

Gifts in Motion: Ottoman-Safavid Cultural Exchange, 1501-1618

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for Sena

## Abstract

Between the sixteenth and mid-seventeenth centuries, the Shiite Safavids of Iran and the Sunni Ottomans of Turkey—two of the greatest Islamic empires in history—developed a complex relationship in which tenuous peace alternated with bloody conflict, often with dizzying speed. This dissertation is the first systematic study of this relationship from the perspective of visual culture, and focuses specifically on the objects exchanged, through gifting, by the royal courts of these two empires. These objects—ranging from lavishly illustrated books and exquisite silk carpets to richly embroidered tents, chandeliers and even live birds of prey—enriched the visual culture of each court, and led to the formulation of two distinctive artistic canons with a lasting legacy in the artistic traditions of each empire. This study aims to deepen our understanding of this cultural exchange and the role it played in the relations between these two rival empires. It argues that the movement of luxurious objects functioned as a primary mechanism for the expression of competitive interaction between the two courts.

This thesis focuses primarily on gifts received by Ottoman sultans from Safavid shahs from the early sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century. Specifically, the exchange of gifts between the two courts is explored at certain key moments in the development of their relationship, each of which forms a separate chapter in the dissertation. Through an examination of the elaborate ceremonies that typically accompanied the exchange of objects at these moments, I investigate the ritual use of material culture to project both political power and cultural influence in the early modern world.



The four chapters below are organized in rough chronological order, with each one focusing on a specific exchange or a set of ceremonial exchanges that provide visual and material clues about how objects functioned in the early modern Muslim world. Each case study takes as its unit of analysis a group of routinely exchanged objects on the one hand, and one-of-a-kind objects on the other. I examine both the actual gifts exchanged, as well as manuscript paintings depicting and describing their ritual presentation and reception. The textual evidence ranges from treasury records and court chronicles to epistolary sources and first-hand ambassadorial accounts in Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Italian. The purpose of each chapter is thus to understand the potential and actual movement of objects in illuminating the convoluted relationship between two rival empires.

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## INTRODUCTION

In his *Relazione* written to the Venetian Senate in 1578, the envoy to Constantinople, *bailo* Giovanni Correr recorded an anecdote in wide circulation in sixteenth-century Constantinople about a copy of the Qur'an that the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent (r. 1520-66) received as a gift from the contemporary Safavid king, Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-76):

Nor should I fail to mention that which is being said about Sultan Süleyman, who is greatly esteemed and revered by all. They say that once he opened a Qur'an, one of the many sent to him by the king of Persia, who always includes them among the gifts he sends to court, as the Persians profess to be eloquent writers and masters of beautiful miniatures. Within its pages, [Süleyman] found a grain of wheat and immediately put it in his mouth. Then, turning to one of his attendants, he said with a laugh: 'I must be greatly obliged to the king of Persia for allowing me to eat his grain from the comfort of my own home; something that in earlier times I could not have done without a great deal of trouble!'<sup>1</sup>

Correr's account brilliantly captures the strong and significant role that diplomatic gifts played within Ottoman-Safavid cultural exchange throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Diplomatic gifts that moved between the rival courts of the Ottomans and Safavids not only illuminate the cultural and political conditions under

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<sup>1</sup> *Né debbo tacer quello che si racconta in questo proposito di sultan Soliman, l'eseempio del quale è molto stimato e riverito da ogn'uno. Dicono che aprendo un Alcorano statogli portato di Persia, perché quel re nelli presenti che fa sempre ne manda molti, facendo Persiani professione di scriver bene et di far bellissime miniature, vi trovò dentro un grano di frumento, et subito se le porse in bocca; poi, voltosi ad uno che era presente, disse ridendo: 'Grand'obbligo devo havere al re di Persia che mi fa mangiare del suo frumento stando a casa commodamente, che se in altri tempi ne ho voluto mangiare, non ho potuto farlo senza molto travaglio.'* ASVe, Collegio, Relazioni, busta 5, published in *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al Senato, vol. XIV: Constantinopoli, Relazioni inedite (1512-1789)*, ed. Maria Pia Pedani-Fabris (Aldo Ausilio Editore-Bottega D'Erasmus: Padova, 1996), 235-6.

which they were sent and received, but they actively shaped those relations,<sup>2</sup> as this thesis aims to demonstrate.

The Ottoman state, originally founded in the early fourteenth century in western Anatolia, had by the mid-sixteenth century grown into a major Islamic empire. Meanwhile, the neighboring Safavids of Iran— although rising to power only in the early sixteenth century—quickly established themselves as a competitively powerful state whose political and military ambitions were in direct conflict with those of the Ottomans. At times, these conflicting ambitions resulted in outright warfare. At other times, periods of relative peace allowed mutually profitable exchange despite a continuing background of rivalry and mistrust. Religion proved simultaneously to be a source of common ground (a shared adherence to Islam), and conflict (Sunni vs. Shi'ite). It is within the context of this highly charged confessional, political, and military rivalry that I study the movement of objects between the Ottomans and the Safavids.

Anecdotes and stories similar to the one above abound in historical record and in contemporary popular imagination concerning gifts exchanged between Ottoman sultans and Safavid shahs. Safavid and Ottoman historians, as well as foreign observers, some of

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<sup>2</sup> Regarding the agency of gifts, Marcel Mauss wrote: "...the thing given is not inactive. Invested with life, often possessing individuality, it seeks to return to what Hertz called its 'place of origin' or to produce, on behalf of the clan and the native soil from which it sprang, an equivalent to replace it." Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, transl. W.D. Halls (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 2000; reprint London: Routledge, 1990), 13. While Mauss discusses the agency of objects in the context of the receiver's obligation to return gifts, others have focused on objects themselves. See for example, Bill Brown, "Thing Theory," *Critical Inquiry* 28, no.1 (Autumn 2001): 1-22; Mark Osteen, "Introduction: Questions of the Gift," in *The Question of the Gift: Essays across Disciplines*, ed. Mark Osteen (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 1-41; Lorraine Daston, "Speechless," in *Things that Talk: Object Lessons from Art and Science*, ed. Lorraine Daston (New York: Zone Books, 2004), 9-24.

whom participated in the official ceremonies organized for the presentation and reception of these gifts, describe and comment on the gifts by citing current trends and traditions of gift-giving at both courts, and by comparing them to previous groups of gifts received in terms of their amount, rarity and beauty. This way, these gifts were always in conversation with past gifts sent and received.

Correr's account also underscores the appropriateness of conceiving all contact as a form of exchange.<sup>3</sup> There were a disproportionately larger number of Safavid embassies that arrived at the Ottoman court bearing many more gifts than any Ottoman sultan had ever sent the Safavid court throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup> This may at first suggest that Safavid gifts were in fact tribute, a category of objects and money that requires a very different methodology for analysis. However, the idea that Safavid shahs sent gifts as tribute finds little historical proof.<sup>5</sup> In this study, I instead turn to the variety of meanings that gifts accrue for the giver and the receiver. In the above case, the gifting of the copy of the Safavid Qur'an with splendid calligraphy, as observed by Correr,

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<sup>3</sup> Georg Simmel wrote that "every interaction is properly viewed as a kind of exchange. This is true of every conversation, every love (even when required unfavorably), every game, every act of looking one another over." Georg Simmel, *On Individuality and Social Forms: Selected Writings*, ed. Donald E. Levine (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), 43-4.

<sup>4</sup> The gifts dispatched by Ottoman sultans to Safavid shahs were usually sent back with Safavid ambassadors who came on diplomatic missions to the Ottoman court. Ottoman and Safavid sources refer to these in passing and to my knowledge neither has any object been securely identified as an Ottoman gift to the Safavid court, nor are there any extant visual depictions of these gifts or their presentation.

<sup>5</sup> The large variety of terms used to refer to gifts and tribute in Persian, Arabic and Turkish complicates the matter further, for in both Ottoman and Safavid sources, the use of these terms is never consistent. Moreover, these words are often used in pairs, e.g. "tributes and gifts" (*pişkeş ü hedāyā*), or "rarities and gifts" (*tuhfa u hadāyā*). See, for example, Ann Lambton, "Pishkash: Present or Tribute?," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 57, no. 1 (1994): 145-58; Fahmida Suleman, "Gifts and Gift-Giving," in *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Joseph W. Meri (New York: Routledge, 2006), 295-6.

underscores the superior skills of artists commissioned by Safavid shahs. At the same time, the gifting of this particular object by a Safavid shah, declared a heretic by the Ottoman sultan, should be seen as demanding religious recognition. But Süleyman completely ignores these aspects, and sidesteps such a reading. Instead, he focuses on the piece of grain stuck in the book. Since crops such as wheat—instead of money—was the basic medium of taxation in the Ottoman land-tenure system, Süleyman suggests that the shah had willfully sent him taxes, or tribute with this gift, something that in the past he had to get from him by force. One of the objectives of my case studies here is to bring to the fore the multiplicity of meanings and associations that gifts generate.

This thesis focuses primarily on gifts received by Ottoman sultans from Safavid shahs from the early sixteenth century to the early seventeenth century. Specifically, I explore the exchange of gifts between the two courts at certain key moments in the development of their relationship, each of which forms a separate chapter in the dissertation. Through an examination of the elaborate ceremonies that typically accompanied the exchange of objects at these moments, I investigate the ritual use of material culture to project both political power and cultural influence in the early modern world.

Within the larger field of comparative early modern cultural studies, recent scholarship has placed a great deal of emphasis on the contact between the “East” and the “West,” stressing in particular the continuous and reciprocal nature of the connections between Europe and the Islamic world. My project shifts the focus to the interaction between individual Islamic empires. Most existing scholarship on Ottoman-Safavid relations has focused on its political and military components, typically portrayed as little

more than an ongoing series of conflicts.<sup>6</sup> Within this framework, the exchange of cultural objects appears to be a routine, peripheral practice that has no actual bearing on military and diplomatic history. I argue, in contrast, that gifts were actors of central importance for the mediation of diplomatic negotiations.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, I treat the formation of Ottoman and Safavid cultural and artistic traditions as intertwined rather than separate and discrete. Building on existing scholarship on both Ottoman and Safavid cultural and artistic traditions, I use diplomatic gifts as a lens to understand the manner in which two distinct artistic canons were constructed as the result of an ongoing competitive dialogue between two imperial powers. Finally, a systematic examination of gift exchange between these courts also promises to enrich our understanding, in more general terms, of the interactive process of imperial self-fashioning in the early modern period.

Modern studies of collecting, gifting, and exchange in the broad disciplines of anthropology, history and art history inform my approach. I take objects and their presentations as vehicles for mediating courtly relations and interactions. The seminal study of Marcel Mauss on the practice of gift giving, as well as more recent studies and

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<sup>6</sup> This trend also speaks to disciplinary boundaries, for in the discipline of history, gifts usually make an appearance marginally, confined to footnotes. In art history, few studies have dealt with Ottoman-Safavid cultural interaction, focusing mainly on works of art that travelled between the two courts (not necessarily through gifting), or works of art produced to be sold to either Ottoman or Safavid patrons. Many recent exhibitions dedicated to gift exchanges among Islamic courts make reference to possible Safavid gifts to the Ottoman court, by nature prioritizing objects that have survived to our time and neglecting those that are no longer extant.

<sup>7</sup> I am inspired by studies on gift exchange within the related fields of Byzantine and early modern French studies such as Natalie Zemon-Davis, *The Gift in Sixteenth Century France* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2000); Anthony Cutler, "Gifts and Gift Exchange as Aspects of the Byzantine, Arab and Related Economies," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 55 (2001): 247-78; Cecily Hilsdale, "Diplomacy by Design: Rhetorical Strategies of the Byzantine Gift" (PhD dissertation, University of Chicago, 2003).

approaches within anthropology have provided a range of theoretical frameworks for me. These include studies on the agency of objects and art, inalienability of objects, reciprocity, the social biography of things, and materiality.<sup>8</sup> As a result, I incorporate a broad array of theoretical concerns about material culture by focusing on a select group of objects exchanged between rival courts, and interpreting both the instrumentality of objects as gifts, and their role in negotiating power.

The four chapters below are organized in rough chronological order, with each one focusing on a specific exchange or a set of ceremonial exchanges that provide visual and material clues about how objects functioned in the early modern Muslim world. Each case study takes as its unit of analysis a group of routinely exchanged objects on the one hand, and one-of-a-kind objects on the other. I examine both the actual gifts exchanged, as well as manuscript paintings depicting and describing their ritual presentation and reception. The textual evidence ranges from treasury records and court chronicles to epistolary sources and first-hand ambassadorial accounts in Ottoman Turkish, Persian and Italian. The purpose of each chapter is thus to understand the potential and actual movement of objects in illuminating the convoluted relationship between two rival

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<sup>8</sup> Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice*, transl. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992); Daniel Miller, ed., *Material Cultures: Why Some Things Matter* (London: UCL Press, 1998). For a technological approach to material culture, see Peter-Paul Verbeek, *What Things Do: Philosophical Reflections on Technology, Agency, And Design* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).

empires.

The opening chapter discusses the ceremonial presentation of the many priceless gifts sent by the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp to the Ottoman sultan Selim II (r. 1566-1574) on the occasion of the latter's enthronement in 1566. The potential of objects to act as active agents in diplomatic negotiations is at the heart of this discussion. While the shah's letter to the Ottoman sultan had an excessively submissive tone, recognizing him as the leader of all Muslims, the gifts that he sent had a much different message. In particular, the manuscript of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) in his own name—today recognized by art historians as the most luxuriously illustrated copy of the epic ever produced—proudly declared the original owner's strong Shi'ite identity and underscored him as a learned, if not superior, patron of the arts.

Turning to the myriad Ottoman manuscript paintings depicting the presentation of Safavid gifts to Ottoman sultans in the second half of the sixteenth century, Chapter two demonstrates a strong link between the changing visual image of the sultan in Ottoman illustrated histories and the manner in which Safavid gifts were depicted before him in the same manuscripts. Paintings completed in the 1580s, when the Ottoman and Safavid states were at war, show many more Safavid gifts before the sultan than those produced during the reign of Sultan Süleyman. In addition to being integral to the sultan's new image, the repetitiveness of these paintings is deliberate, I argue, and that they require the viewer to read them intertextually, demanding him/her to recall the subservient function they previously served.

The Safavid embassy sent to Constantinople with many gifts in 1590 to sign a peace treaty following more than a decade of active warfare provides the focus of

Chapter three. This embassy came with a six-year-old child prince, Haydar Mirza, sent by Shah Abbas (r. 1587-1629) to be held at the Ottoman court thereafter as a condition of the peace treaty. This could potentially create a dynastic crisis for the Safavids, for this prince could in the future claim right to the throne, much like other Safavid or Ottoman renegade princes had done for both polities around mid-sixteenth century. In this case, I treat this child prince himself as a gift, for he was treated as an object to be sent and received, and occasioned the exchange of many subsidiary objects. My examination of Ottoman, Safavid and Venetian archival documents, narratives, paintings and poems on the gifting of the prince shows that his agency was understood in contrasting ways by the two sides. The Ottomans in particular, took the prince to embody Safavid compliance, and took him to be an object of their submission. By contrast, Shah Abbas constantly raised objections on the details of the peace treaty, which prompted the arrival of many more embassies from him in the 1590s and 1600s.

My final chapter assesses these embassies collectively. From 1590 to about 1595, when Haydar Mirza died in Istanbul, Shah Abbas sent the Ottoman sultans gifts that closely resembled those that his grandfather Shah Tahmasp had sent during his long rule that spanned the reigns of three Ottoman sultans. These included copies of the Qur'an, lavishly illustrated copies of Persian epics, collections of poetry, precious jewels, drugs, porcelains, chandeliers, silk carpets, luxurious fabrics and lavish tents. The death of the little prince coincided with a time when Abbas began to gain increasing military power and had already begun to establish ties with rulers around Europe—through the mediation of gifts—for a promise of joint action against the Ottomans. Towards the very end of the sixteenth century, Shah Abbas stopped sending any embassies at all to the Ottoman



capital, even on the occasion of a new enthronement, namely of Mehmed III in 1595. The resulting diplomatic crisis attests to the power of objects and their agency in carrying meaning particularly in the context of Ottoman-Safavid relations. I argue that it was not just the wars fought and treaties signed that defined diplomacy and political interaction in the early modern Islamic world, but material objects—particularly those that had a strong historical and cultural identity—actively participated in that interaction by forming, strengthening and even breaking ties.

In the interest of providing a historical background to the chapters that follow, I will first give below a summary of the aggressively competitive, in fact “agonistic exchanges” between the first Safavid ruler Shah Ismail and his contemporaries, sultans Bayezid II and Selim I. These exchanges show that in Ottoman-Safavid relations, victory was not only measured by territories lost and won, but also by sending and receiving visually dazzling and culturally significant objects that carried potent messages of their own.

### **The Beginnings: Gifts in the Prelude to Conflict**

Competitive exchanges defined relations between the founder of the Safavid dynasty, Shah Ismail (r. 1501-1524), and his contemporary Ottoman ruler, Selim ‘the Grim’ (r. 1512-1520) prior to the outbreak of war between the two in 1514 at Chaldiran. The memory of these exchanges continued to set the tone for, and was critical to the visual and material dialogue between the Ottoman and Safavid courts for decades to come, as this thesis argues.

Ismail had come to the throne as a teenager, and news of his invincibility and

exponentially growing fame had quickly spread far and wide, raising much hope in Europe, for example, that he might finally be able to put a stop to Ottoman expansion.<sup>9</sup> In modern historical literature, much emphasis has been placed on the definitive Ottoman victory in the Battle of Chaldiran, and the artists that were brought to Constantinople from the Safavid side in its aftermath, transforming artistic production at the Ottoman court for half a century.<sup>10</sup> The period prior to Chaldiran, however, is crucial for the establishment of the religious and military rivalry between these two courts. This period is characterized by a highly competitive dialogue, in which political and military potency

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<sup>9</sup> Palmira Brummett discusses how Ismail's fame quickly spread into Europe between 1502 and 1514. Various official reports and other accounts relate how Ismail's rulership is divinely ordained, how his people take him to be a new prophet, or God himself, and that he is an enemy of Sunni Muslims, i.e. the Ottomans, Palmira Brummett, "The Myth of Shah Ismail Safavi: Political Rhetoric and 'Divine' Kingship," in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam*, ed. John V. Tolan (New York: Garland Press, 1996), 331-59. See also Margaret Meserve, *Empires of Islam in Renaissance Historical Thought* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 231-7. In his poetry, Shah Ismail emphasized that his lineage goes back to Prophet Muhammad, and even fashioned himself as ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of Muhammad, and God himself. For Ismail's poetry and his messianic claims, see Vladimir Minorsky, "The Poetry of Shah Ismail I," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 10, no. 4 (1942): 1006-53; Wheeler Thackston, "The *Diwan* of Khātāʿī: Pictures for the Poetry of Shah Ismaʿil," *Asian Art* 1, no.4 (1988): 37-63; A. Karamustafa, "Esmaʿil I. His Poetry," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online; Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavi Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994): 135-161. During Ismail's lifetime, the introduction of novel pictorial elements in paintings depicting the Prophet's nightly journey to heaven (*miʿrāj*), such as the facial veil and the distinctive Safavid headgear (*tāj* or *tāj-i Haydari*), is interpreted against the background of Ismail's bold claims in Christiane Gruber, "When *Nubuvvat* Encounters *Valāyat*: Safavid Paintings of the Prophet Mohammad's *Miʿrāj*, c. 1500-50," in *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam*, ed. Pedram Khosronejad (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 46-73.

<sup>10</sup> Şehabettin Tekindağ, "Selim-nameler," *Istanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Dergisi* 1 (1970), 214; Şehabettin Tekindağ, "Yeni Kaynak ve Vesikaların Işığında Yavuz Sultan Selim'in İran Seferi," *Tarih Dergisi* 17, no. 22 (1968), 72; James Allan, "Early Safavid Metalwork," in *Hunt for Paradise: Court Arts of Safavid Iran 1501-1576*, ed. Sheila Canby (Milan and London: Thames and Hudson, 2003), 203-39.

was tested by offering openly insulting objects as a prelude to conflict. In his examination of the cross-cultural interaction between Roman and Sassanian courts, Matthew Canepa wrote: “The Romans and Sassanian kings interacted with each other, exchanged ideas and images in a competitive and violently hostile atmosphere, even in circumstances where they substantially adopted and integrated their opponent’s cultural material.”<sup>11</sup> The cultural exchanges between Selim and Ismail may be described in strikingly similar terms, and therefore Canepa’s term “agonistic exchange” is appropriate in conceptualizing the manner in which the Safavid and Ottoman courts established their material and visual dialogue.

Sultan Selim’s father, Bayezid II (r. 1481-1512), who was the ruling Ottoman sultan when Ismail rose to power in 1501, generally followed a policy of appeasement toward him.<sup>12</sup> In response, however, Shah Ismail was unabashedly hostile, as he was to his Mamluk and Uzbek neighbors. Even though Ismail had not dispatched an envoy to the Ottoman court to announce his accession to the throne, in 1504/5 Bayezid sent an envoy bearing gifts (*tuhfāt-i lā’iq va pīshkashhā-yi muvāfiq*) to congratulate the shah when news of his military successes in Iraq and Fars came to be heard in the west.<sup>13</sup> In his letter, Bayezid was asking Ismail to stop persecuting Sunni Muslims in a civilized

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew Canepa, *The Two Eyes of the Earth: Art and Ritual of Kingship Between Rome and Sassanian Iran* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), 21.

<sup>12</sup> Ghulām Sarwar wrote that “Bayezid II pursued a dual policy: indirect anti-Şafawī, as long as Shāh Ismā‘īl was weak; and direct pro-Şafawī, the moment Shāh Ismā‘īl became strong.” Ghulām Sarwar, *History of Shāh Ismā‘īl Şafawī* (Aligarh: Published by the author and Aligarh Muslim University, 1939), 72; Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906-962 / 1500-1555)* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983), 74-93.

<sup>13</sup> Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *A Chronicle of the Early Şafawīs Being the Aḥsanu’t-Tawārīkh of Ḥasan-ı-Rūmlū*, ed. and transl. C.N. Seddon, 2 vols. (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1934), I: 86-7.

manner.<sup>14</sup> According to the Safavid historian Hasan Beg Rumlu, Ismail sent back with the envoy robes of honor and favors as gifts (*bi-khil<sup>c</sup>āt u ri<sup>c</sup>āyāt*).<sup>15</sup> Other historians have recorded a hostile reaction from Ismail: that the Ottoman envoy was made to watch the burning of two Sunnis, who refused to follow the shah, and that he was forced to eat pork at the Safavid court, which of course is forbidden in Islamic practice.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of whether these reports have any validity, other measures taken by Ismail point to his aggressively disaffected stance towards the Ottomans. For example, he sought to secure the military support of Venice against the sultan by sending an embassy there,<sup>17</sup> and tried to take advantage of the ongoing Ottoman civil war caused by a major dispute among Bayezid's sons over the succession to the throne.<sup>18</sup>

A final exchange between Bayezid and Selim vividly demonstrates the contrast between the congenial attitude of the sultan on the one hand, and the provocative attitude of the shah on the other, most forcefully expressed by his dispatch of a highly insulting “gift.” In 1510, following his victorious battle with the Sunni Uzbek ruler Muhammad Shaybani Khan, Shah Ismail had his opponent's head cut off. He then ordered the skull to be stuffed with hay and sent it to Bayezid II, while the remaining bones of the skull were

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<sup>14</sup> Nasrallah Falsafi, “Jang-i Chāldirān,” *Majalla-i Dānishkada-i Ababiyāt-i Tehrān* 1 (1953/4): 50-127; Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*, 86-7.

<sup>15</sup> Both robes of honor as well as the specific word used here to mean “favors” indicate gifts given from a superior to an inferior. Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh*, I: 87.

<sup>16</sup> Sarwar, *History of Shāh Ismā'īl*, 50-1; Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*, 87.

<sup>17</sup> Guglielmo Berchet, *La Repubblica di Venezia e la Persia* (Torino: G.B. Paravia, 1865), 25.

<sup>18</sup> For the Ottoman Civil War at the beginning of the fifteenth century, see Dimitris J. Kastritsis, *The Sons of Bayezid: Empire Building and Representation in the Ottoman Civil War of 1402-1413* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

mounted in gold and made into a wine cup for the shah.<sup>19</sup> Ironically, soon after the dispatch of Shaybani Khan's skull to Bayezid, a letter from the sultan arrived at the shah's court in 1511/12, expressing congratulations on his victory over the Uzbek ruler.<sup>20</sup>

When Sultan Selim took over the throne in 1512, the memory of these provocations must have been alive. The new sultan quickly made it clear that he had no intention to maintain his father's eastern policy. Selim's anger towards the shah was fed both by his own hot-tempered nature, and Ismail's continuing attacks and provocations. The months leading to the two rulers' military confrontation in 1514, when Selim finally succeeded in inflicting a crushing defeat against the Safavid shah, are characterized by an exchange of highly insulting objects accompanied by parallel correspondence. These are recorded in the letters they've exchanged and are recalled by contemporary and near-contemporary accounts.

In April 1514, Sultan Selim sent a letter to Shah Ismail declaring war on him.<sup>21</sup> The letter begins with a statement of the sharp contrast between the titles and attributes of each ruler. In this construction, not only is Selim defined as the leader of all Muslims, the "Caliph of God," but he is also identified with the best kings and heroes in the Perso-Islamic tradition. He is fashioned as "the Solomon of Splendor, the Alexander of Imminence; haloed in victory, Farīdūn triumphant; slayer of the wicked and the infidel,

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<sup>19</sup> Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh*, I: 122; Marino Sanuto, *Šāh Ismā'īl I nei «Diarii» di Marin Sanudo*, Biancamaria Scarcia Amoretti, ed. (Istituto per l'Oriente: Roma, 1979), 193-4.

<sup>20</sup> Sarwar, *History of Shāh Ismā'īl*, 73.

<sup>21</sup> A full text of the letter is given in Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭin*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1264-65/ 1848-49), I: 379-81. An English translation can be found in John Woods, "Letters from Selīm and Ismā'īl," in *The Islamic World*, eds. William Hardy McNeill and Marilyn Robinson Waldman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 338-42.

guardian of the noble and the pious; the warrior in the Path, the defender of the Faith; the champion, the conquerer; the lion, son and grandson of the lion; standard-bearer of justice and righteousness.”<sup>22</sup> Selim’s victory is also declared this way as inevitable and approved by God. By contrast, Ismail is given the title “prince” (*amīr*), who is “the possessor of the land of tyranny and perversion, the captain of the vicious, the chief of the malicious, the usurping Darius of the time, the malevolent Zahhak of the age, the peer of Cain.”<sup>23</sup> Such a pointed effort to define Ismail as a tyrant has more to do with proving that Ismail was a heretic than to point out the pure evil in him. This way, Selim proves to his own audience, the Ottoman administrative and military establishment, that it is legitimate to wage war on the shah. Indeed, Selim refers to the *fatwas* (judicial rulings)<sup>24</sup> issued by Ottoman religious scholars, supporting his claims that Ismail had deviated from the rules of Islam, and disrespected the religion by cursing the first caliphs and placing copies of the Qur’an in dirty places.<sup>25</sup> This last point is quite significant for patterns of exchange between the Ottoman and Safavid courts for decades to come, for as we will see, Ismail’s son and successor Shah Tahmasp sent Ottoman sultans priceless copies of the Qur’an as gifts, and peppered his own letters with verses from the Qur’an to demonstrate his knowledge of the religion.

As he marched on Iran, Selim I wrote three more letters to Ismail,<sup>26</sup> employing

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<sup>22</sup> Woods, “Selīm and Ismā‘īl,” 338-9.

<sup>23</sup> Woods, “Selīm and Ismā‘īl,” 339.

<sup>24</sup> Bruce Masters, “Fatwa (fetva),” *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 217.

