legitimacy for their Shi'i faith from the Sunnis.

The proclamation, distributed across Iran and the empire's vassal territories in Turān and Hendustān,[172] spoke to both Sunni and Shi'i audiences simultaneously. The acknowledgement of the Rāshedun caliphs and condemnation of *sabb o rafż* against them were meant to show Sunni subjects and the Ottoman observers that Iranians were no longer the heretical foe from the Ṣafavid past. At the same time, the reiteration of Nāder as the saviour of Iran and of the Iranians was mostly meant for internal audiences. The proclamation tried to bind the collective self to Ja'farism by referring to it as the 'Iranian creed'. Many Sunnis came away thinking of the council as a victory over Shi'i heresy. Nāder may have encouraged this. When Suwaidi was granted an audience after the council, he told Nāder that he hoped all Iranians would soon convert to Sunnism. Apparently, Nāder replied 'inshallah, they will convert gradually'.[173] Kashmiri, understood the result of the council as 'the triumph of the Sunni ulema over the Shi'a'.[174] Many Uzbeks in Nāderid service shared Kashmiri's view of the council.[175] Even though nothing in the proclamation explicitly states so, Nāder encouraged the notion among his Sunni audiences that he was championing their cause, hoping to cement the legitimacy of his empire in the minds of his considerable Sunni constituency.

Conversely, the council of Najaf, and more broadly, Nāder's Ottoman campaign of 1743, were explained as struggles for Shi'i recognition by many Iranians. Marvi wrote that Nāder's Ottoman war was meant to secure Iranians the right to make the Hajj pilgrimage without molestation or taxation on the way, for 'a *rokn* [at the Ka'ba] to be shared with the Twelver ulema', and for the Shi'a to be permitted to pray according to their custom.[176] Kandulehi's *Jangnāmeh* struck a more militant tone, with Nāder declaring his intention to fight the Ottoman sultan all the way to Mecca 'to finally see whether the Beyt ol-Ḥarām (the mosque surrounding the Ka'ba) ٭ has an Iranian prayer-place (*qeblehgāh-e Irāni*) ٭ so that I may

[171] Ibid, p. 340. The proclamation was in Persian, but the concluding paragraph was in Arabic to emphasise the religious sanctity of the agreement.

[172] Kashmir, *Bayān*, p. 112; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 980.

[173] Suwaidi, *Ḥujaj*, p. 25.

[174] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 112.

[175] Pickett, 'Nadir Shah, pp. 491–510; see my upcoming article 'Imperial Legacy of Nāder' in *Iran*.

[176] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 886.

clarify ⁖ whether we have a *rokn* or not'.[177] For Kandulehi, then, Nāder was taking the fight for Shi'ism into the heart of Islam by invading the Ottoman empire. Nāder's court poets, Ṭusi and Nashʾeh, encouraged a militant Shi'i understanding of events. Ṭusi likened Nāder's campaign to ʿAli's famous battle of Khyber. ʿAli was described as the 'righteous successor (*vaṣi*)' and 'custodian (*vali*)' to the Prophet's legacy, implicitly committing *rafż* by rejecting the legitimacy of the first three Rāshedun Caliphs who succeeded the Prophet.[178] Nashʾeh was more subtle, likening Nāder's successful march upon Najaf to ʿAli's victory over Moʿāvieh at the battle of Ṣeffin (657).[179] Moʿāvieh, the founder of the Umayyad caliphate, and his son Yazid, were reviled in Shi'i historical memory as the archetypal enemies of the Imams.[180] By evoking the battle of Ṣeffin, Nashʾeh infused Nāder with the aura of an ʿAlid Shi'i warrior, while casting the Ottomans as contemporary iterations of the Umayyads. From the pro-Nāderid Iranian perspective, then, the invasion of Ottoman ʿErāq and the council of Najaf were part of Nāder's continued struggles as a fellow Shi'i for Islamic unity despite the divisive malice of the Sunni Ottomans.

Nāder sought to reconcile discourses on Iranian identity, universal sovereignty, and Ja'farism by ordering a monumental inscription at the ʿAlid shrine in Najaf. He had the dome of the shrine encased in red gold, with the inscription made on the shrine's façade. Rather than Arabic, the inscription was in Turkish, hinting at a militarised display of Nāder's ʿAlid and universal sovereignty. It repeatedly referred to Nāder as the shāhanshāh and the crown-bestower of realms. While the Shi'a would have recognised the ʿAlid connotation as Nāder's bond to the First Imam, the inscription made sure to allow Sunnis to project their religious identity onto Nāder too. It did this by referring to ʿAli as the fourth of the Rāshedun caliphs. For example, the inscription declared that 'the star that holds the firmaments of caliphal authority in its luminosity ⁖ hangs as the fourth wheel (sunlight sky) in the heart of the land and the age'.[181] The righteousness of the four Rāshedun caliphs was encoded in another poem which was composed in Arabic and inscribed on the base of the minaret adjacent to the mausoleum of Ardabili. It marked the date of the renovations at the ʿAlid shrine by

[177] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 450, vv. 2665–2666.

[178] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, pp. 205, 213, vv. 4805, 5008–5009.

[179] Nashʾeh, *Divān*, fol. 8v, composed in 1156/1743.

[180] Momen, *Introduction*, pp. 23–86.

[181] Transcript of the poem can be found in Qoddusi, *Nādernāmeh*, pp. 474–476.

proclaiming that 'the muezzin of history stood ⁂ and repeated four times Allāhu Akbar'.[182] Of course, the abjad numerals corresponding to the letters of the phrase 'Allāh Akbar' add up to 289, and multiplying by four gives 1156 (1743), the date of the inscription.

For Iranians, the renovation of the shrine was to fuse Nāderid and ʿAlid authority from a Shi'i and Qezelbāsh perspective. In an ode composed to celebrate the renovations and the inscription, Nadim claimed that 'the shāhanshāh who possesses honour and grandeur ⁂ is but the sincere disciple of the shāh of Najaf'. The connection was given an Iranian-Qezelbāsh inflection when Nadim described how the 'Khosrow of Iran' was 'the great shāh and crown-bestower ⁂ this sovereign has turned the dome red/golden' (where Nadim plays on the word *qizil*/*qızıl*).[183] Renovating the first Imam's shrine by encasing its dome with red gold and affirming a Qezelbāsh-Iranian identity were made contiguous.[184] Nāder wanted his Iranian subjects to know that the abandonment of sectarian enmity with Sunnis did not entail being any less Iranian, or Shi'i, than before. Perhaps this is why the proclamation at Najaf referred to Ja'farism as the 'Iranian creed' (*firqat al-Īrāniyya*).[185]

Whether Shi'i or Sunni, one discourse which was meant for both audiences was the universal sovereignty of Nāder. The unity of Islam, in this context, was inextricably linked to the universality of Nāder' imperium. As Suwaidi recalled form his last conversation with Nāder, the conqueror told him: 'my threshold represents the unification of the four great sultanates, those of Iran, Turkestān, Hend, and the Afghan (*al-Afghān*). By the grace of God, I am the overlord of Islam'.[186] Given the need for peace with the Ottomans, the fourth realm was revised from Rum into that of the Afghans'. Nonetheless, the idea of being the imperial ruler of a quadripartite Islamic world as a whole was retained. Despite the failure to conquer Rum, Nāder emphasised his universal sovereignty in the Islamic world by pointing to his continued imperial authority over Hendustān and Turān. In the proclamation of Najaf, Nāder was introduced as the 'illuminator of the Turkmenid dynasty… and crown-bestower of the dominions of Hend and Turān'.[187] The stress on Nāder's imperial grandeur might have been intended to project strength to the Ottomans and convince them to negotiate a peace.

---

[182] The Arabic original is *wa qām muʾadhdhin al-tārīkh fīh ⁂ yukarrir ʾarbaʿan Allāhu Akbar*.

[183] Nadim's ode was recorded in Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 928–929.

[184] Recall that Qezelbāsh was Turkish for red-cap.

[185] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 340.

[186] Suwaidi, *Ḥujaj*, p. 25.

[187] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, p. 330.

As Nāder was attempting to end his Ottoman campaign with a new peace treaty, he began revising his ideological stance. Iranian interests were no longer considered to be in retaking all Ottoman-controlled territories east of the Euphrates. In a conversation with an Ottoman peace delegate, Nāder claimed he sought peace with his 'elder brother' to 'guard the status and honour of the Iranian state (*Irān döwleti*)'.[188] Peace, not conquest, was to serve Iran. the ideology on universal sovereignty was also revised. The reference to the sultan as his 'elder brother' was in sharp contrast to Nāder's previous rhetoric in Hendustān and Turān where he had portrayed himself as the elder brother to the Mughal and Turānian rulers. It seems that for the sake of ending the war post-haste, Nāder was willing to show ideological flexibility regarding his role as the singular universal ruler of the Islamic world. Even though Nāder did not abandon his claim to universal authority over the Islamic world (see above), Nāder was careful not to directly challenge the sovereignty of his Ottoman counterpart in a way that could compromise any peace negotiations. At the Friday prayer organised in the Kufa Mosque, Nāder's name was read after that of the Ottoman sultan, who was mentioned as the 'elder brother' to Nāder.[189] The pronouncement of the ruler's name at Friday prayer was one of the key markers of sovereignty in Islamicate society, and by ceding the precedence to his Ottoman counterpart, Nāder was acknowledging an inferior position to him in an act of appeasement. These gestures were meant to secure peace with the Ottomans as soon as possible, giving Nāder room to deal with the numerous rebellions within Iran. His ideology was readjusted to his new needs.

Nāder's appeasement did little to push the Ottomans towards a peace settlement. At the end of 1743, the Ottomans thought, quite correctly, that they had caught Nāder on the backfoot. They lent aid to rebellions in Āẕarbāijān and prepared for an army to take the field against Nāder while he was plagued with rebellion in Iran's interior. The Ottoman imperial army was ready to invade Iran in 1745. It had hardly crossed the frontier before Nāder destroyed it in a battle in Armenia, while his son Naṣrollāh destroyed another Ottoman column in Arab ʿErāq. Bloodied, the Ottomans resolved to return to peace negotiations with Nāder, made all the easier by the fact that the latter had waved his demands for the recognition of the Ja'fari creed and a *rokn* at the Ka'ba. Nāder's focus had shifted from pursuing conquests abroad to dealing with the growing insurrections within Iran.

[188] Naẓif, 'Sefāratnāmeh', p. 188.

[189] Saçmali, 'Sunni-Shiite', p. 499.

Conclusion

The expansion of imperial power beyond Iran needed to be legitimated with new ideological discourses. For internal audiences, Nāder drew on Turco-Mongol traditions to place an emphasis on imperial vengeance against foreign non-Iranians lands. Irredentist notions of reaching the Oxus, the Indus, and the Euphrates were important elements for justifying the new wars to internal audiences. To his new subjects and vassals in Hendustān and Turān, Nāder presented himself as the new ṣāḥebqerān, heir to Timur's legacy of millenarian sovereignty over the world. Given his lowly birth, Nāder relied on a novel ideological construction to articulate his nascent dynasty's supremacy over Turco-Persianate dynasties which had reigned for centuries. He envisioned himself as the elder of a Turkmenid dynastic clan whose branches ruled over the four major realms of the Islamic world: Iran, Turān, Rum, and Hendustān. The Chinggisid and Timurid lineages which respectively reigned over Turān and Hendustān were both made junior brothers to Nāder. As shāhs, they were made to acknowledge the shāhanshāhic authority of Nāder, paying him tribute as his vassals.

The ideological foundation of Nāder's universal empire facilitated his extraction of resources from the vassals that he acquired in conquered territories. These imperial conquests of non-Iranian lands were not followed by the establishment of direct administration, but by the forging of tributary relations which bound Nāder to his vassals as shāhanshāhic crown-bestower. Thus, Nāder retained local rulers in their previous positions in exchange for their payment of tribute, either in men, money, or material. The central treasury was enriched by Hendustān, while the imperial army drew heavily on Turānian manpower.

The aborted attempt to conquer the Ottomans in 1743 saw Nāder integrate several discourses on Iranian identity and irredentism with universal sovereignty. The campaign against the Ottoman empire was not merely another imperial conquest to expand Iran's frontiers and cement Nāder's reputation as a universal sovereign. The campaign was used by Nāder as a forum for reconciling sectarian tensions by legitimating the Ja'fari creed in the eyes of both Shi'a and Sunnis. The council of Najaf was presented as an imperial gathering of ulema from across the Islamic world, ostensibly to discuss the legitimacy of the Ja'fari proposal and find a way to establish Islamic (read: Nāderid) unity. The resulting treaty of Najaf was meant to display the reconciliation of all Islamic creeds under Nāder's universal imperium. Concurrent with the imperial army's sojourn at Najaf, Iran was swept with rebellions from north to south, requiring Nāder to terminate his conquest of Ottoman ʿErāq to focus on the rapidly destabilising situation back home. In an effort to appease the Ottomans and hastily conclude a

peace, Nāder compromised on some of his ideological goals such as reaching the Euphrates frontier and becoming the singular universal ruler of the Islamic world to whom even the Ottoman sultan had to pay homage.

Chapter Six
Nāder as the Enemy of Iran and a Traitor to the Iranians

In the 1740s, a new ideological discourse on Iranian identity emerged which challenged the official narrative of the state by presenting Nāder as a traitor to the Iranians. Rather than the saviour and exemplar of the collective self, Nāder was increasingly viewed by many of Iran's elites as using non-Iranian Sunnis, particularly Afghans and Uzbeks, to oppress his own people. The growing anti-Nāderid discourse among the elites reflected their disempowerment under Nāder's reforms. The centralisation of tax revenues, removal of tax exemptions, increase in tax rates, and wide-spread expropriation of appanages had led to the unprecedented curtailment of the Iranian elites' political and economic powers. Commanders saw their *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s expropriated and had to rely on salaries paid by the treasury. Likewise, their soldiers looked not to their commanders but to the treasury for remuneration. The dependence and loyalty of the soldiery was transferred from local commanders to the centre. Non-military elites suffered similarly, as provincial governors and revenue officers in Iran's dominions were severed from local revenues. They facilitated revenue collections by the centre, but no longer had any stake in the revenue streams as they received fixed salaries for their bureaucratic services. Those who reverted to their old Ṣafavid habits of skimming from collections, found their estates expropriated, their eyes gouged out, or worse. The Shi'i ecclesiastic elites found that many of their fiscal privileges, and the wealthy endowments placed under their custodianships, did not carry over from the Ṣafavid era. The Nāderid state was continuously growing in economic and political power, yet most of Iran's elites did not see this Nāderid ascendancy translate into greater political and economic power for themselves. Compared to the Ṣafavid period, they had a much smaller share of the realm's administrative entitlements and fiscal resources.

Iran's elites were far from passive objects which the imperial centre could act upon without impunity. For centuries, they had resisted centralisation under successive empires. This chapter will examine how the elites challenged the Nāderid state in a series of rebellions in the 1740s, eventually leading to its disintegration. It will demonstrate that the ideological discourse on Iranian identity was utilised to serve the interests of the elites against the

centralising encroachment of the Nāderid state. By portraying Nāder as an ally of Iran's historic enemies, the elites justified and fuelled the rebellions which brought about the state's collapse in 1747.

The chapter offers a brief chronological overview of the rising tensions within the Nāderid state as numerous rebellions in the mid-1740s sowed instability and chaos throughout Iran, ending in the demise of Nāder and his empire. The first section analyses the tensions between Nāder and his son, Reżā-Qoli, arguing that the latter was supported by some among the Iranian officer class. There were indications that these officers were dissatisfied with Nāder's distribution of the war spoils and tribute gained in the conquests of Hendustān and Turān. As a result, some commanders conspired, unsuccessfully, to assassinate Nāder and replace him with Reżā-Qoli. The chapter then moves onto explore the growing discontent among Iranians more broadly, demonstrating that non-military elites were also beginning to question the legitimacy of the Nāderid state. They attacked the ideological foundation of the state by portraying Nāder as acting against Iranian interests with the aid of foreign enemies, mostly Afghans and Uzbeks. Nāder was cast as a traitor to his fellow Iranian Shi'a, upon whom he had unleashed his foreign Sunni menace. The state's non-sectarian discourse on Iranian identity, then, was contradicted by the elites who used the significant presence of non-Iranians in the imperial army to portray the state as serving the interests of the foreign enemy. By implication, it was a collective duty to overthrow the Nāderid state.

The latter half of the chapter examines some of the administrative and fiscal dimensions of the state's collapse. I argue that the dissatisfaction of the elites with Nāder's centralising policies was evident in their opposition to the centrally determined taxes (*abvāb*). Furthermore, the elites' rebellions against the *abvāb* debilitated the state's revenue collection by displacing large sectors of the tax base. The fiscal administration passed on the tax burden of those who fled or where otherwise removed from their tax jurisdictions onto those who remained, causing a greater fiscal burden than was originally intended. That fiscal burden would, in turn, pressure the remaining taxpayers to take flight or to defy the collectors, exacerbating the empire's turmoil while depriving it of revenues. Thus, the chapter will demonstrate a mutually reinforcing relationship between political instability and fiscal burden, which hastened the Nāderid state's demise.