<sup>25</sup> For these *fatwas*, see Tekindağ, “Yeni Kaynak ve Vesikaların”; Elke Eberhard, *Osmanische Polemik gegen die Safawiden im 16. Jahrhundert nach arabischen Handschriften* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1970).

<sup>26</sup> Selim’s first two letters were written in Persian, and the remaining two were written in Turkish. Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe‘ātü’s-selātin*, I: 382-3, 383-4, 385-6.

increasingly demeaning language, but only got one response from Ismail before their actual combat, accompanied by a highly insulting gift.<sup>27</sup> In this letter, Shah Ismail criticized the sultan's hostile tone and pointed out, in a very sarcastic manner, that his letters could only have been written by scribes who were under the influence of drugs. He therefore "dispatched [his] honored personal companion and servant Shāh Qulī Āghā (May he be sustained!) with a golden casket stamped with the royal seal and filled with a special preparation (*huqqa<sup>3</sup>-i zahabī mamlū az kaifīyat-i khāṣṣa makhtūm bi-muhr-i humāyūn*) for their use should they deem it necessary."<sup>28</sup> Selim was so infuriated with Ismail's gift and the accompanying letter that he ordered his messenger to be executed immediately.

There is another exchange of insulting gifts between Selim and Ismail prior to Chaldiran, which is recorded quite differently by Ottoman and Safavid historians. According to the Safavid historian Hasan Beg Rumlu, alongside his letters full of threats and intimidation, Ismail sent the sultan a female head-dress (*chīzī chand miṣl-i mi<sup>4</sup>jar va ghaira ki mujab-i fitna u fasād būd būy mīfrastād*).<sup>29</sup> This provoking gift, meant to challenge the receiver's masculinity, is recorded by the Ottoman historian Mustafa Ali as one that was instead sent from Selim to Ismail: "Along with letters full of offensive words and scolding statements, [Selim] had sent [Ismail] a female head-dress here and handkerchiefs worn by women there. To expose his impotence, [Selim] wrote: 'For you, who is unworthy to be called a man, these are more fitting than a turban and a helmet.'"

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<sup>27</sup> Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe<sup>5</sup>ātü's-selāṭin*, I: 384-5.

<sup>28</sup> Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe<sup>5</sup>ātü's-selāṭin*, I: 384-5; Woods, "Selīm and Ismā<sup>6</sup>īl," 343; Idrīs-i Bidlīsī, *Selim Şah-nāme*, ed. Hicabi Kırılancıç (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 152.

<sup>29</sup> Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh*, I: 143-4.

Ali records too that Selim also sent Ismail a cloak, woolen cloths, a shawl, *misvak*,<sup>30</sup> and a staff—all garments and equipment typically worn or used by Sufis—pointing out that since he comes from a line of Sufis, he should wear these instead of royal regalia, and that his place of dwelling is more appropriately a Sufi residence rather than a throne.<sup>31</sup>

The memory of these exchanges of highly offensive objects between Ottoman and Safavid rulers, meant to challenge or discredit the receiver’s political and religious legitimacy, bravery and manlihood was a lasting one. According to Caterino Zeno, after the battle of Chaldiran, which shattered Ismail’s image as an unbeatable military leader and as the long-awaited messiah,<sup>32</sup> Shah Ismail sent another set of daring gifts to Selim I weighing the value of lands under his rule against the value of those gifts, threatening to conquer his country, and humiliating him by underscoring his ignoble background:

...Ismail, who was fully prepared for the enterprise against the Turks, sent ambassadors to Selim, who was then in Amasia, with presents, a *baton* of massive gold, a saddle and richly-mounted sword, with a letter to this effect:—  
‘Ismail, great Sovereign of the Persians, sends to you Selim these gifts, quite equal to your greatness, as they are worth

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<sup>30</sup> “A small stick (the tip of which is softened by chewing or beating) used for cleaning and polishing teeth” Hans Wehr, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, ed. J. Milton Cowan (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrasowitz GmbH & Co. KG, 1979), 517.

<sup>31</sup> ... *ta<sup>c</sup>n u tevbîhî vâfir ve serzîşi mütekâsir nâmeler ile gâh nezkeb ü gâh çenber gönderirlerdi. “Senin gibi nâ-merde destâr u miğfer yerine bunlar lâyıkdır” diyû muhannesliğini tasrîh kılurlardı ve gâh “Sen bir sofî-zâdesin. Taht-gâh-ı saltanata lâyıkdır bir fîrû-mâye üftâdesin. Sana münâsib olan bunlardur” diyû hurka, ‘abâ ve şâl ve misvâk ve ‘asâ gönderüb, ‘Sana zâviye-nişîn olmak münâsibdir’ diyû bildirirlerdi. Gelibolulu Mustafa ‘Âlî Efendi, Kayseri Raşid Efendi Kütüphanesi’ndeki 901 ve 920 No.lu Nüshalara Göre Kitâbü’t-Târih-i Künhü’l-Ahbâr, eds. Ahmet Uğur et al., 2 vols. (Kayseri: Erciyes Üniversitesi Yayınları, 1997), II: 1091.*

<sup>32</sup> As Hans Roemer noted: “For Shah Ismâ‘îl Châldirân did not mean merely the loss of a battle and of extensive tracts of land. In the eyes of his followers he had also lost the nimbus of invincibility, even if the defeat had done nothing to impair his reputation of sanctity.” H.R. Roemer, “The Safavid Period,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, eds. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 225.



as much as your kingdom; if you are a brave man, keep them well, because I will come and take them from you, together with your head and kingdom; which you possess against all right, as it is not proper that the offspring of peasants should bear rule over so many provinces.’ This letter so enraged the haughty spirit of Selim, that he wished to kill the ambassadors, but refrained, being kept back by his Bashas (Pashas). However, in his rage he could not restrain himself from having their ears and noses cut off, and sent them back in this state with a letter written to Ismail, saying:—Selim, great Sovereign of the Turks, replies to a dog without taking the least notice of his baying; telling him that if he will show himself, he will find that I will do to him what my predecessor Mahomet did to his predecessor Ussun Casano.<sup>33</sup>

Against this background, the famous booty brought back to the Topkapı Palace by Selim I in 1514 after his defeat of Ismail, which included objects that belonged to the shah himself such as a jade cup (Figure 0.1) and a belt and armband (Figure 0.2),<sup>34</sup> gain much more significance within the context of Ottoman-Safavid cultural exchange.<sup>35</sup> Several examples in this study demonstrate that the Ottomans continued demanding to receive such symbolically loaded objects as gifts from Safavid shahs at times of peace

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<sup>33</sup> Giosafat Barbaro and Ambrogio Contarini, *Travels to Tana and Persia and A Narrative of Italian Travels in Persia in the 15th and 16th Centuries*, ed. Lord Stanley of Alderley, transl. William Thomas Hakluyt Soc., Ser. I, vol. 49 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1873), 65. Zeno is referring to the battle of 1473 between the Ottoman sultan Mehmed II and the Turkoman ruler of the Aq Qoyunlu dynasty Uzun Hasan. Franz Babinger, *Mehmed the Conquerer and His Time*, ed. William C. Hickman, transl. Ralph Manheim (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 314-5.

<sup>34</sup> Topkapı Palace Museum, Hazine, no. 1844, 1842 and 1843 respectively. All of these objects bear the name of Shah Ismail. For the cup and the armband, see Cengiz Köseoğlu, *The Topkapı Saray Museum, The Treasury*, ed. and transl. J. Michael Rogers (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1987), 196, 206. For the belt, see Allan, “Early Safavid Metalwork.”

<sup>35</sup> For a discussion of the booty brought to the Ottoman court by Selim I from Tabriz, see J. Michael Rogers, “‘The Gorgeous East:’ Trade and Tribute in the Islamic Empires,” in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, ed. Jay A. Levenson (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 69-74;

negotiations. Therefore, the role that objects played in this dialogue, I argue, had a lasting impact within the Ottoman-Safavid interaction during the decades to come.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The memory of Chaldiran was also kept alive in other ways at the Ottoman court. The Marble Kiosk, a shore pavilion built in Constantinople by Selim I was “painted with historical murals in the manner of Persian pavilions, which Selim I certainly saw when he conquered Tabriz in 1514.” These paintings were probably executed by the Persian artists brought to the Ottoman capital by the sultan following the Battle of Chaldiran, and they were “reminders of Selim I’s victories over the Safavids in 1514 and the Mamluks in 1517.” Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (New York and Cambridge, Mass.: Architectural History Foundation and MIT Press, 1991), 224. Indeed, in the mid-sixteenth century, the Habsburg ambassador Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq saw in a pavilion in Istanbul an image depicting the famous battle between Selim I and Shah Ismail. Busbecq says, he “had the privilege to be admitted into some of the Pleasure-Houses of the Grand Seignor. In the Valves of one of them, I beheld the famous Fight of Selimus with Ismael King of the Persians, excellently described in Checker-Work.” A.G. Busbequius, *Travels into Turkey: Containing the Most Accurate Account of the Turks, and Neighbouring Nations, Their Manners, Customs, Religion, Superstition, Policy, Riches, Coins, etc.* (London: J. Robinson and W. Payne, 1774), 52.

## CHAPTER 1:

### “Of the Kind One Prince Sends Another”:

#### The gifts presented to Sultan Selim II by Shah Tahmasp in 1568

In the year 1568, the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp (r. 1524-76) sent a delegation to the Ottoman sultan Selim II (r. 1566-74) at his court in Edirne with plentiful gifts of enormous value. The Safavids and the Ottomans were two of the most powerful Islamic empires at this time; the Safavids were based in Iran and the Ottomans were headquartered in Anatolia and the Balkans. The ceremony surrounding the presentation of these gifts, as well as the gifts' precise contents and their symbolic and rhetorical significance for the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the other foreign ambassadors present at this encounter, constitute the central subject matter of this chapter. This presentation of gifts was extraordinary, because among the objects brought to the Ottoman court by the Safavid ambassador was the world-famous illustrated manuscript, the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) of Shah Tahmasp. This chapter argues that the presentation of this incomparably valuable manuscript had dual purposes for the Safavid shah. On the one hand, it was designed to increase his chances of obtaining specific diplomatic concessions in his negotiations with the militarily and politically more powerful Ottoman sultan. But on the other hand, it was also intended as a public act of supreme generosity and magnanimity, which would solidify the shah's own superior position as a patron of the arts vis-à-vis the Ottoman sultan.

This manuscript of the *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) was completed in the early 1520s under the personal auspices of the Safavid ruler Shah Tahmasp.<sup>1</sup> Today, it is widely considered a masterpiece of Islamic art, and is remarkable both for its size and for the superb artistic expression manifest in all 259 paintings it contained. Yet despite its obvious importance, the circumstances under which it was given away by its patron remain inadequately explained by modern scholars. However, a previously unknown document at the *Archivio di Stato* (State Archives) in Venice reveals crucial details about the gifting of this manuscript, which will contribute greatly to this discussion. The document in question is a report written by Giacomo Soranzo, the Venetian *bailo* (ambassador and consul of the Venetian State),<sup>2</sup> relating the details of the Safavid ambassador's visit with an attached list of the gifts he brought to the Ottoman sultan, Selim II.<sup>3</sup>

In order to contextualize this material, I will first briefly discuss gift-giving as a form of diplomatic contact and exchange in Muslim courts of the sixteenth century. Then, I will turn to the role that gift exchange played in Ottoman-Safavid relations, which will place the presentation of gifts in 1568 in historical context. Finally, I will turn to the details of the ceremony held at the Edirne Palace. Gift-giving, as I will show, is

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<sup>1</sup> The work is also known as *Shahnama-i Shahi* or *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*. After its presentation to the Ottoman sultan in 1568, it was housed for several centuries in the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, but in the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was removed and its contents later dispersed. Today, parts of it are housed in several different collections.

<sup>2</sup> The *bailo* would be appointed for a period of three years to reside in Constantinople and would be assigned political, economic and judicial duties. For an overview of the history of the institution of the *bailo*, see B. Spuler, "Bālyōs" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.

<sup>3</sup> Archivio di Stato di Venezia (hereafter ASVe), Senato, Dispacci degli Ambasciatori Constantinopoli (hereafter Dispacci Constantinopoli), Filza 2, 512a-515b.

essentially a measure that facilitates a manifestation of power relations, in this case between the rival rulers of two early modern Islamic empires.

### **Gift-giving**

Gift-giving was an integral part of early modern political culture both at the domestic and international levels. Rulers sent and received gifts of differing value and amounts for a number of purposes. Although today we think of gifts as unconditional favors, a more careful examination of gifting patterns reveals that it involved varying levels of political, economic, and artistic interaction. Natalie Zemon Davis argues that “gift exchange exists as an essential relational mode, a repertoire of behavior, a register with its own rules, language, etiquette, and gestures.”<sup>4</sup> This definition is not so much used as a general definition of “the Gift” but as what Davis dubs as a “gift mode.” This approach will be quite useful in understanding that Shah Tahmasp’s gifts themselves as objects of economic, symbolic and artistic values were not divorced from the manner in which they were presented before the Ottoman sultan. In other words, although the exchange took place between the two rulers, one did not hand the gifts over to the other in a private audience but rather this exchange was a courtly performance. There were intermediaries involved, those who were directly involved and the spectators of the ceremony. The highest-ranking officials of both courts made up the first group while foreign ambassadors constituted the latter group. Through courtly ceremonial, which brought

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<sup>4</sup> Davis, *Gift in Sixteenth Century France*, 9.

together all these participants, the presentation of gifts became a spectacle, or a “performative moment”<sup>5</sup> that portrayed existing and changing balances of power.

Sovereigns, high-ranking officials of the state, the members of the aristocracy, and powerful merchants sent each other gifts most simply as a demonstration of their willingness to maintain good relations, express friendship, and ensure loyalty. A ruler’s accession to the throne, for example, was usually such a major occasion to honor him with gifts. Gifts received in this way created tension and at times complicated power relations. The gifting of the *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* to the Ottoman sultan must have created such tension due to the receiver’s obligation to return the gift in the form of a comparable or more valuable gift. An anonymous Venetian account written in 1553 relates an occasion in which the Ottoman sultan was obliged to countergift a Safavid present with twice its worth. Prior to the signing of the Amasya Treaty between the Safavids and the Ottomans, which concluded long years of fighting, the Ottoman sultan Süleyman the Magnificent received an unofficial negotiator of Shah Tahmasp whose mission, according to the Venetian account, was to negotiate and persuade the sultan to make peace. The envoy promised the sultan that within a month Shah Tahmasp would send an ambassador with the authority to conclude final peace. Then, he “gave [to Süleyman] the book which he was holding in his hand while they were conversing as a present, whose value was said to be 16,000 gold ducats. In exchange, Süleyman gave him

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<sup>5</sup> J.L. Austin’s theory of “speech acts,” which lay the foundation for performance studies, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin’s engagement with and expansion of the concept through a model that empowers the audience of a speech act inform my approach here. See J.L. Austin, *How To Do Things with Words*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962) and Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981).

double that value [in cash].”<sup>6</sup> By paying the negotiator in return for the book, the sultan not only eradicates the indebtedness that accepting the gift generates, but also by paying him twice its value the sultan reiterates his superiority and expresses his power of acquiring the book. Drawing on this example, I will argue below that the gifts that Selim II received in 1568 must have given rise to similar feelings of indebtedness.

Consequently, honoring the new sultan was only a superficial motivation for sending the gifts. As we will see, the Safavids used this occasion to acknowledge the Ottoman sultan as the superior ruler of all Muslims and asked his permission to go to Mecca and to grant protection for their pilgrims on their way to the holy lands of Islam, then under Ottoman control.

### **Ottoman Context**

The enthronement of a ruler was the principal, but definitely not the only, occasion when he was honored with gifts. Ottoman sultans accordingly received congratulatory gifts from foreign rulers and their own courtiers upon their accession to the throne. The Venetian ambassador Costantino Garzoni records in the report he presented to the Venetian Senate in 1573, that the sultan

...in addition to his ordinary state revenues, receives an incredible number of gifts; and it is a commonly held opinion that the total value of these almost equal to his ordinary sources of revenue ...no ambassador from any foreign prince ever goes to Constantinople without appearing before his majesty with the most costly present and neither does any subject of his majesty ever go before him or return from a mission, be it large or small, without first giving him a gift, according to his rank and often

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<sup>6</sup> ... al quale egli donò quel libro che teneva in mano, mentre che parlava con lui, il valore del quale si dice che fosse di ducati sedici mila d'oro. All'incontro del quale Solimano gli diede il doppio più di valuta. Eugenio Alberi, ed., *Relazioni degli ambasciatori veneti al senato*, Series III, 3 vols. (Florence, 1840), III: 265.

paying for these gifts with the money that would otherwise have gone to the treasury of his majesty since it can be said truly that nobody ever talks with the Gran-Signore [the sultan] who does not give him something of a value that corresponds to his own station.<sup>7</sup>

As a form of displaying royal generosity, the sultan then in turn presented gifts to the members of the state and to his subjects. Every time a new Ottoman sultan ascended the throne, he was expected to distribute money (*cülus bahşisi*) to all the state officials, the *ulema* (Muslim religious establishment), and the *janissaries* (elite slave soldiers who were the military and administrative backbone of the Ottoman Empire).<sup>8</sup> Following the death of his father, when Selim II became sultan in 1566, he was forced to borrow 50,000 golden coins from his extremely wealthy sister, Mihrümah, to pay the *cülus bahşisi*.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, when Shah Tahmasp ascended the throne in 1524, he “[bestowed] 8000 robes of honor (*khilat*), [and granted] a reported 20,000 tomans in gifts to courtiers.”<sup>10</sup> The shah also proclaimed a significant reduction in taxes for the peasants, which amounted to a significant sum, 15,000 tomans, according to the Safavid historian Iskandar Beg. It has also been recorded that due to these expenditures, almost the whole treasury was depleted.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Alberi, *Relazioni*, III: 427.

<sup>8</sup> İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Devletinin Saray Teşkilatı* (Türk Tarih Kurumu: Ankara, 1945), 59.

<sup>9</sup> Selānikī Mustafa Efendi, *Tarih-i Selaniki*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1989), 1: 43.

<sup>10</sup> Rudi P. Matthee, “Gift Giving, iv. In the Safavid Period,” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

<sup>11</sup> Matthee, “Gift Giving.”



## Safavid Tradition of Gift-Giving

When we examine gift exchange between the Safavids and their contemporary political powers, it appears that certain objects were almost systematically sent and received. Rudolph Matthee's discussion of these in the *Encyclopedia Iranica* provides a synopsis of the types of objects routinely sent to and from Safavid Iran. For example, among the gifts that the Russian tsar almost always sent were gerfalcons, sable fur, and hard liquor. At the end of the sixteenth century, on one occasion Shah Abbas received live bears from Russia.<sup>12</sup> Lions, zebras, and elephants were not atypical gifts that foreign envoys brought to the Safavid court. Among other characteristic diplomatic presents the Safavids received were Arabian horses, spices, sugar, sums of money, gold ducats, European paintings, books, and prints. The most common type of gifts sent out by the Safavids included silk, brocade, turbans, shawls, and scimitars. Specifically for the Ottomans and the Mughals, Safavid shahs liked to send "camels, horses, carpets, and richly decorated tents."<sup>13</sup> While courtly ceremonial accompanied the presentation of gifts at the Safavid court was well, the strict formality of Ottoman ceremonial does not seem to be paralleled here. H. Busse notes that "[on] Persian soil the ambassadors and their often numerous retinue were entertained at the expense of the Shah..."<sup>14</sup>

This contrast is also visually observable in the *Süleymānnāme* (Book of Sultan Süleyman), an Ottoman manuscript completed in 1558 and penned by Fethullah ° Arif

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<sup>12</sup> Matthee, "Gift Giving."

<sup>13</sup> Matthee, "Gift Giving."

<sup>14</sup> H. Busse, "Hiba, iv.—Persia" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.

Çelebi.<sup>15</sup> Its text relates the major political events of Süleyman's reign up until 1555, accompanied by paintings illustrating them. The court of Shah Tahmasp, receiving an Ottoman ambassador is depicted twice in this manuscript. In the first painting (Figure 1.1), the reception does not take place at the palace but in the imperial tent set alongside a river. This ambassador was sent following the first campaign of Süleyman against the Safavids in 1535.<sup>16</sup> He clearly presents a letter from Süleyman in a formal setting: the courtiers are lined up on either side of the shah but the scene captures the non-uniformity in their bodily movements and hand gestures in contrast to the depiction of analogous scenes at the Ottoman court. The courtiers in the second painting (Figure 1.2) are portrayed in a more orderly manner and their actions are well-matched. A few of them are sitting cross-legged emulating the shah, which is never the case in the representations of the receptions of foreign ambassadors at the Ottoman court. The court is once again illustrated in camp and the encounter takes place inside the imperial tent with the shah sitting cross-legged on a carpet on the ground.<sup>17</sup> Even when he is in camp, the painter(s) depicting Süleyman always seat him on an elaborate throne in the *Süleymānnnāme*. Although the ambassadors do not present gifts in either painting, we can be sure that they brought gifts along with them to the shah.

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<sup>15</sup> Topkapı Palace Museum Library (hereafter TSMK), H. 1517. For more on this manuscript, see Chapter 2 below.

<sup>16</sup> TSMK, H. 1517, 374a. See "Tahmasp Receiving the Ottoman Ambassador," in Esin Atıl, *Süleymanname: The Illustrated History of Süleyman the Magnificent* (Washington, D.C. and New York: Harry N. Abrams and the National Gallery of Art, 1986), 172-3.

<sup>17</sup> TSMK, H. 1517, 550a. See "Tahmasp Receiving the Ottoman Ambassador" in Atıl, *Süleymanname*, 214-215. Although I accept that there may be inaccuracies simply because they depict the Ottoman point of view, it does not seem likely to me that the Safavid ceremonial is entirely fabricated.

In discussing the nature of Safavid gifts sent to foreign courts, Matthee has cogently argued that in the Safavid diplomatic culture, “a combination of the presumed importance of the country, the weight of the issue to be negotiated, and the value of gifts previously received, determined the richness and value of the presents offered at diplomatic exchanges.”<sup>18</sup> The characteristics of the gifts and the gift-giving ceremony held at the Edirne palace in 1568 can well be understood in accordance with this observation. Before discussing that though, I will briefly look at Ottoman-Safavid relations in the mid-sixteenth century in order to underscore the significance of important political events that prompted the arrival of the Safavid envoy to Edirne. The historical background will place the gifts presented in 1568 in political context, and help us understand the state of gift exchange tradition between the two dynasties.

### **Ottoman-Safavid Relations in the Mid-Sixteenth Century**

The Ottomans and the Safavids were neighboring dynasties, and there was constant competition between them over control of territories, over support from people living on the borders, and over control of trade and pilgrimage routes, all of which were economically and politically extremely valuable. However, the religious rivalry between them overshadowed all other considerations, for the Ottomans and Safavids were bitterly divided by their adherence to opposing versions of Islam. The Ottomans were Sunnis, and Safavids were Shi'is, which compelled them to be as hostile towards each other as they were to non-Muslim powers. In the mid- sixteenth century Sultan Süleyman had the *shaykh al-Islam* issue a legal opinion, that killing a Safavid was as legitimate as killing an

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<sup>18</sup> Matthee, “Gift Giving.”

infidel in the name of Islam. Both rulers thus claimed to be the legitimate leader of Muslims and viewed the other as illegitimate. It is against this background that I consider Ottoman-Safavid relations as well as the gift exchange between them. As a witness to the 1568 reception of the Persian envoy, Feridun Beg explicitly and forcefully emphasizes in his chronicle that the Safavids were not true believers of Islam by saying that “their polluted minds” lacked an adherence to true faith, as they were accustomed to be “engaged in obscure blaspheming and heresy, cursed the companions of our prophet.”<sup>19</sup>

The signing of the Amasya Treaty in 1555 between the Ottomans and the Safavids is reasonably generally accepted to have marked a turning point in their relations. After long years of fighting along the frontier between the two states, in 1553/54, the Safavids managed to capture Sinan Beg, an intimate companion and favorite of Sultan Süleyman (r. 1520-66). Iskandar Beg Munshi, the official court chronicler of Shah Abbas I, explains the details of this event and its aftermath in the *Tarikh-i alam-ara-yi Abbasi* (History of Shah Abbas the Great). Munshi says that “Sultan Süleyman was distressed by the capture of Senan Beg and regretted his fruitless expedition to Iran,” and immediately after that he started peace negotiations in which the Ottoman grandvizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha played a crucial role.<sup>20</sup> Shah Tahmasp then sent Sinan Beg back to the Ottoman court with a member of the Safavid royal bodyguard, Shah Quli Beg. In return, Süleyman “sent Shahqoli Beg back laden with gifts and favors.” After Shah Quli ’s return, Tahmasp sent Süleyman a letter expressing friendship.

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<sup>19</sup> He is referring to the Safavid custom of cursing the first three caliphs who succeeded the prophet. TSMK, H. 1339, 250b.

<sup>20</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, transl. Roger Savory, 2 vols. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), I: 130.

In return, Süleyman “sent trusted ambassadors bearing cordial greetings to the Shah.”<sup>21</sup>

Following this, the formal negotiations for an official peace treaty started. Adel Allouche interprets this treaty as “the success of the policy of containment which Süleyman had pursued vis-à-vis the Safavids,” and argues that the Safavids made an effort to maintain good relations by following its stipulations.<sup>22</sup>

The signing of the Amasya Treaty was concluded with an “exchange of documents and gifts”.<sup>23</sup> The Austrian ambassador residing at the Ottoman court, Ogier de Busbecq, provides a detailed account of this event. Busbecq records the following description of the gifts Shah Quli brought to Amasya in 1555:

The Persian ambassador had arrived on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May and had brought with him many splendid presents--carpets of the finest texture, Babylonian tent hangings embroidered on the inner side in various colours, harness, and trappings of exquisite workmanship, scimitars from Damascus adorned with jewels, and shields of wonderful beauty. But all these presents were eclipsed by a copy of the Koran, the book which contains their ceremonies and laws, which the Turks believe to have been composed by Mahomet under divine inspiration. A gift of this kind is very highly esteemed among them.<sup>24</sup>

The Ottoman court historian Arifi also makes note of these gifts in the *Süleymānnnāme*.

He says that the Safavid envoy brought to Amasya: “a gold-embroidered canopy for a tent resembling a rose garden, caskets filled with gold coins, silks with figural

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<sup>21</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ʿAbbas the Great*, I: 130.

<sup>22</sup> Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*, 144-145.

<sup>23</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ʿAbbas the Great*, I: 130.

<sup>24</sup> Ogier Ghiselin Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq*, ed. E.S. Forster (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1927), 62.

representations, jewelry, bows, and countless other unusual and rare items.”<sup>25</sup> These two descriptions help us in identifying the gifts that Shah Tahmasp typically sent to the Ottoman court. Below, I will compare them to the gifts sent in 1568.

The receptions of Safavid envoys prior to and during the Amasya peace treaty are recorded in two paintings in the *Süleymānnāme*. In the first painting, (Figure 1.3), Süleyman receives the Safavid envoy in the imperial camp. This scene depicts the sultan enthroned, with the envoy prostrate before him and a row of the Ottoman courtiers. Meanwhile, the courtiers are all standing in a uniform position with even their eyes looking towards the same direction.<sup>26</sup> The second scene (Figure 1.4) takes place inside the Amasya Palace, probably prior to the finalization of the peace treaty. The sultan receives the envoy in the presence of his viziers and two pages (*iç oğlanlar*) lined up in a comparable manner to the former scene. Four officials carry boxes, probably bearing the gifts sent by Shah Tahmasp. The meaning of discipline in Ottoman ceremonial for Ottoman courtiers and for foreign officials alike has been interpreted by Gülru Necipoğlu. She argues that such solemn ceremonial and the display of imperial pomp in the Ottoman court worked together to inspire awe, and even to “exhaust”, and “weaken” the foreigners.<sup>27</sup> Feridun Beg relates that in 1568, the Persian envoy was so bewildered by the food he ate he could only say: “I don’t know what kind of food this is!”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Atıl, *Süleymannname*, 231. See Chapter 2 on a broader discussion of the gifts received with this treaty.