Chronological overview of resistance and rebellion against the Nāderid state

During Nāder's conquest of Hendustān, his son, Reżā-Qoli, had acted as regent from 1738 to 1740, but he had overstepped his mandate by raising new armies and launching a war against the Khānate of Bokhārā. Upon Nāder's return in June 1740, Reżā-Qoli and his retainers were sidelined. The subsequent year, when Nāder was passing through the forests of Māzandarān on his way to Dāghestān, he survived an assassination attempt. The bullet fired by the assassin grazed Nāder's thumb and killed his horse. When the assassin was captured, he confessed that he had been acting on orders from Reżā-Qoli and several other senior Iranian officers. Reżā-Qoli was blinded while most of his co-conspirators were executed. This represented the first major rift between Nāder and the Iranian military elites during his reign.[1]

The failed assassination attempt marked the beginning of several setbacks for Nāder in the 1740s. The failure to subdue Dāghestān was widely perceived as a military defeat. For early modern imperial states in the Turco-Persianate world, military defeat caused not just a loss of legitimacy but a loss of 'the state's coercive power'.[2] With Nāder's aura of invincibility fading, discontented elites across Iran looked for the opportune moment to rebel. In 1743, as Nāder focused his armies for the invasion of the Ottoman empire, rebellions broke out all across the realm. In North Āẕarbāijān, Sām Mirzā, a Ṣafavid pretender, rallied support for the overthrow of the Nāderid dynasty. He received support from the Ottoman empire as he began raiding Āẕarbāijān alongside his Dāghestānian allies. The Donboli clan, residing in Āẕarbāijān's Khuy o Salmās, capitalised on the instability in the region to break away from Nāderid authority. In Esterābād, the Qājār clan allied with the Steppe Turkmen, taking over large parts of the Caspian coast. In Fārs and the Persian Gulf, the governor, Taqi Khān led the nobles of the region in the largest rebellion against Nāder since his coronation. The tumult gripping Iran convinced Nāder to cut short his campaign in Ottoman ʿErāq as he began siphoning off contingents of the imperial army to suppress the rebellions. After convening the council of Najaf and sending fresh peace proposals to Istanbul, Nāder returned to Iran in January 1744, though he remained near the western frontier in anticipation of an Ottoman offensive.

By the Summer of 1744, all the rebellions in Iran had been crushed, permitting Nāder to concentrate on the looming Ottoman invasion. All the main Ottoman armies were routed in

[1] This section summarises the events relating to the growing resentments of Iran's elites against the Nāderid state between 1740 to 1747. See Lockhart, *Nadir*, pp. 163–266; Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 211–286.

[2] Karateke, 'Legitimising the Ottoman', p. 47–49.

1745, leading to the resumption of peace negotiations. The Porte gave up on its ambitions for expanding into Nāderid territories, while Nāder, wary of new rebellions in Iran, abandoned his quest to reach the Euphrates by annexing Ottoman territories. The peace negotiations were expedited by the fact that Nāder no longer demanded the Ottoman caliph to acknowledge the legitimacy of Ja'farism. Given that Nāder had forsaken expanding into Ottoman lands, and that the Nāderid empire's Sunni ulema had ratified the treaty at Najaf, there was no longer a pressing need for the caliph's approval of Ja'farism as a legitimate school of Islamic jurisprudence. Nāder was focused on stabilising his hold on his existing possessions, particularly in Iran itself.

Neither Nāder's victory over the Ottomans nor the brutal suppression of past rebellions were sufficient to prevent Iran's nobles from further revolts. In 1746, the local Nāderid commander joined the Bakhtiari clan in Ajam ʿErāq to call for Nāder's overthrow. They were defeated, but a new rebellion took place that same year in Sistān, where the military governor, Fatḥʿali Khān, claimed to re-establish the Kayānid dynasty in the vein of Malek-Maḥmud. Nāder marched east in 1747 to deal with the deteriorating situation there. Nāder tasked his nephew ʿAli-Qoli, and his trusted general and governor of Kābol, Jalāyer Khān, with the subjugation of Sistān. But ʿAli-Qoli and Jalāyer Khān turned against Nāder. ʿAli-Qoli was declared the new shāh. They marched on Nāder's embattled army in Khorāsān. The two armies never made contact. On 20 June 1747, several members of the imperial guard broke into Nāder's camp and killed him. His severed head was sent to ʿAli-Qoli as a sign of submission to his sovereignty. The already fragmented empire was fought over by dozens of successors. The Nāderid household almost wiped itself out through infighting over the crown and none succeeded in establishing control over Iran.

Nāder as the enemy of the Iranians

Discontent in the Iranian military

The Nāderid state trumpeted how its imperial conquests were in service to Iranian interests, but many among the military elites were not convinced. In Hendustān, Esterābādi extolled the munificence of his master in his chronicle, recording that the soldiers and retainers were each given the equivalent of their annual pay while officers and officials received additional gifts in accordance with their rank.[3] Given the monumental riches gained by the Nāderid treasury in Delhi, however, not everyone was satiated. Hanway heard from Nāder's men that prior to

[3] Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, pp. 333–334.

crossing the Indus back into Iran, it was declared by the camp heralds that all jewels and valuables which the soldiers had acquired through illicit means, meaning plunder, had to be surrendered to the treasury.[4] Incensed that they were forced to surrender the fruits of such a perilous expedition, many threw their plunder into the Indus rather than hand it to Nāder's treasurers. When officers were found hiding undeclared valuables, they were executed.[5] This incident is confirmed by several other sources such as Kashmiri, Mokhleṣ, and the VOC staff stationed in Iran.[6] The officers and soldiers throwing gems and diamonds into the Indus were almost certain to have been enraged by the suggestion that the conquest had served Iranian interests.

Many officers found that the conquest of Turān brought them even less gain than that of Hendustān. Marvi, for example, was embittered by Nāder's decree granting amnesty to the inhabitants of Khʷārazm, viewing it as a decree 'for the soldiery to persist in their desolation (*bichāregi*)'.[7] Kashmiri, who was also present in the Turānian theatre, observed that 'some of the generals in the Iranian army regarded these conquests as the fruit of their courage and gave voice to their haughty objections'.[8] In defiance of the Nāderid decree, a group of officers and men sought to despoil one of Khʷārazm's main fortress cities, calling out 'God-given (*Allāh-dād*)' to instigate a general plunder.[9] The looting had hardly began when Nāder's military police (*nasaqchi*) reimposed order and arrested the offending officers. Kashmiri counted thirty-five officers, from senior generals to junior lieutenants, as having been executed.[10] Marvi's estimate differed slightly, at some thirty to forty mid-ranking officers and 'a number' of senior generals.[11] Some may have expected Nāder to distribute gifts and robes among the men once the army had returned to Khorāsān. If so, they were disappointed. Many more officers were put to death for disobedience, and 'whatever was gathered from Iran's coffers (filled with tax revenues) and the (tribute from) other realms was all sent to Kalāt', Nāder's fortress which housed the central treasury.[12] It is plausible that

[4] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. IV, p. 201.

[5] Ibid, pp. 201–202.

[6] See Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 319–320, n. 9.

[7] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 815.

[8] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 90.

[9] Ibid, pp. 90–91; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 815.

[10] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 91.

[11] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 815.

[12] Ibid, pp. 822, 827.

many Iranian officers did not see their fortunes as aligned with the Nāderid state. On the contrary, they probably saw Nāder as having robbed them of the fruits of their conquests in Hendustān and Turān.

The disappointments of the imperial campaigns may have bred enough resentment among some Iranian officers for them to conspire against Nāder. The first effective plot to remove Nāder was seemingly hatched by his own son, Reżā-Qoli, supported by several senior Iranian officers and officials who had acted as advisors during his regency (1738–1740). Similar to many officers, Reżā-Qoli had cause to resent the shāh. In Nāder's absence, Reżā-Qoli had drawn on the central treasury to raise a new army of 24,000 men, with which he invaded the Bokhāran Khānate in 1737 and dealt the Uzbeks a defeat at the battle of Qarshi.[13] He was chastised for his military adventurism by Nāder, who ordered him to disengage from the Uzbeks and return to Iran. When Nāder returned from Hendustān in 1740, he reviewed Reżā-Qoli's men. Marvi, who was an eyewitness to the review, wrote that Nāder disbanded all of Reżā-Qoli's military formations and distributed all of the men and material among the imperial army.[14] Apparently, Nāder had told his son that 'since the people of Iran cannot tolerate two orders, I have placed (our two armies) under one structure'.[15] There could be only one *Nāder-e Irān*, and he was evidently concerned by Reżā-Qoli's creation of an autonomous command, seeing it as a threat to his centralised model of governance. The young prince did not take his fall from grace amicably. He apparently made his anger well-known throughout the imperial camp and defied several of Nāder's orders. For example, he refused to marry the Turānian princess Nāder had picked out for him.[16]

It is possible that Reżā-Qoli was already conspiring with senior Iranian officers to have Nāder assassinated. Nāder may have suspected something, as he expropriated Reżā-Qoli's estate once the imperial army returned to Khorāsān from Turān.[17] He also had a number of Reżā-Qoli's closest advisors executed.[18] On 15 May 1741, as Nāder was passing through the forests of Māzandarān on his way to Dāghestān, an assassin fired a shot, lightly wounding

[13] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 634.

[14] Ibid, p. 785.

[15] Ibid, p. 786.

[16] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 64; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 785, 800. The princess in question was Shāh Abulfeyż Khān's daughter.

[17] Kashmiri, *Bayān*, pp. 96–97.

[18] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 822.

Nāder.[19] Kashmiri claimed that the senior commanders tried to frame two Afghan musketeers, perhaps to cover their or their co-conspirators' tracks, but Nāder announced that he had seen the assassin's face and that no one could fool him by scapegoating any innocents.[20] The failure to immediately apprehend the assassin, and the later scapegoating of two Afghans, suggest that there was growing distrust between some of his Iranian officers and their sovereign.

Based on Nāder's description, the imperial guards tracked down the assassin, a former retainer of Reżā-Qoli called Nik-Qadam, a few months later.[21] Having confirmed his identity, Nāder interrogated him on the conspirators behind the assassination. Nik-Qadam revealed that Reżā-Qoli and four of his close confidants had asked him whether he was capable of assassinating the shāhanshāh. All the conspirators were Iranian officers from Khorāsān: two were fellow Afshārs, one was a Qājār, and the other was a Marvian who Nāder had already executed after his fallout with Reżā-Qoli in 1740.[22] While many of the conspirators were beheaded, Nāder ordered Reżā-Qoli's eyes to be gouged out, removing him from the succession. One of the court officials observed that upon seeing his son's eyes on a platter, Nāder was stricken with grief, which quickly gave way to a murderous rage leading to the execution of many other Iranian officers who had served Reżā-Qoli during his regency.[23] Despite Nāder having successfully uncovered the men behind the attempt on his life, the affair revealed that a significant number among the Iranian military elites had become alienated from their sovereign and were conspiring to destroy him.

The ideological challenge to the *Nāder-e Irān*

Many nobles began to view Nāder as having turned away from his fellow Iranians, in collusion with his non-Iranian followers. Āṣef, drawing on an oral account by one of Nāder's court retainers, wrote that 'eventually, [Nāder] withdrew his affection from the Qezelbāsh, and placed the Afghans above them… he strove to destroy the lives and property of the people through his oppressive tax assessments (*abvāb*)'.[24] Marvi, who was formerly a loyal

[19] Axworthy, *Sword*, p. 231.

[20] Kashmir, *Bayān*, pp. 108–109.

[21] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 835; Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 29.

[22] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 836; Kashmiri, *Bayān*, p. 109, claims that it the Qājār in question was not Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Khān, but his son, ʿAbdollāh Beyg; Anon. 'Aḥvāl', pp. 29–30.

[23] Anon., 'Aḥvāl', p. 30; see also Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, p. 837.

[24] Āṣef, Rostam, pp. 221–222; for Āṣef's sources see Abul-Ḥasan Fayyāẓ Anush, 'Padideh-ye Rostam ol-Tavārikh', in *Taḥqiqāt-e Tārikh-e Ejtemāʿi*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2011), p. 100.

Nāderid, wrote that his sovereign 'had withdrawn his grace from Iran's people, burdening them with tax assessments, slaughter, and pillaging'. Consequently, 'all Iranian people have turned their back on the Nāderid state'.[25] In 1744, Hanway recorded his conversation with a Qazvinian merchant regarding the state of the country. The merchant asked Hanway rhetorically 'who restored the Persian empire (Iran) but the Persians (Iranians)? And who assisted the king to conquer India but the Persians? He has now a foreign force and governs us with an army of Tartars (Turānians?)'.[26] What the courtier, the officer, and the merchant had in common was their sense of alienation from the Nāderid state as Iranians. The three accounts reveal that many of the realm's elites saw the collective self as oppressed under Nāder and his foreign horde.

In contrast to Nāder's efforts to diffuse sectarian tensions within his empire, many among the Iranian nobility held onto a Shi'i inflected hostility against non-Iranians. The Nāderid state's rearticulation of Shi'ism into Ja'farism was not successful in changing the contents of Shi'i identity overnight. Many of the sectarian practices and rituals which Nāder officially prohibited such as *sabb o rafż* and *taʿzieh* (commemorating Imam Ḥoseyn's martyrdom) had been 'pivotal to Shi'i communal identity' for centuries.[27] Traditionally, *taʿzieh*s, and the holy month of Moḥarram more broadly, were considered the ideal time to commit *sabb o rafż*.[28] In the early modern era, these sectarian practices were seen not only as affirmations of loyalty to the Shi'i Imams, but also as a means of showing direct opposition to the state.[29] In defiance of Nāder's prohibitions, Marvi observed that most Iranians continued to hold *taʿzieh*s in secret.[30] There is no evidence that the Nāderid state sought to interfere with these secret observances. The political costs of doing so would have been too high. Nāder only took action when Iranians openly engaged in sectarian behaviour in front of his Sunni subjects. For example, in 1739, when some officers and men held a *taʿzieh* outside the gates of Delhi, Nāder had the participants executed.[31] Nonetheless, if Nāder was hoping to slowly cultivate a non-sectarian understanding of Shi'ism among his Iranian subjects, he failed. The following

[25] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 1100, 1189, 1193.

[26] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 156.

[27] Moazzen, *Formation of Religious Landscape*, pp. 98–108.

[28] Ibid, p. 106.

[29] The quote is from ibid, p. 98; Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala*, pp. xii, 12; Hamid Dabbashi, 'Taʿziyeh as Theatre of Protest, in *The Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (2005), 91–99.

[30] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 982.

[31] Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, p. 11; Fraser, *History*, pp. 198–199.

examples demonstrate that Iranians retained their sectarian animosity towards non-Iranians till the very end of the empire.

The retention of the sectarian element in Iranian identity was useful in portraying the Nāderid state as non-Iranian due to its enfranchisement of large numbers of Sunni foreigners. Elites in both civil and military circles questioned the Iranianness of the Nāderid state by pointing to its use of the Sunni other against the Shi'i self. The emphasis on sectarian differences undermined the legitimacy of the state. For example, in his memoirs, Mirzā Moḥammad recalled an incident from 1746, while he was working at the chancellery office in Shirāz. He was pestered by one of his colleagues to provide tax receipts. Momentarily overcome with frustration, Moḥammad cursed the caliph ʿOmar, 'since the tongue of us Shi'a is accustomed to the cursing of the first three caliphs and to their joyous denigration'.[32] Unfortunately for Moḥammad, there were twenty Afghan officers in the chancellery building who overheard him.

> Immediately, shouts of angry protest arose from nearby and I knew I had made a mistake. I acted dumb and asleep, laying my head down on my records and not daring to raise it for half an hour. Praise be to God, for he pulled a veil over the ears and eyes of the Afghans. They did not ascertain who was the source of the offense. Without doubt, if any of that ilk had established me as the source, they would have run me through with a sword, and even if not, Nāder Shāh would have had me put to death as soon as catching word of it.[33]

Later, Moḥammad's colleagues expressed their relief for his narrow escape, telling him it was God's will. Moḥammad claimed that the incident strengthened his faith.[34] The narrative clearly contained two distinct communities, the Sunni Afghan other, and his fellow Shi'i colleagues who were relieved when Moḥammad evaded the Afghans' ire. Crucially, Nāder was identified as being on the opposing side, standing in support of the foreign enemy against the Shi'i self.

For Marvi, the historicised enmity against the Turānians was, in contrast to the official ideology of the state, inflected with anti-Sunnism. The expedition against the Kalmyk Khānate in 1746 was applauded by Marvi as it resulted in the 'liberation of 60,000

[32] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, pp. 24–25.

[33] Ibid, p. 25.

[34] Ibid.

Iranians'—certainly a gross exaggeration—which had been 'sold to the Kazakhs and Kalmyks by the Steppe Turkmen and Uzbeks who preyed on the Muslims based on invalid fatwas'.[35] The implication was that revenge was justified since the Turānians had oppressed Iranians based on sectarian enmity. While Marvi championed the conquest of the Sunni enemies, he lamented their involvement in quelling rebellions in Iran. For example, on the re-subjugation of Shirāz by the Nāderid army in 1744, Marvi wrote that the Afghan and Uzbek contingents 'disregarded the sanctity of the Shāh Cherāq shrine' by attacking those who had taken refuge in its confines.[36] In spite of his admiration for Nāder, Marvi was angered by what he saw as the oppression of his fellow Iranians at the hands of the Sunni other. Marvi thought that Nāder ought to have been 'ashamed to face the people of Iran'.[37] For Mirzā Moḥammad and Marvi, members of Iran's civil and military elites respectively, the legitimacy of the Nāderid state was undermined by its collusion with the Sunni other against the Shi'i self.

It was difficult for some Iranians to welcome their previous enemies as comrades in the imperial army, and the Nāderid state never succeeded in reconciling the tensions between its Iranian and non-Iranian subjects. Marvi and his fellow officers provided an excellent example of lingering tensions. He served in the empire's Central Asian campaigns throughout the 1740s, maintaining a historicised enmity against the Turānians. The Nāderid state's ideological discourse on vengeance during the 1740 conquest of Khʷārazm lingered among the officers serving on that front. There was no post-conquest reconciliation as Nāder had intended. The sense of anti-Turānian animosity only grew after his departure and there was usually a sectarian inflection to that animosity. Rather than just rhetoric, for many Iranian officers the call for vengeance came to justify the most heinous atrocities. Drawing upon his colleagues' accounts of their expedition to the Kalmyk Khānate in 1746, Marvi related what his companions had seen and the atrocities they committed.[38] The expedition's commanding general, Moḥammad-ʿAli Khān, had rounded up the elders of a Kalmyk tribe when he ordered their women and children to be brought over and executed in front of them. The Kalmyks were asked if they knew why such a fate had befallen them. In an apocryphal answer, one Kalmyk said that it was revenge 'for what we had done to you in the era of

[35] Ibid, p. 1147.