<sup>26</sup> TSMK, H. 1517, 603a. Atıl, *Süleymannname*, 230-231.

<sup>27</sup> Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 68.

<sup>28</sup> *...hayretinden gûş olub yedügi ta’am için bilmezem nedür derdi*. Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Nüzhetü’l-esrâri’l-ahbâr der Sefer-i Sîgetvâr* (Chronicle of the Szigetvár Campaign), TSMK H. 1339, 250a.

Another point worthy of note pertaining to the Amasya Treaty is the favorable manner in which the Persian ambassador was treated in contrast to the other ambassadors present at this event. On this issue Busbecq notes that “no possible honour towards the Persian was omitted, that we might have no doubt about the genuineness of the peace which had been made with him.” He further makes note of a banquet organized exclusively for the Safavid ambassador. None of the Christian ambassadors, including Busbecq himself, was invited: “Ali Pasha, the second Vizier, gave a dinner to the Persians in a garden, which, though it was at some distance and separated from us by a river, was visible from our quarters...”<sup>29</sup> Busbecq’s account of the events goes on to demonstrate that the gifts were presented in the presence of himself and possibly other foreign ambassadors. The banquet in honor of the Safavid delegation, together with the seating arrangements, which placed the Safavid envoy in a privileged position, served to show the other foreigners that the intimacy and bonds of friendship between the two states were strong. To be sure, this act contrasts sharply with the highly pejorative language used in contemporary Ottoman literature about the Safavid shah and his subjects. By assigning the Safavids and the gifts they brought an eminent place in courtly ceremonial, then, the Ottomans deemed it necessary to appear as true friends with the Safavids in order to show their western neighbors that no conflict existed between them and their eastern neighbors.

After 1555, Ottomans and Safavids did not fight and in general maintained good relations as they had agreed in the Amasya Treaty. There was, however, one issue that developed and created tension between the two states. In 1560, the rebellious Ottoman

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<sup>29</sup> Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters*, 63.

prince Bayezid fled to Shah Tahmasp's court. While Süleyman's attitude toward the Safavids was either indifferent or hostile before his son took refuge in Iran, after that it changed significantly. After the arrival of Bayezid at the Safavid court, Süleyman seems to have made a special effort to keep the shah on his side and prevent him from taking advantage of this situation to use his own son, a potential heir to the throne, against him. Before the Ottoman prince came to his court, Tahmasp had requested permission to establish a permanent embassy in Istanbul. This request was flatly refused with the terse reply: "such is not the Ottoman custom."<sup>30</sup> In contrast, after 1560, the Ottoman sultan first sent Sinan Pasha as an envoy to the Safavid court, then he sent the governor of Maraş and his chief taster, Hasan Agha, with an unprecedented retinue. Iskandar Munshi records that together with servants and retainers the embassy numbered over seven hundred people. They brought the shah "bejeweled weapons, dagger belts, precious stuffs from Europe, rare items from all over the world."<sup>31</sup>

Over the course of the next two years, at least two other Ottoman embassies visited Tahmasp bringing "Syrian and Arabian horses, unequalled for excellence and fleetness of foot, with bejeweled saddles of gold, and Ottoman horse blankets of brocade; in cash, about five hundred thousand gold *asrafi* and florins, the equivalent of fifty thousand royal Iraqi *toman*; precious stuffs; and other items of the same scale."<sup>32</sup> Eventually, in 1562, this series of embassies succeeded in achieving its goal. Shah Tahmasp finally agreed to turn over the Ottoman prince to the custody of the visiting Ottoman dignitaries. As soon as these officials took a hold of Bayezid, they immediately

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<sup>30</sup> Quoted in Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 191.

<sup>31</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 192.

<sup>32</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 192.



put him to death along with his sons to forestall any further trouble that may be caused by him or his heirs.

In contrast to the routine exchange of embassies, then, when a ruler (i.e. Sultan Süleyman) had a special request of crucial importance for him, the scale of the embassy, and the amount and value of the gifts he sent significantly increased. This same rule in turn applied for the embassy Shah Tahmasp sent to the Ottomans in 1568. This embassy was not an ordinary one, the scale of the embassy and the extraordinary value of the presents, which included the priceless *Shahnama-yi Shah Tahmasp*, it brought to the Ottoman court attest to this.

### **Shāh Qūlī presents the gifts to the Ottoman sultan Selim II in Edirne**

The presentation of lavish gifts to Sultan Selim II in Edirne in 1568 is a well-known event to historians and art historians alike. That the Safavid ambassador came to the Ottoman court and presented sumptuous gifts was not only recorded by numerous historians, but also two paintings depicting this event are extant. One of these (Figure 1.5) is from the illustrated manuscript *Nūzhetü'l-esrāri'l-ahbār der Sefer-i Sīgetvār* (Chronicle of the Szigetvár Campaign). This book was completed within months after the arrival of the ambassador, in 1569 and was written by Ahmed Feridun Beg, probably for the grandvizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha.<sup>33</sup> It narrates Süleyman the Magnificent's last

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<sup>33</sup> The colophon gives the date of completion as 13 Receb 976/ 1 January 1569 in TSMK, H 1339, 302a. For a discussion of the manuscript's patronage, see Emine Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs: Transitions in Ottoman Manuscript Patronage, 1566-1617" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2005), 97-106. She argues that there is strong evidence that Sokollu commissioned the manuscript. At the same time, her analysis of the overall textual and visual program of the manuscript shows that it was designed to appeal to and promote at varying levels, the sultan, the grandvizier, and the author, which, as a group,

campaign against Hungary in 1566, the sultan's death there, and the orderly transition of the throne to his son, Selim II. The other painting (Figure 1.6) is a double-spread from the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān* (Book of Kings of Sultan Selim) dated 1581. This is a more detailed visual account of the event in that it captures the sultan, highest-ranking Ottoman officials, the Safavid ambassador, a few members of his entourage, and the presents he brought, in typical Ottoman ceremonial scenery. Moreover, the latter painting has been published in one of the most widely used art-historical textbooks of Islamic art, making the painting accessible to any student of Islamic art.<sup>34</sup> Still, as presentation of the gifts has not been thoroughly examined before, the discussion of these two paintings needs to be further expanded.

These two visual accounts have been explained by art historians in two ways. The first approach considers the first painting (Figure 1.5) as visually documenting how manuscripts in general, and the *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* in particular, were presented to the Ottoman sultan.<sup>35</sup> The other approach discusses the double-page painting under the category of "Ottoman painting" in general and points to the orderliness of the ceremony, the central position of the sultan, and the submissive role played by the ambassador.<sup>36</sup> It is presented as one among many paintings exemplifying the constant Ottoman motivation to visually eulogize the sultan. With respect to the foreign and domestic elements juxtaposed side-by-side, emphasizing Ottoman superiority here is considered as the

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formed the audience for illustrated manuscripts at the Ottoman court in the late sixteenth century.

<sup>34</sup> Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam 1250-1800* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), 246.

<sup>35</sup> Filiz Çağman and Zeren Tanındı, "Remarks on Some Manuscripts from the Topkapı Palace Treasury in the Context of Ottoman-Safavid Relations." *Muqarnas* 13 (1996), 144n.

<sup>36</sup> Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam*, 245.

ultimate objective of the patron and painter.<sup>37</sup> To date, historians have primarily answered the question of why these gifts were sent in the following manner: “to congratulate Selim II on his accession.” While I do not disagree with this explanation, as it has been recorded time and again in contemporary accounts. However, my examination of the presentation of these gifts expands on and eventually amends this point by considering the rhetorical significance of the shah’s request. This request is most clearly recorded in a hitherto unknown contemporary report written by Giacomo Soranzo, the Venetian representative (*bailo*)<sup>38</sup> at the Ottoman court.

In what follows, I tell the story of the Safavid ambassador’s journey from Tabriz to Erzurum first, then to Istanbul, the Ottoman capital, and finally to Edirne, where the new sultan and his court were wintering. An examination of events at these three stops helps draw a better picture of the presentation of gifts at three levels ascending in pomp and complexity of protocol from one to the next.

As soon as news of Sultan Süleyman’s death and the subsequent enthronement of his son Selim II spread to Persia,<sup>39</sup> Shah Tahmasp knew that the 1555 peace treaty needed to be renewed. It was also part of customary international protocol to send a letter of congratulations to the new sultan. Before long, the shah appointed Shāh Qūlī, the powerful governor of Yerevan (now Armenia) and Nakhichevan (now Azarbaijan), as his ambassador.

According to one account, the most distinguished and foremost Safavid courtiers

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<sup>37</sup> For a recent criticism of this approach, see Fetvacı, “Viziers to Eunuchs.”

<sup>38</sup> The *baili* (pl.) were required to write reports to the authorities in Venice on a regular basis about what transpired at the Ottoman court.

<sup>39</sup> Feridun Beg reports that it was Mehmed Agha, a *müteferrika* (member of the elite corps of officers at the Ottoman court) who was sent to Persia with this mission. TSMK, H. 1339, 207b.

were selected to accompany the experienced ambassador in order to “display their splendor and to demonstrate their capacity to dress well” (*per dimostrazion di lor pompa e possibilità si vestirno*)<sup>40</sup> The forethought that the shah put into selecting the members of the delegation was paralleled by his careful designation of gifts for the sultan. Ali Pasha reports that the arrival of the ambassador was delayed because this process took longer than anticipated. The gifts that Shah Tahmasp ordered to be made were: “two tents made of gold embroidered fabric on its ceiling, and embroidered with trees, and other than this, two books of history and two pearls, which weigh 10 *miscali*<sup>41</sup> and a large ruby resembling a small pear, and other than these were stuffs (*robe*) valued at 82,000 tumans (*tumenlich*), ...and forty falcons.”<sup>42</sup>

Reminiscent of the shah’s negotiators, these gifts were likewise carefully selected to impress the Ottomans. Since their preparation delayed the departure of the embassy, we can assume that at least some of these gifts were custom-made, or collected specially for this occasion. Moreover, among the entirety of gifts for the sultan, this group of gifts received pride of place, for the news of their arrival was spreading concurrently with the movement of the embassy. The Ottoman chronicler Selaniki Mustafa Efendi wrote that when the sultan and his court had already settled in Edirne, news of Shah Quli

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<sup>40</sup> Marc’ Antonio Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna a Costantinopoli*, ed. Daria Perocco (Padova: Il Poligrafo, 2008), 231. Both Safavid and Ottoman chroniclers mention that the ambassador was sent to bring a letter of condolence for the deceased sultan and congratulation for the new one, and to renew peace. Hasan Beg Rumlu explains: “the Shah sent Shah Quli Sultan Ustajlu with gifts and a letter seventy cubits long to congratulate the sultan and to confirm peace.” Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu’-t-Tawārīkh*, II: 191

<sup>41</sup> Miṣḳāl was a unit of measurement used to weigh precious stones. Ramire-Pie-Maxime Vadala gives the equivalent as: 1 miṣḳāl=4.97 grams. Cited in Daniel T. Potts, “Pearls, ii. Islamic Period” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>

<sup>42</sup> Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 230.

approaching the city arrived. He records: “He [Shah Quli ] has an elaborate letter of condolence and congratulation, with one thousand Persians (*surhser*, lit. redheads) he comes bearing great tribute and presents (*piškeş ü hedāyā*).”<sup>43</sup>

As a group, they encapsulate important religious, historical, cultural and economic Perso-Islamic royal attributes. At varying levels, however, as object types, the popularity of each one of them was shared by other rulers in the early modern Muslim world. Contemporaneous rulers frequently collected lavish copies of similar books, jewels, textiles, tents and birds of prey. They did this through commissioning similar objects to their court artists, receiving them as gifts or tribute from their own courtiers and foreign rulers, or appropriating them as booty, as tokens of military victory. To add to this, in this particular case, most, if not all of these objects were one-of-a-kind objects, the value of which was either beyond any measure or irrelevant. As signifiers of sophisticated royal power, the kind of value they bore was dependent partly on who possessed them, which is to say that they would acquire currency when set in motion, to be exchanged between kings. In order to demonstrate the role of possessing and displaying wealth to expand power and authority, the eleventh-century Persian scholar al-Biruni says: “if kings have no other way to increase their power, they embellish themselves with sumptuous jewelry so that they will be honored by the people since they adore wealth and yearn for it.”<sup>44</sup> At the same time, he emphasizes that only kings have the right to claim authority over such rare objects: “Jewelry and precious stones belong to kings; if they are in the possession of

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<sup>43</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 67.

<sup>44</sup> Cited in Eva Baer, “Jeweled Ceramics from Medieval Islam: A Note on the Ambiguity of Islamic Ornament,” *Muqarnas* 6 (1989), 91.

people for whom they are not appropriate they might be suspected of theft or stealing.”<sup>45</sup>

It is possible to expand this medieval definition of royal power in the early modern period to include other rare objects that have broader historical and cultural connotations. These would appeal not only to the subjects of the king, but also, and perhaps even more so, to other kings. Shah Tahmasp’s gifts underscore this principle by creating an image of a perfect king, through harmonizing objects that denote pure wealth, piousness, and descent from a noble line of ancient Persian kings.

As we will see in further detail below, one of the “history books” reported in Ali Pasha’s letter was a Qur’an, one that was allegedly written by °Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet. The other was Tahmasp’s own *Shahnama*, a work widely considered as the masterpiece of Persian art of the Islamic period. The pearls and the pear-shaped ruby were similarly highly rare and extremely desirable objects among contemporary kings. The seventeenth-century French traveller and jewel merchant Jean-Baptiste Tavernier wrote that the largest pearl that he ever saw was one that the Persian king Shah Safi purchased in 1633 from an Arab who got it from the fisheries near al-Katif.<sup>46</sup>

It is difficult to assess exactly how rare the pearls sent by Tahmasp were. In Pigafetta’s report nothing but the weight of the pearls is mentioned to describe them and emphasize their rarity. Writing a century later, Tavernier reminds us that weight is not the sole indicator of quality in assessing pearls. He explains that the Prince of Muscat possessed “the most beautiful pearl in the world, not by reason of its size, for it only weighs 12 1/16 carats, nor on account of its perfect roundness; but because it is so clear

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<sup>45</sup> Cited in Baer, “Jeweled Ceramics,” 91.

<sup>46</sup> This was one of the two main pearl fisheries in the Persian Gulf. One was located around Bahrain, and the other across Bahrain islands, on the Arabian side, near the town of al-Katif.

and so transparent that you can almost see the light through it.” He then recounts the story of how the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan wanted to purchase this pearl:

the Prince of Muscat came to visit the Khan of Hormuz, who entertained him with magnificence, and invited the English, Dutch, and some other Franks, in which number I was included, to the festival. At the close of the feast the Prince took this pearl out of a small purse which he carried suspended from his neck and showed it to the Khan and the rest of the company. The Khan wished to buy it, to present to the King of Persia, and offered up to 2000 tomans, but the prince was unwilling to part with it. Since then I crossed the sea with a Banian merchant whom the Great Mogul was sending to this Prince to offer him 40,000 *ècus* for this pearl; but he refused to accept that sum.<sup>47</sup>

Al-Biruni likewise explains that the most desirable pearl is one that is even on all sides, and “pure, spherical, oblong, and devoid of any blemish.”<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the countless examples and references to literary and scientific works noted by al-Biruni reveal the difficulties of delienating fixed criteria for determining the value of a specific pearl. His references show that the price is determined by a combination of the origin, type and weight.<sup>49</sup> To give an example, large pearls are found among the *qulzumi* type: “If free from dullness in colour and perforations, a pearl weighing three *mithqals* should fetch 600 dinars. A pearl that approaches six *mithqals* in weight is beyond any price.” The

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<sup>47</sup> Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, *Travels in India, by Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Baron of Aubonne, Translated From the Original French Edition of 1676 With a Biographical Sketch of the Author, Notes, Appendices, &c.*, trans. V. Ball, 2 vols, (London and New York: Macmillan and Co., 1889), II: 110.

<sup>48</sup> Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad Bīrūnī, *The Book Most Comprehensive in Knowledge on Precious Stones: al-Beruni's Book on Mineralogy, Kitāb al-jamāhir fī maʿrifat al-jawāhir* (Pakistan Hijra Council, 1989), 106-107.

<sup>49</sup> For example, he explains: “Al-Kindi has said that an equivalent weight of the *Khaʿidanah* kind is one-half the price of the spherical kind, while the price of *Muzannar* variety is one-twentieth of an equivalent weight of the spherical kind. According to Al-Kindi, stones similar in form to pearls are priced at ten *dinars* per *mithqal*.” Bīrūnī, *Book on Mineralogy*, 105.

pearl that al-Biruni characterizes as the “priceless pearl” is the type known as *Durr Yatimah*. According to tradition, after putting her to a difficult test, the Umayyad caliph Hisham bin ‘Abd al-Malik gave to his wife this pearl, which “weighed three *mithqals* and had all the attributes of a perfect pearl. It was spherical, pure white, exquisite and possessed lustre.”<sup>50</sup> Weighing ten *mişkāl*s, we can assume that Tahmasp’s double pearls would probably compare to these examples of extraordinary pearls.

In addition to pearls, Tahmasp also sent the new sultan many falcons. The use of falcons in hawking was by this time an old tradition with roots dating back at least several centuries prior to the sixteenth century. Furthermore, it was a prerogative of royalty as falcons were rare animals with a costly upkeep.<sup>51</sup> Within the Ottoman court hierarchy, the post of the chief falconer was established as a prestigious position as codified in the *kanunname* (code of laws) of Mehmed II in the fifteenth century. In the sixteenth century, the importance of the position increased significantly as derivative positions filled by officers of various ranks in charge of other birds of prey were created.<sup>52</sup> Iskandar Beg Munshi mentions the post of the falconer (*khid-mat-i kushčigarī*), “who became later the head of the royal hunt (*ba-manşab-i mīr-shikārī sar-afrāz*

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<sup>50</sup> Bīrūnī, *Book on Mineralogy*, 132-133.

<sup>51</sup> In Persian, the word most commonly used for falcon, *baz*, is defined by Dekhoda as “a famous bird that kings and persons of high rank use in hunting.” *Loghatnāma-yi Dehkhuda*.

<sup>52</sup> Various groups of falconers were appointed in the Inner and Outer Courts (*enderūn* and *bīrūn*.) The *doğancıbaşı* at the Inner Court and *çakırcıbaşı* at the Outer Court served as the head of the organization of falconers. While according to Halil Inalcik the number of falconers changed in time based on each sultan’s interest in hawking, there was a general trend of increase in the sixteenth century, which dissipated in the seventeenth century. H. Inalcik, “Doghandji” *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.



*shud*)”<sup>53</sup>

We learn from Pigafetta’s account that while these gifts were being prepared, a rebellion broke out in Shirvan with armed forces attacking each other. Shah Quli had to attend to this and settle it before his departure. The Ottomans were informed that this was the other obstacle that prevented the embassy from leaving Persia earlier. The announcement of this event in Erzurum coupled with Shah Quli ’s effective management of it might be interpreted as a means to underscore Shah Quli ’s prestigious position not only as an experienced and esteemed diplomat but also as a talented military commander. In fact, Selaniki confirms Shah Quli ’s prominent position among the Safavids: “he was famed for his dignified oratory and because of his distinguished eloquence he was appointed ambassador.”<sup>54</sup>

With the rebellion safely subdued and gifts prepared, Shah Quli then left Tabriz,<sup>55</sup> with his large retinue to make his first major stop in Erzurum, an Ottoman city close to the Persian border. When they reached Erzurum, the current governor Ali Pasha, wrote to the sultan to give news of the ambassador’s arrival “with grandeur, numerous men, and great presents” (*‘azametle, vāfir ādemle ve ‘azīm pişkeşle*).<sup>56</sup> While Ottoman chroniclers mention it in passing, Marc’ Antonio Pigafetta discusses this pompous arrival and gives a translation of Ali Pasha’s letter in his account.

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<sup>53</sup> Bregel, Yu. "Kōsh-begi, preferable to Kūsh-Begi" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.

<sup>54</sup> *Şah-Kulı dahi Kızılbaş içinde sözi bellü kişi ve cangu ādemīsi olup yahşi söz bilmek ile meşhūr ve müte‘ayyen sühandān olmağla ilçilik hidmetine ta‘yīn olunmuş olup Selaniki, Tarih*, I: 70.

<sup>55</sup> Tabriz was a city near the Ottoman border and had served as the Safavid capital during the first half of the sixteenth century. While Shah Tahmasp moved the court to Qazvin in 1548, it seems that Tabriz continued to serve as a major outpost.

<sup>56</sup> TSMK, H. 1339, 208a.

The procession was led by Shah Quli along with a retinue of a hundred and twenty “gentlemen” with gilded turbans followed by another two hundred men on horseback, all wearing gold embroidered robes. Behind this forerunning group were four hundred merchants and the accompanying servants numbering about two thousand, who moved on camels, donkeys and horses. Also among this group were approximately thirty musicians who proceeded playing trumpets, flutes, drums (*tamburi*) and other instruments.

In response, a counteracting ceremonial display of the Ottoman army was not late to come. Ali Pasha explains that a crushing number of eight thousand Ottoman soldiers (*saym e spahi*) gathered in Erzurum “from morning to night playing their musical instruments.” Almost mirroring the Safavid hierarchical order, about one hundred appeared in gold embroidered and sparkling robes, and about two thousand were wearing gilded and silvered helmets. Ali Pasha notes that seeing before them the “beautiful order” of the Ottoman army, the entire Safavid embassy was amazed.<sup>57</sup> The ornament of the Ottomans astonished the ambassador himself, who said “the whole army in Constantinople must have come here.”<sup>58</sup> In turn, however, the Ottoman governor was not at all excited by the way in which the Safavid delegation appeared. Pigafetta notes that his letter had a mocking tone when mentioning Shah Quli and his retinue.<sup>59</sup>

This initial series of encounters between the two sides were evidently already taking the shape of a struggle to impress or even overcome by presenting various symbols

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<sup>57</sup> *Ma con tutto ciò questa pompa venendo appresso all'essercito ad Arsrum tutti li Persiani si stupirno a veder la bella ordinanza delli Ottomani.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 231.

<sup>58</sup> *Il quale ornamento vedendo l'ambasciatore si stupì, e disse che tutto l'essercito ch'era in Costantionpoli era venuto quivi* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 230.

<sup>59</sup> *Là dove il chiaus scrittore di questa lettera parla della qualità di questo ambasciatore e di quell'altro soltan, e delle loro entrate, si fa beffe di loro* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 233.

of power and displaying material human possessions and talent. The next morning, the ambassador invited Ali Pasha and his courtiers to listen to their music; following suit, the Ottoman governor invited the Safavid officials to his court to do the same. During the banquet, an Ottoman official (*un altro sultan del Re*) presented Shah Quli a gilded horn (*un corno indorato*) and dressed him with a gold embroidered robe of honor.

The ambassador had brought with him the possessions of the eliminated prince Bayezid, the newly enthroned sultan Selim II's brother, who had taken refuge at Shah Tahmasp's court in 1560. After long negotiations, Tahmasp had handed the prince over to his father in 1562. The dignitaries that Sultan Süleyman had killed the prince and all of his sons on the spot. Apparently, they had not taken back these possessions, which Shah Quli now brought. Unfortunately, Ali Pasha's letter, which Pigafetta cites, does not itemize all of these objects: "And the King of Persia sent all the armor (*armature*) of Sultan Bayezid, with all of his camels, and also all his other stuff."<sup>60</sup>

In response to news of Shah Quli approaching the Ottoman capital, letters were sent to governors based on the way to the capital with orders to direct the embassy to Edirne where the court had moved and where the sultan would receive all the representatives of foreign states coming to congratulate him and renegotiate peace. They were also advised to show utmost respect and hospitality.<sup>61</sup> Accordingly, Selaniki writes that on their way to Istanbul, the embassy was afforded every possible respect and esteem. During the journey, they had the opportunity to experience what the Ottoman lands had to offer; they moved "contemplating the prosperity of the Ottoman country, fortunate and affluent with

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<sup>60</sup> *E il re di Persia ha mandato tutte l'armature di Soltan Baiazith, con li suoi camelli tutti, e anco tuta l'altra roba* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 230.

<sup>61</sup> TSMK H.1339, 208b-209a.

endless blessings, they saw all around them the ubiquitous grandeur of the king of kings [the Ottoman sultan] and the innumerable brave soldiers of war.”<sup>62</sup> In this way, as the embassy moved closer to Istanbul, the Ottoman efforts to overwhelm them intensified by way of displaying military might. But nothing would match the impression the capital city made on the Safavid embassy.

Piyale Pasha, who was left in Istanbul in charge of the city in the absence of the sultan, wrote to Edirne in the meantime to ask the appropriate manner of welcoming the embassy.<sup>63</sup> The grand vizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha then posed the question to the sultan who declared that every effort should be made to display imperial power and majesty, which would accord with the prayers of the Prophet and the first four caliphs (*çehāryār-ı kirām*). Subsequently, Sokollu sent specific instructions calling for the mobilization of the whole naval army. He sent the following order in response:

When the envoy reaches on the other side [of the strait], between Üsküdar and Gebze (*Gekiveze*), the village of Kartal, summon all of the naval commanders, captains, and the marines. They should be dressed up, according to custom, in their uniforms and be equipped in their weapons and armature. Other than these, the corps of the armorers (*cebeci*) and artillery (*topçu*) should likewise be clothed in their designated garments and embellished in their war equipment and arms of combat. The combination of these three squadrons of foot soldiers should number approximately several thousand people. Early in the morning that day, all of these soldiers should be properly prepared and organized, and proceed, with their chiefs and

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<sup>62</sup> *hürmet ü ri<sup>c</sup>āyetlerinde ihtimām u ikdāmda dakīka fevt olunmayup, memleket-i Osmāniyye ne vechile ma<sup>c</sup>mūr u ābādān olup ve envā<sup>c</sup>-ı ni<sup>c</sup>am-ı bī-pāyān ile muğtenim u mütena<sup>c</sup>im, haşmet ü şevket-i şehenşāhī her yerde ferāvān ve leşker-i dilāverān-ı kārzār-ı bī-şümārı müşāhede ederek Selaniki, Tarih, I: 68.*

<sup>63</sup> *risālet tarīkiyle biñ nefere karīb ādemle ve <sup>c</sup>ażīm pişkeşlerle geliyorlar. Dārü's-salţanatü'l-makbūl mahmiye-i Istanbul'a duğulları karībdür. Istikbāl bābında ve ri<sup>c</sup>āyet ādabında ne vechile tedārik olunmaq gerekdür diyū südde-i sa<sup>c</sup>ādete <sup>c</sup>arz ü i<sup>c</sup>lām iylemişler TSMK H.1339, 208b.*

commanders, to meet the envoy to lead him (*öñünce yürüyeler*). Other than this, decorate many ships, that is, imperial galleys (*haşsa kadırgalar*), and assign in each a gunman (*tüfenkçi*), a guardsman (*harbeci*), and an archer (*tirendaz*.) In due order, every bench in every galley should be adorned and in every gallery, too, place as many cannons (*top ve bocoloşkolar*) as possible. Also, gather however many janissaries are present in the city of Istanbul and have them, according to custom, gather their firearms and be prepared, adorned (*mücemmel*) and armed (*müsellāh*), ordered alongside their chiefs at the landing station.<sup>64</sup>

When the embassy reached Istanbul, according to Selaniki, they were awestruck by its heaven-like beauty and its splendor afforded by the Ottoman state. They cried out: “Whoever says I have seen, known and understood this mighty state would speak unwisely. It is a thousand levels beyond that which he is capable of understanding.”<sup>65</sup> By reporting how much they admired it, to the extent that they exclaimed the incomprehensible character of the seat of the Ottoman state, Selaniki ascends the city to a divine status, beyond the intellectual and physical grasp of the Safavids.<sup>66</sup> As if to say they got jealous with envy, the chronicler then wishes that the evil eye may not fall on it: “may God protect it from the evil eye, may He spare it with whom it belongs to!”<sup>67</sup>

When the Safavid embassy drew closer to the city of Istanbul, following the grand vizier’s order, the head of the corps of the armorers (*cebecibaşı*) was already waiting in

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<sup>64</sup> TSMK H.1339, 209a-209.

<sup>65</sup> “*Fî’l-hakika bî-manend ü bî-misl olup ukül vâsf u beyânında âciz ve kasırdür*” *dimişler. Ve müddet-i ömr, bu mülk-i saltanatı bilüp iz’ân itmege kifâyet itmez. Her çend ki bir kimse, “Bu saltanat-ı kâhireyi gördüm ve anladım, bildüm” dise nâ-mâ’kûl söyler. Bilüp anladuğundan bin mertebe ziyâdedür.* Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 68.

<sup>66</sup> In the Quran, God and angels are described as beyond grasp. For example, the Sura of Al-An’am (6:103): “No eyes can penetrate Him, but He penetrates all eyes, and He knows all the mysteries, for He is all-knowing.”

<sup>67</sup> *Allāh tebāreke ve ta’ālā yavuz gözden saklasun, sāhibine mübārek u huçeste eylesün* Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 68.

Üsküdar with nearly one thousand soldiers under his command to welcome them “sumptuously and excellently” (*müzeyyen ve mükemmel*). In order to cross the sea to get to the historical peninsula, the soldiers then assisted the Safavids to embark on the galleys. As the ships were being propelled by competent galley slaves (*başardaların forsa kāfirleri*), the Ottoman display of power and magnificence reached a climax. If we trust Selaniki’s account, the Safavids’ admiration and bewilderment incited by the beauty of the city and by the orderliness of the soldiers turned into outright fright as the ships moved forward:

The brave warriors therein fired guns and canons scattering fire like lightning and blustering like thunder. Blown away with amazement and affliction, the redheads [Safavids] in the galley cried “O Ali, help [us]!” (*yā ‘Ali meded*) They kept saying: “O help us warriors (*gaziler*), find us a remedy, the sea makes us sick!”

On the other side of the Bosphorus, alongside the thousands of janissaries who came to escort the envoy to his palace, a large group of urbanites had assembled near the landing place eager to catch a glance of the Persians. The ambassador and his immediate retinue were then settled at the Hançerlü Sultan Sarayı, a waterfront palace near the Hippodrome. Feridun Ahmed Beg testifies that the order of protocol spelled out by the grand vizier was carefully followed. Piyale Pasha, the admiral of the Ottoman fleet, sent to the ambassador’s residence a large selection of fresh flowers and fruit (*şükūfe vü reyāhīn ve meyvelerden bī-kıyās*).

During Shah Quli’s stay, Piyale Pasha took him on a tour of the city so he would see the bathhouses and imperial mosques of the city; the ambassador saw Hagia Sophia, the great Byzantine church converted into a mosque following the Ottoman conquest of

the city, the Süleymaniye and the Sultan Selim Mosque. The Safavids were allowed to pray in the latter two mosques, built by the late Sultan Süleyman, one for himself and the other in honor of his father who had defeated Shah Tahmasp's father in a crushing blow at Chaldiran in 1514.

Before the embassy was sent off to Edirne, the Ottoman mode of hospitality followed by the governor of Erzurum was replicated in Istanbul:

afterwards, the wise vizier, according to state custom, feasted the envoys and gave them splendid robes of honor, excellent horses, various textiles (*akmişe-i mütenevvia*), sumptuous goods (*emti'a-i fahire*), and silver vessels (*evānī-i nukre*). [Piyale Pasha] had honorable artisans attend to whatever the ambassador might need during the journey and ordered them to provide these. And, Shah Kulī, too, gave him and his retinue lustrous or elegant things (*āb u tāb*).<sup>68</sup>

After a stay of three days in Istanbul, the envoy was informed that an imperial decree was received which ordered the embassy to proceed to Edirne. As the ambassador prepared to leave the Ottoman capital, all the foot soldiers of the city were once again assembled, mounted on horses and lined up to pay respects to the embassy. The grand vizier had sent sergeants (*çavuş*) to towns between Edirne and Istanbul so that necessary preparations would be made to provide abundant food when the embassy would stop to rest. And so they went on “from place to place, eating and drinking, resting and moving” (*menzil be menzil yiye içe kona göçe*) until they reached the village of Hasköy.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 69. Some of the vessels of Persian origin, such as those at the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts in Istanbul, which did not enter the Ottoman imperial treasury, and are of lesser quality than those kept by royalty, might have arrived through such exchanges between high-ranking officials of both courts

<sup>69</sup> TSMK, H.1339, 210b.

Ahmed Feridun Beg's account makes it clear that as the embassy approached closer to the sultan, the enthusiasm to impress the Safavids heightened but at the same time apparently even turned into frustration. He explains that because the court had temporarily moved to Edirne on a hunting expedition, they lacked extensive means to show eminence (*şöhret göstermek*); hence, "...it was not possible to demonstrate a perfect level of glory and a sufficient amount of power." All the same, once again, all the soldiers were advised to be prepared on horseback. The inhabitants of the city were also systematically recruited<sup>70</sup> to turn the entry of the embassy into a grand spectacle, the scale of which is described in contemporary sources as surpassing any event that anyone had ever seen before.

If the highly charged environment in which the embassy made its journey from Persia to the Ottoman lands was not clear enough until this point, it will become much more obvious during the events to come once the ambassador enters Edirne. This part of the story, when the Safavids move closer and closer to the sultan, also makes apparent the emotional investments made by the observers of the encounter of the embassy in the Ottoman people, the soldiers, courtiers, foreign representatives, and finally the sultan himself. At different levels, Ottoman observers Feridun Ahmed Beg and Selaniki speak of the Safavids using eminently pejorative language. Selaniki is rather subtle, emphasizing all the Ottoman favors bestowed on the Safavids, which they could not appreciate due to their "ungrateful nature." Words seemingly more courteous or neutral such as "creatures of God" (*mahlūku'llāh*) are replaced, by contrast, in Ahmed Feridun Beg's account with evidently more insulting idioms such as "demon-mannered" (*dīv-*

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<sup>70</sup> It was indicated, however, that women should be saved from mingling with the crowds out on the street to observe the embassy. TSMK, H.1339, 211a.



*sīret*) and “impostor-faced” (*deccāl-şūret*) to qualify and emphasize the otherness of the Safavids. Meanwhile, foreigners who witnessed this complex ceremonial interaction observed the events closely, recording too, what the Ottoman historians omitted from their accounts. While the failed attempt of an Ottoman soldier to kill the Safavid ambassador was perhaps too embarrassing to record for the Ottoman chroniclers, it goes to show the extent to which the abovementioned negative sentiments circulated among different levels of the Ottoman establishment and that these expressions cannot be dismissed as isolated and personal opinions recorded in books that only a small elite group had access to.

### **Edirne**

The Safavid embassy entered Edirne on February 7<sup>th</sup> 1568, several months after the new Sultan’s temporary transfer of the court to this city. Since the preceding summer, the sultan had been accepting foreign dignitaries who came to present their “gifts and tributes of accession.”<sup>71</sup> The visit of some of these foreigners overlapped with the Safavid ambassador. They, too, joined the crowds made up of the entire Ottoman military and the city dwellers curious to see, according to Ahmed Feridun Beg, “the curious state and the strange manners” (*hey’āt-ı ‘acībe ve kıyāfet-i ğarībelerin*) of the Safavid embassy.

The crowds were so large that they overflowed the streets of the city. Nevertheless, this welcoming ceremony was far from chaotic. The position of every group was carefully orchestrated, with each standing apart from another, observing the Ottoman

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<sup>71</sup> *Ve makam-ı mülāzametde olan hükkām-ı etrāf u eknāf, culūs-ı saltanat pīşkeş ü hedāyāsın südde-i sa‘adet-medāra çekmeğe müteveccih olup gelüp çekdiler. Selaniki, Tarih, I: 67.*

principle of orderliness. The military troops and the people of Edirne stood separately, either lined up along the main avenue or spread out into the streets of the city. Following suit, the retinues of the Habsburg and Venetian ambassadors stood apart. The cavalry corps waited outside the city to be the first group to welcome the embassy.

The Safavids entered the city led by Ottoman soldiers mounted on their horses, then followed the standard bearer (*emir-i ʿalem*) and other high ranking officials with the soldiers under their command. Standing among the Habsburg ambassador's retinue, Marc' Antonio Pigafetta saw that after these came six men, who carried six leopards on their horses, and then a group of "Egyptian and Moorish players" (*uomini giocatori all'egiziana e moresca*). The ambassador came after them, accompanied by a great number of janissaries.<sup>72</sup> To emphasize the imposing character of the ceremony, one Ottoman observer reports: "In the state of the Padishah, the refuge of the world, such a great assembly had gathered that day that the people who saw it cried, 'in any expedition have we ever seen or heard of an assembly of this scale (*bu kadar cem'iyet-i vāfire*), nor of such an abundant number of soldiers (*ʿasker-i mütekāşire*)'"<sup>73</sup>

The effort of the Ottomans to put out an impressive performance for the Safavids was surely not lost on the ambassador. In Selaniki's imagination, in the interest of complimenting the ceremony, he said: "honestly, the ornament and beauty of these soldiers resemble a wedding crowd." Şemsi Ahmed Pasha's pungent remark in response

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<sup>72</sup> *Poscia seguitavano sei uomini a cavallo, i quali sopra la groppa dei lor cavalli avevano sei leopardi, i quali suole usare alla caccia il Gran Turco. Poi seguitavano alquanti altri pur a cavallo, i quali nelle mani tenevano longhissime aste, uomini giocatori all'egiziana e moresca. Dopo seguitava il chiauspassi con alquanti chiaussi e persiani, e dietro a costoro una gran moltitudine de giannizzari, dietro a quali subito veniva l'ambasciatore Pigafetta, Itinerario da Vienna, 244.*

<sup>73</sup> TSMK, H.1339, 211b.

brought up the Ottoman definitive victory over the Safavids decades before, after which, according to tradition, Shah Ismail's wife was taken captive: "Yes, it was these same soldiers who brought the bride from Chaldiran."<sup>74</sup>

As the Persians drew near the Hungarians and the Venetians,<sup>75</sup> the ambassador curiously asked who they were, and wanted to salute them. Selaniki reports that he then inquired: "We have passed by so many infidels who all took their hats off, what does it mean?" The pasha responded: "It is their custom, when they see each other, by way of salutation, they take off their hats to humbly praise one another."<sup>76</sup> In Ahmed Feridun Beg's account, the ambassador asks what people they are (*bunlar ne milletdür*). It was explained then that they are ambassadors of the kings of Christian kings of some western countries who came to pay taxes and tribute. The Safavids probably were genuinely interested in the customs of the Europeans in addition to an effort to learn more about their mission at the Ottoman court. Nevertheless, Ahmed Feridun Beg's opposition to the Safavids finds expression in his demeaning comments on the Safavids' curiosity of the westerners:

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<sup>74</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 67. In a recent article, Savory has discussed some of the inconsistencies and contradictions in historical record about Tajlu Khanum's capture by Selim I, Roger M. Savory, "Tājlu Khānum: Was she Captured by the Ottomans at the Battle of Chāldirān, or not?" in *Irano-Tukic Cultural Contacts in the 11<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> Centuries*, ed. Éva M. Jeremiás (Pilisésaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle East Studies, 2003), 217-32.

<sup>75</sup> In Selaniki's account, at this time, Hungarian (*Üngürus*), French, Venetian, Ragusan (*Dubrevnik*), Polish, Czech, Moldavian, and Walachian envoys were in Edirne. However, contemporary accounts confirm only that the Venetian and Habsburg representatives were in Edirne.

<sup>76</sup> ... *ilçi Şah-Kulı han, Paşa hazretlerine dirler ki 'Sultanum, bunca küffār alayı ki geçdüük, hamusı takyelerin başlarından bile çıkarırlardur, ayā ne nemehdür' diyüp su'āl eylemişler eyitmişler ki 'Ādetleridür, birbirlerini gördüklerinde mahall-i merhabāda takyelerin çıkarırlar ya'c'nī ser-fürü itmek süretinde sitāyişleridür' dimişler*. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 67.

Consequently, speaking of the aforementioned infidel envoys, the [Safavid] envoys said, “what amazingly luminous and magnificent people they are!” What ill-bred enemies these are that they attribute the infidels, who are in essential error and disbelief, luminosity. The absurd manners of these people is clear to me and there is sufficient proof that their figure is well-known and agreed-upon. Nevertheless, whereas the appearance and character of these lowly redheads (*kızılbāş*) is evidently wicked, there are so many individuals who befriend these people, respect and sympathize with them; even in certain matters prefer them. May God protect us! These sorts of people are worse than them. Blessings of the sultan for those ungrateful people are illegitimate.<sup>77</sup>

With these words, while Feridun Beg himself unapologetically opposes the Safavids and justifies his animosity towards them, it is at the same time clear that his was not a feeling shared universally by the entire Ottoman establishment.

The Safavid ambassador entered the city with these conflicting sentiments circulating within the hosting court. Ahmed Feridun Beg’s account of the movement of the embassy textually mirrors the principle of Ottoman orderliness and presents the ideal mode of performing the “old custom of traveling” (*‘ādet-i qādīme’-i misāfīret üzre*). Fittingly, three days after the settlement of the Safavids in their designated guesthouse, their steward (*ilçiler üzerine turān*) Süleyman Çavuş was sent to inform the grandvizier of their arrival and of their request to see him in order to present Shah Tahmasp’s letters.

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<sup>77</sup> *ol halde mezkūr ilçiler mezkūrān kefere ilçileriçün ne ‘aceb nūrānī ve muhteşem halk olur diyü kelimāt iylemişler. İmdi ol t̄āife’-i mülāhede’-i bed-āyīnki bu aşl-ı küfür ü zelālet içre olan kefere’-i müşrikīn için nūrāniyyet asnād ide. Ol maqūle eşhāş-ı bāṭılānīn şūret-i hālleri bu kullarından ma’lūm ve mefhūm olūb sīret-i māfi’l-bālleri dāḥī bu kapl u qallarına muṭābık u muvāfık olduğuna istidlāl tām olunur. hāl bu ki kıızılbāş-ı evbāş t̄āifesinin bu gūne şūretleri ve sīretleri ḥabāset üzre iken nice kimesneler vardur ki bulub yine ol t̄āīfeye muḥib gecinüb ḥürmet ü rağbet idüb belki ba’z umurda tercīh dāḥī iderlermiş. na’c ūzubillāh ol maqūla kimesneler anlardan bedter olub ol aşl-ı küfrān ??? ol nesillere ni’met-i pādişāhī ḥaramdır.*

Sokollu responded favorably by commanding that they might come as it suits “the vizierial etiquette and the glorious rules of that rank.”

The grand vizier’s house was beautifully decorated for this visit. The two men met in the audience hall (*divan*), which “was covered entirely with carpets on the floor, on top of which were laid gold embroidered fabrics”<sup>78</sup> Reminiscent of Busbecq’s account, Soranzo emphasizes that the Safavid ambassador was treated with favors that no Christian prince would ever receive from the Ottomans.<sup>79</sup> They exchanged words of wisdom as the ambassador conveyed Shah Tahmasp’s flattering remarks for how well Sokollu made possible the transition of the throne from Süleyman the Magnificent to his son Selim: “...may God help assist him in every situation. My ancestors will be his advocates on the Day of Judgement. Ali, the chosen one, lion of God (*murtazā Ali şir-i hüdü*) will help him very much.”<sup>80</sup> Probably due to the openly Shi’i nature of these wishes, Selaniki characterizes them as strange comments (*ibārāt-ı garībelerin*). The conversation was followed by the ambassador’s treatment to, according to custom, a refreshing sweet drink (*şerbet*).

During this visit, Shah Quli also presented the many gifts he had brought for Sokollu from the shah as well as himself. In contrast to gifts he would present the lesser viziers, these included more luxurious items like sable linings. Emulating Tahmasp, Shah Quli likewise singled out additional gifts for Sokollu, among which were “carpets,

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<sup>78</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 512a.

<sup>79</sup> ... *de quali favori non se ne fà pur uno a qual si voglie amb. r de principe X. no* ... ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 512a.

<sup>80</sup> *Sāhib-serīre saltanat teslīm olunca müstakil cihān-bānlık eylemişlerdür. İki cihānda yüz akliği anundur. Düşmen-i dīn içinde bu ser-encam ki vāki<sup>c</sup> olupdur ırz-ı dīn ü devleti yahşi saklayupdur, Hak tebārek ve ta<sup>c</sup>ālā anun herhalde mu<sup>c</sup>in ü yāveri olsun. Ceddüim anun Arasātda şeft<sup>c</sup>idür. Murtazā Ali şir-i Hüdü ana çoğ yardım idüpdür. Selaniki, Tarih, I: 71.*

swords and other things.”<sup>81</sup> After this first visit, the ambassador also went to see other viziers in their residences to present his gifts and to establish rapport with them. In Ottoman accounts, the viziers of the court are conceived of as senior to Shah Quli . The expression *Selaniki* uses for presenting translates as serving continually or paying respects to a superior (*mülâzemetlerine varup*).<sup>82</sup> But there is agreement in sources that the gifts for the high ranking Ottoman officials were carefully selected from among rare and famous items from different regions of Persia. These included silk carpets from Hamadan and Dergezin, felt caps from Ghadjan, and “excellent and exquisite books” (*kütüb-i nefîse-i a<sup>c</sup>lâ*).<sup>83</sup> Hammer’s account adds to this list more carpets from Darabdjerd, light silk fabrics from Yazd, heavier ones from Qum, clothes from Besa, antidotes called mumies<sup>84</sup> from Nirin, and swords from Shiraz.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> *oltra che tutte le preditte cose erano piu ricche una belliss[im]a fodra de Zebelini doppò mandò esso Amb[asciato]r à parte un’altro presente fatto da lui particularm[en]te de tapedi, spade, et altre cose d’azemia.* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 513a.

<sup>82</sup> *Selaniki, Tarih, I: 72.*

<sup>83</sup> *kâ<sup>c</sup>ide-i kadîme üzre diyâr-ı Şark tuhafından vükelâ-i saltanata ibrişim kaliçe-i Hemedân ü Dergezîn ve tekye-i nemed-i Câm ve kütüb-i nefîse-i a<sup>c</sup>lâ herbirine çekilüp* *Selaniki, Tarih, I: 72.*

<sup>84</sup> *Mumia*, or *mumiya* in Persian and Turkish, refers to bitumen used as a drug for healing wounds, and aches. Traditionally, the most effective kind was believed to be those extracted from mines in Persia, though beginning in the late Medieval period, pieces of embalmed bodies of ancient Egyptians were also thought to serve the same purpose and were in wide circulation in early modern Europe. For a discussion of the history, use and attitudes towards *mumia* in the early modern period, see Karl H. Dannenfeldt, “Egyptian Mumia: The Sixteenth Century Experience and Debate,” *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 16, no. 2 (1985): 163-180; Richard Sugg, “‘Good Physic but Bad Food:’ Early Modern Attitudes to Medicinal Cannibalism and its Suppliers,” *Social History of Medicine* 19, no. 2 (2006): 225-240. In his memoirs, the Mughal emperor Jahangir (r. 1605-1627) writes about a *mumiya* sent to him from Shah Abbas, and explains how the drug did not work, when rubbed on a broken leg. Nur al-Din Jahangir, *The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India*, trans. Wheeler M. Thackston (Washington D.C. and New York: Freer Gallery of Art, Arthur M. Sackler Gallery and Oxford University Press, 1999).

What Marc'Antonio Pigafetta characterizes as a "strange event" took place on Shah Quli's way to one of these visits. As mentioned earlier, whereas this incident is not at all mentioned in contemporary Ottoman accounts, foreign eyewitnesses inquisitively make a note of it. Pigafetta records this seemingly spontaneous rage of an Ottoman novice in the following manner:

The other day, to present the pashas [gifts], [Shah Quli] himself went to visit them, where on his way a strange event came about. A novice (*un giamoglano*)<sup>86</sup> (while the ambassador went off to visit [Sokollu Mehmed Pasha]), appeared in front of him, and shot an arquebus to kill him, but missed him, instead hitting one of his own seniors, though only slightly on one of his arms. The Persian got terrified, believing he was ambushed, turned his horse around to return to his residence.<sup>87</sup>

As soon as Sokollu got news of what had happened, he ordered that the criminal be caught immediately. He also sent his men to Shah Quli to apologize for what had

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<sup>85</sup> *l'ambassadeur offrit au grand-vizir et aux autres vizirs un choix des productions naturelles et industrielles de son pays: des tapis de soie de Hamadan et de Derghez, des bonnets de Ghadjan, du savon d'Ardjan, des tabliers de Mehrouyan, des tapis de Darabdjer, des housses de Djehrem, de la momie de Nirin, des étoffes légères de soie d'Yezt, d'autres plus fortes de Koum, des vêtements de Bésa, et des lames de sabre de Schiraz.* Joseph F. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman, depuis son origine jusqu'à nos jours*, 18 vols. (Paris: Bellizard Barthès, Dufour & Lowell, 1835-43), 6: 323. Hammer's account is based on a letter written in Italian which is a translation of a report by an attendant in the ambassador's retinue. He does not provide full citation for the letter.

<sup>86</sup> This refers to *acemi ođlan* in Turkish. Literally meaning inexperienced youth, these were soldiers being trained to later join higher ranks within the janissaries, the Ottoman elite soldiers.

<sup>87</sup> *Il giorno dietro, presentati li passà, egli stesso poi andò a visitarli, dove nell'andare gl'intravenne un caso st[r]ano. Un giamoglano (mentre l'ambasciatore s'era inviato per andare a visitar Mahometto per lo primo), se gli fece incontro e gi sparò un'archibugiata per ammazzarlo, ma non lo colse, ma fu colto in vece sua, legiermente però, un gentiluomo principal suo, in un braccio. Il Persiano spaventatosi, credendo di esser tradito, voltò il cavallo per ritornarsene all'alloggiamento.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 244.

happened, assuring him also that the criminal would be punished severely; this kind of behavior would not be tolerated lightly. Giacomo Soranzo notes, however, that all the efforts were fruitless. Striking fear in the public, Sokollu then picked out a prisoner who had already been condemned to death and declared him the criminal.<sup>88</sup> In Pigafetta's account, the criminal is quickly caught as promised and brought before Sokollu and Shah Quli . When questioned about his action, the transgressor audaciously said that "he would not have done it had it not been for this ambassador who was a heretic, and was sent by a heretic king, enemy of their saints, and for this reason it was not appropriate that he came to make peace with his king, and that it was not suitable."<sup>89</sup> Anyone witnessing or hearing about this event would be hard pressed not to form an opinion on it especially if Soranzo's version circulated among the populace. For if so far the series of encounters between the elite members of the Safavid and Ottoman courts were private events falling under the rubric of routine international diplomacy, now the obscure tension was made public. This tension, stemming from the religious divide did not surface, however, with rival parties attacking each other. Rather, the Ottoman soldier who gave expression to the oppositional sentiments of courtiers such as Ahmed Feridun Beg was to be sacrificed. One thing that cannot be emphasized enough in this matter is Sokollu Mehmed Pasha's excellent management of it. His experience in state matters in general and in particular

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<sup>88</sup> *et di subito fu fatta grandiss[im]a diligentia trovar quello che havea fatta la bota ma non si trovando et puolendo pur il mag[nifi]co Bassà metter terror al popolo, et insieme dimostrar di tener conto del Amb[asciato]r fece di subito cavar di prigione un condannato alla morte, et fattolo strasinar per la città lo fecero morir credandosele avasse che era quello ch'havea sparata la preditta archibusata. ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 512a-512b.*

<sup>89</sup> *Il giamoglano senza turbarsi rispose che ciò per altro egli non avea fatto, che per esser quello ambasciatore un eretico, e mandato da un re eretico, e inimico delli lor santi, e che perciò non era conveniente che venisse a far pace col suo Signore, e che di quella non ne era degno. Pigafetta, Itinerario da Vienna, 244.*



his knowledge of the history of Ottoman-Safavid relations account for his deep understanding of the highly complex nature of these relations. The dialogue between the two empires could not be dictated solely by the Sunni-Shi'i split. What was reduced in many people's mind to this intellectual split in fact was the very thrust that kept uniting the two polities physically. Sokollu therefore would wisely use his power to skillfully eliminate anything that would initiate diplomatic crisis. To this end, the designated criminal was brutally murdered. He was condemned to be dragged on the streets of Edirne tied behind a horse; with his hand cut off, he was then decapitated.<sup>90</sup> Complicating this picture is Giacomo Soranzo's commentary on this execution, which reveals Sokollu's obligation to justify it at another level, to the general public:

but this is not all, and so that the [Safavid] ambassador and all of his [men] would not be badly regarded by the public due to the treason done to Sultan Bayezid, but on the contrary the Sultan reminded [them] of the good favors received for every command, and that they would be honored and singled out.<sup>91</sup>

Apparently, the elimination of Prince Bayezid from the contest for the throne, when Sultan Süleyman was still alive six years before, was still fresh in many people's memory. Perhaps more significant than the differences in religious orientation for the general public was the tendency to blame Shah Tahmasp for the heartless killing of the prince along with his sons. This public opinion might easily have been encouraged by

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<sup>90</sup> *Il che udito dal passà, fu condannato il giorno dietro ad esser strassinato per la città a coda di cavallo, e tagliatali una mano, esser decapitato.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 244.

<sup>91</sup> This section is written in cipher on fol 512v; 513r gives the following decipherment: *Ma non per cio resta, et ch l'Amb[asciato]r et tutti li soi non siano malissimo veduti da tutta il populo esplorandoli il tradimento fatto à Sultan baiesit ma all'incontro il S[erenissi]mo Sig[no]r memore del beneficio havuto ogni di commanda, che siano piu honorati, et accanzzati.* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 513a.

Sultan Süleyman himself, whose previous execution of another one of his sons, Prince Mustafa, had caused uproar among the janissaries.

### **Selim receives Shah Quli**

Three days after, on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, Shah Quli and his entourage visited the sultan at the imperial palace. The procession of the embassy from their residence to the palace was a public spectacle that many observed closely. It has been recorded that it was “the most lavish of the embassies heretofore seen.”<sup>92</sup> The procession moved flanked by Ottoman soldiers on either side of the road, who stood along the road all lined up with their hands tied in front of them.<sup>93</sup> One observer described the embassy as proceeding “in the most honorable manner.” At the very front came Ottoman courtiers including palace sergeants and members of the sultan’s elite corps. Both the Ottomans and Persians donned robes made of extravagant fabrics very much like those worn by the Venetian nobility. Pigafetta therefore immediately recognized this type of dress as of the highest quality. What made one group discernible from the other was the conspicuous use of figural embroidery in one and its strict elimination in the other (Figures 1.7 and 1.8):

[The Ottomans were] all clothed in rich vestments, most of them in gold brocade, and velvet, and others in damasks, and other kinds of silk. Behind them came thirty Persians on horseback, dressed in the Persian style with robes of honor embroidered with various colors of wool, and others with different bits of ormesine silk and taffeta of varied colors, on which were delicately embroidered figures of

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<sup>92</sup> Hammer, quoted in Martin Dickson and Stuart Cary Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 270.