[36] Ibid, p. 955.

[37] Ibid, p. 1195. Marvi actually put these words into Nāder's mouth, having him acknowledge his misdeeds against his own people before his demise.

[38] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, p. 1146.

Chinggis Khān and Hulāku'.[39] Apparently when Moḥammad-ʿAli Khān was reminded of the campaigns of Chinggis Khān, he let loose his wrath, ordering even greater massacres.

Marvi transcribed the poem composed by a colleague to celebrate the retribution.[40] It was addressed to Chinggis Khān.

> You raised a boundless army from Turān-Realm ⁎ you invaded the great realm of the Iranians… Lift your head from the dust and look at Turān ⁎ look at how it is in the hands of Iran's valorous men ⁎ Who patrolled, killed, and burnt all they saw ⁎ as they sought vengeance against the realm of the Turānians.[41]

The sense of grievance developed among Marvi's colleagues was historicised as they projected their contemporary identities onto past events and figures, accentuating the desire for avenging the archaic transgressions by Turān. These views bore little relation to the actual past. The Anushteginids who were invaded by the Mongols in the thirteenth century were ironically a Khʷārazmian dynasty and did not view themselves as Iranian. Likewise, Chinggisid-era Mongols would not have identified as Turānians. The anachronistic framing of the past served to legitimate the Iranian enmity with the other as being intrinsic and eternal.

The tensions between Iranians and non-Iranians in the imperial army came to a head in June 1747, leading to the assassination of Nāder. Pierre Bazin, Nāder's French physician who attended him in the last years of his reign, recalled in letters he wrote to his father in 1751 that there was growing antagonism within the imperial camp, with Nāder and his Afghan and Uzbek officers on one side and the Iranians (*les Kizilbash*) on the other. Bazin reported that Nāder called his Afghan generals to a meeting in which he outlined his plans to arrest several Iranian generals on suspicions of plotting his assassination. The Afghans, whom Bazin described as the enemies of the Iranians, were ordered to prepare their men for breaching the Iranian quarters in the camp. Apparently, as the distrust between Nader and his Iranian officers grew in the 1740s, he increasingly came to rely on the Afghan and Uzbek commanders in the imperial army. These non-Iranian contingents saw the preservation of the Nāderid empire and their position within it to be in their interests, pitting them against the Iranians who sought the fall of that order. Spies from Nāder' imperial guard forewarned the

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid. he does not mention the bloodthirsty author by name, just prefacing the verse with *limusavvada* ("it was transcribed" in Arabic).

[41] Ibid, pp. 1146–1147.

Iranian generals of his plans. The generals reacted swiftly, breaking into Nāder's camp and assassinating him with the aid of some among the imperial guards.[42] Bazin saw the Afghans make a valiant attempt to reach Nāder's camp to save him, fighting against superior numbers of Iranian troops, but to no avail. Upon discovering his headless corpse, the Afghans and Uzbek contingents broke away from the camp.[43] Bazin himself narrowly escaped the carnage, fleeing south to Bandar ʿAbbās.[44]

There is an alternative account of Nāder's demise taken from eye-witness testimonies. Four Iranian battalion commanders who fled the imperial camp after Nāder's assassination, recounted the incident to the Ottoman ambassador, Reḥmi Tātār, who recorded their version of events in his diplomatic memorandum (*sefāratnāmeh*) for the Porte.[45] The commanders told Reḥmi that Nāder, knowing the people of Iran would never yield to him and his progeny, 'sought to kill Iranian warriors at every opportunity and to despoil the Iranian peasants with (tax) bills'.[46] They portrayed Nāder as beholden to and directed by the Afghans, even permitting them to sack the holy city of Mashhad.[47] Fearful that the Iranian officers in the army might join ʿAli-Qoli's rebellion, Nāder reportedly conspired to carry out a purge using his loyal Afghan and Uzbek soldiers. The four commanders then claimed that ʿAli-Qoli was in secret correspondence with several generals in the imperial guard, imploring them to act against the shāh. The generals had uncovered Nāder's designs for a purge and decided to pre-empt him. They broke into the harem with forty Iranian guardsmen and beheaded Nāder, avenging the 'Ṣafavid household and the Iranian people'.[48] They then burned the Nāderid chancellery's tax registers 'which contained thousands of gratuitous tax bills'. As the news of the assassination spread around the camp, the Iranian and non-Iranian contingents began to clash. Eventually, the Afghans and Uzbeks disengaged and returned to their homelands, while the imperial guard and some other Iranian units marched to join ʿAli-Qoli.[49]

The core theme in the commanders' account of the empire's downfall was Nāder's betrayal of the Shi'i Iranian self by siding with the Sunni other. This theme was reiterated by

[42] Bazin, *Nāmehhā*, pp. 37–39.

[43] Ibid, pp. 47–48.

[44] Ibid, pp. 48–52.

[45] Riāḥi, 'Moqaddameh bar sefāratnāmeh-ye Reḥmi', pp. 197–204.

[46] Reḥmi Tātār, 'Sefāratnāmeh', pp. 232–233.

[47] Ibid, p. 235.

[48] Ibid, pp. 236–237.

[49] Ibid, p. 237.

countless others. Ṭusi, writing after Nāder's demise, perhaps looking for a new patron, lamented how Nāder despatched Afghans and Uzbeks across the realm to extort Iranians and carry them off into captivity.[50] Kandulehi's chapter, 'The Conceit of Nāder and his Designs on Massacring Iranians', placed a strong emphasis on the sectarian angle, with Nāder promising his Afghan and Uzbek soldiers that he would convert to Sunnism once they had purged all Iranians from the realm.[51] The guardsman who led the assassins into Nāder's tent was said to have acted in ʿAli's name.[52] Other eighteenth-century contemporaries echoed the same sentiments as Ṭusi and Kandulehi.[53] These narratives demonstrated the ideological collapse of the Nāderid state, which had mainly based its legitimacy, as far as internal audiences were concerned, on the notion of preserving the interests of Iran and its people. That core constituency of Iranian elites had come to see the Nāderid state as non-Iranian, acting in the interests of foreign Sunni enemies. Nāder had gone from saviour to turncoat, making the overthrow of his state a collective duty.

The role of fiscal administration in the rebellions

The emergence of an ideological discourse which questioned the Iranianness of the Nāderid state was intimately tied to the material interests of the Iranian elites. The overbearing centralisation and heavy fiscal burden placed on the elites led them to engage in and encourage a discourse which undermined the legitimacy of the Nāderid state. Epic poetry and storytelling were sometimes used by elites to express discontent with centralisation by the imperial court and to articulate a challenge to the state's fiscal policies.[54] For example, the sense of growing fiscal oppression found voice in Kandulehi's *Jangnāmeh*:

> Some were in fear of taxes and the noose ⁘ while the rest were already suffering under the exactions…Collectors extracted the sums written on their tax bills ⁘ striking men with sticks ⁘ Nāder left not a *dināر* in the provinces ⁘ and all was

[50] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh*, p. 224, vv. 5260–5263.

[51] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, pp. 480–485.

[52] Ibid, p. 496, v. 3049.

[53] For example, see Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 1193–1196; Golestāneh, *Mojmal ol-Tavārikh*, pp. 7–16; Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, p. 31; Ḥoseyni, *Majmaʿ ol-Tavārikh*, pp. 81–104; Āz̲ar Bigdeli, *Ātashkadeh*, Vol. II, pp. 467–469.

[54] Dimitri Kastritsis, 'Tales of Viziers and Wine: Interpreting Early Ottoman Narratives of State Centralisation', in *Trajectories of State Formation*, pp. 224–245, and specifically, pp. 249–250.

> taken to the treasury in Kalāt… The whole world was filled with misery and anguish ⁘ as the taxes assessments were sent out to be recouped.[55]

While Ṭusi described Nāder as having

> Raised the levy to such heights ⁘ that each poor widow was billed an *alaf*[56] ⁘ Those whom he spared from the slaughter ⁘ he assailed with hundreds of tax collectors ⁘ They were subjected to extortion ⁘ and made to pay a whole crore in gold and silver.[57]

With characteristic embellishment, Kandulehi and Ṭusi envisioned Nāder as a Żaḥḥāk, the avaricious demon-king in the tradition of the *Shāhnāmeh* epic.[58] In contrast to the official narrative which cast Nāder as possessing Jamshid-like munificence, the two poets described him as a tyrant whose centralised tax system had despoiled Iran and its people.

The polemics, and the scholarship that takes them at face value, would have us believe that Nāder was deliberately engaged in despoiling the realm. Hitherto, historians have argued that that the fiscal troubles which exacerbated the empire's collapse stemmed from Nāder's avarice, who fixed taxes beyond the capacity of his people to satiate his rapacity.[59] However, the Nāderid state, with its rigorous tax assessments, was well aware of the reduced economic capacity of Iran's inhabitants due to decades of war, occupation, and instability. It took meaningful measures to revive the agrarian economy and trade.[60] Especially in the 1730s, it gave temporary tax breaks to those provinces which had suffered more acutely under Afghan rule.[61] The last and most generous of these tax breaks came after Nāder's conquest of Hendustān in the Spring of 1739, when he issued an edict giving all Iranians not living on

---

[55] Kandulehi, *Jangnāmeh*, p. 483, vv. 2950, 2955–2956, 2962.

[56] Each *alaf* was the equivalent of 5,000 *tumān*s.

[57] Ṭusi, *Shāhnāmeh,* p. 224, vv. 5257–5259.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Lockhart, *Nādir*, pp. 199, 276; Axworthy, *Sword*, p. 270; Shaʿbāni, *Tārikh*, Vol. I, pp. 116–117; Tavaḥḥodi, *Nāder*, pp. 815–819; Āsiyeh Izadyār, 'Barresi-ye eqteṣād-e Irān dar dowreh-ye Afshāriyeh', in *Faṣlnāmeh-ye Revāyat-e Tārikh*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2018), pp. 1–12, especially pp. 11–12; Arunova and Ashrafian, *Dowlat*, pp. 298–309 essentially repackages this paradigm in Marxist language, where Nāder is cast as an avaricious feudal lord preying on the hapless peasantry. Indeed, the theme of 'greed' is quite prevalent in discussions on Nāderid fiscal policy. See for example, Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 241; Navāʾi, Nāder, p. 484, n. 1. These views are largely derived from the polemics offered by contemporaries. See for example, Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 1189–1193; Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, pp. 420–424; contemporary European sources such as Hanway, Bazin, the staff of VOC, and of EIC, also offer complimentary views.

[60] Shaʿbāni, *Tārikh*, Vol. I, p. 388; Floor, *Rise*, p. 56; Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 445, 453–455; Fasāʾi, *Fārsnāmeh*, pp. 169, 925; Esterābādi, *Jahāngoshā*, p. 117; Spilman, *A Journey Through Russia into Persia*, pp. 39–41.

[61] Nāʾini, *Jāmeʿ-e Jaʿfari*, pp. 283; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. I, pp. 201, 350.

*tiyul*s or publicly-administered lands (*khāleṣehjāt*) a three-year exemption from paying six major tax categories.[62] This Iran-wide exemption came to an end in the Spring of 1742. Perhaps it is no coincidence that many of the rebellions in Iran date from 1743 and onwards, as the fiscal burden made itself felt more acutely than before. The costly wars in Dāghestān and Ottoman ʿErāq in the early 1740s were probably the reason why the Nāderid state discontinued its tax breaks.

As the centrally determined annual tax assessments (*abvāb*) were dispatched to Iran's provinces, discontented nobles capitalised on the growing sense of fiscal oppression to instigate uprisings.[63] Tax collectors were obligated to 'collect the revenues of the province(s) based on the tax assessment register we (the Nāderid centre) have determined'.[64] Contemporaries within the state observed that these centrally determined *abvāb*s acted as catalysts for the rebellions. Marvi's history provides several good examples. In 1743, a few months prior to pro-Ṣafavid rebellion in northern Āẕarbāijān, Nāder had carried out an audit which led to the expropriation of many of the local nobility's estates, with a 'considerable sum of *abvāb* being assigned to Āẕarbāijān'.[65] The pro-Ṣafavid nature of the rebellion suggests that some among the Āẕarbāijānian elite wished to return to the more decentralised Ṣafavid model. If so, then their views were echoed by the four battalion commanders who told the Ottoman ambassador that Nāder's assassination was partly to avenge the 'Ṣafavid household and Iranian people', and that the subsequent burning of the Nāderid chancellery's tax registers was justified since 'they contained thousands of gratuitous tax bills'.[66] The Ṣafavids in this context may have served as a symbol for what these elites may have regarded as the ideal form of state, one which devolved fiscal and administrative powers rather than centralised them.

Other rebellions in 1743, such as those in southern Āẕarbāijān and Fārs, did not have a Ṣafavid connection, but they too were partly driven by the centrally determined *abvāb* imposed on them by the Nāderid state. When the Feyli clan rejected their *abvāb* by killing twenty of Nāder's tax collectors, many others in Fārs imitated them. The province's elites

[62] Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 410–413; Arunova and Ashrafian, *Dowlat*, pp. 92–100.

[63] For the use of *abvāb* in the sense of centrally administered tax assessment, see the edict in Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 484–486; Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 937, 1085. For its original Ṣafavid meaning, see Floor, *Fiscal*, p. 102.

[64] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, doc. No. 30, pp. 110–111; see also, Navāʾi (ed.), *Nāder*, pp. 484–486.

[65] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. II, pp. 869–870.

[66] Tātār, 'Sefāratnāmeh', p. 237.

joined together and besieged the governor's palace in Shirāz. Taqi Khān was given a choice: to die in loyal Nāderid service or to join and lead the rebellion. He chose the latter, and all tax collectors in his company were put to death.[67] Later rebellions in 1746–1747, in Ajam ʿErāq, Khorāsān, and Sistān were also prompted by the *abvāb*.[68] The rebels in ʿErāq and Khorāsān did not articulate any dynastic alternative to the Nāderids, merely seeking to assert their autonomy from the Nāderid state.

The rebellion in Sistān was different. The military governor of Sistān, Fatḥʿali Khān, used the locals' discontent with the *abvāb* to declare the re-establishment of the Kayānid dynasty in the vein of Malek-Maḥmud.[69] Just as the Sistānian elites had rallied to Malek-Maḥmud in the mid-1720s to realise their centrifugal ambitions against the Hotakid and Ṣafavid centres, they rallied to Fatḥʿali Khān to throw off the yoke of Nāder's centralised state and its heavy fiscal burden. The Iranian elites, stripped of their political and fiscal autonomies, and reduced to dependence on Nāderid salaries, capitalised on the growing instability in the empire to reassert their lost autonomy. Some sought to do so by reviving the Ṣafavid state, while other more ambitious elites, like the self-proclaimed Kayānids in Sistān, sought to stake their own claim to dynastic rule.

The incessant rebellions of the mid-1740s were linked to the disintegration of the Nāderid state's fiscal administration. There were two mutually reinforcing processes at work. One was the severe political instability brought on by the rebellions, leading many peasants to flee from the jurisdictions which they had been assigned to in the *abvāb*. The second was the tax collectors' imposition of greater burdens on the remaining taxpayers in an effort to raise the revenues outlined in their jurisdiction's *abvāb*, in turn leading to greater flight and or discontentment, which were circumstances conducive to new rebellions. These mutually reinforcing processes formed a downward spiral for the political and fiscal stability of the empire. The crisis invited many Iranian elites to lead or join rebellions to claw back their lost power from the centre, culminating in the collapse of the Nāderid state in 1747.

Rebellions posed a serious challenge to fiscal administration. Hanway, travelling through Iran in 1744, recorded what a local notable told him about the effects of the recent upheavals: 'When the farmers hear of insurrections near them, they often times not only refuse to pay

[67] Marvi, *ʿĀlam*, Vol. III, pp. 937–938. For the *abvāb* which drove the Donboli clan in Āẕarbāijān to rebel, see pp. 999–1000.

[68] Ibid, pp. 1090, 1183, 1193.

[69] Ibid, pp. 1183–1184.

their taxes, but their rents also'.[70] Hanway saw many fleeing from their towns and farmsteads into neighbouring forests and mountains.[71] Flight made economic sense for those peasants caught in a region where rebellion was ongoing, imminent, or even just plausibly expected. By fleeing to mountain passes or to the forests, they avoided the empire's tax collectors as well as the rebels and bandits. The peasants held onto their wealth and produce as they awaited the outcome of the rebellion from a safe distance. Since the *abvāb* required the listed taxpayers to remain in the same jurisdiction in order to be properly identified and taxed,[72] Nāderid tax collection could be crippled by large numbers of peasants fleeing their lands. Nāder issued many edicts to his governors and generals, commanding them to round up and return scattered peasants to their original settlements, but it is unlikely that this produced any decisive result.[73]

As tax collectors were unable to yield all the sums assigned to their jurisdictions in the *abvāb*, they passed the burden of absent taxpayers onto those who remained. Sometimes the Nāderid state would step in and adjust the *abvāb* or cancel them altogether if a province or district was badly ravaged.[74] But as the number and scale of the rebellions grew in the mid-1740s, the centre did not always adjust its *abvāb* in a timely and efficient manner. New *abvāb*s took a long time, sometimes years, to be drafted and finalised.[75] The revision of old *abvāb* under the tumultuous circumstances was no easy task. The result was that many tax collectors, fearful of submitting unbalanced accounts to the centre's auditors, raised the sums assigned to them in their outdated *abvāb*. Multiple sources attest to the shifting of the tax burden by collectors.

Nāder's French physician, Bazin, observed that 'if someone fled his house, his neighbour's house was pillaged (by tax collectors). If a village was abandoned by inhabitants (peasant flight), the nearby town was made to pay'.[76] Mirzā Moḥammad, in his capacity as revenue officer, was well placed to record the shifting fiscal burden in his jurisdictions in Fārs. In

[70] Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 151.

[71] Ibid, pp. 141, 199.