<sup>93</sup> TSMK H.1339, 242v.

men and women, horses and other animals, and other fabrics elegantly woven.<sup>94</sup>

Behind this group marched Shah Quli 's personal servants on foot, who were followed by two hundred jannissaries in Pigafetta's estimation. This observer goes on to explain, in the following manner, how the ambassador and his horse appeared behind this sea of soldiers:

... and at the back of these came only the ambassador himself and [his] horse most pompously decorated. [He was] wearing a crimson velvet robe, but one mixed with other colors. The saddle and the reins and the crownpiece of the horse on the reverse side were all decorated with jewels, and the very same fabric that they use, like the Turks and the Hungarians, placed at the back of the horse, as ornament, was profusely inlaid with turquoises. The ornaments, which crowned the turbans of the Persians by more than a palm and a half is named *metevenchia* by the Turks. [These were] all gilded and encrusted with different kinds of gems.<sup>95</sup>

The ambassador, together with his horse, was among those Safavids that were dressed most extravagantly. This was underscored by the appearance of the hundred and

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<sup>94</sup> *L'ambasciatore veniva onorissimamente accompagnato così da Turchi, come da suoi gentiluomini. Andavano innanzi, oltre molti altri, in bella ordinanza, una pomposa cavalleria de spahi e chiaussi e altri cortigiani tutti bene a cavallo, e riccamente vestiti, molti con vesti di broccato d'oro, e di veluto, e altri con damaschi, e altri sorti di sete. Dietro a costoro poi venivano da trenta persiani a cavallo, vestiti alla persiana con vesti tessute di vari colori di lana, e altre di vari pezzetti di ormesini e taffetà di diversi colori, facendone minutissime figure d'uomini e donne, di cavalli, e d'altri animali, e altre vesti fatte a foggioni.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna a Costantinopoli*, p. 246

<sup>95</sup> ... e nella fine di questi veniva solo l'ambasciatore, egli e il cavallo pomposissimamente addobato. Aveva di sopra una vesta di velluto cremesino, ma con altri colori mischiata. La sella e le redine e la testiera del cavallo nei debiti luoghi erano tutte lavorate di gioie, e quel drappo medesimamente che usano così essi, come i Torchi e gli Ungari di porre per ornamento sopra la groppa del cavallo era tutto riccamato di turchine. Quel corno, che avanza di sopra dal turbante dei persiani più d'un palmo e mezo, da turchi chiamato *metevenchia*, era tutto lavorato d'oro e di diverse sorti di gemme. A slightly different version of the movement of the Safavid ambassador is also given in Hammer, *Histoire de l'Empire ottoman*, 6: 323-4.

forty people from his retinue that walked behind him: “some [dressed] well, some bad, according to their power.” Those with the gilded turbans, for example, stood out notably. At the same time, however, a foreign observer explains that in spite of all the display of Safavid imperial pomp in this procession, Ottomans appeared significantly more glamorous; their ceremonial robes, made of Venetian cloth were superior as they were more brightly colored than those worn by the Persians.<sup>96</sup> Furthermore, Pigafetta speaks more favorably of the gold brocades and velvets worn by the Ottomans: “even though [the Safavids] have abundant silk and wool, they have limited access to plain cloths and velvets, for they have to get some from the Portuguese who control their trade in the Persian Gulf.”<sup>97</sup> Ahmed Feridun Beg expands Pigafetta’s classification by underscoring the element of ceremonial order, which even impressed Shah Quli himself, who “became convinced of Ottoman superiority when he encountered the countless obedient courtiers lined up in ‘order, majesty, magnificence, and greatness.’”<sup>98</sup>

Shah Quli was more awestruck when he entered the imperial palace, which was even more sumptuously decorated than usual for this occasion. He saw here various ranks of soldiers and other courtiers in great number filling up the space waiting to receive the ambassador with utmost deference. The display of power by way of such modesty reportedly aroused feelings of extreme admiration in all members of the embassy. Feridun Ahmed Beg describes this reaction, which probably tells us more about Ottoman

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<sup>96</sup> Hammer, *Histoire de l’Empire ottoman*, 6: 323-4.

<sup>97</sup> *Ve ne erano ancora alcuni con vesti di broccato d’oro, ma non così bello, come il turchesco, e qualchedun altro con vesti di velluto, e pochissimi con vesti di panno, perché di questo e di quello, anchorché abondino e di seta e di lana, non ve ne hanno, se non lo pigliano da Portoghesi che trafficano a quelle parti per lo Golfo Persico.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 246.

<sup>98</sup> Cited in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and Power*, 68.

aspirations than how the messengers actually might have felt:

Many people witnessed that the envoys, recollecting the shameful manner of their own king, became malevolent. They uttered: “May his sluggish state be gone! Instead of being a king to this sort of age, may he be a doorkeeper and servant at the Ottoman imperial threshold.” They said, “In reality, that would be a hundred times better and a thousand times superior”<sup>99</sup>

Selim II received the envoy in his *divan* (imperial council hall). The envoy first presented the letter from Shah Tahmasp in a gilded box. The illustrated double-spread from the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān* captures this moment (Figure 1.6). The sultan sits in an elaborate throne,<sup>100</sup> and all the courtiers taking part in the solemn ceremony are oriented and looking towards his direction, which underscores his position as the center of attention. The grandvizier and other viziers are lined up alongside the sultan in the upper left-hand side of the painting at the right. At the lower side of both paintings, court attendants are each holding a different gift. The figures in these two paintings are aligned on a vertical axis directing the viewer’s attention from the sultan down to the line of presents from right to left, ending with the large gilded boxes placed at the upper left-hand side of the painting at the left. These boxes must have been used to carry the presents to Edirne. As mentioned earlier, the embassy was quite a sizeable one, numbering over seven hundred people, with 320 officials and 400 merchants. The gifts

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<sup>99</sup> *ilçiler kendü şāhlarınıñ uslūb-u meslūb ve tarz-ı ma’yūbların yād idiüb nefret ü istikrāh iyliyüb itmīşler ki şāh-i kemrāh-u devletüñ tebāh olsün sin-i maķūle şāh olmaķdan ise işbū ‘atebe-i ‘aliye’-i ‘oşmāniyye ve sūdde’-i seniyye’-i hāķāniyyede derbān u nūker olsuñ senün hakikatte şad bār bihter ve hezār u hezār evveliyatta idī dīmīşler.* TSMK, H. 1339, 243b.

<sup>100</sup> The sultan’s custom of receiving foreign ambassadors seated in a throne as opposed to a sofa was initiated by Sultan Suleyman. See Pál Fodor, “Sultan, Imperial Council, Grand Vizier: Changes in the Ottoman Ruling Elite and the Formation of the Grand Vizieral *Telhis*,” *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 47 (1994): 67-85.

were carried by forty-four camels, ten of which were reserved for bringing Shah Quli 's own gifts.

The shah's long letter was presented to the sultan in a golden box encrusted with jewels.<sup>101</sup> The gifts that received unanimous pride of place in all contemporary accounts had similar covers; these were a Qur'an and a *Shahnama*. In the painting, the attendant standing closest to the sultan must depict the extraordinary Qur'an, which is described by Pigafetta as "a Qur'an with the sole authority of Ali [ibn Abi Talib], as is their belief."<sup>102</sup> In Feridun Beg's list, the first gift is recorded simply as a volume of the most glorious word [of God] (*kelām-ı mecīd, bir cild*) with no reference to Ali at all. It is not possible to identify any of the Qur'ans currently in the collection of the Topkapı Palace Museum today as this particular one with certainty, though a Qur'an fragment in a private collection has been tentatively identified as this gift (Figure 1.9).<sup>103</sup> Without the object itself, the only other clue we have is Soranzo's report, in which he describes the book as having three lines per page.<sup>104</sup>

All the same, the extreme value of this object is better understood if we approach this gift with questions about the intention of its giver and its reception by the receiver.

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<sup>101</sup> *et l'Amb[asciato]r presenter alla M[ae]s[t]à sua una lettera del Re suo messa in una casetta d'oro Zogielata.* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 514a.

<sup>102</sup> *un Alcorano con l'autorità sola d'Alì, secondo essi tengono e ciò è di costume loro sempre rappresentargliene uno. Aveva le coperte riccamate d'oro.* Pigafetta, *Itinerario da Vienna*, 245.

<sup>103</sup> This Qur'an was recently put on display at the exhibition, "Gifts of the Sultan" held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in 2011. See Linda Komaroff, *Gifts of the Sultan: The Arts of Giving at the Islamic Courts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), cat. 148, 18-19, 261. It was sold in 1992 in a Christie's auction. See *Islamic Art, Indian Miniatures, Rugs and Carpets London 20 October 1992 Christie's*, Lot 232, 94-7.

<sup>104</sup> *Alcorano scritto à tre righe per faccia.* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 515a.

The descriptions of the book, as well as its presentation and reception attest to the high esteem with which it was received at the Ottoman court. In the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān* painting (Figure 1.6), the inscriptions on top of the opposite page describe the leading gifts as follows: “the very first [was] a gilded Quran in a volume largely studded with jewels.”<sup>105</sup> The distinction of this gift from all others in the painting is highlighted both visually and in writing. Furthermore, it is placed at the top of the hierarchy of gifts in all other sources. The bejeweled cover must have enhanced this book and guaranteed its distinction, much like the letter and the *Shahnama*. But if we trust Pigafetta’s account that this was a copy believed to have been designed by °Ali ibn Abi Talib himself, then the jewels only become signifiers of its importance and the value they add become only cosmetic and negligible, if not insignificant. For this was a Qur’an with no equal, written with the pen of the master calligrapher.

The tremendous respect and importance ascribed to the Qur’an as the word of God in Islamic traditions had rendered the art of copying it beautifully the principal form of decoration, whether in portable media or in monumental architecture. At both the Ottoman and Safavid courts, commissioning and collecting complete Qur’an copies and calligraphic specimens in general were venerated princely practices. The active interest in collecting and copying classical texts of Persian literature as well as Qur’ans at the Safavid court in particular made possible an excellent environment, as David Roxburgh has cogently argued, an intellectual engagement with artistic production and its history. Within the small but important corpus of Safavid treatises on art and biographies of artists and album prefaces produced in the mid to late sixteenth century, calligraphy is

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<sup>105</sup> *nukhustīn muzahhab qalām-i qadīm bi-jild-i muraşsa° bi-qadr-i °aẓīm* TSMK, H.3595, 54a.

upheld as the most supreme form of artistic expression. In these texts, issues related to artists' lineages and sources of artistic knowledge formed the driving force behind the authors' quest. Within this scheme, °Ali ibn Abi Talib is designated as a key figure within the chain of transmission (*silsila*) of artistic knowledge. This idea finds expression, for example, in the *Gulistān-i Hunar* (Rose Garden of Art) of the Safavid author Qazi Ahmad. In this famous treatise on calligraphers and painters, he praises °Ali as the master of the kufic script:

Then that writing which, like kohl, cleared the sight of men of understanding with divine revelation and the commands and prohibitions of His Holiness the prophet—God's prayer on him and his family!—was the *kūfī* writing. And there exist tracings by the miraculous *qalams* of His Holiness the Shah, the Refuge of Sanctity (i.e., °Alī) which enlighten the sight of the soul and brighten the tablets of the heart. None wrote better than that Holiness—God's blessing on him!—and the most excellent *kūfī* is that which he has traced—God's peace on him!<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Qāzī Aḥmad, *Calligraphers and Painters: A Treatise by Qāḍī Aḥmad, Son of Mīr-Munshī* (circa A.H. 1015/A.D. 1606), transl. V. Minorsky, Freer Gallery of Art Occidental Papers 3, 2 (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1959), 53-54. The goal of the introduction is to demonstrate this idea, which is summarized in the title: "On the appearance of the qalam and the first appearance of writing, with the tracing of the origin of the latter to His Holiness the King of the throne of sanctity, the Amīr of all Amīrs [°Ali ibn Abi Talib]" Following suit, Maulānā Sultan-°Alī's treatise, which Qazi Ahmad gave in the *Gulistān-i Hunar*, puts forth the same idea: "Murtaḍā (°Alī) laid the foundations of the Kūfī script and developed it. And those other styles of writing, which masters invented, know they are also derived from the Kūfī." p. 107. °Ali is also believed to have continued to inspire and instruct calligraphers who lived centuries after him, for example, by appearing in their dream. For example, Dust Muhammad talks about how Khvaja Mir °Ali Tabrizi, the inventor of the *nastaliq* script, and the Abbasid calligrapher Ibn Muqla received Ali's assistance. David Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image: The Writing of Art History in Sixteenth Century Iran* (London: E.J. Brill, 2000), 131, 188. Roxburgh's examination of treatises and album prefaces also shows that other Safavid authors such as Dust Muhammad recognized Ali as the initial designer and illuminator of the Quran. Roxburgh also discusses how this understanding was used as a tool to explicate and strengthen connections between calligraphy and depiction.



The extraordinary value and respect that the Safavids would have attributed a Qur'an of this kind is underscored, therefore, by such a distinctive understanding of °Ali as a master illuminator and calligrapher, the one who gave meaningful form to writing, and who potentially possessed the power to instruct or guide generations of talented artists to come. David Roxburgh further discusses how the agency of °Ali “took on a particular resonance among the Shi'ite audience of the Safavid court” in a collective scholarly attempt to elevate the status of calligraphy and illumination.<sup>107</sup>

But how did Safavid authors and artists study calligraphic specimens and/or designs penned by °Ali? Testifying to the existence of such examples, Dust Muhammad claimed that pages with his decorations survived.<sup>108</sup> A fragment from an early Quran manuscript with a colophon indicating that it was written by °Ali ibn Abi Talib is today at the shrine of the eighth Shi'ite imam °Ali ibn Musa in Mashhad.<sup>109</sup> It was among the gifts endowed by Shah °Abbas to the shrine, where he went on a famous pilgrimage in 1601. Such Qur'ans bearing invented signatures of °Ali and other imams, according to Sheila Blair, served a legitimating function for the Safavids who claimed descent from the Prophet

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<sup>107</sup> Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 90. Dust Muhammad maintained that “...°Ali b. Abi Talib was the first person to embellish Korans with design and illumination (*ba-naqsh va tazhīb-i zīnat*)...” 170.

<sup>108</sup> “According to Dust Muhammad, some pages decorated by °Ali b. Abi Talib survived to his day and the term given to °Ali's decorative elements was *islāmī*.” Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*, 171.

<sup>109</sup> Mashhad, Astan-i Quds, no. 6. Written on parchment, the manuscript has fifteen lines per page. It is published in Sheila Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 15, citing: Ahmad Gulchīn-i Ma°ānī, *Rāhnamā-yi ganjīna-yi qur'ān* (Mashhad, 1347), no.1 (jim gives list of qurans abbas endowed); Ramažān-°alī Shākīrī, *Ganj-i hizār sāla-yi kitābkhāna-yi markazī-yi āstān-i quds-i rižavī qabl wa ba°d az inqalāb* (Mashhad, 1367/ 1989), 36 and 38. Blair discusses another fragment found in the Gulistan Palace Library (no. 1052) in Tehran, which likewise has a colophon containing °Ali ibn Abi Talib's signature that was added much later. Unlike the first example, however, this one has six lines on each page. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 127.

Muhammad through the line of °Ali ibn Abi Talib. These objects were venerated as religious relics and their possession by the Safavid rulers provided tangible proof for this line of descent.<sup>110</sup>

In the *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān* painting, the third gift along the line must be the *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*. As mentioned earlier, Giacomo Soranzo provides a list of these gifts in his report. First in his list are a Qur'an, second is a "book of the kind which one prince sends another with all pages in gilded calligraphy and illustrated with 259 figures."<sup>111</sup> This is none other than the *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp*, as art historians have already shown. Not only do the number of paintings and other exalting words used to describe the book in contemporary sources validate this, but also two accounts actually identify the manuscript as a *Shahnama* and we know that Shah Tahmasp commissioned only one *Book of Kings*.<sup>112</sup>

Other gifts included silver compasses, cushions, porcelain plates, gilded arrows, a chandelier, a gilded quiver (?), horses, saddles, a pavilion tent measuring sixteen units,<sup>113</sup> large felts from Khurasan to be put on the floor, small silk carpets, large carpets, and falcons. A contemporary account claims that "the most costly of all the gifts were two

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<sup>110</sup> Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy*, 102.

<sup>111</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 515a.

<sup>112</sup> These two sources are the Venetian source, on which Joseph von Hammer's account is based, and the Ottoman historian Feridun Beg records: *Şah Tahmaspîñ kendü adına denilmiş ikiyüz ellitokuz yirde taşvîr-i meclis olunmuş muraşsa<sup>c</sup> cildle bir kıt<sup>c</sup>a şāhnāme*. TSMK, H. 1339, 243b. Pigafetta lists it as a "book of history."

<sup>113</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 515a. The tent is described in detail. Soranzo says it is "hung with Damascene cloth, and covered with crème colored satin with a pole painted blue with silver inlay, and above a green cover, and three parasols to be placed at the entrance of the pavilion, one of Iranian gold, one of satin, and one of 'ermesine,' and their centerpoles painted in blue with silver spokes that are gilded and jeweled and held together with two sets of cords made of gold and silk, one for the pavilion and the other for the parasols."

books. Bound alike in gold and gems, one was a Quran, allegedly in the hand of [the Imam] Ali himself; the other was a copy of Firdowsi's *Shahnama*."<sup>114</sup> Among the gifts of Shah Tahmasp, then, manuscripts were considered as the most valuable items as they were prioritized in both written text -always being the first items in lists-, and in image - in the painting depicting this event, the Qur'an and the *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* are presented at the very front row, portrayed closest to and aligned with the sultan.<sup>115</sup>

The *Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* was an illustrated manuscript composed in the tradition of the original *Shahnama* (Book of Kings) written in the late tenth century by the poet Firdowsi under the auspices of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni. It relates the deeds of ancient Persian kings and heroes. In time, commissioning a *Shahnama* became "a part of any Iranian ruler's regalia."<sup>116</sup> Shah Tahmasp was also an active patron of the arts especially in the former part of his reign. The illustrated manuscripts produced under Tahmasp date from the first three decades of his rule, as in the year 1556 he renounced the arts. After this date, he seems to have drawn away from other pleasures of life and rarely left the palace in Qazvin.<sup>117</sup> His *Shahnama* is perhaps the most famous illustrated manuscript in Islamic art, and at times considered the most sumptuous one (Figures 1.10, 1.11). It was a production of enormous scale with 742 large folios and 259 illustrations. It does not have a colophon, yet it bears a dedicatory rosette, which indicates that it was

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<sup>114</sup> Quoted in Dickson and Welch, *The Houghton Shahnama*, 270.

<sup>115</sup> Also, the caption on the painting reads: "...the gatekeepers brought in tribute, pleasing, beautiful and nice gifts of every sort/ first was a gilded Qur'an in a volume largely studded with jewels, [then there were] pleasing books and Shahnamas written in good order and beauty..."

<sup>116</sup> Stuart Cary Welch, *A King's Book of Kings: The Shahnama of Shah Tahmasp* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1972), 15.

<sup>117</sup> Welch, *A King's Book of Kings*, 68-73.

prepared for Tahmasp's library (Figure 1.12).<sup>118</sup> Stylistically, artists have combined the use of lively colors that are seen in Turcoman painting and use of extraordinary detail typical of Timurid painting.<sup>119</sup> Another characteristic unique to this *Shahnama* was that by the 1520s, when it was produced, "the age of magnificent royal Shah-namas had long since passed."<sup>120</sup> It was a time when shorter texts with fewer illustrations were produced. In sum, its scale with lavish illustrations and that it was a royal *Shahnama* produced in sixteenth-century Persia made the manuscript "truly exceptional"<sup>121</sup>

But independent of the value such a manuscript held in general terms, this particular *Shahnama* includes an innovative painting in the opening pages of the manuscript, which needs close examination in the context of the gifting of the book from a Shi'ite king to a Sunni one (Figure 1.13). This painting illustrates the story of the "Ship of Faith." This parable, in which Prophet Muhammad and 'Ali, the two loyal friends, set out on a sea voyage with other faithful Muslims, is known to have become an arena for Sunni-Shi'ite disputes. In her study of paintings that depict this story, Raya Shani points to the rarity of *shahnama* copies including this painting.<sup>122</sup> But within this small group, it is possible to see how artists, while referring to established models, changed the composition based on the patron's religious orientation and more specifically his stance

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<sup>118</sup> Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam*, 168. The lines inscribed in the rosette read: "Commissioned for the library of the Most Mighty Sultan, and the most just and beneficent *Khaqan* [Grand Khan], Sultan, son, grandson of sultans, Abu'l-Muzaffar, Sultan Shah Tahmasp, of Husayni and Safavi descent, *Bahadur* [The Valiant] Khan. May God, the Most Exalted, perpetuate His realm and His rule, and diffuse..."

<sup>119</sup> Welch, *A King's Book of Kings*, 33.

<sup>120</sup> Robert Hillenbrand, "The Iconography of the *Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhī*," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London and New York: I.D. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1996), 54.

<sup>121</sup> Hillenbrand, "Iconography of the *Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhī*," 57.

<sup>122</sup> Raya Y. Shani, "Illustrations of the Parable of the Ship of Faith in Firdausi's Prologue to the *Shahnama*," in *Shahnama Studies I*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge, 2006).

with regard to the issue of the true line of succession after Muhammad.

Tahmasp's *Shahnama* reflects this strongly, unreservedly expressing a view of Twelver Shi'i salvation that is incorporated seamlessly into Safavid religious propaganda. The Shi'i tradition emphasizes that in his lifetime Muhammad clearly designated Ali as his successor and likened his family and successors, the *ahl al-bait*, to Noah's Ark. This metaphor was also used by Safavid artists in other paintings on this subject (Figure 1.14). Here, Muhammad and °Ali are at the front of the ship and are distinguished from the rest spiritually through their veiled faces and spatially through the use of a column between them and the rest. But Muhammad is further set apart from °Ali through his vertical elevation, seated higher on a platform. Ottoman painting, too, always makes such distinctions, carefully setting Muhammad from everyone else including °Ali (Figure 1.15). The scene takes place in a mosque; the prophet is seated on the *minbar*, or pulpit, and °Ali and his sons Hasan and Husain are at Muhammed's left side. The holy characters are identified by their flaming haloes and are surrounded by the attentive audience.

In one of the Safavid compositions depicting this scene (Figure 1.14), °Ali and the other holy figures are wearing the Safavid turban whose white fabric is folded around a red high baton. Muhammad, however, is given a more neutral headdress. In the Tahmasp *Shahnama* (Figure 1.15), four figures stand out with their positioning under a canopy, their veiled faces and the bundles of flaming lights that encircle their heads. The two figures flanking the canopy are Hasan and Husain, °Ali's sons and Muhammad's grandsons, and the two inside the canopy are Muhammad and °Ali. Without any obvious marks of identification, it is in fact unclear, as Martin Dickson and Cary Welch pointed

out, which one is which. Moreover, all four figures wear the Safavid turban marking them as Shi'ī Safavids. Hence, the painting unmistakably links Safavid rulers not just to ʿAlī but also to Muhammad by way of him. The omission of the other caliphs from a painting about the right path, for the receivers of this gift, must have visually paralleled the Safavid rejection of the legitimacy of the first three caliphs of the Sunni tradition.

On the the question of why this priceless manuscript was gifted, art historians are either silent, or they attribute this gifting to Shah Tahmasp's loss of interest in arts. Robert Hillenbrand briefly addresses this issue at the end of an article in which he makes a thematic analysis of the paintings in this manuscript. He argues that the themes of the illustrations were carefully selected so as to emphasize certain themes. Four-fifths of the paintings are placed in the first part of the manuscript, where "the major theme is the enmity between Iran and Turan."<sup>123</sup> Hillenbrand also demonstrates that one-third of the paintings are battle scenes, and the rest are split into several other themes. All in all, the *Shahnama* is interpreted in historical context. Through the recurrent theme of the struggle between Iran and Turan, a nationalist message, "Iran for the Iranians," is conveyed.<sup>124</sup> While this argument is very convincing, the two claims that Tahmasp gifted the manuscript because "his priorities had changed," and that following the Treaty of Amasya, when peace was already secured, gifting the *Shahnama* was a political gesture "to cement good relations" with the new sultan may be considered a hypothesis not without alternatives. In this chapter I present an alternative explanation, which is based both on the visual analysis of the "Ship of Faith" painting included in Tahmasp's *shahnama*, an on Giacomo Soranzo's report that uncovers Shah Tahmasp's plea to the

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<sup>123</sup> Turan is a geographical term used to refer to the central Asian steppes.

<sup>124</sup> Hillenbrand, "Iconography of the Shāh-nāma-yi Shāhī," 69.

Ottoman sultan communicated by his ambassador. In light of this new source, I argue that the Safavid shah intended to proclaim his superiority as a patron of the arts. To elaborate this statement, I will first consider what takes place in the imperial council hall as related by Soranzo, and then interpret the exceptionally valuable gift sent by Shah Tahmasp by comparing it to the equally outstanding ruby exchanged between a seventeenth-century Safavid ruler and his Mughal counterpart.

In the presence of the Ottoman sultan Selim II, the Safavid ambassador, Shah Quli, bends over in utmost respect, and he is held by his arms by two attendants of the sultan. This image of Shah Quli in the painting further enhances the subordinate position he takes before Selim II. The Venetian *bailo* who witnessed this event says that Shah Quli intended to maintain good relations “with words full of submission and reverence”<sup>125</sup> out of a desire from which he promises never to depart. Then the ambassador goes on to praise the sultan. “In addition to his majesty’s other greatnesses and titles”, Shah Quli recognizes him “as head of the Muhammadan sect even though in some issues pertaining to religion they continue to disagree.” Then, according to Giacomo Soranzo, Shah Quli humbly requests of Selim II that “merchants might be allowed to trade freely between their respective countries and the roads should be kept open for the Persians to travel to Mecca by means of Baghdad.”<sup>126</sup> It should be noted at this point that all Muslims, who have the means to afford it are obliged to go to Mecca for pilgrimage. Although merely a religious requirement on the surface, the pilgrimage also had social, economic, and

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<sup>125</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 513a. All the rest of the citations in this paragraph are from this same page.

<sup>126</sup> ...*dimandò appresso che li mercanti avessero libero commercio dall’una et l’altra parte, et che fusse aperta et sicurata la strada che essi persiani potessero andar alla Meca per via di Babilonia...*

communicative functions.<sup>127</sup> Moreover, in the Ottoman context, this religious duty had political implications for the legitimacy of the state. As *Hadim al-Haremeyn* (Defender of the Holy cities), “the Ottoman [sultan] protected the pilgrimage... because this protection legitimized the Sultan”<sup>128</sup>. To this end, considerable sums of resources were allocated to organize the event and guarantee the safety of the pilgrims. The holy lands of Islam came under Ottoman control after they defeated the Mamluks of Egypt in 1517. Henceforth, Ottoman sultans claimed a special superior status over all other Muslim leaders. Providing social and municipal services to Muslims on the way to the Holy lands and in Mecca and Medina was the critical way in which Ottomans demonstrated this special role.

After the Safavid ambassador makes the request about trouble-free pilgrimage to Mecca, the sultan responds favorably to it “with few words”, and the ambassador leaves shortly after. Based on the report of the Venetian *bailo*, it is clear that in addition to congratulating and honoring Selim II as the new Ottoman sultan, the Safavid ambassador came to Edirne to ask him for permission to use the road to Mecca, which was under Ottoman control, without restraint. This means that he was also asking for protection from the sultan because it was the obligation of the Ottoman state to provide protection to all the caravans traveling to Mecca. In addition to having control of the holy lands of Islam, providing protection for pilgrims traveling to and from this area was a great source of pride for the Ottomans. Evidently though, the Safavids were having problems in traveling to Mecca. Moreover, it also seems that around the year 1568, other Muslim

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<sup>127</sup> Suraiya Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans: The Hajj under the Ottomans 1517-1683* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1994).