[72] This Nāderid regulation is acknowledged in the later Georgian edict in T.M. Musavi (ed.), *Orta asr Azarbaijan tarikhina dair fars dilli sanadlar*, (Baku, 1977), pp. 210–211.

[73] See Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, doc. No. 43, p. 148; doc. No. 997/355 at the National Library and Archives of Iran; Ḥoseyn Dāvudi, 'Asnād-e khāndan-i Kalāntari-ye Sistān', in *Barresiha-ye Tārikhi*, Vol. 4, No. 5–6, (1970), pp. 15-16, 31.

[74] See for example, Hanway, *Account*, Vol. I, p. 195; Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, doc. No. 37, pp. 128–129; Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, p. 26.

[75] See the previous chapter for how Nāderid tax assessments were made, sometimes taking years, using meticulous research by numerous chancellery offices.

[76] Pierre Bazin, in *Persia Through Writers' Eyes*, ed. David Blow, (London, 2007), p. 205.

1746, the chancellery's tax collectors (*moḥaṣel*s) demanded he go to his jurisdiction, Meymand, and recoup its annual tax revenues. When the tax collectors discovered that the inhabitants of the neighbouring town of Ṣimgān had fled into the mountains with all their possessions, they sought to extract Ṣimgān's taxes from Meymand. Fifteen collectors made their way to Moḥammad's jurisdiction 'on the ridiculous pretext that the wealth of Ṣimgān was hidden away in Meymand'.[77] The peasants in Meymand 'decided to take me and the tax collectors captive, dismantle the town, and flee to the mountains with their belongings'.[78] There was a vicious circle of causation suggested here: the shift in the tax burden brought on by peasant flight, in turn, caused more peasant flight. Moḥammad was able to convince the Meymandians that such a course of action would only serve to bring them more harm in the long run, so the people of Meymand remained put, and 'suffered under the sticks and torture of the tax collectors', yielding another one hundred *tumān*s. The other three hundred *tumān*s had to be imposed on other settlements, and Moḥammad wrote that the chief tax collectors 'assailed me for other taxes and arrears not once, but twice more'.[79]

The adverse effects of peasant flight on the distribution of the tax burden were evident in other regions of Iran. In late 1742, the priests of an Eṣfehānian church wrote a petition to the supreme chancellery explaining that,

> The peasants in the town next to the church have dispersed… their taxes are now demanded from us… [and the tax collectors] are imposing additional levies. It is our request that His Majesty commands that the peasants' share of taxes (*rasad*) be recouped from them, not us… we cannot pay both our own taxes, and those of the peasants.[80]

The situation of the Eṣfehānian priests was far from unique. Numerous edicts issued in response to petitions from the mid-1740s, from ʿErāq to the Caucasus, which demonstrate that local tax collectors frequently imposed additional dues on taxpayers to raise their centrally assessed revenues.[81] As instability gripped the realm, the fiscal administration of the

[77] Mirzā Moḥammad, *Ruznāmeh*, pp. 19–20.

[78] Ibid, p. 20.

[79] Ibid.

[80] An image of this petition/edict was kindly shared with me by Andras Barati, who discovered it during his doctoral fieldwork in Iran. Barati completed his PhD 'Royal Decrees of the Nādirids, Durrānīs and Zands from the Āstān-i Quds-i Raẓawī of Mashhad' in Feb 2021 at Eötvös Loránd University, Faculty of Humanities.

[81] Rashtiāni (ed.), *Gozideh*, Vol. III, doc. No. 39, pp. 136–137, dated Aug/Sep 1743; there are also two edicts issued in response to Eṣfehānian petitioners, the images of which I obtained from Andras Barati. The first is in

state failed to adapt, fuelling discontent among both the nobles and the peasants. This discontent provided fertile soil for the elites' discourse on Iranian identity which portrayed Nāder as a traitor and foreign tyrant. It was in this ideological and administrative context that rebellions proliferated across Iran, eventually destroying the Nāderid state.

Conclusion

The Nāderid state was not the only actor to ideologically draw on Iranian identity to pursue its political and administrative aims. The elites who had had their political and fiscal autonomy curtailed by Nāderid centralisation, challenged the state's discourse on Iranian identity. The officers and men who had helped Nāder expel foreigners from Iran and later to seek vengeance through the conquest of enemy lands, were not generally predisposed to the incorporation of those former enemies into the empire. Beyond Iran's military officers, the nobility were angered by the inclusion of large numbers of foreigners in the empire's institutions. Similar to the Qazvinian merchant who spoke to Hanway, many among Iran's elites viewed the empire as a fruit of their own labour and felt betrayed that Nāder would try to rule them with that same 'foreign horde' which the Iranians had conquered for him. In contrast to the official ideology of the state which sought to remove the sectarian animosity between Iranians and non-Iranians, many elites continued to emphasise their sectarian hostility to foreigners. To be Iranian was to be opposed to the Sunni upstarts, such as the Afghans and Uzbeks, whom the Nāderid state seemed to value so highly as generals and courtiers. Thus, the very Iranianness of the Nāderid state became questionable. Nāder was no longer a saviour. He was the traitor who oppressed the Shi'i Iranian self with the help of the Sunni other. This discourse was intimately tied to the elites' reassertion of their power in the face of Nāderid centralisation as they defied the *abvāb* sent to their provinces. The commanders who beheaded Nāder and clashed with his Afghan and Uzbek soldiers, also set fire to the Nāderid chancellery's tax registers that same night.

The fading legitimacy of the state and the escalating turmoil across the realm hampered the Nāderid state's fiscal administration and hastened its demise. As Iran's people began to feel the full weight of centralised taxation in the mid-1740s, rebellion swept across the provinces as they refused to pay the *abvāb* set by the Nāderid chancellery. As rebellions spread, large numbers of townspeople and peasants were displaced, making it more difficult to assess and collect taxes. The Nāderid state evidently failed to modify its tax assessments in line with

response to churchmen, dated Sep 1742 (distinct from the other edict discussed above). The second is in response to Eṣfehān's Armenian merchants and their taxes in kind, dated to Oct/Nov 1743.

each jurisdiction's rapidly declining economic base. As a result, tax collectors placed the fiscal burden of those who fled on those who remained, exacerbating the discontent across the realm. The Iranian elites capitalised on the instability which afflicted the state to lead new rebellions, precipitating the collapse of the Nāderid state.

Conclusions and Reflections on State Formation in post-Ṣafavid and Nāderid Iran

The fall of Eṣfehān in 1722 was followed by the rise of a series of states which ideologically engaged with notions of Iranianness in a manner not seen since the fall of the Sāsānids in antiquity. Furthermore, for the very first time in recorded history, a state was founded based on the supposed consensus of all Iranians, be they Turk or Tajik, commoner or noble. This 'Iranian state', established by Nāder in 1736, legitimated many if not most of its major policies in pursuit of what it claimed were Iranian interests. Nāder was by no means the originator of the discourse on collective Iranian identity. He was a latecomer in a burgeoning ideological development among Iran's elites who had begun vociferously articulating a common identity in opposition to the Afghan conquest of Eṣfehān in 1722. The defining characteristics which Iranians imagined as distinguishing them from others were Shi'ism and a sense of territorial belonging to the realm of Iran. Most Shi'i elites who witnessed the establishment of a Sunni Afghan state in Iran were adamant that they had a collective right and duty to restore Shi'i sovereignty over the realm. A collective identity emerged which ideologically fused these elites to a sacralised conception of Iran as an inherently Shi'i land. Thus, true Iranians were inherently Shi'i and any non-Shi'i, in particular Sunni, dominion over Iran and its people was considered sacrilege. The implication was that Sunni states such as the Afghans and the Ottomans were profanely foreign (*Khāreji*), and ought to be cast out from the realm.

The discourse on Iranian identity was not entirely homogeneous and was frequently inflected to legitimate different ideological and material interests. The Hotakids, for example, attempted to promulgate a version of Iranian identity which was inclusive of both Shi'i and Sunni subjects, Afghans and non-Afghans. Such a conception of Iranianness, if realised, would have allowed the Hotakids to reconcile the different constituencies under their rule. There is no evidence that this view gained any traction whatsoever, even among the Hotakids' Afghan subjects. The overwhelming consensus among the Shi'i elites was that the Hotakids, and the Afghans more broadly, were not Iranian and therefore lacked the legitimacy to rule. The near-universal rejection of Afghan sovereignty did not necessarily

entail support for a Ṣafavid restoration. Many elites, such as Nadim, Neyrizi, Malek-Maḥmud, and the author of the *Mokāfātnāmeh* called for the deliverance of the Iranian self through the re-establishment of a Shi'i state under a non-Ṣafavid dynasty. Each had different candidates in mind for the throne. Each saw his material interests and his corresponding inflection of Iranianness lead him to an alternative proposal on who should restore Shi'i sovereignty and what that sovereignty should look like.

The man who would success in re-establishing Shi'i rule in Iran was a young Ṣafavid prince, Ṭahmāsp. He and his followers engaged with the burgeoning calls for an Iranian saviour-sovereign while retaining the core elements in Ṣafavid ideology. Ṭahmāsp underlined his Ṣafavid lineage not only to emphasise that he was descended from the Shi'i Imams but to claim that he held 'hereditary' rights to sovereignty over Iran, its territories, and its people. He resurrected his ancestors' claim to being an ʿAlid-Timurid conqueror, speaking to the millenarian expectations of the Iranian elites, promising to rid them and their lands of the common Sunni enemy. Thus, Ṭahmāsp's engagement with the new discourse on Iranian identity was accompanied with ideological motifs which were very much in conformity with Ṣafavid precedents. Despite his early successes, Ṭahmāsp's legitimacy as both an Iranian saviour and a Ṣafavid sovereign was undermined when he suffered ignominious defeats and ceded Iranian territory to the Ottomans in 1732. In the Turco-Mongol tradition, military victory was a prerequisite to legitimating politico-ideological power. Victories were understood to be a demonstration of a divine mandate, of *qut*/*dowlat*, while defeat suggested the lack thereof.[1] Thus, the authority of a ruler over the state was in part reliant on his military record. Blemishes on that record could undermine that authority.[2] After all, how could Ṭahmāsp be the ʿAlid-Timurid millenarian saviour of the Iranians if he had abandoned them to the enemy after being vanquished in battle?

The Turco-Mongol stress on military glory permitted one militarily talented Ṣafavid vassal to legitimate his expanding powers over Ṭahmāsp's state. Nāder had begun as a commander of humble origins who derived his legitimacy from his vassalage to his overlord, Ṭahmāsp. Nāder's victories against the Afghans and Ottomans meant that he was accruing legitimacy in his own right. While ostensibly seeking to restore the Ṣafavid state's control over lost territories, Nāder was in fact seeking to wrest control over the state from his overlord and to

[1] Fairey, 'Southwest Asia', p. 124; Neumann and Wigen, 'Legacy of Eurasian Empires', pp. 102–103.

[2] Karateke, 'Legitimizing the Ottoman', pp. 43–46.

wield sovereignty on his behalf. To do so, Nāder drew on the prevailing discourse on Iranian identity, inflecting it to legitimate his de facto takeover of the state. He usurped Ṭahmāsp in his role as the millenarian saviour of Iran and Iranians from the Sunni enemy. The opportunity for this came in 1732, after Ṭahmāsp's defeat and cession of territory to the Ottomans. Nāder argued that the cession of sacred Iranian land and the abandonment of Iranian captives to the Sunni Ottoman foe was against the interests of the Iranian state and faith. The work of Iran (*kār-e Irān*) could only be completed with the resumption of war on behalf of the Shi'i Imams.

By referring to the interests of an Iranian state, Nāder was able to depose Ṭahmāsp and become regent, installing Ṭahmāsp's infant son as a puppet shāh. Not for the first time in Ṣafavid history, one of the Turkmen military elites had usurped de facto power as regent of the state (*vakil ol-dowleh*), with the Ṣafavids practically reduced to wards. For example, in the early sixteenth century, Ṭahmāsp I had initially ruled only in name, while ʿAli Beyg Rumlu acted as regent in his name.[3] Even ʿAbbās the great spent the first year of his reign as the puppet of the Morshed Khān Ustājlu.[4] In both cases, the Ṣafavid centre was eventually able to reassert its independence from the overbearing military elites and bring them under some degree of submission. In the 1730s, however, for the first time in over two centuries of Ṣafavid rule, a Turkmen military leader began undermining the very ideological foundations of the Ṣafavid state by claiming that ultimate loyalty was owed to Iran and the interests of the Iranian state. In other words, the new discourse on Iranian identity provided the ideological context for Nāder to go further than any of his counterparts from previous centuries, ultimately resulting in the abrogation of the Ṣafavids.

The state itself was increasingly associated with Iran rather than remaining exclusively tied to the Ṣafavids. Such a development reflects changes in other parts of early modern Eurasia where the state became more closely associated with a particular territory or imperial realm rather than the dynastic ruler.[5] For example, the seventeenth-century English philosopher Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), expounded the idea that the duties of subjects are owed to the

[3] Daniel t. Potts, *Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era*, (Oxford and New York, 2014), pp. 229–230.

[4] Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 50.

[5] Abou-El-Haj, *Formation of the Modern State*, p. 19; H. A. Lloyd, *The State, France, and the Sixteenth Century*, (London, 1980), xvi–xvii; Q. Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. II: The Age of Reformation*, (Cambridge, 1978), pp. 349–358; idem, 'The State', in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. T. Ball, Farr, J., and Hanson, R. L., (Cambridge, 1989), p. 102.

state rather than to the person of the ruler.[6] As Quentin Skinner has pointed out, Hobbes's remapping of political loyalties from the dynastic ruler to abstract notions of territorially delimited power were reflective of broader discourses across Europe.[7] In China, both the imperial realm and state were identified exclusively with the ruling dynasty up until the early modern period.[8] From the late seventeenth century onwards, both state and realm came to be referred to not just by the name of the dynasty, Da Qing, but increasingly by the term *Zhongguo* (Middle Country), which was hitherto used to designate the imperial capital and its immediate surroundings.[9] By the end of the eighteenth century, *Zhongguo* was used consistently to refer to territories where the 'state claimed sovereignty'.[10] A similar process seems to have taken place in Iran, with the remapping of the state from the Ṣafavids onto Iran allowing Nāder to eventually stake a claim to absolute sovereignty.

Nāder's Iranian-inflected sovereignty at the assembly of Moghān in 1736 was ideologically grounded in the Turco-Mongol tradition. Historically, the consultative assembly or *qurultāi* was a ritualistic ceremony in which the political and military elites of the realm elected a new ruler. After the election was settled, the elites then gave a binding pledge or *möchälgä* to obey the ruler and his progeny.[11] The *qurultāi* was used to project an image of unanimous consensus for Nāder's enthronement. The *möchälgä* which was signed by the attending grandees was written from the perspective of 'us', referring to 'all the people of Iran', who acknowledged Nāder as the divinely ordained saviour of Iran's state and faith, and thus, worthy of sovereignty over them. The imperial seal adopted after the coronation summed up Nāder's new identity as the Iranian saviour-sovereign: 'As the seal of state and faith came apart in disaster ⁂ in the name of the Nāder of Iran, God restored order'. The supersession of the Ṣafavids by the Nāderids was thus, in the interests of Iran's state and faith and in accordance with the unanimous will of the Iranian people. No wonder that Nāder and some of his officials used Iranian state and Nāderid state interchangeably.

---

[6] Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, ed. H. Warrender, (Oxford, 1983), p. 32.

[7] Skinner, 'State', pp. 90–131.

[8] Peter Zarrow, *After Empire: Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State 1885–1924*, (Stanford, California), pp. 93–94.

[9] Joseph Esherick, 'How the Qing Became China', in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayali, Eric Van Young, (Lanham, Maryland, 2006), pp. 232–233.

[10] Mark C. Elliott, 'The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 3, (2000), p. 638.

[11] Bold, *Mongolian Society*, p. 83; Hope, *Power, Politics*, p. 45.

Despite his earlier rhetoric on cleansing Iranian territory from Sunni enemies, Nāder sought to divorce Iranian identity from anti-Sunnism after his accession, reconciling the Iranian Shi'a with non-Iranian Sunnis under his rule. This was to facilitate his imperial expansion beyond Iran into Sunni-inhabited non-Iranian domains, reigning over Shi'a and Sunni as a universal conqueror. A complimentary idea to Nāderid universal dominion was that of Nāder as a millenarian sovereign who was disseminating peace between all subjects. This form of millenarianism had some precedents in other realms in the Turco-Persianate world. For example, Muzaffar Alam argued that the early modern Mughals were held as exemplars of universal and millenarian justice, promoting universal peace (*solḥ-e kol*) to ensure the coexistence of all denominations and communities under their auspices.[12] It was in the context of his claims to universal sovereignty over the Islamic world that Nāder introduced the Ja'fari creed as a way to revise Shi'ism into a non-sectarian denomination. To internal Iranian audiences Ja'farism was described as true Shi'ism before the divisive excesses of the Ṣafavids who engaged in *sabb o rafż*, the ritual cursing of the first three caliphs revered by Sunnis. To Sunni subjects and neighbouring sovereigns, Ja'farism was described as the conversion of Iran to Sunnism, and it was framed as being no more than a fifth school of jurisprudence to stand harmoniously alongside the other four Sunni schools. Iranian Shi'a and non-Iranian Sunnis were meant to look upon the universal sovereign and project their denominational identity onto him. The empire, then, sought to remove any sectarian tensions which might curtail its expansion or undermine its stability.

The imperial conquest of neighbouring realms justified for internal audiences by reference to Iranian interests. For example, the framework for pursuing Iranian vengeance was provided by the Turco-Mongol tradition, which held imperial conquest for the sake of avenging oneself or one's people to be legitimate.[13] The previous encroachments on Iranian territory, real or imagined, were the pretext for launching new wars of vengeance against virtually all neighbours. The irredentist element was never discarded in these wars. Mughal Hendustān was made to cede all territories north of the Indus to the 'sublime state of Iran'; the Khānate of Bokhārā was made to cede everything south of the Oxus; and the Ottomans territories east of the Euphrates were declared to be Iranian lands, though they were never successfully annexed. The conquests were also presented as benefiting the Iranian people. After the despoilment of Mughal coffers, Nāder suspended many taxes for three years in all of Iran's

[12] Muzaffar Alam, *The Languages of Political Islam in India c. 1200–1800*, (Chicago, 2004), pp. 26–80.

[13] Clark, 'Theme of Revenge', pp. 33–57.

dominions. In the case of the Turānian khānates, the freeing of Iranian captives and their return to their homeland was underlined by Nāder.

The ideological structure of the expanding Nāderid empire adhered to a binary between Iran and non-Iran. Such a binary may conjure parallels with the old Sāsānian notion of 'Ērān and an-Ērān',[14] but Nāder was probably adapting the basic principles of the Chinggisid-Timurid model of dynastic imperium which viewed 'the empire as the joint property of the Chinggisid clan'.[15] While the control of peripheral territories was delegated to the lesser members of the clan, the clan leader retained direct administration over the 'core' territories of the empire.[16] In the Nāderid case, the core was Iran, subject to direct sovereignty, while realms such as Turān or Hendustān were subject to indirect sovereignty, meaning they were ruled by vassals whom Nāder reduced to junior members of his new dynastic clan: the 'Turkmenids' (*Torkmāniyeh*). Similar to other early modern imperial rulers who used dynastic ideologies to 'present themselves as standing in leading positions vis-à-vis competing rulers and as the legitimate leader within their own domains', Nāder constructed a dynastic model through which he could assert sovereignty over his vassals.[17] Nāder claimed to be the elder (*bozorg*) of the Turkmenid clan, which consisted of the four ruling dynasties of the Islamic world: The Nāderids in Iran, the Ottomans in Rum, the Mughal (Timurids) in Hendustān, and the Chinggisids (Tuqā-Timurids) in Turān.[18] As the elder brother, Nāder conferred crowns upon the junior members of the clan, confirming his shāhanshāhic authority over the shāhs of Turān and Hendustān. The Turkmenid clan was a dynastic entity meant to foster a communal identity between the imperial households of the Islamic world and to cement Nāder's primacy over his peers. Nāder's precedence was communicated through the formal adoption of the title shāhanshāh in all official settings. This shāhanshāhic authority was imbued with eschatological rhetoric pointing to Nāder's mission to unite the Islamic realms under one banner. While Nāder's regency saw him adopt a millenarian ideology to serve his claims of being the saviour of the Iranian Shi'a from the Sunni enemy, during his reign, Nāder

[14] Daryaee, 'Idea of Eranshahr', pp. 393–399.

[15] Biran, 'Mongol Imperial Space', pp. 231–235.

[16] Ibid; For the Ottoman and Timurid contexts see Kołodziejczyk, 'What is Inside', pp. 421–432 and Subtelny, 'Administration and Delegation', pp. 206–207 respectively.

[17] Fischel, *Local States*, pp. 244–245. See also, Anooshahr, *Turkestan*, p. 173.

[18] The Chinggisid family of the Bokhārā Khānate identified as descendants of Tuqā-Timur, thirteenth son of Jochi, the eldest son of Chinggis Khān. The dynasty was also sometimes referred to as the Jānids or the Astrakhānids.

repurposed millenarianism to serve his claims to universal imperium. He was still shāh of Iran, but also the shāhanshāh over the realms of the Islamic world.

The administrative institutions of the state between the centre and the periphery

The institutional and governmental aspects of the state in Iran, and in the Islamicate world more broadly, were subject to decentralising inclinations of its military elites. The Turco-Mongol mindset of these elites had a strong preference for a decentralised state which entrusted them with the management of local economic and military resources.[19] In contrast, the rulers of imperial states in the early modern Islamicate world typically favoured hierarchical principles which extended down to the administrative system, leading them to 'create (or aspirer to create) centralised and vertical structures of power, increasingly putting pressure on horizontal links'.[20] This dialectic between the imperial centre and the elites is evident in the process of state formation in Iran from 1722 to 1747. To analyse this process, we return to the framework provided by Marshal Hodgson's model of the military patronage state.[21]

Hodgson's model of the state has three defining characteristics: First, the legitimation of dynastic law; second, the conception of the whole state as a single military force; third, the distribution of all the realm's resources as appanages of the leading military families.[22] In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the Ṣafavid dynasty legitimated itself based on Islamic law, as interpreted by Twelver Shi'i jurists, and less so on the *jasaq*. The harmony of faith and state under the Ṣafavids was realised through the promotion of the juristic ulema to high offices and positions at court. Unlike their sixteenth-century counterparts, the later Ṣafavids were not the supreme religious authority in the lands, having relinquished that role to the ulema.

The conception of the state as a unified military force in the Ṣafavid period was realised ideologically rather than in practice. The shāh was regarded as a Shi'i ṣāḥebqerān, leading the vanguard of the Mahdi's army. Such a role gave him a sacralised and supreme military authority over all commanders and men in his realm.[23] In practice, however, the late-Ṣafavid

[19] Van Steenbergen, 'Temur to Selim', pp. 35–50.

[20] Fischel, *Local States*, pp. 242–243 where he gives a concise summary of the early modern Eurasian model for imperial state formation.

[21] This was outlined in the introduction.

[22] Hodgson, *Venture of Islam*, Vol. 2, p. 405.

[23] Jaʿfariān, 'Naẓarieh', pp. 735–780.

military was composed of disparate units drawn from a host of provincial militias while even the standing army was reduced and scattered across Iran to be maintained on local land-revenue assignments. The fissures in Ṣafavid military command were all too apparent in the early eighteenth century.[24] At the fateful battle of Golunābād near Eṣfehān in 1722, Shāh Ḥoseyn did not even join his army to demonstrate symbolic leadership. The army's generals fought the Afghans in uncoordinated actions and were defeated with relative ease.[25] Ideologically and structurally, the military of the late-Ṣafavid state was far from a cohesive force.

The military disunity was reflected in the late-Ṣafavids' decentralised administrative structures. The centre distributed the realm's resources as appanages of not only the leading military families, but ecclesiastic families also. The widespread land-revenue assignments such as *tiyul* and *siyurghāl* preserved the interests of the military elites while the custodianships over tax-exempt endowments did the same for many among the Shi'i religious elites. Senior bureaucrats also held lucrative appanages. The entrenchment of the elites in the periphery severely curtailed the possibility of centralisation. The late-Ṣafavid state, then, remained a military patronage state despite its circle of patronage extending to non-military elites and the erosion of military unity leading up to their overthrow by the Hotakids.

The dearth of evidence from the Hotakid period makes it difficult to gauge how their state fits into the historical process. In terms of dynastic law, the Hotakids presumably drew from Islamic law, as interpreted by Ḥanafi jurists. To what extent this may have differed in practice from the Ṣafavid period is unclear. Furthermore, it is unknown if the Hotakids brought with them laws of their own based on Pashtun concepts of sovereignty developed in the seventeenth century.[26] As a conquest dynasty they appear to have had a large degree of military cohesion. Maḥmud and Ashraf both led the Hotakid army in person, though the sources are silent on the precise structure and composition of their military forces. Even though the Hotakids commissioned manuals of state administration which suggested they wished to adhere to Ṣafavid models of governance, in practice they did not always respect the elites' appanages, including the endowments. The Hotakids expropriated many estates and

[24] Axworthy, *Sword of Persia*, pp. 45–50.

[25] Ibid; Krusinski, *History*, Vol. 1, pp. 100–101.

[26] For the development of such concept by the Pashto poet and warlord, Khushal Khān Khattak, see Niaz Muhammad, 'Khushal Khan Khattak's Educational Philosophy', PhD Diss., (Qurtuba University, Peshawar, 2009), pp. 84–120.

endowments in and around Eṣfehān, turning them into crown properties, but again, the sources do not reveal if this was part of a general policy. The sources are also silent on how the Afghan military elite were recompensed. It is unlikely they received fixed salaries from the Hotakid treasury, but there is no evidence that they were given land-revenue assignments either. The dearth of evidence means that there is no way to know whether the Hotakids adhered to the military patronage model of the state.

The restored Ṣafavid state under Ṭahmāsp changed little with regard to its conception of dynastic law. In fact, it underlined its continuity with the Ṣafavid past. Many *tiyul*s, *siyurghāl*s, and endowments were ratified by Ṭahmāsp in order to gain the service of local military, ecclesiastic, and bureaucratic elites. The decentralisation of power meant that Ṭahmāsp's new Ṣafavid state was never able to marshal a unified military force. The most brazen example of military heterogeneity was Nāder's personal Khorāsānian army, acting independently of Ṭahmāsp, and eventually, acting against him. The disparate campaigns being waged, and the dethronement of the nominal head of the military by a vassal, spoke to the fact that Ṭahmāsp's state did not function as a cohesive military entity. The distribution of appanages to leading commanders was in line with Ṣafavid precedents, but under Ṭahmāsp, it reached a new height. The collegial notion of power sharing encapsulated in the old Ṣafavid idea of a 'Qezelbāsh state' had reached a culminating point by 1730, when Nāder held almost the entire eastern half of the Ṣafavid realm as his viceroyalty, allowing him to undermine the centre ideologically and politically. Similar to his late father's, Ṭahmāsp's state was a failing military patronage state which lacked military cohesiveness. Its thoroughly decentralised nature was in contrast with early modern imperial states.

At the periphery, Nāder had been a striking manifestation of decentralised Ṣafavid rule. As he assumed the regency, he used his powerful ideological power as the saviour of Iran and Iranians to drive forward his centralisation of the state, consolidating his power within it as regent. Many of the *tiyul*s and the *siyurghāl*s held by the military elites were expropriated. The only appanages which were untouched were those of the custodians, which Nāder could not alienate without undermining his ideological discourse on being a Shi'i saviour. The focus of the state under Nāder's regency was to wage war against the Ottomans until all Iranian lands and captives had been freed. Nāder had declared his resumption of war against the Ottomans had been 'for the sake of faith and state'.[27] Thus, the state, under his

[27] Ibid, p. 201.

charismatic leadership, was conceptualised as a single military force whose objective was to drive out the Ottoman foe and free fellow Iranians from their occupation. On a practical level, Nāder's regency saw the beginnings of new system which largely succeeded in achieving military cohesion, as military salaries, armament, procurement, and logistics were burdened by the central treasury. These expenses were covered by the expropriation of lucrative land-assignments and the centralisation of the state's fiscal administration. The efficacy of Nāder's centralised military became apparent by 1735, when he had regained all the territories and people captured by the Ottomans since 1722.

Establishing his reign as the *Nāder-e Irān*, he brought the *dowlat-e Irān* ever more firmly under his centralised control, establishing a contiguity between the ideological and institutional structures of his state. The centralisation of this Iranian state, just like its founding, drew on Turco-Mongol traditions. Paradoxically, these traditions which had historically legitimated decentralised models of governance were used by Nāder to assert his centralising policies. In terms of dynastic law, the Nāderid state was born from the *qurultāi* of Moghān in 1736. Historically, the *qurultāi* was used to legitimate the appanages and exemptions of the realm's elites, particularly, the military elites.[28] The 'arrangement of the ordinances of the realm' at a *qurultāi* signified the 'allocation of offices and armies' and was a common method of reconciling the elites to one's rule by sharing power with them.[29] As a Turco-Mongol ritual, the *qurultāi* and its constituent ceremonies legitimated the decentralised model of the state which the elites benefited from. However, at the *qurultāi* of 1736, Nāder announced the elimination of several high-ranking offices, absorbing their responsibilities in the hands of himself and his secretary, Esterābādi. The administrative and fiscal autonomies of the bureaucratic elites were severely restricted and their accounts were placed under centralised oversight. Yet more *tiyul*s and *siyurghāl*s were expropriated and the soldiery were almost exclusively made to rely on the central treasury rather than their local commanders for remuneration. The purpose of the *jasaq*, as a tool of legitimating the elite's decentralised interests, was turned on its head. The dynastic law of the Nāderid state was used to legitimate centralisation. The focus on centralisation puts Nāder in stark contrast to many of Iran's previous Turco-Mongol conquerors and state-builders, including Timur, Uzun Ḥasan, and Esmāʿil Ṣafavi.

[28] Hope, *Power, Politics*, pp. 52–56.

[29] Ibid, 52–53.

The conception of the Nāderid state as a single military force was most readily apparent from Nāder's central role in all major military operations. From the moment it was formed to the moment it collapsed, the Nāderid state waged war across Asia. Many of its expeditions and campaigns were led personally by Nāder, though the empire was simultaneously active in several theatres of war at any one time. The state sought to bind the loyalty of its rank and file to itself by shouldering the costs of all their mounts, equipment, rations, and salaries through the central treasury. As the new ṣāḥebqerān, Nāder had an ideological mission to lead his vast armies in a series of millenarian conquests to establish his universal imperium over the four realms of the Islamic world. But again, despite some similarities between Nāder and Timur's personal leadership of major campaigns, the decentralised military administration of the latter contrasts sharply with the unprecedented centralisation effected by the former.

On its surface, the third characteristic of the military patronage state did not apply to the Nāderid case. As mentioned above, there was a systematic expropriation of appanages held by military, bureaucratic, and ecclesiastic elites in Iran. However, outside Iran, there was no such policy. Vassal shāhs and local rulers were confirmed over their holdings in return for tribute in money, material, or manpower. The empire's vassals were left to their own devices to muster these resources, and there was no push to incorporate them into the administration of the Nāderid state, nor any attempt at reforming the appanages in Turān or Hendustān. The Nāderid state was not a complete departure from the military patronage model proposed by Hodgson. It legitimated dynastic law, but for the unconventional purpose of centralisation. The entire state was conceived as a singular vehicle for the millenarian conquest of the Islamic world. Within Iran, there was little tolerance of appanages held by elites of any kind. Outside Iran, on the other hand, Nāder confirmed the autonomy of his vassals in the management of their own affairs and resources, so long as they remained loyal tributaries.

The Nāderid state, then, stands quite apart from its predecessors and even its neighbours in terms of the centralisation of its internal administration. Imperial states in the eighteenth-century Islamicate world, including the Ottomans, Ṣafavids, and Mughals, seem to have undergone a process of decentralisation.[30] In contrast, other Eurasian imperial states such as Romanov Russia and Qing China seem to have undergone centralisation in the early modern

[30] Ursinus, 'Transformation of Ottoman Regime', pp. 423–435; Baki Tezcan, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (New York, 2010), pp. 227–244; Alam, *Crisis of Empire*, pp. 299–318; for the Ṣafavids see this study.

period.[31] While Ṭahmāsp's state seems to have followed the same decentralising trajectory as the Ottomans and the Mughals, the state formed by Nāder resembled that of Peter the Great and Kangxi. The Nāderid state was different in one key respect: durability. After little over a decade, its disillusioned elites, who had lost many appanages and been subjected to unprecedented oversight by Nāder's tax officials, rose up in countless rebellions. The states which replaced Nāder's for the rest of the eighteenth century were thoroughly decentralised.[32]

The devolved nature of rule which resurfaced in Iran was much more in line with the elites' interests. The unorthodox use of the Turco-Mongol tradition by the Nāderid state to curtail their appanages stoked discontent among them, especially at a time when non-Iranian elites were being incorporated into the empire without losing their appanages in their own territories. In a similar fashion to Nāder, these elites inflected their discourse on Iranian identity to reflect their interests, which they saw as diverging from the those of the Nāderid state. Thus, Nāder was cast as a traitor to the Iranian Shi'a, an ally to the Sunni other with whom he planned to wreak destruction upon Iran and its people. The ideological implication of such a discourse was that it was a collective Iranian duty to overthrow Nāder, who had transformed from saviour to nemesis. The generals who departed Nāder's camp after his assassination described his killing as vengeance for the Iranian people.[33] Nāder had fallen victim to the very same vengeance which he himself had used to justify numerous wars against non-Iranians.

Later saviours of Iran and of the Iranians: A persistent discourse

[Look at the chapter 1 notes on post 1747 developments. Also involve some of your findings on the Manghits and other successor states.]

[31] Lindsey Hughes, *Russian in the Age of Peter the Great*, (New Haven and London, 1998), pp. 63–158; William T. Rowe, *China's Last Empire*, pp. 31–62; Mark C. Elliot, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banner and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, (Stanford, California, 2001), pp. 137–138.

[32] The most prominent successor state in Iran was that of Karim Khān, who ruled most of West Iran only nominally. See John. R. Perry, *Karim Khan Zand*, (Oxford, 2006).

[33] This refers to the four Kurdish generals who recounted their experiences to Reḥmi Tātār, 'Sefāratnāmeh', pp. 236–237.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Manuscripts and archival documents

‘Farmāns’, Doc. No. 35185 the Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Mashhad, I.R. Iran

Afżal ol-Molk al-Maʿi, Gholām-Ḥoseyn, (ed.), *Korrāseh ol-Maʿi*, in Library, Museum, and Document Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of I.R. Iran, Persian MS., No. 9450/115

Anon., Esterābādi’s letter to Iran’s governors, in Golpāygāni Library in Qom, Persian MS., No. 43.117

Anon., *Tārikh-e Mohammad Pādshāh*, British Library, Persian MS. Or. 1677

Āshub, Moḥammad-Bakhsh, *Tārikh shahādat-e Farrokh-Siyar va Jolus-e Moḥammad Shāh*, British Library, Persian MS. Or. 1832

Esterābādi, Mirzā Mehdi, *Monsha’āt-e Esterābādi*, in National Library and Archives of the I.R. Iran, Persian MS. No. 5/14624; idem, *Fotuḥāt-e Nāderi*, in Central Library of Astan Quds Razavi, Persian MS. No. 41563

Nadim, Zaki Mashhadi, *Divān-e Nadim*, in Library of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Persian and Turkish MS., No. 1080

Nashʾeh, ʿAbdorrazzāq Tabrizi, *Divān-e Fārsi o Torki*, in The Library and Archives of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of I.R. Iran, Turkish MS. No. 14761

Neyrizi, Qoṭboddin, *Nāmehā*, in Library, Museum, and Documents Centre of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the I.R. Iran, Arabic MS., No. 12347.8

Neẓif Efendi, Moṣṭafā, *Sefāratnāmeh*, in Millet Kutuphanesi, MS. No. 824

Vafā Karminagi, Moḥammad, *Toḥfeh-ye Khāni*, in Abu Rayhan Biruni Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, No. 16

Published

Afshar, Iraj, (ed.), ‘Aḥkām-e Marbuṭ beh Khāndān-e Saʿdlu’, in *Āyandeh*, Vol. 19, No. 4–6, (1993), pp. 471–472.