<sup>128</sup> Faroqhi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*, 9.



states similarly appealed to the Ottoman sultan to protect pilgrims. Muslim rulers in Central Asia pressured the sultan because the Safavids were not letting them through their lands and there were other difficulties in traveling to the holy lands of Islam. Sometimes rulers of Islamic states in central Asia even made alliances to support the sultan to (re)conquer strategic places such as Astrakhan, a city to the north of the Caspian Sea.<sup>129</sup> Moreover, in a recent study by Giancarlo Casale, it has been cogently argued that “the Ottoman dynasty’s authority as Caliph of the universal community of believers was recognized on a scale never equaled before or since, receiving formal expression in the Friday call to prayer of Muslim houses of worship from the Horn of Africa to Indonesia”.<sup>130</sup>

As a group, Tahmasp’s gifts to Selim II encapsulate important religious, historical, cultural and economic Perso-Islamic royal attributes. At varying levels, however, as object types, the popularity of each one of them was shared by other rulers in the early modern Muslim world. Contemporaneous rulers frequently collected lavishly illustrated copies of literary texts and Qur’ans, jewels, textiles, tents and birds of prey. They did this through commissioning similar objects to their court artists, receiving them as gifts or tribute from their own courtiers, vassals and foreign rulers, or they appropriated such objects as booty, as tokens of military victory. But in this particular case, some of the

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<sup>129</sup> Robert D. McChesney, “The Central Asian Hajj Pilgrimage in the Time of the Early Modern Empires,” in *Safavid Iran and Her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press) 133. See also M. Khodarkovsky, *Russia’s Steppe Frontier: The Making of a Colonial Empire, 1500-1800* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), 115.

<sup>130</sup> Giancarlo Casale, “The Ottoman Age of Exploration: Spices, Maps and Conquest in the Sixteenth Century Indian Ocean” Ph.D. diss. (Harvard University, 2004), p. 231. See chapter 4 for a more detailed discussion.

gifts were surely one-of-a-kind, the value of which was beyond any measure. As signifiers of sophisticated royal power, the kind of value they bore was dependent on who possessed them, and they would acquire currency when set in motion, when exchanged between kings. Shah Tahmasp's gifts underscore this principle by creating an image of the Persian monarch as a perfect king, through harmonizing objects that denote wealth, piety, and descent from a noble line going back to the Shi'ī Imam 'Alī, and ancient Iranian kings. At a time when the Ottoman rulers had recently signed a peace treaty with the Safavids, recognizing their political existence but refusing to recognize the shah as a legitimate Muslim ruler, Tahmasp's gifts forcefully assert that he was in fact a legitimate Shi'ī ruler. His request implicitly demands this recognition, for by accepting to grant permission for Persian pilgrims to go to Mecca and by providing safety on their way, the Ottoman state would recognize them as true Muslims.

What function did the gifts from Iran serve for the participants of the ceremony from Europe? The Venetian *bailo* Giacomo Soranzo says at the end of his report, "I should not forget to tell your majesty as there were many retainers of Christian ambassadors as well as my own outside the Divan, the Pasha [probably Sokollu Mehmed Pasha] asked all of them to come in and see the great gifts the abovementioned ambassador brought" Then, Sokollu "announced in a very loud voice, that they should see how a sultan should be treated by someone who comes to kiss his hand."<sup>131</sup> The ceremony in which Shah Quli presented Shah Tahmasp's gifts, then, served as an occasion for the Ottomans to display their arrogance and sense of superiority to the representatives of the major contemporary European powers.

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<sup>131</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Constantinopoli, Filza 2, 514a.

## Conclusion

The function that Shah Tahmasp's gifts served for him was to put forth a certain public image of the ruler himself. But their mission extended beyond this. They were objects that the sultan could not dismiss, or regift. Hence, they obliged their receiver to keep them, and contemplate their message. But what about the immediate future, what of the shah's specific request and the sultan's promise of good relations and safe travel to Mecca? It seems that the submissive message delivered by the ambassador did not make a lasting impression on the Ottomans.

A double-page painting from the *Surnāme-i Hümāyun* (c. 1582), for example, depicts a group of buffoons playing with Safavid turbans (Figure 1.16). The page on the right portrays "a man bending over [with] two Safavid turbans placed on his bottom in a symbolic act of defilement."<sup>132</sup> As for the second issue, a similar attitude is observed in another painting from the *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān* (Shahnama of Sultan Selim) that depicts the murder of Shah Tahmasp's envoy, Masum Beg by Beduins in the Hijaz (Figure 1.17).<sup>133</sup> The envoy is depicted in a comparable manner; his body is upside down and his turban has fallen on the ground. A Safavid chronicler wrote that Masum Beg, a favorite of Tahmasp, when having secured permission from both rulers, set off to go to Mecca, "a group of Ottomans, disguised as Bedouins, treacherously attacked and murdered him and his son, and several of their companions, while they were actually with the pilgrim caravan and had donned the special pilgrims' robe."

As these two paintings visually demonstrate, the Safavid recognition of the

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<sup>132</sup> Derin Terzioğlu, "The Imperial Circumcision Festival of 1582: An Interpretation," *Muqarnas* 12 (1995), 86.

<sup>133</sup> TSMK, A. 3595, 68a.

Ottoman sultan as a superior Muslim ruler did not secure Ottoman friendship and a permanent state of peace. The gifts, however, began a new life at the Ottoman court. Here, despite the renewed outbreak of war between the Ottomans and Safavids in subsequent decades, they remained accessible to a highly select group of courtiers, foreign visitors, and painters, inspired new Ottoman artistic modes that helped to define the visual culture of the empire throughout the latter part of the sixteenth century.

## CHAPTER 2:

### Ottomans Bearing Safavid Gifts

#### Introduction

In her examination of the artistic output of Sultan Süleyman's reign, Gülru Necipoğlu has identified the mid-sixteenth century as a time "very different from the eclectic syncretism characteristic of artistic expression in the early years of the sultan's reign."<sup>1</sup> The last part of Süleyman's reign is also understood as a time of the solidification of imperial territorial limits in the east and west, coupled with a growing emphasis on religious orthodoxy, which culminated in the codification of a new self-identity. As Necipoğlu further argues, the new Ottoman artistic canon fittingly reflected an acute awareness of difference from the empire's neighbors to its east and west.<sup>2</sup>

The unresolved, in fact rising, tension with the Safavids played a large role in this process. The Ottoman-Safavid rivalry resonated far beyond the battlefield and was more a matter of political and territorial hegemony than sectarian disagreement as several scholars have noted.<sup>3</sup> While the nature of this rivalry and its implications on both ends at military, political and religious levels will be better illuminated with new studies on the subject, I would like to approach Ottoman-Safavid rivalry here by looking closely at the visual representations of these empires' ceremonial encounters. An examination of these paintings show that following the Amasya Treaty of 1555, the flow of objects from the

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<sup>1</sup> Gülru Necipoğlu, "A Kanun for the State, a Canon for the Arts," *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps, Actes du Colloque de Paris Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 mars 1990*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: Rencontres de l'école du Louvre, 1992), 195.

<sup>2</sup> Necipoğlu, "Kanun for the State," 195-7.

<sup>3</sup> Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*.

Safavid shah increasingly became, for the Ottomans, a manifestation of Safavid subservience. The new image of the sultan in the post-Süleymanic era vis-à-vis his own courtiers and military commanders involved interesting parallels with the sultan's visual alignment with and relationship to Safavid gifts.

Paintings of a Safavid ambassador presenting gifts to the Ottoman sultan began to be duplicated in official histories, significantly named after Firdausi's *Shahnama*, during the reigns of Selim II and Murad III. The recurrence of such paintings with strikingly similar iconography coincide with a new era in Ottoman-Safavid relations. This was also a period that rather than personally leading armies to war, the sultan stayed at the capital. However, he continued to fulfill the royal tradition and the religious duty of conquest "through the medium of his commanders," as one Ottoman historian of the late sixteenth century put it. While the sultan secluded himself in his palace, his contact with the outside world was increasingly mediated through his grand vizier, other viziers and an emerging group of power-sharers including the queen mother and eunuchs of the palace. Within this highly competitive and hierarchized environment, the sultan's new image became one in which he received and dispensed objects in a more conspicuous manner.

In this chapter, I argue that the presentation and selective display of Safavid gifts was the forerunner of this trend. However, as we will see, instead of comfortably designating the sultan as the superior authority fit to receive the best things in the world as gifts and tribute, and who in turn wisely distributes tokens of beneficence based on rank and achievement to his courtiers and vassals, the display of Safavid gifts came with an ascending level of frustration about the sincerity and legality of their presenters. This questioning of the sincerity of the gifts' presenters in contemporary texts poses a stark

contrast with the orderly presentation of the gifts in Ottoman *shahnama* paintings. While at first this point was less subtle, hidden we might say in between the lines in contemporary accounts and official texts, by the 1580s, when Ottomans and Safavids were actively engaged in warfare, we begin to observe its resonances much more powerfully, in visual form.

In an effort to demonstrate more clearly these arguments, I would like to step back and begin my discussion with the *Süleymānnāme*, an Ottoman *shahnama*,<sup>4</sup> or a

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<sup>4</sup> To avoid any confusion I should first clarify what is meant here by an “Ottoman *shahnama*.” Persian was the prestigious language of letters at the Turkish speaking Ottoman court at least from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century or the reign of Mehmed II whose literary patronage and collection of Persian texts attests to this. The interest in the *shahnama* in particular continued uninterrupted whether in the form of collecting Firdowsi’s text, reciting stories from it orally or by commissioning the text’s translation into Turkish. But this engagement with Ferdowsi’s text also went hand in hand with another process by which the Ottoman sultans adopted the *shahnama*, and tailored it to fit their propagandistic programs. The Ottoman incarnation of the *shahnama* first appeared at the Ottoman court in the 1470s in the form of versified dynastic histories written in the *shahnama*-style using the same meter.

These *shahnama*-style versified histories, as Sara Nur Yıldız notes, instead of repeating the *shahnama* verbatim, employed both its stylistic format and its thematic strategies such as military victory and imperial sovereignty, in order to legitimize Ottoman rulership. These books would be read by a small educated elite audience, one that was typically well-versed in the stories and heroes of the *shahnama*, which would allow them to catch implicit or explicit associations drawn between the legendary kings of the *shahnama* and the Ottoman sultans. As such, this particular citation of the *shahnama* would elevate and secure the monarch’s absolute authority in the eyes of his ruling elite. The sources of this authority depended on associations with various aspects of the *shahnama*. The Ottoman dynasty and the current sultan by extension were associated with the ideal ancient Iranian kings, likened to them in their execution of justice and wisdom, and their rulership was fashioned similarly as divinely ordained. Stepping beyond the confines of the *shahnama*, the *Süleymānnāme* for example, fashioned Süleyman as a second Solomon, perfect just like him in his execution of justice. Furthermore, the organizational structure of Ottoman *shahnamas*, beginning with the creation of man, proceeding with a discussion of the advent of Islam, and the histories of dynasties that adhered to the religion leading up to the contemporary Ottoman sultan was meant to designate the sultan as the last and final ring in a chain of lawful Islamic rulers. Sarah Nur Yıldız, “Ottoman Historical Writing in Persian, 1400-1600,” in *Persian Historiography* ed. Charles Melville (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 436-502. (I thank

*shahnama*-style versified illustrated history produced at the Ottoman court, which chronicles the reign of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent.<sup>5</sup> It is the first manuscript illustrating Ottoman-Safavid encounters involving material exchanges.

### ***Süleymānnāme* (Book of Süleyman)**

The *Süleymānnāme*, composed in Persian and in the *shahnama*-style by °Arifî,<sup>6</sup> was completed in the latter part of Süleyman’s reign in 1558. It is the final book in a five volume manuscript of the *Şehname-i Āl-i °Osmān* (Book of Kings of the House of

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Dr. Yıldız for sharing with me this article before it went into press.) For illustrated Ottoman *shahnamas*, see Zeren Akalay (Tanındı), "Osmanlı Tarihi ile İlgili Minyatürlü Yazmalar (Şehnameler ve Gazanameler)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Istanbul University, 1972); Filiz Çağman, "Ottoman Miniature Painting," in *Ottoman Civilization*, eds. Halil İnalcık and Günsel Renda (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2003), 893-931, esp. 899-921.

This experimental molding of Persian concepts of rulership with orthodox Sunnism took an unmistakably Ottoman character visually and textually in the Ottoman *shahnamas* starting with those commissioned by Sultan Süleyman in the mid-sixteenth century. Our examination of the display of gifts will begin with the *shahnama* made for Sultan Suleyman for it is key in gaining a better understanding of the process through which the receiving and dispatching of objects were fully integrated into the projected image of the sultan within two generations.

<sup>5</sup> TSMK, H. 1517. For the *Süleymānnāme*, see Atıl, *Süleymanname*, esp. 61-77; Christine Woodhead, "An Experiment in Official Historiography: The Post of Şehnameci in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1555-1605," *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* 75 (1983): 157-82; Reha Günay, "Süleymanname Minyatürlerinde Mekan ve Anlatım Teknikleri," *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllık* 5 (1992): 103-156; Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 84-91; Sinem Eryılmaz, "The *Shehnamecis* of Sultan Süleyman: °Arif and Eflatun and Their Distinct Project" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Chicago, 2010), esp. 166-209.

<sup>6</sup> The author’s full name is Fethullah °Arif Çelebi. For Arifî’s life and career at the Ottoman court, see Cornell H. Fleischer, *Bureacrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Āli (1541-1600)* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 30; Atıl, *Süleymanname*; Tahsin Yazıcı, "°Aref Çelebi" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.



Osman), the first official illustrated history of the Ottoman dynasty following the *shahnama* format.<sup>7</sup>

*Süleymānnāme* chronicles Sultan Süleyman's first thirty five years in power, between 1520 and 1555, when he actively built a large empire upheld by sophisticated political and cultural institutions. In line with the book's citation of Solomon, the theme of justice is one that runs through the text.<sup>8</sup> The sultan takes the center-stage as a powerful, sophisticated ruler, and a talented military leader.<sup>9</sup> He is personally involved in all matters of the state, including leading battles, directing his commanders and ceremonially receiving members of his family, top officials and foreign representatives. However, as Necipoğlu has argued, rather than the personal charisma of Süleyman himself, the visual program of the book glorifies "the just power of an imperial state machine." In the paintings of the manuscript, the sultan is either surrounded by his ruling

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<sup>7</sup> The work was conceived as a world history, beginning with the creation of mankind, and ending with the Ottoman dynasty. The first volume, *Enbiyānāme*, contains 48 folios with 10 paintings and is currently kept in a private collection. The second and third volumes are unfortunately lost. The fourth volume, *ʿOsmānnāme*, which is also in a private collection, has 205 folios and illustrated with 34 paintings. The final volume, *Süleymānnāme*, contains 617 folios with 69 illustrations. See Atıl, *Süleymanname*, 55-61; Ernst J. Grube, *Islamic paintings from the Eleventh to the Eighteenth Century in the Collection of Hans P. Kraus* (New York: H.P. Kraus, 1972). The *Enbiyānāme* and the *ʿOsmānnāme* have been discussed and analyzed in Eryılmaz, "Shehnamecis of Sultan Süleyman," 76-215.

<sup>8</sup> Necipoğlu, "Kanun for the State," 212.

<sup>9</sup> In a recent study, Sinem Eryılmaz argues additionally that the book portrays the sultan as "the seal of kingship and faith," linking him directly to Prophet Muhammad: "the tenth Ottoman sultan [Süleyman] is both the last of the great kings of universal dominion and the last of the saints with Muḥammedan light." Eryılmaz, "Shehnamecis of Sultan Süleyman," 207, 170-5. For other authors who had conceived of Süleyman's mission along similar lines, see Cornell H. Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymān," in *Soliman le magnifique et son temps*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992), 159-77. Fleischer argues in fact that Süleyman himself "actively participated in the formation of his messianic image, and for a time at least seems to have believed in his own apocalyptic role in history."

elite, or he is completely absent, which has been interpreted as a conscious choice that underscores the efficiency of the state's administrative and military system.<sup>10</sup>

This idea is taken further and the supremacy of the state-machine is accentuated more clearly in the Ottoman *shahnamas* completed later in the sixteenth century. Emine Fetvacı extends and complicates this point through a study of the various textual and visual strategies employed by the authors, commissioners and patrons of Ottoman illustrated manuscripts produced in the second half of the sixteenth century, and shows how these strategies were used to negotiate political and military rank and power at the top layers of the Ottoman court.<sup>11</sup> Here, rather than entire networks of patronage, I focus instead on the transformation of the visual image of the sultan in Ottoman *shahnamas* dating from the late sixteenth century, in which he makes significantly fewer appearances. These appearances primarily occasion his reception of the high-ranking officials of the court and foreign envoys in which he receives many gifts.

In the *Süleymānnāme*, the first reception scene (Figure 2.1) establishes the courtly setting and etiquette within which such ceremonies operated.<sup>12</sup> This scene takes place during one of Süleyman's campaigns on Hungary, where he is distinguished and distanced from the courtiers and soldiers around him through the use of several visual devices. His turban appears taller with its thick black plume attached atop by a gold pin; he is seated in a high gold throne, and depicted alone in his tent, which appears as an enlarged halo that encircles him. The commander paying his respects is prostrate before the sultan, making a move to kiss the sultan's feet. Other paintings reiterate this gesture

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<sup>10</sup> Necipoğlu, "Kanun for the State," 212.

<sup>11</sup> For a succinct summary of her conclusions, see Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 297-306.

<sup>12</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 189b.

and establish it as the proper manner of showing allegiance to the sultan. For example, in a reception given to Ibrahim Pasa (Figure 2.2), the grand vizier similarly makes a move to kiss the sultan's foot, which he extends toward Ibrahim. The text tells us that this gesture "exalted the sultan of the age from the ground."<sup>13</sup>

The first reception scene of an envoy from the Safavid king Shah Tahmasp emulates closely these courtly manners (Figure 2.3). The event takes place in 1532, two years before Süleyman went on his first eastern campaign, known as the "expedition of the two Iraqs." The envoy came with apologies (*ma'zirat khāstan*) from the shah, whose secret agreement to form an alliance with the Habsburg emperor Ferdinand I against Süleyman was discovered by the sultan.<sup>14</sup> In the presence of the sultan, the envoy is made to bend over prostrate in a complete gesture of submission in emulation of the previous reception scenes. But here, a sharper hierarchy seems to be established between the sultan and the messenger of Shah Tahmasp. The sultan is seated cross-legged, with a large round pillow supporting his back, in a much larger and higher throne. The envoy, described as an experienced old man (*parvarda'-i sāl-khurd*), is distanced from Süleyman's feet, unable to touch, let alone kiss them. But his complete submission while kissing the ground beneath the sultan's feet is taken as mirroring Tahmasp's own submission, as he is explained to have kissed the ground on behalf of the shah.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, in the couplet inscribed at the top-right corner of the painting, Tahmasp is

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<sup>13</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 260a.

<sup>14</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 332a. According to the *Süleymānnāme*, Sultan Süleyman discovered the secret agreement through his spies who reported to him about the emperor's envoys to Iran and the secret letter from Tahmasp to Ferdinand, in which the shah responded favorably. TSMK, H.1517, 329a-333b. The envoy is recorded to have expressed this plea during his audience with the sultan: *ṭalab kard 'afv-i gunāh* TSMK, H.1517, 332b.

<sup>15</sup> *nukhust az lab-i shāh-i Irān-zamīn / z[a] lab kard khāk-i zamīn gauharīn* TSMK, H.1517, 332a.

given the title “petty shah,” whereas Süleyman is identified as the “great shah” (*be shāh-i buzburg āmad az shāh-i khurd.*) The construction of such a hierarchy is heightened by the inscription above the sultan’s throne: “the sultan, the shadow of God” (*al-sulṭān zill Allāh*). Used almost like a slogan, this line is incorporated into the visual narrative as it is placed right above the sultan’s head, and given further emphasis by way of the use of contrasting colors of white and blue in rendering it. Having roots and a long history in both the Islamic and ancient Iranian traditions, this title designates the ruler as the sole representative of God on earth.<sup>16</sup> With this declaration, the sultan’s absolute authority over the world’s Muslim community is underscored, and his superior position to all other rulers, including Shah Tahmasp, is elucidated.

The Ottoman officers standing behind the envoy are depicted from the waist up, holding small jeweled boxes, which must stand for Shah Tahmasp’s gifts. Even though they are in proximity to the Safavid envoy, the thick borders on a pink background with zigzagging patterns that separate the gifts from the sultan and the envoy might denote their physical and rhetorical exteriority to the main scene. This idea is strengthened by the positioning of the gifts in the composition before an iron-latticed window. This must be the ceremonial window of the Chamber of Petitions in the third courtyard of the Topkapı Palace, where the sultan customarily gave private audiences to foreign representatives. Situated beside the entrance to the Chamber of Petitions (Figure 2.4), this window would be visible from the opposite end of the chamber, where the sultan sat.

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<sup>16</sup> J.H. Kramers and C.E. Bosworth, “Sulṭān” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online; Patricia Crone, *God’s Rule Government and Islam: Six Centuries of Medieval Islamic Political Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 153.

Before envoys entered the Chamber of Petitions, the gifts that they had brought would be paraded before this window so the sultan would be able to see them.<sup>17</sup>

Distanced this way from the sultan in the painting, the exact contents of the gifts sent by Shah Tahmasp are not revealed, for they are abstracted to two small boxes. However, according to the text, because of his fear (*bīm*) of the sultan, the shah sent a great number of gifts (sing. *tuhfa*).<sup>18</sup> First among these were golden vessels (or objects) encrusted with jewels (*zarrīnahā-yi muraşşac bi-la<sup>c</sup>l*). The beauty of these jewels and colored stones are emphasized in the *Süleymānnāme* through various indirect analogies. For example, the turquoise stones are said to have shamed the sky.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the jewels are praised and distinguished as “worthy of kings.” Besides those set on other objects, Shah Tahmasp must have sent loose stones and jewels too, since the author of the text suggests that they could be used in bracelets or earrings. Among the gifts were also horses of the best and most rare kind, for their value was beyond measure. In addition to jewels and horses, “exquisite books” came from Iran. Though Arifi does not specify the titles of these books, they must have included literary works written in verse, for he extols the rhyming poetry they contain. Of the rest of the gifts, identified admiringly as “elegant things akin to spring leaves” (*zarāif chu barg-i bahār*), Arifi writes that there were “more than can be counted.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> As Gülru Necipoğlu has shown, this practice had its roots in at least the late 15<sup>th</sup> century. After they were made visible to the sultan, the gifts would be taken around the palace so that everyone else at the palace would likewise be able to observe them. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 96-102.

<sup>18</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 331b.

<sup>19</sup> *za firūzaash āsmān munfa<sup>c</sup>il* TSMK, H.1517, 331b.

<sup>20</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 331b.

Sultan Süleyman responded to the appeal of the ambassador by accepting Shah Tahmasp's apology. This forgiving and generous gesture was solidified and materialized by the sultan's granting of some gold to the ambassador before he was sent off.<sup>21</sup>

Just as in this first Ottoman painting depicting the presentation of Safavid gifts to the Ottoman sultan, gifts continue to appear in the *Süleymānnāme*. But they appear sporadically, and by contrast with the text that itemizes and praises them, visually they are always abstracted in a similar manner. For example, a scene about the sultan's reception to Francis I's ambassadors includes no gifts at all (Figure 2.5).<sup>22</sup> Throughout the manuscript, gifts do not come into view consistently, and the role assigned to them is unimposing, if not ambiguous. Consider for example, the painting of Süleyman's audience to the envoy of the Sultan of Mecca, one of his vassals (Figure 2.6).<sup>23</sup> Like those of the Safavid envoy, the gifts are depicted right behind the envoy. In a gesture signaling his relative closeness to the sultan, he stands upright. In another painting, the khan of Crimea, Devlet Giray Khan, who was a trusted vassal and relative of the sultan, is given a pose even more intimate with him: he takes Süleyman's hand to kiss it, even though the text tells us, as always, that he came "to kiss his feet"<sup>24</sup> (Figure 2.7).<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the gifts that he must have brought are entirely omitted in this scene. But this by no means indicates that he brought none, for as we know from numerous sources, no one would come to see the sultan without bringing something based on his rank, mission, and the current trend in desired objects at the Ottoman court.

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<sup>21</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 332b.

<sup>22</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 346a. This scene takes place in imperial camp. However, the main ceremonial principles of the palace setting are preserved.

<sup>23</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 503a.

<sup>24</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 519a.

Within Ottoman-Safavid relations, an important milestone was the arrival of Shah Tahmasp's rebellious half-brother Alqas Mirza in Istanbul in 1547.<sup>25</sup> The coming of this Safavid prince instigated momentous enthusiasm at the Ottoman court, significantly raising the sultan's hopes for a definitive victory over Shah Tahmasp. If victorious over his brother, this prince would then take over the Safavid throne not as an independent sovereign, but as an Ottoman vassal. Such an anticipation called for an official and ceremonial integration of the prince into the Ottoman court.

The sultan was in Edirne when Alqas reached the Ottoman capital. A particularly spectacular procession was organized for Sultan Süleyman's entry into the city, for the prince was to watch it from a kiosk (*köşk*) before his first meeting with the sultan. Historians note the extraordinary quantity of soldiers and high-ranking officials dressed in their best, which was surely meant to impress the Safavid prince. Indeed, according to Solakzade, Alqas was truly amazed, jumping up at the sight of some Ottoman officials, mistaking them for the sultan.<sup>26</sup> Then, when he actually saw Süleyman, he was

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<sup>25</sup> For a short narrative of Alqas Mirza's life through the use of a large selection of Ottoman and Safavid chronicles, as well as modern studies in Turkish and Persian, see Cornell H. Fleischer, "Alqās Mirza" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>; see also J. R. Walsh, "The Revolt of Alqās Mirza," *Weiner Zeitschrift für die Kunde den Morgenlande* 68 (1976): 61-78; Ḥasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh*, I: 327-36. The most extensive study on Alqas Mirza's tenure in the service of the Ottoman sultan is Walter Posch, "Der Fall Alkās Mirza und der Persienfeldzug von 1548-1549. Ein gescheitertes osmanisches Projekt zur Niederwerfung des safavidischen Persiens," (Ph.D. dissertation, Bamberg University, 1999). For Alqas Mirza's impact on the production of Ottoman illustrated manuscripts, both through the actual books that he brought with him to Istanbul, and the Ottoman recruitment of men of letters in his retinue, see Zeren Tanındı, "Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts in Ottoman Workshops," *Muqarnas* 17 (2000):147-161, esp. 149.

<sup>26</sup> *Her geçip giden özengi ağalarını, meselā topçu-başyı ve Cebeci-başı'yı Osmanlı āyini üzere, zib ü ziynet ile şöhetli bir tantana ile geçerken gördüğünde; "ālem-penah pādişāh hazretleri bunlar mıdır?" diye ayağa kalkıp tāzīm ve tekrīm eylerler idi* Solak-zāde Mehmed Hemdemī Çelebī (henceforth Solakzade), *Solak-zāde Tarihi*, ed. Vahid Çabuk,

completely taken aback (*dilini yuttu ve şaşırıp kaldı*).<sup>27</sup> After a few days had passed, when Alqas visited the Topkapı Palace to meet the sultan, he was feasted likewise, with great care and generosity. The gifts presented to him subsequently by the sultan were meant to be material agents of the prince's integration into the Ottoman court. These gifts consisted of large amounts of gold and silver coins, as well as objects and textiles decorated or woven with those metals. In the following list, even the postures of the slaves given as gifts are likened to silver:

[Alqas] reached his residence, and on the same day, the sultan sent him sacks of gold and silver, and never-before-seen rarities as keepsakes, a variety of gold and silver dishes, bundles of gold-woven fabrics, and robes of honor, velvets lined with sable and lynx fur, various sorts of fine garments, woolen cloths, chests filled with a variety of cloths, several rare and Arabian horses with jeweled equipment, and gold and silver stirrups, gold and bejeweled swords, gold belts, slaves with silvery limbs, and many other valuable gifts and goods.<sup>28</sup>

The idea that gifts presented to the Safavid prince in Istanbul were meant to welcome him and incorporate him into the Ottoman court system was masterminded by the sultan himself, who ordered his high-ranking officials to entertain the prince and show him favors. According to Peçevi, each high-ranking Ottoman official complied by

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2 vols. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1989), II: 212; İbrahim Peçevi (Peçuyi), *Tārīḫ-i Peçevî* (Istanbul, 1283/ 1866-67), I: 267.

<sup>27</sup> Solakzade, *Tarih*, II: 212; Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 267.

<sup>28</sup> ... *menzillerine revāne olındılar ve ol gün şāḫib-i salṭanatdan bir kaç kīse altun ve ğurūş ve bir nice hībeyān-ı ʿoşmānī ve şāḫī ve tefārik ü nevādir kısmından gözler görmedik yādigārlar ve altūn ve sīmīn evānī kısmının envāʿinden ve boğça boğça zer-endūd ve şeb ḫilʿatler ve samūr ve vaşāk postīn kablu her nevʿiden kaṭīfe ve aḫmişe ve çukadan envāʿi elbiseʿ-ı nefīse ve her nevʿi kumāş ve çuka pāstāvlar ile memlū şandūklar ve bir kaç ṭavīle ʿarabī ve ṭarīfī ātlar ve mücevher ve muraşsaʿ raḫtlar ve zerrīn ve sīmīn rikāblar ve muraşsaʿ ve zerrīn tiğler ve şimşirler ve bir kaç zerrīn kemer ğulam-ı sīm-endām ve sāʿir zī-kıymet tuḫaf u emtiʿa* Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 268.



feasting Alqas in his own home, and by giving him excessive amounts of gifts.

Collectively, these favors were meant to demonstrate the power of the Ottoman court to the Safavid prince and his retinue, aimed at convincing them of its superiority to the court Alqas had come from. Peçevi further notes that by receiving all of these favors and gifts (*in ʿām*) from officials at various levels of the Ottoman establishment, the prince attained “wealth that he had neither seen nor heard of in his entire life.”<sup>29</sup>

Historians also note that the sultan treated the renegade prince as if he was his own son.<sup>30</sup> Such affection was emphasized and enhanced by a presentation of intimate gifts to Alqas Mirza from the sultan’s wife, Hürrem Sultan. These gifts were presented to the Safavid prince from the most powerful female member of the Ottoman court, who intervened in diplomatic negotiations when she preferred to.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the intimate quality of the gifts themselves is evident in the gendered context in which they were produced, and the private context in which they were to be used. Hürrem’s gifts consisted of luxury textiles, including gold woven night gowns, upholsteries, cushions, and comforters and sheets “peculiar to women” (*zenāna mahşūş*). Their total value was of a substantial amount, reaching more than ten thousand gold coins. The incessant ceremonial presentation of lavish gifts to the Safavid prince by so many members of the

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<sup>29</sup> Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 269.

<sup>30</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 499b.

<sup>31</sup> Hürrem corresponded with foreign rulers and female members of royal courts and sent them gifts. For Hürrem Sultan’s role in foreign diplomatic relations, see Leslie Peirce, *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 220-2. For her correspondence with and gifts for the king of Poland, see Szymon Askenazy, “Listy Roxolany,” *Kwartalnik Historyczny* X (1896): 113–17, which gives the letters in French translation; Nejat R. Uçtum, “Hü Mihriümah Sultanların Polonya Kralı II. Zigmund’a Yazdıkları Mektuplar,” *Bellesten* 44, no. 176 (1980): 697-715; Galina Yermolenko, “Roxolana: The Greatest Empresse of the East,” *The Muslim World* 95, no. 2 (2005): 231–48.

court evidently initiated a public debate in Istanbul about the necessity and legality of such expenditure for a Shi'î prince.<sup>32</sup>

In line with Alqas Mirza's incorporation into the Ottoman court, he took active part in the design and execution of Süleyman's second military campaign on Iran in 1548. This time, the sultan was hoping that the campaign would result in the long-awaited conquest of all of the lands under Safavid dominion. Since Süleyman's first eastern campaign in the 1530s, Shah Tahmasp had taken back Tabriz and had been attacking Georgia. In the meantime, the sultan signed a peace treaty with the Habsburgs in 1547, the same year that Alqas took refuge at the Ottoman court.<sup>33</sup> Having temporarily closed the western warfront, Süleyman led his armies into Iran in 1548, capturing Tabriz, Van and a large portion of Georgia. Concurrently, the Safavid prince was sent off to confront his brother Tahmasp as the Ottoman governor of Tabriz and Shirvan, and as the next "monarch of Iran."<sup>34</sup> Backed by Ottoman forces, Alqas and his retinue had been given—according to their rank—a variety of tents (*oṭaqlar ve obālar*), baldachins, kitchen and pantry equipment, and many camels.<sup>35</sup> During the campaign, as the sultan's delegate, Alqas attacked various Safavid cities, raiding Hamadan, Qum, Kashan. His attack on Isfahan was unsuccessful; and his actions following these raids led to his

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<sup>32</sup> Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 269; Peirce, *Imperial Harem*, 220.

<sup>33</sup> With this treaty, Ferdinand agreed to pay Süleyman a yearly tribute of 30,000 ducats. For the treaty of 1547, see Ernst Petritsch, "Der Habsburgisch-Osmanische Friedensvertrag des Jahres 1547," *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchiv* 38 (1985): 49-80.

<sup>34</sup> Gülru Necipoğlu, *The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire* (London and Princeton, N.J.: Reaktion Books and Princeton University Press, 2005), 207.

<sup>35</sup> Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 269.

subsequent falling out of favor with the Ottoman court, and his eventual death on the Safavid side in 1550.<sup>36</sup>

But before the Ottoman sultan lost hope on the Safavid prince, when he still appeared able to take down Shah Tahmasp, Alqas sent a large sum of booty consisting of extremely valuable and culturally significant objects to Sultan Süleyman. The selection and sending of these objects attest both to Alqas's military might, and his familiarity with and sensitivity to his homeland's leading items of artistic production. A painting in the *Süleymānnāme* depicts the arrival of these objects to Aleppo, where the sultan was wintering (Figure 2.8).<sup>37</sup> Similar to other reception scenes in the *Süleymānnāme*, as examined above, the gifts here are abstracted to multiplied objects of the same shape dominating the lower register of the painting. But this time, rather than being hidden in boxes, they appear as objects wrapped in gold cloth. Furthermore, instead of their presentation to the sultan, the scene captures the arrival and the official recording of Alqas's gifts in court registers prior to their presentation to the sultan. As Esin Atıl has pointed out, the architectural setting of the scene recalls the Second Courtyard of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul, where gifts brought by foreign representatives would ordinarily be taken in advance, so that they would be recorded in this way.<sup>38</sup>

The booty (or gifts) sent by Alqas are meticulously recorded and each item is described and praised so highly in the *Süleymānnāme* that clearly, they were admired greatly at the Ottoman court. Furthermore, immediately following the lengthy description

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<sup>36</sup> Fleischer, "Alqās Mīrza;" Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ʿAbbas the Great*, I: 122-4. The Safavid shah also details these events in his memoirs, Shah Tahmasp, *Tazkira-yi Tahmasp*, ed. D.C. Phillott (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1912), 57-64.

<sup>37</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 498b.

<sup>38</sup> Atıl, *Süleymanname*, 198.

of these gifts, it is noted that the sultan himself was very pleased with them.<sup>39</sup> Arifi begins the list with “many bound copies of the Qur’an beyond compare.”<sup>40</sup> All of these books were written by the greatest masters of calligraphy (*ustādān*), such as the legendary thirteenth century calligrapher Yāqūt and the fourteenth century calligrapher °Abdullah Sayrafi.<sup>41</sup> The value of these books was also signified by the emeralds and

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<sup>39</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 499b.

<sup>40</sup> *nukhust az muṣāḥif bimujallad-i basī / ki hargiz nadīda naẓīrash yakī* TSMK, H.1517, 498a. A literal translation of the actual expression used here to describe these Qur’ans would be: “like no one had ever seen before.” This expression is repeated frequently to describe other items throughout Arifi’s list.

<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in the Topkapı collection, two Qur’ans have been identified as having been copied by Yaquṭ al-Mustasimī (TSMK, E.H. 76, dated 1271, and TSMK, E.H. 74, dated 1294), David James, *The Master Scribes: Qur’ans of the 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> Centuries* (New York: Nour Foundation in association with Azimuth Editions and Oxford University Press, 1992), 59. Two other works, which are parts 2 and 12 of the Qur’an, are attributed to Yaquṭ (TSMK, E.H. 226, and TSMK, E.H. 227), Sheila R. Canby “Yāqūt al-Musta°ṣimī” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2012). Brill Online. For Yaquṭ al-Mustasimī (d. 1298), see Canby “Yāqūt al-Musta°ṣimī,” Qāẓī Aḥmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, 57-8; Sheila S. Blair, “Yaquṭ and His Followers,” *Manuscripta Orientalia* 9, no.3 (2003): 39-47; Sheila S. Blair, *Islamic Calligraphy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 242-50.

There is a Qur’an currently in the Topkapı collection (TSMK, E.H. 49) that was copied by °Abdullah Sayrafi in 1344/5. This manuscript was refurbished between 1554 and 1557 at the Ottoman imperial artistic workshop, by the esteemed illuminator Karamemī, binder Mehmed Çelebi, and the scribe Hasan. For this manuscript, see Zeren Tanındı, “13-14. Yüzyıllarda Yazılmış Kur’anlar’ın Kanuni Döneminde Yenilenmesi,” *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Yıllık* 1 (1986): 140-52; Atıl, *Süleymanname*, 38; Tanındı, “Additions to Illustrated Manuscripts,” 157-8. For °Abdullah Sayrafi, see P.P. Soucek, “°Abdallah Şayrafi” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>; Qāẓī Aḥmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, 61-3.

Known as the “qibla of scribes” (*qibla al-kuttāb*) among his contemporaries, Yaquṭ al-Mustasimī is probably the most esteemed calligrapher in the Islamic manuscript tradition, and Abdullah Sayrafi was trained by one of his six followers. David J. Roxburgh, “On the Transmission and Reconstruction of Arabic Calligraphy: Ibn al-Bawwab and History,” *Studia Islamica* 96 (2003), 42. Both Yaquṭ and Sayrafi are among the “Seven Masters,” whose works have been included in the earliest extant Persian calligraphy album, compiled for Timur’s grandson, Prince Baysungur (TSMK, H. 2310). For specific references to these calligraphers in Persian albums, see Wheeler M. Thackston, *Album Prefaces and Other Documents on the History of Calligraphers and Painters Studies and Sources in Islamic Art and Architecture: Supplements to Muqarnas*,

rubies that decorated their bindings. In addition to these, there were other manuscripts as well. Even though the titles of these books are not specified, their poetry, bindings, color programs of individual pages, and calligraphers and painters are described and praised in some detail: They were “written in courtly prose and in elegant verse;”<sup>42</sup> they had pleasant bindings (*hamma khush-namā jild*) made in Shiraz in the style of Herat (*hamma kār-i Shirāz va shughl-i Hirī*); they were copied in a variety of scripts by master calligraphers such as Sultan °Alī and Anīsī;<sup>43</sup> their pages were on pink and yellow background (*gulgūn u zard*), and dominated by gold and lapis lazuli (*zar u lājavard*); and “their composition [was] the work of masters [and] all of their illustrations [were] executed by Bihzad.”<sup>44</sup> The books sent by Alqas Mirza are collectively praised over and over in the *Süleymānnāme* in a manner that references the actual jewels on the covers of those books on the one hand, and on the other, the refined calligraphy, illumination and

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vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2001); Roxburgh, *Prefacing the Image*; David J. Roxburgh, *The Persian Album, 1400–1600: From Dispersal to Collection* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

<sup>42</sup> *za digar kutub nuskhahā-yi sharīf / za naṣr-i darī va nazm-i laṭīf* TSMK, H.1517, 498a.

<sup>43</sup> *hamma naskhhāyishān khaft u jalī / bikhaft-i Anīsī u Sulṭān °Alī* TSMK, H.1517, 498a. The scripts are described here in fact as “hidden and evident,” or “complex and plain.” For Sultan Ali Mashadi, see Qāzī Aḥmad, *Calligraphers and Painters*, 101-3.

<sup>44</sup> *hamma shughl-i ustād taḥrīrishān / hamma kār-i Bihzād taṣvīrishān* TSMK, H.1517, 498a. As David Roxburgh has pointed out, in the history of Persianate painting, there is a long tradition that sees Kamal al-Din Bihzad (b. circa 1450- d. 1535/6) as the quintessential artist-genius, “a painter of mythical skill in the Persian cultural tradition, as a paragon of excellence.” David J. Roxburgh, “Kamal al-Din Bihzad and Authorship in Persianate Painting,” *Muqarnas* 17 (2000):119. The literature on Bihzad is vast; for a concise biography of this painter and for some of the basic sources on him, see Sheila Blair and Jonathan Bloom, “Bihzad,” *The Grove Encyclopedia of Islamic Art and Architecture*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), II: 286-8.

paintings they contained, which are likened to those jewels: “all of them [were a] mine of emeralds [and an] ocean of pearls.”<sup>45</sup>

The exact quantities of neither the manuscripts, nor any other item sent to Sultan Sülyeman by the Safavid prince is specified by Arifi. However, it was important for him to emphasize quantities, for expressions such as “more than anyone can imagine,” “more than can be calculated,” “like fall leaves,” “beyond measure,” or “caravans of” are repeated frequently in his list. The jewels sent by Alqas is a good case in point, for they are acclaimed both for their quantities as such, as well as their uniqueness measured by their luminosity, and round and smooth textures. These emeralds, pearls and rubies came on the backs on forty camels, placed in large trays. Moreover, some of the jewels decorated other objects, made in silver and gold.

In the painting depicting the arrival of Alqas’ gifts to Süleyman’s court (Figure 2.8), all of these luminous things—rather than any other item sent by Alqas—were selected to represent, and therefore be the showpiece of the entire group of gifts. The couplets written on the upper right and lower left corners of the painting relate that there were so many golden objects (sing. *zarrīna*) encrusted with unique jewels, which shined like the sun and the stars, that even a skilled jeweler would not be able to put a price on them. The profuse use of gold in many of Alqas’ gifts is clear from the description of other objects as well. These included golden swords, golden belts, golden saddles, golden bridles, and golden vessels, such as bowls, flasks and cups (sing. *ṭasht*, *ṣurāḥī* and *jām*).<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> *hamma kān-i yāqūt u daryā-yi dur* TSMK, H.1517, 498a. It is noteworthy that the Persian word for emerald here, *yāqūt*, is also name of the renowned thirteenth-century calligrapher that some of the manuscripts are said to have been copied by, as discussed above.

<sup>46</sup> Some of these vessels were simple (*sāda*), while others were decorated with jewels.

Alqas's gifts to the sultan also included a group of objects that reflected his taste for and knowledge of the famed productions of different locations within and outside Iran. The acquisition of these objects by the rebellious prince could be taken also as a form of symbolic domination, anticipating his military conquest of some, or all of the places that his gifts to the sultan came from. By gifting these particular objects, Alqas probably wanted to communicate to the sultan his determination to become the shah of Iran. Arifi's account supports this idea, for he wrote that upon receiving these gifts, Sultan Süleyman was delighted that Alqas had conquered Iran (*z[a] pīrūzash bar 'Ajam shād shud*).<sup>47</sup>

These objects are introduced in the *Süleymānnāme* as “the most distinguished gifts of every region” (*guzīdatārīn tuḥfa'-i har diyār*). Among these were bows and three-winged arrows from Chach (the modern city of Tashkent in Uzbekistan),<sup>48</sup> spears from Khatt in Bahrain,<sup>49</sup> shields from China, gold-threaded silks (*zar-baft* and *kamkhā*) from Yazd, lavish textiles in black color and silk brocades (*aksūn* and *dībā*) from Kashan, colorful linens and fabrics of a cotton-silk mixture (*miṣqālī* and *qutnī*), felt pillows from Herat (*namad-takya*), glasses from Jam, camel-loads of fine muslin cloths to wrap around

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<sup>47</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 499b.

<sup>48</sup> Edward G. Browne, *A History of Persian Literature under Tartar Domination (A.D. 1265-1502)*, vol. 3 of *A Literary History of Persia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), 262; C. Edmund Bosworth, “Čāč” in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

<sup>49</sup> Francis Joseph Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary, Including the Arabic Words and Phrases to be Met with in Persian Literature* (London: Routledge, 1892), 466. There is disagreement about whether this name was used to refer to a particular port on the coast of Bahrain, or to the whole coast. A. Grohmann, “al-Khatt” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2012). Brill Online.

turbans (*dastār*) from India, silk brocades (*dībā*) from China, textiles from Dabiq,<sup>50</sup> and other precious cloths of silks, and fur (*vālā*, *saiḡūr* and *khazz*).

Gifts of precious Persian silk carpets, “whose beauty [was] beyond words,” were decorated with figures (*muṣavvar*). These carpets and a satin canopy (or tent)<sup>51</sup> that Alqas sent are described as “worthy of nobility” and “princely” (*shāhanshahī*). This canopy was so rare that “no king had ever seen the like of it above his head.”<sup>52</sup> Its borders were made of gold-woven silks, and it was meticulously decorated all over with figures, both on the inside and outside. The distinctiveness of the canopy is further emphasized through exaggerated comparisons between its beauty and conventional archetypes of beauty and wonder in Persian poetry, such as the face of a bride, angels and the firmament. For example, Arifi writes that the canopy was so beautiful that the firmament felt inelegant and ashamed.<sup>53</sup>

The gifting of this tent sparked the memory of the competitive dialogue mediated by the exchange of hostile objects, which defined Ottoman-Safavid relations during the reigns of Shah Ismail and Selim I, as related in the contemporary Ottoman historian Lutfi Pasha’s account:

Previously, Alqas had appointed many artists and artisans, and placed many monumental works for Shah Tahmasp in all the cities he had visited. He now reappropriated all of these [for Süleyman]; and in fact, it is rumored that among the objects he took was a tent that Shah Ismail had ordered to be embroidered while he was still alive, but which was

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<sup>50</sup> Dabiq is a region in northern Syria, celebrated for its manufacture of textiles. D. Sourdel, “Dābiq” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.

<sup>51</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 499a. The word used in the *Süleymānnāme* is canopy (*chatr*), but other sources refer to it as a tent.

<sup>52</sup> *naḡīda bibālā-yi sar hīch shāh*

<sup>53</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 499a.



left unfinished. Alqas took this tent and sent it to the Padshah of Rum, Sultan Süleyman.<sup>54</sup>

Finally, there were horses and other rare animals such as camels with red hair, she-camels which diffused a nice fragrance (*nāqa<sup>2</sup>-i nāfa*), and bactrian camels, all generously covered with golden ornaments and equipment.

Pleased as he was with Alqas' gifts, the sultan sent back with the envoy gifts (*in<sup>c</sup>ām*), all of which were very valuable and some of them personal, to be given to the prince. These consisted of ten thousand gold coins, a number of his own robes of honor (*ham az khil<sup>c</sup>āt-i khāṣṣa<sup>2</sup>-i khīshān*), priceless textiles, and gold-woven garments, which are said to be “worthy of kings.”<sup>55</sup>

Several months after the arrival of Alqas Mirza's gifts to Sultan Süleyman's court in Aleppo, the prince was taken captive by the forces of Shah Tahmasp. Disappointed with the actions of Alqas, and finding it unsound to keep the army any longer in the east under its severe winter conditions,<sup>56</sup> the sultan returned to Istanbul in December 1549. Even though there was significant Ottoman territorial gain,<sup>57</sup> Süleyman's ambitious goal of overthrowing the Safavid shah and instating Alqas Mirza in his place as an Ottoman

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<sup>54</sup> Lütü Paṣa, *Lütü Paṣa ve Tevārih-i Āl-i Osman*, ed. Kayhan Atik, (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2001), 305.

<sup>55</sup> *qabāhā-yi zar-baft-i shāhanshāhī* TSMK, H.1517, 499b.

<sup>56</sup> Beyond relative strengths of technical and human capacities of armies, throughout the sixteenth century, a crucial measure for victory in Ottoman-Safavid military struggles was each side's ability to take advantage of the harsh winter conditions in the area surrounding the shifting borders between the two states. As sources frequently point out, there are places in this area covered with snow all year long, rendering the maintenance of large armies there extremely costly and difficult. Shah Tahmasp often took advantage of these geographical conditions by choosing to retract and by refusing to confront Ottoman forces.

<sup>57</sup> Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*, 143. Süleyman sent letters to Ferdinand I and Charles V, detailing his victories and achievements in this campaign. Fahrettin Kırzıoğlu, *Osmanlılar'ın Kafkas-Elleri'ni Fethi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1998), 203-4.

vassal was therefore not realized with this campaign. But this goal was kept alive, triggering Süleyman's third and final offensive on the Safavids in 1553.

In the meantime, numerous small-scale attacks on both sides generated an exchange of envoys. The correspondence between Sultan Süleyman and Shah Tahmasp in the early 1550s is full of provocative claims, accusations, and threats. Süleyman, for example, charges Tahmasp of blasphemy, and questions his legitimacy, manlihood and military might, accusing him of failing to confront the Ottoman army on the battlefield. He also threatens to attack Ardabil, wherein is the Ardabil Shrine Complex, one of the principal sites of Safavid pilgrimage.<sup>58</sup> By contrast, Tahmasp generally adopts a submissive tone in response to these claims, calling the sultan Alexander of the Age, asking for mercy and peace. Still, some of these letters overtly engage with Süleyman's accusations, stating proudly the superiority of the Safavid Twelver Shi'î conviction over the Sunnism of the Ottoman state. One such letter first proves God's preference of 'Ali as the true successor to the prophet, and thereafter the progeny of 'Ali and Fatima (*ahl al-bayt*) as the right and legitimate line of leadership. Directly responding to Ottoman accusations, the letter ends with a daring statement of the eschatological consequences of failing to follow this path:

On that day when kings and beggars are one and everyone is resolved to their faith, they will not be ashamed to appear before he who drinks from the Kauşar river—'Ali, the friend of God—and her Excellency Fāṭima (*sayyidah al-nisā*), and the Innocent Imams...And for that earthly kingdom [i.e. the Ottomans] which rejects the hand of

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<sup>58</sup> Kırzioğlu, *Kafkas-Elteri*, 210-38; Solakzade, *Tarih*, II: 225-44; Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 124-31; Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārikh*, II: 161-8.

[Ṭahmāsp], they will say and know nothing of the mercy, grace, and the beneficence of °Ali.<sup>59</sup>

Though not always mediated by such heated rhetoric, negotiations for peace continued during the war, culminating in the first Ottoman-Safavid peace treaty, signed in 1555. It was during the final stages of these negotiations that Shah Tahmasp sent to Süleyman’s court the Ottoman official Sinan Beg, who had been taken captive, together

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<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 81. Mitchell discusses the letter at length, comparing it with another one sent to the Uzbeks, which boasts similar claims. Another letter dated 1554 from Shah Tahmasp to Sultan Süleyman, which Mitchell calls the “Belt Letter,” for “Shāh Ṭahmāsp repeatedly describes his faith in terms of girding the belt of love for °Ali and his family around his heart,” is probably the most aggressive and polemical letter ever written by a Safavid shah to an Ottoman sultan. Shah Tahmasp’s accusations in this unprecedented letter range from calling Süleyman “the chief priest of the idol temple, Istanbul,” and the entire group of Sunni religious scholars “idol-worshipping sodomites,” to claiming that the Ottoman state itself was “[based] on Satan, [complete] with lies, trickery, fraud, and deceit.” Mitchell also shows how Tahmasp draws a direct historical parallel between the injustice and pain that °Ali and his offspring experienced in their struggles with “the caliphal oppressors,” and his own struggles with the Ottomans. For an analysis of the “Belt Letter,” and the likely influence of prominent Shi’i scholars favored by Shah Tahmasp, most significantly °Ali al-Karaki (d. 1534), see Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, esp. 83-8. For al-Karaki and Shi’ism under Shah Tahmasp, see also Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi’ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986); Said Amir Arjomand, “Two Decrees of Shah Tahmasp Concerning Statecraft and the Authority of Shaykh °Ali al-Karaki,” in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi’ism*, ed. Said Amir Arjomand (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), 250-62; Andrew J. Newman, “The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safawid Iran: Arab Shi’ite Opposition to Ali al-Karaki and Safawid Shi’ism,” *Die Welt des Islams*, 33 (1993): 66-112; Rosemary Stanfield Johnson, “Sunni Survival in Safavid Iran: Anti-Sunni Activities during the Reign of Tahmasp I,” *Iranian Studies* 27, no. 1-4 (1994): 123-133; Devin J. Stewart, “Notes on the Migration of °Amili Scholars to Safavid Iran,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 55, no. 2 (1996): 81-103; Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

with the Safavid envoy Shāhqūlī Beg.<sup>60</sup> A painting in the *Süleymānnāme* illustrates the sultan’s audience with the Safavid envoy in September 1554 at camp near Erzurum (Figure 2.9).<sup>61</sup> Any gifts that the envoy might have brought are not included here, making the envoy the single representative and mediator of the shah. The text emphasizes Shah Tahmasp’s feelings of regret and apologies to the sultan, stated in his letter and articulated by his envoy. Shahquli, who is depicted as an old man in the painting, and is fully prostrate, with his hands placed gently on the corner of Süleyman’s great canopy. As in the first painting of a Safavid envoy encountering the sultan (Figure 2.3), here too, the text communicates with the image in conveying the idea that the complete submissiveness of the envoy is meant to be understood as an extension, or even reflection of Shah Tahmasp’s obedience to the sultan, and his plea for forgiveness. The envoy says: “Oh shah! If our crimes are boundless, your forgiveness and beneficence is a hundred times that”<sup>62</sup> With Süleyman’s favorable response, official peace negotiations began. The sultan also gave the envoy many gifts and favors (*basī kard aḥsān va bakhshīd māl*). Arifi mentions then that Prince Selim, the future Ottoman sultan, who was passing by the imperial camp, additionally gave the envoy and his retinue “unique things” (*ganj-i nāb*).<sup>63</sup>

In June 1555, the Treaty of Amasya was signed, putting an end to Ottoman-Safavid military offensives.<sup>64</sup> As is often noted, this treaty was to the benefit of both

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<sup>60</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ʿAbbas the Great*, I: 130; Kırzioğlu, *Kafkas-Elteri*, 238-9; Remzi Kılıç, *XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı-Iran Siyasi Antlaşmaları* (Istanbul: Tez Yayınları, 2001), 70.

<sup>61</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 600a.

<sup>62</sup> *ki shāhā agar jarm-i mā biḥadd [a]st / turā ʿafv u aḥsān yakī dar şad [a]st* TSMK, H.1517, 600a. For the letter presented by Shahquli, see Kılıç, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 70.

<sup>63</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 600b.

<sup>64</sup> A. Ekber Diyanet, *İlk Osmanlı-Iran Anlaşması (1555 Amasya Musalahası)* (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1971).

sides, for it provided political stability and stopped bloodshed in Anatolia. Even though the Ottoman aspiration of terminating Safavid rule in Iran was not realized, the treaty should be seen as an ideological victory for the Ottoman sultan, for the first item in the treaty, as recorded by Ottoman sources, stipulates that Tahmasp promises to end the ritual cursing of the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs, and the prophet's wife Aisha.<sup>65</sup>

Another item in the treaty responds to Tahmasp's request from the sultan for permission and a promise of safe travel for Safavid pilgrims to Mecca and Medina.<sup>66</sup> With this item, the sultan guarantees that the holy lands of Islam are open to "Muslims" (*umūm Müslimīn*).<sup>67</sup> Within the corpus of Ottoman letters sent to the Safavid court prior to the signing of the treaty, the issue of whether or not the Safavids were Muslims is a prominent one. One letter written by the grandvizier Rüstem Pasha, for example, fiercely argues that "everyone in Iran, including the army and the subjects, are infidels."<sup>68</sup> This letter then points out the *fatwas* (judicial rulings issued by a religious scholar),<sup>69</sup> which declared that it is licit to seize Safavid property and shed their blood, for whoever disrespects the oneness of God and the prophethood (*nubuvvat*) of the prophet is an

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<sup>65</sup> For Safavid ritual cursing, the ways in which it was institutionalized during the reign of Shah Tahmasp, and its importance within the context of Safavid-Ottoman and Safavid-Uzbek rivalry, see Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, 77-9; Stanfield Johnson, "Anti-Sunni Activities;" Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, 2003), 222-4; Rosemary Stanfield-Johnson, "The Tabarra'iyan and the Early Safavids," *Iranian Studies* 37, no. 1 (2004): 47-71.