ʿĀlami, Abulfażl, *Āʾin-e Akbari*, ed. H. Blochmann, (Osnabrück, 1985)

al-Hamawi Baghdādi, Yāqut, *Moʿjam ol-Boldān*, Vol. 1, (n.p., 1977)

Anon., 'Aḥvāl-e Nāder Shāh', in *Ḥadiṡ-e Nāder Shāhi*, ed. Reżā Shaʿbāni, (Tehran, 1997), pp. 1–39

Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', in Jaʿfariān (ed.), *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1231–1295

Anon., 'Mokāfātnāmeh', in Jaʿfariān's *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1191–1295

Anon., *Tajdār-e Nāfarjām: Tajgoẕāri-ye Nāfarjām-e Malek Maḥmud Sistāni dar Mashhad, bar Asās-e Noskheh-ye Khaṭṭi-e Maṡnavi-ye Maḥmudnāmeh*, ed. ʿAlireżā Jannati-Sarāb, (Mashhad, 2014)

Āṣef, Mohammad-Hāshem, *Rostam ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Moḥammad Moshayyeri, (Tehran, 1973)

Beheshti Heravi, ʿAbdollāh II, *Nur ol-Mashreqin*, ed. Ṣādeq Sajjādi, (Qom, 2008)

Bigdeli, Āẕar, *Ātashkadeh*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāṣeri, 2 Vols., (Tehran, 1957)

Birjandi, Ibn Ḥesām Khusefi, *Khāvarānnāmeh*, ed. Saʿid Anvari, (Tehran, 2002)

Blow, David (ed.), *Persia Through Writers' Eyes*, (London, 2007)

Dāneshpaĵuh, Moḥammad-Taqi (ed.), 'Amār-e māli va neẓāmi-ye Irān dar 1128', in *Farhang-e Irān-Zamin*, Vol. 20, (1353 Sh./1974), pp. 396–421

Dinevari, Ibn Qotaybeh, *Akhbār ol-Ṭavvāl*, tr. Maḥmud Mahdavi Dāmghāni, (Tehran, 1992)

Efendi, Neẓif, 'Sefāratnāmeh-ye Neẓif Efendi', in Riāḥi (ed. and tr.), *Sefāratnāmehhā*, pp. 179–194

Eftekhāri, Yusof (ed.), *Sekkeh-Shenāsi-ye Shāhān-e Afshār*, (Tehran, 2015)

Elliott, Mark C., 'The Limits of Tartary: Manchuria in Imperial and National Geographies', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 3, (2000), pp. 603-646; idem, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banner and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China*, (Stanford, California, 2001)

Eṣfehāni, Fażli Beyg Khuzāni, *Afżal ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Kioumars Ghereghlou, (Exeter, 2015)

Esherick, Joseph, 'How the Qing Became China', in *Empire to Nation: Historical Perspectives on the Making of the Modern World*, eds. Joseph W. Esherick, Hasan Kayali, Eric Van Young, (Lanham, Maryland, 2006), pp. 232–233

Esmāʿili, Soghrā (ed.), *Paĵuheshi dar Sekkehhā va Mohrhā-ye Dowreh-ye Ṣafavi [Seals & Coins]*, (Tehran, 2006)

Esterābādi, Mirzā Mehdi, *Dorreh-ye Nādereh*, ed. Seyyed Jaʿfar Shahidi, (Tehran, 1962); idem, *Jahāngoshā-ye Nāderi*, ed. ʿAbdollāh Anvār, (Tehran, 1962); idem, *Tārikh-e Jahāngoshā-ye Nāderi*, ed. ʿAbdol-ʿAli Adib Borumand, (Tehran, 1991); idem, 'Fatḥnāmeh-ye Hendustān', in *Ḥadiṡ-e Nāder Shāhi*, ed. Reżā Shaʿbāni, (Tehran, 1997), pp. 101–111

ʿEzzi, Soleymān, *Tārkh-e ʿEzzi*, (Istanbul, 1785)

Floor, Willem (ed.), *The Afghan Occupation of Safavid Persia, 1729–1729*, (Paris, 1998); idem (ed.), *Rise and Fall of Nader Shah: Dutch East India Company Reports, 1730–1747*, (Washington State, 2009)

Fragner, Bert (ed), 'Ardabīl Zwischen Sultan und Schah. Zehn Urkunden Schah Ṭahmāsps II', in *Turcica*, Vol. 6, (1975), pp. 177–225

Fraser, James, *The History of Nadir Shah*, (London, 1742)

Hanway, Jonas, *Historical Account of the British trade over the Caspian Sea*, 4 Vols., (London, 1753)

Ḥasan-Ābādi, Abulfażl, (ed.), *Sādāt-e Rażavi-ye Mashhad: az āghāz tā pāyān-e Qājāriyeh*, (Tehran, 2008)

Ḥazin Lāhiji, Moḥammad-ʿAli, *Divān-e Ḥazin-e Lāhiji*, ed. Ẕabiḥollāh Ṣāḥebkār, (Tehran, 1995); idem, *Tārikh o Safarnāmeh*, ed. ʿAli Davāni, (Tehran, 1996)

Hedāyati, Moḥammad ʿAli (ed.), *Āstāneh-ye Rey: majmuʿeh-ye asnād va farāmin*, (Tehran, 1965)

Hobbes, Thomas, *De Cive*, ed. H. Warrender, (Oxford, 1983)

Ḥoseyni Eshkevari, Seyyed Ṣadeq and Feyż-Pur Qomi, Sheykh Moḥsen, *Fehrest-e Asnād-e Mowqufāt-e Eṣfehān*, 12 Vols., (Qom, 2009)

Kandulehi, Almās Khān, *Jangnāmeh-ye Nāder*, ed. Maẓhar Advāyi, (Tehran, 2017)

Kashmiri, ʿAbdol-Karim, *Bayān-e Vāqeʿ*, ed. K. B. Nasim, (Lahore, 1970)

Kretats'i, Abraham, *The Chronicle of Abraham of Crete*, ed. George A. Bournoutian, (Costa Mesa, California, 1999)

Krusinski, Judas T., *The History of the Late Revolutions of Persia*, 2 Vols., (London, 1733)

Lloyd, H.A., *The State, France, and the Sixteenth Century*, (London, 1980)

M. Ẕabihi, M., and Sotudeh, M., *Az Āstārā tā Esterābād*, Vol. 6, (Tehran, 1975), doc. No. 2.

Marcinkowski, Muhammad Ismail (ed.), *Mīrzā Rafīʿa'sDastūr al-Mulūk*, (Kuala Lampur, 2002)

Marvi, Moḥammad-Kāẓem, *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi*, 3 Vols., ed. Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi, (Tehran, 1985)

Minorsky, Vladimir (ed.), *Taẕkerat ol-Moluk*, (London, 1943)

Mirzā Mohammad, *Ruznāmeh-ye Mirzā Moḥammad, Kalāntar-e Fārs*, ed. ʿAbbās Eqbāl, (Tehran, 1984)

Moḥaddeṡ, Mir Hāshem (ed.), *Tārikh-e Qezelbāshān*, (Tehran, 1982)

Mokhleṣ, Anand Rām, *Badāyeʿ ol-Vaqāyeʿ*, in *Manshur ol-Vaṣiyat va Dastur ol-Ḥekmat*, ed. Seyyed Ḥesāmoddin Rāshedi, (Sindh, Pakistan, n.d.), pp. 63–85

Mostowfi Qazvini, Ḥamdollāh, *Nuzhat ol-Qolub*, ed. Aqal ol-ʿEbāẕ, (Tehran, 1983)

Mostowfi Yazdi, Moḥammad-Mofid, *Mokhtaṣar-e Mofid*, ed. Seyfeddin Najmabadi, (Wiesbaden, 1989)

Mostowfi, Moḥammad-Moḥsen, *Zobdat ol-Tavārikh*, ed. Behruz Gudarzi, (Tehran, 1996)

Musavi, T.M. (ed.), *Orta asr Azarbaijan tarikhina dair fars dilli sanadlar*, (Baku, 1977), pp. 210–211

Nāder Mirzā, *Tārikh o Joghrāfiā dar Dār ol-Salṭaneh-ye Tabriz*, (Tehran, 1981)

Nāʾini, Moḥammad-Jaʿfar, *Jāmeʿ-e Jaʿfari*, ed. Iraj Afshar, (Tehran, 1974)

Naṣiri, Moḥammad Reżā (ed.), *Asnād va Mokātebāt-e Tārikhi-ye Irān: Dowreh-ye Afshāriyeh*, (Gilān, Iran, 1985)

Navāʾi, ʿAbdolḥoseyn, (ed.), *Asnād va Mokātebāt-e Siāsi-ye Irān: az Sāl-e 1105 tā 1135 H. Q.*, (Tehran, 1984); idem (ed.), *Nāder Shāh va Bāzmāndegānash: Hamrāh bā Nāmehhā-ye Salṭanati va Asnād-e Siāsi va Edāri*, (Tehran, 1989); idem (ed.), *Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafavi*, (Tehran, 1989)

Neyrizi, Qoṭboddin, 'Ṭibb al-Mamālik', ed. and trans. Rasul Jaʿfariān, *Ṣafaviyeh dar ʿArṣeh-ye Din, Farhang, va Siāsat*, Vol III, (Tehran, 2000), pp. 1324–1354

Neyrizi, Qoṭboddin, *Mizān ol-Ṣavāb*, ed. Abulqāsem Khuʾi, (Salmās, 1916)

Potts, Daniel T., *Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era*, (Oxford and New York, 2014)

Rabino di Borgomale, H.L. (ed.), *Coins, Medals, and Seals of the Shahs of Iran (1500–1941)*, (n.p., 1945)

Rashtiāni, Gudarz (ed.), *Gozideh Aḥkām va Farāmin-e Shāhān-e Irān beh Ḥokkām-e Qafqāz*, 3 Vols., (Tehran, 2015)

Riāḥi, Mohammad-Amin (ed.), *Sefāratnāmehhā-ye Irān*, (Tehran, 1989)

Sabzevāri, Seyyed Moḥammad, *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin*, ed. Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, (Tehran, 1989)

Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, 'Moqaddameh', in Seyyed Moḥammad Sabzevāri, *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin*, ed. Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, (Tehran, 1989)

Skinner, Q., *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought, Vol. II: The Age of Reformation*, (Cambridge, 1978); idem, 'The State', in *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, eds. T. Ball, Farr, J., and Hanson, R. L., (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 90–131

Suwaidi, ʿAbdollāh, *Ḥujaj al-Qaṭʿiyya li-Ittifāq al-Firaq al-Islāmiyya*, (Cairo, 1905)

Ṭahmāsp Ṣafavi, *Taẕkereh-ye Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, ed. ʿAbdolshakur, (n.p., 1924)

Ṭanburi, Ārutin, 'Tārikh-e Ṭahmāsb-Qoli Khān', in Moḥammad Amin Riāḥi, *Sefāratnāmehhā-ye Irān*, (Tehran, 1989), pp. 163–194

Ṭehrāni, Moḥammad-Shafiʿ, *Merāt-e Vāredāt*, ed. Mansur Sefatgol, (Tehran, 2004)

Torkamān, Eskandar Beyg, *Ālam Āra-ye ʿĀbbāsi*, ed. Iraj Afshār, (1971), 2 Vols.

Ṭusi, Moḥammad-ʿAli, *Shāhnāmeh-ye Nāderi*, ed. Aḥmad S. Khānsāri, (Tehran, 1960)

Ẕabiḥi, Masiḥ, (ed.), 'Farmāni darbāreh-ye Esterābād', in *Rāhnamā-ye Ketāb*, Vol. 12, (1969), pp. 739–740

Zarrow, Peter, *After Empire: Conceptual Transformation of the Chinese State 1885–1924*, (Stanford, California)

Secondary sources

ʿAbdi, Zahrā, 'Andisheh-ye taqrib-e Shiʿeh va Sonni: siāsat-e Sonni-garāyi-ye Nāder Shāh', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Taqribi Maẕāheb-e Eslāmi (Forugh-e Vaḥdat)*, Vol. 11, No. 41, (2015), pp. 33–45

ʿAbdollāhi, Nurollāh, and Jajbāf, ʿAli-Akbar, 'Mashruʿiyat-e Ṣafaviān va pādshāhi-ye Nāder' in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 3, No. 6, (2013), pp. 117–138

Abou El-Haj, Rifa'at, *Formation of the Modern State, The Ottoman Empire, Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, (Syracuse, New York, 1991)

Āghājri, Hāshem, *Moqaddameh-i bar Monāsebāt-e Din va Dowlat dar Irān-e Ṣafavi*, (Tehran, 2016)

Agnew, John, 'Representing Space: Space, Scale and Culture in Social Science', in James Duncan and David Ley (eds.), *Place, Culture, Representation*, (London, 1993), pp. 251–271

Ahmad, Aziz, 'Ṣafawid Poets and India', in *Iran*, Vol. 14, (1976), pp. 117–132

Aksan, Virginia, *Ottoman Wars: An Empire Besieged 1700–1870*, (New York, 2007)

Alam, Muzaffar, and Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries 1400–1800*, (Cambridge, 2007)

Alam, Muzaffar, *The Languages of Political Islam in India c. 1200–1800*, (Chicago, 2004)

Album, Stephen, *Marsden's Numismata Orientalia Illustrata*, (New York, 1977), pp. 13–16

Allegranzi, Viola, 'Quoting the Shāhnāma in Monumental Epigraphy', in *Before Archaeology: The Meaning of the Past in the Islamic Pre-Modern Thought*, ed. Leonardo Capezzone, (Rome, 2020), pp. 127–142

Allsen, Thomas, 'Prelude to the Western Campaigns: Mongol Military Operations in the Volga- Ural Region, 1217– 1237', in *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, Vol. 3, (1983), pp. 5–23

Amanat, Abbas, *Iran: A Modern History*, (New Haven and London, 2017); idem, 'Shahnameh-ye Naderi and the Revival of Epic Poetry in Post-Safavid Iran', in *The Layered Heart: Essays on Persian Poetry, A Celebration in Honor of Dick Davis*, ed. A. Seyed-Ghorab, (Washington DC, 2019), pp. 295–318

Amin, Seyyed Ḥoseyn, 'Moqaddameh', in Seyyed Moḥammad Sabzevāri, *Zeyn ol-ʿĀrefin*, ed. Seyyed Ḥoseyn Amin, (Tehran, 1989), pp. 1–33

Amitai Reuven, 'Political Legitimation in the Ilkhanate: More Thoughts on the Mongol Imperial Ideology, the Introduction of Muslim Justifications, and the Revival of Iranian Ideals' in *New Approaches to Ilkhanid History*, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 209–248

Anooshahr, Ali, *Turkestan and the Rise of Eurasian Empires*, (New York, 2018)

Anvari, Saʿid, 'Introduction' in Ibn Ḥesām Khusefi Birjandi, *Khāvarānnāmeh*, ed. Saʿid Anvari, (Tehran, 2002), pp. 6–20

ʿAqili, Seyyed ʿAbdollāh, 'Farmān-e Ashraf-e Afghān va Mowqufāt-e Āstāneh-ye Ḥażrat-e ʿAbdolʿaẓim', in *Mirāṡ-e Jāvidān*, Vol. &, No. 4, (2002), pp. 71–86

Arunova, M.R., and Ashrafiyan, K.Z., *Dowlat-e Nāder Shāh-e Afshār*, tr. Hamid Amin, 2nd edition, (Tehran, 1978)

Assmann, Jan, *Cultural Memory, and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (New York, 2011)

Assmann, Jan, *Cultural Memory, and Early Civilization: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Imagination*, (New York, 2011), pp. 116–185

Avery, Peter, 'Nadir Shah and the Afsharid Legacy', in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. XII, From Nadir Shah to the Islamic Republic*, eds. Peter Avery, Gavin Hambly and Charles Melville, (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 50-54

Axworthy, Michael, *Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*, (London, 2006); idem, 'Nader Shah and Persian Naval Expansion in the Persian Gulf, 1700–1747', in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2011), pp. 31–39; idem, 'Awkwardness of Nader Shah', in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism, and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), pp. 44–58; idem, 'The Army of Nader Shah', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 5, (2007), pp. 635–646

Āydenlu, Sajjād, 'Muʿarrefi-ye yek ṭumār-e naqqāli-ye kohan beh zabān-e Torki', in *Āyineh-ye Mirāṡ*, Vol. 6, (2018), pp. 129–149

Babaie, Susan, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad, *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran*, (London and New York, 2004)

Babaie, Sussan, 'Epigraphy: Safavid Iran and Later Inscriptions', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 8, (1998): 498–504

Babayan, Kathryn, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge, 2002)

Bacharach, Jere L., *Islamic History through Coins: An Analysis and Catalogue of Tenth-Century Ikhshidid Coinage*, (Cairo and New York, 2006)

Ball, T., and Farr, J., and Hanson, R. L. (eds.), *Political Innovation and Conceptual Change*, (Cambridge, 1989)

Balog, Paul, *The Coinage of the Ayyubids*, (London, 1980)

Barati, Andras, 'An Early Decree of Nādir Shāh Concerning the *vaqf* of Ardabil', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 53, Nos. 5–6, pp. 963–979

Barker, Rodney, *Legitimating Identities: The Self-Presentation of Rulers and Subjects*, (Cambridge, 2001); idem, 'Hooks and Hands, Interests and Enemies: Political Thinking as Political Action', in *Political Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 2, (2000), pp. 223–238

Barkey, Karen, 'The Ottoman Empire (1299–1923): The Bureaucratization of Patrimonial Authority', in *Empires and Bureaucracy in World History: From Late Antiquity to the Twentieth Century*, eds. Peter Crooks and Timothy H. Parsons, (Cambridge, 2016)

Bashir, Shahzad, 'The Origins and Rhetorical Evolution of the Term Qizilbāsh in Persianate Literature' in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 57, (2014), pp. 364-391

Bates, Michael, 'Methodology in Islamic Numismatics', *As-Sikka: The Online Journal of the Islamic Coins Group* 2.3 [accessed 27/05/2022]

Bayāt, Mohammad-Ḥoseyn, 'Pir-e Moghān, negāhi naqd-guneh', in *Ketāb-e Māh-e Din*, Vol. 10, (1998), pp. 12–15

Beatrice F. Manz, 'Iranian Elites under the Timurids', in *Trajectory of State Formation*, pp. 257–282; idem, 'Tamerlane's Career and its Uses', in *Journal of World History*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2002), pp. 1–25; idem, 'The Empire of Tamerlane as an Adaptation of the Mongol Empire: An answer to David Morgan, "The Empire of Tamerlane: An Unsuccessful Re-Run of the Mongol State?"', in *Journal of the royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, Vol. 26, No. 1–2, (2016), pp. 281–291

Bedos-Rezak, B.M., *When Ego was Imago: Signs of Identity in the Middle Ages*, (Leiden and Boston, 2011), pp. 109–159.

Biran, Michael, 'The Mongol Imperial Space: From Universalism to Glocalisation', in *The Limits of Universal Rule: Eurasian Empires Compared*, eds. Yuri Pines, Michal Biran, and Jörg Rüpke, (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 231–235

Blair, Sheila S., ‘Timurid Signs of Sovereignty’, in *Oriente Moderno*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (1996), pp. 551–576

Bold, Bat-Ochir, *Mongolian Nomadic Society: A Reconstruction of the Medieval History of Mongolia*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2001)

Bosworth, C.E., and Darley-Doran, R.E., ‘Sikka’, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, (Leiden, 1997), Vol. 9, pp. 591–599

Buehler, Arthur F. *Sufi Heirs of the Prophet: The Indian Naqshbandiyya and the Rise of the Mediating Sufi Shaykh*, (Columbia, 2008)

Burak, Guy, ‘The Second Formation of Islamic Law: The Post- Mongol Context of the Ottoman Adoption of a School of Law’, in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (2013), 589–599

Carlyle, Thomas, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*, (n.p., 1841)

Christensen, Peter, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environment in the History of the Middle East, 500 B.C. to A.D. 1500*, (Odense, 1993)

Clark, Larry V., ‘The Theme of Revenge in the Secret History of the Mongols’, in *Aspects of Altaic Civilization II*, ed. Larry Clark and Paul Draghi (Bloomington, Indiana, 1978), pp. 33–57

Crossley, Pamela K., ‘Military Patronage and Hodgson’s Genealogy of State Centralisation in Early Modern Eurasia’, in *Islam and World History: The Ventures of Marshall Hodgson*, eds. Edmund Burke III and Robert J. Mankin, (Chicago and London, 2018), pp. 102–116

Dabbashi, Hamid, ‘Taʿziyeh as Theatre of Protest, in *The Drama Review: A Journal of Performance Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (2005), 91–99

Dale, Stephen F., *The Muslim Empires of the Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*, (Cambridge, 2009); idem, ‘A Safavid Poet in the Heart of Darkness: The Indian Poems of Ashraf Mazandarani’, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, (2003), pp. 197–212

Danner, V., ‘Arabic Literature in Iran’, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. II, Fasc. 3, (1986), pp. 237–243

Darling, Linda, *A History of Social Justice and Political Power in the Middle East: The Circle of Justice from Mesopotamia to Globalization* (New York, 2013)

Daryaee, Touraj, ‘The Idea of the Sacred Land of Eranshahr’, in *Persianism in Antiquity*, eds. Rolf Strootman and Miguel John Versluys, (Stuutgart, 2017), pp. 393–399

Daryaee, Touraj, and Rezakhani, Khodadad, ‘The Sasanian Empire’, in *King of the Seven Climes: A History of the Ancient Iranian World (3000 BCE–651CE)*, ed. Touraj Daryaee, (Irvine, 2017), pp. 155–198

Davies, Brian, *Empire and Military Revolution in Eastern Europe*, (London and New York, 2011)

Dāvudi, Ḥoseyn, ‘Asnād-e khāndan-i Kalāntari-ye Sistān’, in *Barresiha-ye Tārikhi*, Vol. 4, No. 5–6, (1970), pp. 1–34

Dumolyn, Jan, and Steenbergen, Jo Van, ‘Studying Rulers and States across Fifteenth-Century Western Eurasia’, in *Trajectories of State Formation*, ed. Jo Van Steenbergen, (Leiden, 2020), pp. 88–155

Durand-Guedy, David, *Iranian Elites and Turkish Rulers: A History of Iṣfahān in the Saljūq Period*, (London and New York, 2010)

Ebrāhimi, Ḥoseyn, and Rādmanesh, Moḥammad-Kāẓem, ‘Maẕhab-e Nāder Shāh’ in Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh, Vol. 9, No. 34, (2014), pp. 1–24

Eṣfehāni, Moḥammad-Mehdi b. Moḥammad-Reżā, *Neṣf-e Jahān fi Taʿrif-e Eṣfehān*, ed. Manuchehr Sotudeh, (Tehran, 1990)

Fairey, Jack, ‘Southwest Asia, 1300–1800: Ottomans, Safavids, and the Turco-Persianate Imperial tradition’, in *Empire in Asia: A New Global History*, Vol. 1, eds. Jack Fairey and Brian P. Farrell, (London, 2018), pp. 107–140

Faridi, Moḥammad, Maʿṣumeh Qareh-Dāghi, Maqṣud-ʿAli Ṣādeqi, and Maniĵeh Kāẓemi Rāshed, ‘Nāder Shāh, mashruʿiyat va shureshha-ye ejtemāʿi 1726–1740’ in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 8, No. 15, (2017), pp. 143–175

Farrokh-Neĵād, Malek-Moḥammad, and Fallāḥ, Maniĵeh, ‘Paĵuheshi dar qalamro-ye joghrāfiāyi Kayāniān va Shāhnāmeh’, in *Tafsir o Taḥlil-e Motun-e Zabān va Adabiāt-e Fārsi*, Vol. 8, No. 28, (2016), pp. 129–142

Fatḥollāhpur, Parviz, ‘Tashayoʿ dar dowreh-ye Nāder Shāh Afshār’, in *Shiʿeh-Shenāsi*, Vol. 4, No. 16, (2007), pp. 57–96

Fatḥollāhpur, Parviz, ‘Tashayyoʿ dar dowreh-ye Nāder Shāh Afshār’, in *Shi’eh Shenāsi*, Vol. 16, (2006), pp. 57–96

Fayyāẓ Anush, Abul-Ḥasan, ‘Padideh-ye Rostam ol-Tavārikh’, in *Taḥqiqāt-e Tārikh-e Ejtemāʿi*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2011), pp. 97–122

Fischel, Roy, *Local States in an Imperial World: Identity, Society and Politics in the Early Modern Deccan*, (Edinburgh, 2020)

Fletcher, Joseph, ‘Turco-Mongolian Monarchic Tradition in the Ottoman Empire’, in *Harvard Ukrainian Studies*, Vol. 3/4, No. 1, (1979–1980), pp. 236–251

Floor, Willem, and Javadi, Hasan, ‘The Role of Azerbaijani Turkish in Safavid Iran’, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 46, No. 4, (2013), pp. 569–581

Floor, Willem, *The Afghan Occupation of Persia 1721–1729*, (Paris, 1998); idem, *A Fiscal History of Iran in the Safavid and Qajar Periods 1500–1925*, (New York, 1998); idem, *Safavid Government Institutions*, (Costa Mesa, CA, 2001); idem, ‘Persian Economy in the Eighteenth Century’, in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), pp. 125–146; ‘Khelʿat’, in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2017), pp. 226–229; idem, ‘The Iranian Navy in the Gulf during the Eighteenth Century’, in Iranian Studies, Vol. 20, No. 1, (1987), pp. 31–53

Foruzāni, Seyyed ʿAbol-Qāsem, ‘Nāder Shāh Afshār dar bārgāh-e Aḥmadi’, in *Faṣlnāmeh-ye ʿElmi-Paĵuheshi-ye Shiʿe Shenāsi*, Vol. 38, (2012), pp. 229–254

Fragner, Bert G., ‘The Concept of Regionalism in Historical research on Central Asia and Iran’ in *Studies on Central Asia in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. Devin DeWease (2001), pp. 344–345; idem, ‘Ilkhanid Rule and its Contributions to Iranian Political Culture’, in *Beyond the legacy of Genghis Khan*, ed. Linda Komaroff, (Leiden, 2013), pp. 68–82

Geertz, Clifford, ‘Centres, Kings, and Charisma: Reflections on the Symbolics of Power’, in *Rites of Power: Symbolism, Ritual, and Politics since the Middle Ages*, ed. Sean Wilentz, (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 13–38

Ghafuri, ʿAli, *Tārikh-e Janghā-ye Irān: Az Mādhā tā be Emruz*, (Tehran, 2009)

Ghereghlou, Kioumars, ‘A Forgotten Money Heist: The 1746 Mission of Nadir Shah’s Chief Merchant in Russia Revisited’, in *Iran*, (https://doi.org/10.1080/05786967.2020.1829983);

idem, review of *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, by Rudi Matthee, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 47, (2015), pp. 815–818

Giunta, Roberta, and Allegranzi, Viola, 'Ghaznavid, Qarakhanid, and Seljuq Monumental Inscriptions and the Development of Royal Propaganda', in *The Seljuqs and their Successors*, ed. Sheila Canby, Deniz Beyazit and Martina Rugiadi, (Edinburgh, 2020), pp. 113–128

Gnoli, Gherardo, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origins*, (Leiden, 1989)

Golden, Peter B., 'Turks and Iranians: An Historical Sketch', in *Turkic-Iranian Contact Areas: Historical and Linguistic Aspects*, eds. Lars Johanson and Christiane Bulut, (Wiesbaden, 2006), pp. 17–38

Gommans, Jos, 'The Warband in the Making of Eurasian Empires', in *Prince, Pen, and Sword: Eurasian Perspectives*, eds. Maaike van Berkel and Jeroen Duindam, (Leiden, 2018), pp. 297–383

Good, Peter, *The East India Company in Persia: Trade and Cultural Exchange in the Eighteenth Century*, (London, 2022)

Gordon, Stewart, 'Robes of honor: A "transactional" kingly ceremony', in *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. 33, No. 3 (1996), 227–242; idem, 'Conclusions', in *Robes of Honour: Khil'at in Pre-Colonial and Colonial India, ed. Stewart Gordon*, (Oxford and New York, 2003), pp. 140–146

Güngörürler, Selim, 'Islamic Discourse in Ottoman-Safavid Peacetime Diplomacy after 1049/1639', in *Historicizing Sunni Islam in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1450-c. 1750*, (Leiden, 2020), pp. 479–500

Gustafson, James, and Speer, James, 'Environmental Crises at the End of Safavid History', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1, (2022), pp. 57–79.

Ḥāfeẓ-Niā, Moḥammad-Reẓā, and Qilozādeh, ʿAli Vali, 'Dowlat-e Ṣafavi va Hoviyat-e Irāni', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Melli*, Vol. 32, No. 8, No. 4, (2007)

Hagen, Gottfried, 'Legitimacy and World Order', in *Legitimizing the Order: The Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power*, eds. Hakan T. Karateke and Maurus Reinkowski, (Leiden, 2005), pp. 55–84

Hinz, W., *Irans Aufstieg zum Nationalstaat im funfzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1936)

Hochedlinger, Michael, ‘The Hapsburg Monarchy: From “Military-Fiscal State” to “Militarisation”’, in *The Military-Fiscal State in Eighteenth-Century Europe*, ed. Christopher Storrs, (Surrey and Burlington, 2009), pp. 55–94

Hodgson, Marshall G. S., *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, 3 Vols. (Chicago, 1974)

Hodous, Florence, ‘Inner Asia, 1100s–1405: The Making of Chinggisid Eurasia’, in *Empire in Asia*, pp. 15–42

Hoelscher, S., and Alderman, D.H., ‘Memory and Place: Geographies of a Critical Relationship’, in *Social and Cultural Geography*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (2004), pp. 347–356

Hook, Sidney, *The Hero in History: A Study in Limitation and Possibility*, (New York, 1943)

Hope, Michael, *Power, Politics, and Tradition in the Mongol Empire and the Īlkhānate of Iran*, (Oxford, 2016)

Ḥoseyni, Seyyed Moḥsen, and Nikju, Susan, ‘Maḥannatnāmeh-ye Afghān’, in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 4, No. 4, (2019), pp. 48–76

Ḥoseyn-Khāni, Elhām, and Jomʿehzādeh, Javād Emām, ‘Tajziyeh va taḥlil-e ravābeṭ-e Irān bā bigānegān dar dowrān-e Kayāniān bar pāyeh-ye Shāhnāmeh’, in *Adab-e Ḥemāsi*, Vol. 15, No. 2/28, (2019), pp. 95–120

Hughes, Lindsey, *Russian in the Age of Peter the Great*, (New Haven and London, 1998)

İnalcık, Halil, ‘The Ottoman Succession and Its Relation to the Turkish Concept of Sovereignty’, in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, (Bloomington, 1993)

Ivanics, Maria, ‘The Military Co-operation of the Crimean Khanate with the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries’, in *European Tributary*, pp. 279–291

Izadyār, Āsiyeh, ‘Barresi-ye eqteṣād-e Irān dar dowreh-ye Afshāriyeh’, in *Faṣlnāmeh-ye Revāyat-e Tārikh*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (2018), pp. 1–12

Jaʿfari Dehqi, Maḥmud, ‘Naqsh-e sekke-shenāsi dar bāzshenāsi-ye tārikh va farhang-e Irān’, in *Ketāb-e Māh: Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, Vol. 178, (2013), pp. 20–25

Jaʿfariān, Rasul, *Ṣafaviyeh dar ʿArṣeh-ye Din, Farhang, va Siāsat*, 3 Vols., (Qom, 2000); idem, ‘Naẓarieh-ye eteṣāl-e dowlat-e Ṣafaviyeh bā dowlat-e Ṣāḥeb ol-Zamān’, in *Payām-e Bahārestān*, Vol. 3, No. 11, (2011), pp. 735–780

Jaʿfariān, Rasul, and Aḥmad-Reẓā Khežri, and Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn Rafiḥi, ‘ʿAbdollāh Suwaidi va revāyati Salafi az kongereh-ye taqrib-e Nāder Shāh Afshār dar Najaf’, in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Tārikh-e Eslām*, Vol. 9, No. 32, (2017), pp. 53–71

Jayapalan, N., *History of India 1206–1773*, (New Delhi, 2001)

Karateke, Hakan T., ‘Legitimizing the Ottoman Sultanate: A Framework for Historical Analysis’, in *Legitimizing the Order*, pp. 13–54

Kāshāni, ʿAli S. and Shaʿbāni, Reżā, ‘Taʾsir-e siāsathā-ye vaqfi-ye Nāder Shāh va ʿAli Shāh Afshār bar kāhesh yā roshd-e mowqufāt-e Āstān-e Qods-e Rażavi’, in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh*, Vol. 9, No. 34, (2014), pp. 79–98

Kāshāni, ʿAli S., and Kāẓem J. Kalāteh, ‘Mowqufāt-e motavaliān-e Āstān-e Qods-e Rażavi az Ṣafaviyeh tā pāyān-e Qājāriyeh’, in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 1, (2013), pp. 62–98

Kashani-Sabet, Firoozeh, ‘Colorblind or Blinded by Color? Race, Ethnicity, and Identity in Iran’, in *Sites of Pluralism: Community Politics in the Middle East*, ed. First Oruc, (London, 2019), pp. 153–180

Kastritsis, ‘Tales of Viziers and Wine: Interpreting Early Ottoman Narratives of State Centralisation’, in *Trajectories of State Formation across Fifteenth-Century Islamic West-Asia*, ed. Jo Van Steenbergen, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 224–245

Kennedy, Hugh, ‘Survival of Iranianness’, in *The Rise of Islam*, eds. V. S. Curtis and S. Stewart (London, 2009), pp. 13–29; idem, *The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East from the 6th to the 11th Century*, 3rd edition, (Oxford and New York, 2016)

Khodāyi, Moḥammad-Zamān, Karimi, Ṣādeq and Mehdi Yār-Moḥammadi, ‘Negāhi beh seyr-e taḥavvol v namāyandegi-ye boteh va jeqqah’, in *Tāḥqiqāt-e Farhangi*, Vol. 4, No. 2, (2008), pp. 109–132

Khoshkhoosani, Pouye, ‘Written Representation of Temporal Power in Safavid Material Culture’, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 1–2, (2021), pp. 3–40

Kia, Mana, *Persianate Selves: Memories of Place and Origin Before Nationalism*, (Stanford, 2020)

Kock, Ebba, ‘The Mughal Emperor as Solomon, Majnun, and Orpheus, or the Album as a Think Tank for Allegory’, in *Muqarnas*, Vol. 27, (2010), pp. 277–311

Kołodziejczyk, Dariusz, ‘What is Inside and What is Outside? Tributary States in Ottoman Politics’, in *The European Tributary States of the Ottoman Empire in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, eds. Gábor Kármán and Lovro Kunčević, (Leiden, 2013), pp. 421–432

Lambton, Anne, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia: A Study of Land Tenure and Land Revenue Administration*, (London, 1953); Ann Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, trans. Manuchehr Amiri, (Tehran, 1339 Sh./1921); idem, ‘wakf (III in Persia)’, in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, (Brill, 1982-2002)

Landau, Jacob M., *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation*, (Bloomington, 1995)

Lārudi, Nurollāh, *Nāder: Pesar-e Shamshir*, (Tehran, 1991)

Lee, Joo-Yup, ‘The Historical meaning of the Term Turk and the Nature of Turkic Identity of the Chinggisid and Timurid Elites in Post-Mongol Central Asia’, in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1–2, (2016), pp. 101–132

Lockhart, Laurence, *The Fall of the Safavi Dynasty and the Afghan Occupation of Persia*, (London, 1958); idem, *Nadir Shah: A Critical Study Based Mainly Upon Contemporary Sources*, (London, 1938); idem, ‘Nādir Shāh’s Campaigns in ʿOmān, 1733–1744’, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (1935), pp. 157–171

Malik, Jamal, *Islam in South Asia: A Short History*, (Leiden, 2008)

Maʿmuri, ʿAli, ‘Zaminehā-ye Tārikhi-ye Ketāb-e Kāfi bā tekiyeh bar janbehā-ye kalāmi’, in *Tārikh-Paĵuhān*, Vol. 2, (2005), pp. 137–146

Marashi, Afshin, *Nationalising Iran: Culture, Power, and the State 1870–1940*, (Seattle and London, 2008)

Markiewicz, Christopher, *Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam*, (Cambridge, 2009)

Márquez, Xavier, ‘The Mechanism of Cult Production: An Overview’, in *Ruler Personality Cults from Empires to nation-States and Beyond: Symbolic Patters and Interactional Dynamics*, ed. Kirill Postoutenko and Darin Stephanov, (New York, 2021), pp. 21–45

Matin-Asgari, Afshin, ‘The Academic Debate on Iranian Identity: Nation and Empire Entangled’ in *Iran Facing Others*, ed. Abbas Amanat and Farzin Vejdani, (2012), pp. 171–190

Matthee, Rudi, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the fall of Isfahan*, (New York, 2012); idem, 'Zar-o Zur: Gold and Force', in *Comparing Modern Empires: Imperial Rule and Decolonisation in the Changing World Order*, ed. Uyama Tomohiko, (Sapporo, 2018), pp. 35–64; idem, 'Was Safavid Iran an Empire', in *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 53, (2010), pp. 233–265; idem, 'The Idea of Iran in the Safavid Period: Dynastic Pre-eminence and Urban Pride', in *The Idea of Iran: Safavid Persia in the Age of Empires*, ed. Charles Melville, (London, 2021), pp. 157–184; idem, 'The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids', in *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1 and 2, (2003), pp. 157–173

Matthee, Rudi, Willem Floor, and Patrick Clawson, *The Monetary History of Iran: From the Safavids to the Qajars*, (London, and New York, 2013)

Maʿṭufi, Assadollāh, *Tārikh-e Chahār-Hezār Sāleh-ye Artesh-e Irān*, 2 Vols., (Tehran, 2003)

Meisami, Julie Scott, 'Places in the Past: The Poetics/Politics of Nostalgia', in *Edebiyât*, Vol. 8, (1998), pp. 63–106

Meskoob, Shahrokh, *Iranian National Identity and the Persian Language*, (Washington, DC, 1992)

Mikaberidze, Alexander, *Conflict and Conquest in the Islamic World: A Historical Encyclopedia*, (Santa Barbara, 2011)

Mir-Sharifi, Seyyed-ʿAli, *Sarnevesht-e Asir dar Eslām*, (Tehran, 2016)

Mitchell, Colin P., *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion, and Rhetoric*, (London and New York, 2009)

Moazzen, Maryam, *Formation of a Religious Landscape: Shi'i Higher Learning in Safavid Iran*, (Leiden, 2018)

Moḥammad-Amin Riāḥi, 'Moqaddameh', in Moḥammad-Kāẓem Marvi, *ʿĀlam Ārā-ye Nāderi*, (Tehran, 1985), three–ninety-five

Moin, A. Azfar, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*, (New York, 2012)

Momen, Moojan, *An Introduction to Shi'i Islam*, (New Haven and London, 1985)

Moqtader, Gholāmḥoseyn, *Nabardhā-ye Bozorg-e Nāder Shāh*, (Tehran, 2004)

Moreen, V.B., ‘The Status of Religious Minorities in Safavid Iran 1617–61’, in *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2, (1981), pp. 119-134

Morgan, David, ‘The “Great Yāsā of Chinghiz Khān” and Mongol Law in the Ilkhānate’, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 1, (1986), pp. 163–176

Morimoto, Kazuo, ‘Introduction: Kingship and Political Legitimacy in the Persianate World’, in *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 12, (2019), pp. 175–180

Mortażavi, Seyyed Khodāyār, Ḥoseyn-Ābādi, Moṣṭafā Reẓāyi, and Ardavān Qarāʾati, ‘Goftmān-e Tashayyoʿ va barsāzi-e hoviyat-e melli dar Irān-e ʿaṣr-e Ṣafavi’, in *Paĵuheshhā-ye Siāsi-ye Jahān-e Eslām,* Vol. 5, No. 3, (2015), pp. 157–183

Muhammad, Niaz, ‘Khushal Khan Khattak’s Educational Philosophy’, PhD Diss., (Qurtuba University, Peshawar, 2009)

Nadim, Zakki Mashhadi, ‘Ash’ār-e Nadim darbāreh-ye fetne-ye Afghān’, in Rasul Jaʿfariān’s *Ṣafaviyeh*, Vol. III, pp. 1297–1308

Najāriān, Moḥammad-Reżā, and Fāṭemeh Shir-Salimiān, ‘Barresi-ye mohrhā-ye pādshāhān va shāhzādegān az pish khaṭṭi tā Sāsāni’, in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Irāni*, Vol. 12, No. 23, pp. 165–183

Nasr, Hossein, ‘Religion in Safavid Persia’, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 7, No. ½, (1974), pp. 271–286

Nayyeri, Moḥammad-Yusof, ‘Ẕahabiyeh’, in *Dāneshnāmeh-ye Jahān-e Eslām*, Vol. 19, (2014)

Neumann, Iber V., and Wigen, Einar, ‘The Legacy of Eurasian Nomadic Empires: Remnants of the Mongol Imperial Tradition’, in *Legacies of Empire*, ed. Sandra Halperin and Ronen Palan, pp. 99–127

Newman, Andrew, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, (New York, 2009); idem, ‘“Great men”, “decline”, and empire: Safavid Studies and a way forward’, in *Empires: Elements of Cohesion and Signs of Decay*, Vol. 2, (Vienna, 2015), pp. 45–58; idem, ‘Sufism and anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: The Authorship of the Ḥadīqat al-Shīʿa Revisited’, in *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies*, Vol. 37, (1999), pp. 95–108

Orsini, Francesca, ‘Whose Amnesia? Literary Modernity in Multilingual South Asia’, in *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, Vol. 2, (2015), pp 266–272

Orsini, Francesca, Sara Marzagora, and Karima Laachir, 'Multilingual Locals and the Literary Circulation before Colonialism', in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, Vol. 39, No. 1, (2019), pp. 63–67

Özel, M. Nureddin, 'Ambassadors, Spies, Captives, Merchants, and Travellers: Ottoman Information Networks in the East, 1736–1747', MA Thesis, (İstanbul Şehir University, 2018)

Panaite, Viorel, 'Power Relationships in the Ottoman Empire: Sultans and the Tribute-Paying Princes of Wallachia and Moldovia (16th–18th Centuries)', in *Revue des Etudes Sud-est Européennes*, Vols. 37–38, (1999–2000)

Parsa, M.A.H., 'Iran's State Literature under Afghan Rule (1722–1729)', in *Professional Mobility in Islamic Societies (700–1750): New Concepts and Approaches*, ed. Mohamad El-Merheb, and Mehdi Berriah, (Leiden, 2021), pp. 186–206

Perry, J.R., 'Ḥazin Lāhiji', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 97–98; idem, 'The Last Safavids 1722–1773', in *Iran*, Vol. 9, (1971), pp. 59–69; idem, 'The Historical Role of Turkish in Relation to Persian of Iran', in *Iran and the Caucasus*, Vol. 5, (2001), pp. 193–200; idem, *Karim Khan Zand*, (Oxford, 2006)

Pickett, James, 'Nadir Shah's Peculiar Central Asian Legacy: Empire, Conversion Narratives, and the Rise of New Scholarly Dynasties', in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 48, (2016), pp. 491–510

Qoddusi, Moḥammad-Ḥoseyn, *Nādernāmeh*, (Tehran, 1960)

Quinn, Shohleh, 'Notes on Timurid Legitimacy in Three Safavid Chronicles', in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (1998), pp. 149–158

Quinn, Shohleh, *Persian Historiography across Empires: The Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals*, (Cambridge, 2021)

Rachewiltz, Igor de, 'Some Reflections on Činggis Qan's Jasar', in *East Asian History*, Vol. 6, (1993), pp. 91–104

Raḥmati, Moḥsen, 'Ravābeṭ-e khan-neshin-e Khiveh bā dowlat-e markazi-ye Irān az soquṭ-e Ṣafaviyeh tā marg-e Nāder Shāh' in *Paĵuheshnāmeh-ye Tārikh*, Vol. 4, No. 13, pp. 47–59

Rappaport, Roy, *Ritual and Religion in the Making of Humanity*, (Cambridge, 1999)

Reis, Leonhard E., 'Coins and Currency', in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Josef W. Meri, Vol. 1 (New York and London, 2006), pp. 162–164

Reżāyi-Manesh, Behruz, ‘Tārikh-e edāri-ye Irān dar ʿaṣr-e Ṣafavi’, in *Ketāb-e Māh-e Tārikh va Joghrāfiā*, No. 153, (2011), pp. 12–19

Ritter, Markus, ‘Monumental Epigraphy in Iran’, in *Eurasian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 1–2, (2008), pp. 13–37

Rizvi, Sajjad, ‘Polemics and Persecution at the Mughal Court: a Shiʿi Debate at the Time of Akbar’, paper presented at Aligarh Historians’ Society Workshop at Indian History Congress 2015

Rizvi, Sajjad, ‘Whatever happened to the School of Isfahan?’, in *Crisis, Collapse, Militarism and Civil War: The History and Historiography of 18th Century Iran*, ed. Michael Axworthy, (New York, 2018), pp. 71– 96

Rowe, William T., *China’s Last Empire: The Great Qing*, (London, 2009)

Roy, Kaushik, *Military Transition in Early Modern Asia, 1400-1750: Cavalry, Guns, Governments and Ships*, (London, 2014)

Runciman, W.G., ‘Empire as a Topic in Comparative Sociology’, in *Tributary Empires in World History*, eds. Peter Fibiger Bang and C.A. Baylay, (New York, 2011), pp. 99–107

Sabéran, Foad, *Nader Chah: La Folie au Pouvoir Dans L'Iran du XVIII Siècle*, (Paris, 2013)

Saçmali, Muhammet Habib, ‘Sunni-Shiite Political Relations in the First Half of the Eighteenth Century and Early Modern Ottoman Universal Caliphate’, PhD Dissertation, (UC Davis, 2021)

Sadeghi, Ali, ‘Epic and National Self-Consciousness: The Case of the Shahnameh’, in *International Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (2014), pp. 45–72

Ṣādeqi, Maqṣud-ʿAli, and Manîjeh Kāẓemi Rāshed, ‘Nāder Shāh, mashruʿiyat va shureshha-ye ejtemāʿi 1726–1740’ in *Tārikhnāmeh-ye Irān baʿd az Eslām*, Vol. 8, No. 15, (2017)

Ṣadri-Niā, Bāqer, ‘Paĵuheshi dar bāb-e eṣṭelāḥ-e mamālek-e maḥruseh-ye Irān’, in *Irān Shenākht*, Vol. 1, (1995), pp. 65–87

Sardādvar, Abutorāb, *Tārikh-e Siyāsi va Neẓāmi-ye Dowrān-e Nāder Shāh Afshār*, (Tehran, 2010)

Sariyannis, Marinos, ‘Ruler and State, State and Society in Ottoman Political Thought’, in *Turkish Historical Review*, Vol. 4, (2013), pp. 96–104

Sarkar, Jadunath, *Nadir Shah in India*, (Calcutta, 1925)

Savory, Roger, *Iran under the Safavids* (Cambridge, 1980); idem, 'The Safavid Administrative System', in *The Cambridge History of Iran, Vol. 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods*, ed. Peter Jackson and Laurance Lockhart, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 351–372

Scheidel, Walter, 'Chapter 1: Studying the State', in *The Oxford Handbook of the State in the Ancient Near East and Mediterranean*, eds. P.F. Bang and W. Scheidel, (Oxford, 2013), pp. 5–57

Sefatgol, Mansur, 'Rethinking Safavid Iran: Cultural and Political Identity of Iranian Society during the Safavid Period', in *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, No. 72, (2006), pp. 5–16; idem, 'Safavid Administration of Avqāf: Structure, Changes, and Functions, 1077–1135/1666–1722', in *Society and Culture in the Early Modern Middle East: Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew J. Newman, (Leiden & Boston, 2003), pp. 397–408; idem, 'Moḥammad Shafiʿ Ṭehrāni: Zamāneh, Zandegi, va Āṡār', in *Merāt-e Vāredāt*, (Tehran, 2004), pp. 9–70

Seyfoddini, Ḥoseyn, 'Eḥyāʾ va nowzāyi-ye hoviyat-e Irāni: barrasi moqāyesehi Irān-e Sāsāni va Ṣafavi', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Melli*, Vol. 16, No. 3, (2015)

Seyyed-Yazdi, Zahrā, 'Shāh Esmāʿil Ṣafavi va Shāhnāmeh-ye Ṣafavi', in *Moṭāleʿāt-e Irāni*, Vol. 15, No. 30, (2016)

Shaʿbāni, Reżā, *Tārikh-e Ejtemāʿi-ye Irān dar ʿAsr-e Afshāriyeh*, 2 Vols., (Tehran, 1990)

Shahbazi, Alireza Shapur, 'The History of the Idea of Iran', in *Birth of the Persian Empire*, ed. Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, (London, 2005), pp. 100–111

Shamim, ʿAli-Aṣghar, *Az Nāder tā Kudetā-ye Reżā Khān-e Mirpanj*, (Tehran, 1937)

Singh Chann, Naindeep, 'Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān' in *Iran and the Caucasus*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2009), pp. 93–110

Spilman, *A Journey Through Russia into Persia*, (n.p., n.d.)

Steenbergen, Jo Van, 'From Temür to Selim: Trajectories of Turko-Mongol State Formation in Islamic West-Asia's Long Fifteenth Century', in *Trajectories of State Formation*, pp. 27–87

Straub, Jürgen, ‘Personal and Collective Identity: A Conceptual Analysis’ tr. Anthony Nassar, in *Identities: Time, Difference, and Boundaries*, ed. Heidrun Friese, (New York, 2002), pp. 56–76

Subtelny, Maria E., ‘The Binding Pledge (*Möchälgä*): A Chinggisid Practice’, in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell, (London and New York, 2011), pp. 9–29; idem, ‘Administration and the Delegation of Authority in Temur’s Dominions’, in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3, (1976), pp. 206–207; idem, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*, (Leiden and Boston, 2007)

Subtelny, Maria E., *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*, (Leiden and Boston, 2007)

Ṭalāyi, Zahrā, ‘Taʾammoli dar eṣṭelāḥ-e sarkā-e feyż āṡār’, in *Pājuheshnāmeh-ye Moṭāleʿāt-e Asnādi va Ārshivi*, Vol. 4, (2019), pp. 102–122

Tavaḥḥodi, Kalim, *Nāder-e Ṣāḥebqerān*, (Mashhad, 2013)

Tetley, G.E., *The Ghaznavid and Seljuq Turks: Poetry*, (London and New York, 2009)

Tezcan, Baki, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (New York, 2010)

Tezcan, Baki, *The Second Ottoman Empire: Political and Social Transformation in the Early Modern World*, (Cambridge, 2010)

Tikhomirov, Alexey, ‘Father if the People, Face of the Nation: The Premodern and Modern Foundations of Ruler Personality Cults’, in *Ruler Personality Cults*, pp. 120–142

Truschke, Audrey, ‘Dangerous Debates: Jain responses to theological challenges at the Mughal court’, in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 5, (2015), pp. 1311–1344

Tuan, Yi-Fu, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, (Minneapolis, MN, 1977)

Tucker, Ernest S., *Nadir Shah’s Quest for Legitimacy in Post-Safavid Iran*, (Florida, 2006); idem, ‘Nadir Shah and the Ja’fari Maddhab Reconsidered’ in *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 1/4, (1994), pp. 163–179

Ursinus, Michael, ‘The Transformation of the Ottoman Fiscal Regime c. 1600–1850’, in *The Ottoman World*, ed. Christine Woodhead, (New York, 2011), pp. 423–435

Vaglieri, L. Veccia, ‘Khaybar’, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd edition*, IV, pp. 1137–1143

Wilde, Andreas, and Allaeva, Nigora, ‘Lost in Khvārazm: On the Interdependence of Power and Conflict in the Example of Nādir Shāh’s Khīva Campaign(s)’, in *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1–2, (2016), pp. 77–100

Woods, John E., *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire*, (Salt Lake City, 1999); idem, ‘Timur’s Genealogy’, in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, eds. Michel M. Mazzaoui and Vera B. Moreen (Salt Lake City, 1990), pp. 85–125

Yildirim, Riza, ‘In the Name of Hosayn’s Blood: The Memory of Karbala as Ideological Stimulus to the Safavid Revolution’, in *Journal of Persianate Studies*, Vol. 8, (2015), pp. 127–154

Zia-Ebrahimi, Reza, *The Emergence of Iranian Nationalism: Race and the Politics of Dislocation*, (New York, 2016), pp. 18–40