<sup>66</sup> A copy of the shah's letter is recorded in Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 329-36; Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe'ātü's-selāṭīn*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1274-5), I: 620-3; TSMK, H.1517, 603b-604b.

<sup>67</sup> Kırzioğlu, *Kafkas-Elteri*, 244, quoting the treaty as recorded by the Ottoman official and chronicler Celalzade Mustafa (d. 1567). For the Amasya Peace Treaty, see also Kılıç, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 71-8.

<sup>68</sup> *vilāyet-i 'Acemde olan sipāhīden ve re'āyādan cümlesi kāfirlerdür* Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 319.

<sup>69</sup> Bruce Masters, "Fatwa (fetva)," 217.

infidel.<sup>70</sup> Also citing the Qur'an, the grandvizier argues that the punishment for such sin will surely be hell. Against this background, the granting of permission for Safavid pilgrims to go on the hajj should be seen as an ideological victory for Shah Tahmasp, who frequently stated in his own letters to the sultan that he and the people living under his rule are Muslims, and pointed out the futility of Muslims killing each other during Ottoman-Safavid wars.

The gifts that Shah Tahmasp sent with his envoy Farrukhzād Beg<sup>71</sup> for the conclusion of peace can also be read in this light, as objects that demand recognition of Shah Tahmasp's identity. A copy of the Qur'an among these gifts is particularly significant, as noted by Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, who was also in Amasya in 1555, leading a Habsburg delegation, there to conclude peace with the Ottomans. Busbecq writes:

On the 10<sup>th</sup> of May, the Persian Ambassador came to Amasia, and brought with him rich and gallant Presents, as many choice sorts of Hangings, Babylonian Tents, curiously wrought within with many sorts of Needle-work, gallant Horse-trappings, and Saddles, Scymiters made at Damascus, whose handles were studded with Jewels, and shields of curious workmanship; but that which exceeded them all, was the Alcoran, so they call the Book containing the Rites and Ceremonies of their Religion, which they

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<sup>70</sup> For the famous *fatwas* issued by the Ottoman jurist (*shaykh al-Islam*) Ebusuud on the Safavids, see M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun, 1972); Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997).

<sup>71</sup> Qāzī Aḥmad Qummī, *Khulāsat al-tavārikh*, ed. Ihsan Ishraqi, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1359), I: 376. A seventeenth century Safavid court chronicler, Fażlī Khuzānī recalls the dispatch of Farrukhzad Beg as a response to Sultan Süleyman's request for peace in 1553-4. Simin Abrahams, "A Historiographical Study and Annotated Translation of Volume 2 of Afzāl al-Tavārikh by Fażlī Khūzānī al-Isfāhānī" (Ph.D. dissertation, Edinburgh University, 1999), 133-4.

fancy Mahomet compos'd by Divine Inspiration, and which is accounted the most noble Present of all.<sup>72</sup>

This distinction of the Qur'an, which was not lost on Busbecq, should be seen as material proof of Tahmasp's effort for recognition as a Muslim ruler.<sup>73</sup> The book's acceptance by the sultan, together with his granting of permission to Safavid pilgrims to visit the holy places of the faith indicates his implicit acknowledgment of the Safavid shah and his subjects as true Muslims.

Other presents sent by the shah, as recorded by Busbecq, were extravagant. Their selection as a group accorded with the gift-giving practices at the highest echelons of both the Ottoman and the Safavid courts. Furthermore, as we have seen, similar items were gifted to the Ottoman sultan by Shah Tahmasp's rebellious brother Alqas Mirza, just a few years ago. In the *Süleymānnāme*, Tahmasp's gifts are collectively described as "many gifts fit for a king" (*basī hadīya u tuḥfa-yi shāhvār*).<sup>74</sup> Similar to the gifts brought to the sultan by Shahquli less than a year earlier, these are tightly tied in the manuscript to the apologies that Shah Tahmasp is said to have offered the sultan. Arifi writes that these gifts were so valuable that the treasury had to be emptied for each and every one. While he then mentions a tent, various kinds of precious textiles, and jewels, there is no reference to a copy of the Qur'an sent by Tahmasp here.<sup>75</sup> This might be a deliberate omission, to disguise the sultan's receiving of the holy book of Islam from the shah, whom he charged with heresy.

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<sup>72</sup> Busbequius, *Travels into Turkey*, 78.

<sup>73</sup> The letter sent by shah in 1555 states this quite clearly saying, for example, that both rulers follow the same religion (*judā nīst az hamdigar dīn-i mā*). TSMK, H.1517, 604a. For this letter, see also Diyanet, *İlk Osmanlı-Iran*, 5-8.

<sup>74</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 602a.

<sup>75</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 602b.

The ceremonial order in the painting depicting Farrukhzad Beg’s audience with Sultan Süleyman in Amasya (Figure 2.10)<sup>76</sup> takes its cue from other reception scenes in the *Süleymānnāme* that we have examined, particularly those taking place in the Chamber of Petitions at the Topkapı Palace. The formal nature of the reception is highlighted by the great gold throne that the sultan sits in, and the orderly, respectful gestures of the courtiers participating in the scene. Donned in Ottoman robes of honor, the envoy stands near the throne, extending with both hands the letter sent by the shah. Similar to the first painting of a Safavid envoy encountering the sultan (Figure 2.3), the gifts here are pushed away from the main scene in the upper left, confined in a small register in the lower left, in which four attendants hold small boxes in their hands. Represented as such, the Safavid gifts look more like an afterthought in the painting, distanced horizontally and vertically from the sultan, and once again diminished to bare portable boxes. The “apologies” offered by Shah Tahmasp, expressed by his envoy, therefore, is given precedence here over the nature of the gifts so highly admired by Bucbecq and Arifi alike. The envoy’s words of praise to the sultan are noted in the inscriptions on the lower left corner of the painting: “You are the king of the world!”<sup>77</sup> In this construction, the sultan’s agreement to the peace is due to his forgiving nature and justice, as declared in what appears to be an architectural inscription on the top right corner. This message written in white letters on a blue background reads: “The sultan, the just” (*al-sulṭān al-‘ādil*).

The Ottoman-Safavid peace treaty signed in 1555 was respected by both sides until the breakout of war once again in 1578. Ottomans and Safavids did not fight and in

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<sup>76</sup> TSMK, H.1517, 603a.

<sup>77</sup> *chanīn guft shāhā tuyī dar jihān*



general maintained good relations as they agreed in the Amasya Treaty. There was, however, an isolated incident that temporarily heightened tension between the two courts: the flight of the rebellious prince Bayezid to Shah Tahmasp's court in 1559. This event initiated a series of reciprocal diplomatic missions governed by new rules of etiquette. Now that Shah Tahmasp held a potential heir to the Ottoman throne, Sultan Süleyman first pressured Tahmasp about the release of his son, threatening him with a military attack, which would jeopardize the Amasya Peace Treaty. Later, the sultan adopted a much more genial tone in his correspondence with the shah, dispatching also many gifts, an act that he would not have done otherwise. In response, while the Safavid shah first asked the sultan to forgive his son, later, he entered into a negotiation, asking for the Fortress of Kars (Qars) and the administrative responsibilities of the Shi'î sanctuaries in Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. With the escape of Bayezid, the sultan-to-be, Prince Selim, also began to correspond with the shah even before he was officially enthroned. After two years of ongoing negotiations, in return for a large sum of cash and some territorial concessions, Shah Tahmasp agreed to hand the Ottoman prince over to a delegation sent by Süleyman to his court in Qazvin. By the order of the sultan, these Ottoman officials immediately executed Bayezid and his four sons.<sup>78</sup> As we will see below, the next

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<sup>78</sup> For the Bayezid affair, his arrival in Iran, his correspondence with his father, and his brother Selim's involvement in the matter, see Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 166-73; Hasan Beg Rūmlū, *Aḥsanu't-Tawārīkh*, II: 178-80, 182; Shah Tahmasp, *Tazkira-yi Tahmasp*, 74-81; Şerafettin Turan, "Şehzāde Bayezid'in Babası Kanuni Sultan Süleyman'a Gönderdiği Mektuplar," *Tarih Vesikaları* 1 (1955): 118-27; Şerafettin Turan, *Kānūnī'nin Oğlu Şehzāde Bayezid Vak'ası* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1961; reprint, *Kanuni Süleyman Dönemi Taht Kavgaları*, Ankara: Bilgi, 1997); Çağatay M. Uluçay, "Selim-Bayezid Mücadelesi," *Tarih Vesikaları* 3, no.18 (1961): 374-87; Cahit Öztelli, "Kānūnī'nin Oğlu Şehzāde Bayezid'in Babasına Son Mektubu, in *VIII. Türk Tarih Kongresi (Ankara 11-15 Ekim 1976) Kongreye Sunulan Bildiriler*, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1981), II: 1105-1112; Filiz Kılıç, *Şehzāde Bayezid Şāhī Hayatı ve Dīvānu*

Ottoman illustrated *shahnama* includes a painting of an ambassador presenting Shah Tahmasp's gifts to Sultan Süleyman during the Bayezid affair.

### ***Zafernâme* (Book of Victory): A New Image for the Sultan to Match a New Mode of Representation for Safavid Gifts**

The *Zafernâme* (Book of Victory), or the *Tetimme-i Ahvâl-i Sulţân Süleymân Hân* (Appendix to the Events of Sultan Süleyman)<sup>79</sup> is the first Ottoman illustrated *shahnama*, completed after the *Süleymännâme*, in which there is a painting of a Safavid ambassador presenting gifts to the sultan. Completed in 1578-9, this manuscript was written by Seyyid Lokman (d. 1601)<sup>80</sup> and its twenty six paintings were executed by a group of artists working under the direction of Nakkaş Osman. It is thought to be a continuation of Arifi's *Süleymännâme*, for it details the events of the latter part of Sultan Süleyman's reign, between 1559 and 1566.<sup>81</sup> In fact, the text and the illustrations focus primarily on

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(Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000); Colin P. Mitchell, "Am I My Brother's Keeper? Negotiating Corporate Sovereignty and Divine Absolutism in Sixteenth-Century Turco-Iranian Politics," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (London and New York, Routledge, 2011), 33-58.

<sup>79</sup> Chester Beatty Library (Hereafter CBL), T.413. Vladimir Minorsky and J.V.S. Wilkinson, *The Chester Beatty Library: A Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts and Miniatures* (Dublin: Hodges & Figgis, 1958), 19-21. This manuscript is also often referred to as the *Tarih-i Sulţân Süleymân Hân* (History of Sultan Süleyman).

<sup>80</sup> For Seyyid Lokman, see Ahmet Refik, "Bizde Şehnamecilik, Seyyid Lokman, ve Halefleri," *Yeni Mecmua* 9 (1917): 169-73; Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Şehnameci Lokman," in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütükoğlu'na Armağan*, ed. Nebahat Kütükoğlu (Istanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1991), 39-48; Emine Fetvacı, "Office of the Ottoman Court Historian," in *Studies on Istanbul and Beyond: The Freely Papers Volume 1*, ed. Robert G. Ousterhout (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2007), 7-21; Hilal Kazan, "Farklı Açılardan bir Bakışla Şehnameci Seyyid Lokman'ın Saray İçin Hazırladığı Eserler," *Osmanlı Araştırmaları* 35 (2010): 117-36.

<sup>81</sup> Atıl, *Süleymannâme*, 53; István Nyitrai, "Rendering History Topical: One Aspect of a 16<sup>th</sup> Century Persian Historical Epic in the Ottoman Empire," *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae* 48, no. 1-2 (1995): 109-16.

Süleyman's last campaign to Szigetvár in Hungary, his death there, and the events leading to the accession of his son Selim.<sup>82</sup>

A single-page painting in the *Zafernâme* depicts the sultan's audience with a Safavid ambassador during his negotiations with the shah about the release of Prince Bayezid (Figure 2.11).<sup>83</sup> The construction of the scene follows previous paintings in the *Süleymännâme* about the sultan's audiences with foreign envoys, in particular envoys coming from Iran. The sultan sits in a high, gold throne with two court attendants on one side, and the grandvizier and other viziers lined up on the other, all standing up with their hands clenched in front of them, signaling the formality of the ceremony.

This painting departs from previous models, nevertheless, for it conveys the formality of the ceremony, the greatness of the sultan, and the subservience of the ambassador much more forcefully. While in this scene the throne Süleyman sits in closely resembles those in the *Süleymännâme*, here, it is extremely large and spacious, giving the sultan unprecedented prominence. The uniforms of the two pages standing next to the throne on the right, the *silahdar* (sword-bearer) and the *rikabdar* (stirrup-holder), echo and highlight the throne, for the equipment they hold, the belts and the hats they wear have gold-tones. Fittingly, in the Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas* completed during the last decades of the sixteenth century, the ornament and uniforms of officials of the court, attendants, and soldiers are praised as much as, or sometimes more than the regalia of the sultan himself in comparison with the *Süleymännâme*. Moreover, even though the subservient pose the envoy adopts is a strong iconographic thread that binds

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<sup>82</sup> For an interpretation of such distribution and its connection to the influence of the grandvizier Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, see Fetvacı, "Viziers to Eunuchs," 115-21.

<sup>83</sup> CBL, T.413, 14b.

the *Süleymānnāme* with the new Ottoman *shahnamas*, here he is made to bow down completely with the help of two Ottoman courtiers, who grab him under his arms to push him down.

In the previous paintings we have examined from the *Süleymānnāme*, gifts received by Süleyman are either absent, or they do not take part in the main scene, pushed away from the sultan and the envoy, confined in separate registers. This visual marginalization is not matched however in the text, for as we have seen, Arifi itemizes and praises the Safavid gifts presented to the sultan in a bombastic manner in the *Süleymānnāme*. In the *Zafernāme*, the painters of the scene make reference to the orderly way in which ambassadorial gifts were displayed and paraded at the Topkapı Palace. But departing from the mode of their representation in the *Süleymānnāme*, here the gifts are fully integrated into the main scene, aligned vertically with the sultan and the envoy. Furthermore, rather than being confined in bare boxes or wrapped in gold-embroidered textiles, they are represented as real objects. The first gift held by a gatekeeper (*kapıcı* in Turkish, *bavvāb* in Persian) at the far right appears to be a bound manuscript, and the remaining gifts are shown as hunting birds held by eight gatekeepers. Also, by contrast with the way in which Safavid gifts are described in the *Süleymānnāme*, the *Zafernāme*'s text neither spells out the contents of the gifts at length, nor praises them as such in terms of their rarity and value, and the great numbers in which they came.

The visual representation of Safavid gifts expands this way in Ottoman *shahnamas* within two generations. As we turn to other paintings of Safavid gifts being presented to Ottomans sultans, we will see that a new manner of depicting these gifts emerges, which refers back to the set up established by the artists of the *Zafernāme* by

quoting and expanding this painting. The emergence of this new mode coincides with a significant change in the variety of roles assumed by the sultan, and the frequency with which he appears in the official *shahnama*. As noted above, in the *Süleymānnāme*, the sultan appears as the able head and leader of a sophisticated, powerful state. He goes hunting, executes justice, leads his armies into war, directs his commanders, receives members of his family and representatives of foreign rulers. Süleyman's son and grandson left the capital rarely, which demanded a reformation of the sultan's image as a military leader. In the new *shahnamas*, there are a considerable number of paintings in which he receives foreign ambassadors. In these paintings, gifts play an imperative role, highlighting the sultan's new image as a ruler who claims world dominion due to his ability to receive magnificent gifts sent by other, or "lesser," rulers of the world.

### ***Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān (Book of Kings of Sultan Selim)***

The *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān* (Shahnama of Sultan Selim),<sup>84</sup> dated 1581, is the second illustrated *shahnama*-style Ottoman chronicle written by Seyyid Lokman. Similar to the *Zafernāme*, its forty four paintings were executed by a team of artists led by Nakkaş Osman, and Ali.<sup>85</sup> Even though the number of roles assumed by the sultan in the *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān* is significantly fewer when compared with Süleyman's

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<sup>84</sup> TSMK, A. 3595. Fehmi Edhem Karatay, *Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi Kütüphanesi Farsça Yazmalar Kataloğu* (Istanbul: Topkapı Sarayı Müzesi, 1961), 273; Filiz Çağman, "Şehname-i Selim Han ve Minyatürleri," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 5 (1972-3): 411-42; Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Istanbul: Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006), 121-3; Emine Fetvacı, "The Production of the Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān," *Muqarnas* 26 (2009): 263-315.

<sup>85</sup> Kazan, "Şehnameci Seyyid Lokman," 120.

*shahnama*,<sup>86</sup> his portrayal as the perpetrator of justice remains as an important one. Here, Selim II is first shown as the dispenser of justice not by executing it actively himself, but by checking on his imperial council, which he had delegated with this mission. The few remaining paintings in which the sultan makes an appearance are about significant historical events of his reign, such as his accession to the throne, and his meetings with his top officials.

In one other painting, Shah Tahmasp's gifts are being displayed before Selim II in 1568 (Figure 2.12).<sup>87</sup> This double-spread is, then, the only image where the sultan is shown in any sort of contact with the world outside his court. Significantly, it takes place at his court inside the palace in Edirne. Here, the painters must have used the *Zafernâme* painting as a model, for they have designed a scene on the left side of the composition that closely emulates the spatial arrangement of the *Zafernâme* painting (Figure 2.11): the sultan sits in a similar—though smaller—throne at the top right corner with the grandvizier and the other vizier standing by his side, the envoy is brought in front of him by two attendants who force him to bow him,<sup>88</sup> and Shah Tahmasp's gifts are held by gatekeepers who stand in a horizontal line that runs across the lower register of the image. This long line of gatekeepers holding gifts continues on to the right half of the composition, providing continuity between the two pages. At the upper register of the left page, other gifts are spread over the ground, guarded by more gatekeepers. Ottoman

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<sup>86</sup> In this manuscript, only six paintings depict the sultan. Fetvacı, “Şehnâme-i Selim Hân,” 266.

<sup>87</sup> TSMK, A. 3595, 53b-54a.

<sup>88</sup> Ottoman historian and bureaucrat Feridun Ahmed Beg in his *Nüzhetü'l-ahbâr der Sefer-i Sîgetvâr* describes this custom in his account of the ambassador's audience with the sultan: *kapucîbaşularî müşârileyh Şâh Kûlî Sulţânîñ kolluğına girüb adâb-ı ta'zîm ü tekrîm birle pâye<sup>2</sup>-i serîr-i gerdûn nazîre getürüb* TSMK, H. 1339, 245a.

officials and members of the Safavid delegation also stand by, waiting for the envoy to be dismissed. While in the *Süleymānnāme*, ambassadorial gifts—when depicted—were confined in separate registers, both the *Zafernāme* and the *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān* paintings integrate gifts fully into the main action in the scene. Also, similar to the *Zafernāme*, the contents of the gifts are spelled out, which reveals each item, and visually underscores the variety of objects sent by the shah.

In the new mode of displaying Safavid gifts, new ideas of control and order govern both the pose taken by the envoy and the manner in which Safavid gifts are displayed. As such, the gifts are organized and displayed based on a hierarchical order. As Lale Uluç has pointed out, the items deemed most important precede all else and are closest to the sultan.<sup>89</sup> These are manuscripts sent by Shah Tahmasp, which included a copy of the Qur'an, and a copy of the *shahnama* completed for the library of Shah Tahmasp himself.<sup>90</sup> In the painting, other gifts displayed are courtly objects made of gold, heron feathers used to decorate the turbans of the sultan and high-ranking officials of the court. The feathers are followed by what appear in the painting as long rectangular blocks in different colors. These must represent rolled up carpets or textiles sent by the shah. At the upper left side of the composition are a golden dome, two columns in gold and blue, two others in red, and two pairs of doors. All of these must be disassembled pieces of the tent, which was among this group of gifts.

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<sup>89</sup> Lale Uluç, *Turkman Governors, Shiraz Artisans, and Ottoman Collectors: Sixteenth Century Shiraz Manuscripts* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2006), 469-505.

<sup>90</sup> *ve Şāh Tahmasbīñ kendü ādına denilmüş ikīyüz ellī toķūz yirde taşvīr meclīs olunmuş muraşşā<sup>c</sup> cildle bir kıt<sup>c</sup>a şāhnāme* TSMK, H. 1339, 243a. For a more detailed discussion of the gifting of these two items, see the first chapter.

This manner of orderly display in the painting is accompanied by the textual narrative which identify the gifts, referred to as tribute (*pishkash*). By contrast with the *Süleymānnāme*, however, Seyyid Lokman limits the use of hyperbole as a rhetorical device when describing Tahmasp's gifts. Before the author begins to enumerate them, he says that they were collectively "of every appropriate sort, beautiful and pleasing"<sup>91</sup> Then, Lokman uses succinct expressions and simple adjectives to introduce each gift. For example, the first item is "[an] illuminated Qur'an, with jeweled binding, of great value."<sup>92</sup> Other items, such as the manuscripts are referred to as "appropriate" (*maqbul*), and the Persian textiles as "without compare" (*bī-qiyās*).<sup>93</sup>

This new mode of visual and textual display of Safavid gifts surfaces specifically in the Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas* dating from 1579 and after. A different chronicle, completed within a year after the presentation of Shah Tahmasp's gifts in 1568 is Feridun Ahmed Beg's *Nüzhetü'l-esrāri'l-ahbār der Sefer-i Sīgetvār*, (Chronicle of the Szigetvár Campaign). This book includes a painting of the Safavid ambassador's reception with Selim II in Edirne (Figure 2.13).<sup>94</sup> The painting depicts the sultan and the viziers beside him in similar fashion to the *Süleymānnāme*. Even though architectural details show some variation, the spatial arrangement of the people in the scene conforms to established models. Differently, the strict control of court ceremonial imposed on the Safavid delegation is accentuated here through the envoy's pose, which is forced on him by two Ottoman officials. At the bottom left corner, we see a Safavid official (with two more behind him), also held on his arms by Ottoman officials on either side. What is entirely

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<sup>91</sup> *z[a] har jins-i maqbūl zībā u khūsh* TSMK, A.3595, 53b.

<sup>92</sup> *muzahhab kalām-i qadīm bijild-i muraşsa<sup>c</sup> biqadr-i 'aẓīm* TSMK, A.3595, 54a.

<sup>93</sup> TSMK, A.3595, 54a-55b.

<sup>94</sup> TSMK, H. 1339, 244b.



absent from the scene are the magnificent gifts sent by the Safavid shah. In the text, however, Feridun Beg itemizes Tahmasp's gifts. This author also freely expressed his doubts about the mission of this embassy and his personal convictions about Safavids in general, for he titles this section "the curious state and the strange manners" (*hey'āt-ı 'acībe ve kıyāfet-i ğarībelerin*) of the Safavid delegation. When referring to the ambassador of the shah, his comments become openly demeaning, as he refers to him as "demon-mannered" (*dīv-sīret*) and "impostor-faced" (*deccāl-şūret*).

### ***Şehinşehnāme* (Book of the King of Kings) vol. 1**

Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas* that we consider here were completed during the reign of sultan Murad III who came to power in 1574. Even though the Safavid and Ottoman states were at peace at that time, the Safavid shah was not among those kings who were sent imperial notices of the enthronement of the new sultan.<sup>95</sup> According to diplomatic courtesy, all of those receiving official letters were expected to send envoys to congratulate the enthronement, and to renew peace agreements made previously. Though uninvited, Shah Tahmasp did send an ambassador with a large retinue bearing many valuable gifts for the sultan in 1576. Soon after the arrival of this embassy, Shah Tahmasp died, which began a period in Safavid history characterized by weak central authority and internal unrest. Taking advantage of the situation, the Ottoman and Uzbek states soon decided to wage war on Iran, which left the country under attack both on the east and west. After 1578, when the Ottoman-Safavid war began, two other embassies from Iran arrived in Istanbul: the first one in 1580, charged with the mission of requesting

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<sup>95</sup> Bekir Kütükoğlu, "Şah Tahmasb'ın III. Murad'a Cülüs Tebriki," in *Vekayi'nüvis Makaleler* (Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1994), 375-97.

peace, and in 1582 for the circumcision celebration of Murad III's son and future sultan prince Mehmed. Paintings depicting these three embassies are found in the two-volume *Şehinşehnâme* (Book of the King of Kings), which chronicles the reign of Murad III. We will examine these paintings to trace the development of the new pictorial mode of depicting Safavid gifts, and to investigate how this relates to the visual image of the sultan.

Murad III's *shahnama*, or the *Şehinşehnâme*<sup>96</sup> was prepared in two illustrated volumes. Like the *Zafernâme* and the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān*, its text was written in Persian verse by the Ottoman *shahnama*-composer (*şehnāmeçi* or *shahnamagūy*) Seyyid Lokman, and its fifty eight paintings were done by the hand of a team of twenty two artists, once again led by Nakkaş Osman.<sup>97</sup> The first volume, dated 1581, chronicles the events of the first part of Murad III's reign, between 1574 and 1581, when he received the last envoy to be sent to Istanbul by Shah Tahmasp in 1576.

The book opens with the story of the new sultan's accession. The sultan is praised in the text as a world emperor who holds this position through his active power of conquest by way of his victorious army. But what is more important here is that this title is defined both visually and textually by him receiving gifts, booty and tribute from all over the world:

the world rejoiced upon his [Murad III's] accession  
the earth became his well-cultivated garden  
wherever his *farmān* goes  
subjects (*farmānbari*) offer exclusive gifts as tribute (*pishkash*)  
whenever his royal decree (*yarligh*) arrives before the Tatar [Khân]

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<sup>96</sup> Istanbul University Library (Hereafter IUK), F.1404. For more on this manuscript, see Hüsametdin Aksu, "Sultan III. Murad Şehinşehnamesi," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 9-10 (1981): 1-22; Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 124-8.

<sup>97</sup> Kazan, "Şehnameci Seyyid Lokman," 120-1.

its influence [resonates] from China to the land of the Bulgars  
his renown has struck calamity in Iran  
[making] the Damāvand and Alborz [mountains] tremble in their  
place<sup>98</sup>

The painting of Prophet Muhammad’s sword, brought from Egypt and presented to the sultan nicely fits into this formula, showing how the sultan’s power resonates both within and beyond his rulership through the movement of objects into his possession (Figure 2.14).<sup>99</sup> The text above the painting here emphasizes Murad III’s claim to world dominion: “the whole world is dependant, submissive to his splendor/ the noble and the plebeian to his sovereignty.”<sup>100</sup> Just like the example of the holy sword, there are other paintings in *Şehinşehnâme*’s first volume, which depict the sultan receiving gifts from local rulers and foreign ones. As we will see, these are modeled after the norms established for displaying Safavid gifts before the sultan.

In this manuscript, preceding the illustration of Shah Tahmasp’s gifts being presented to Murad III is a double-page painting in which the sultan, his high-ranking officials, and many soldiers of the army parade before the Safavid ambassador Tuqmaq Khān<sup>101</sup> (Figure 2.15).<sup>102</sup> There are many precedents to such a ceremonial entry of the sultan into the capital, like the one that was organized for Shah Tahmasp’s renegade brother Alqas Mirza. But the theme had been foreign to the pictorial program of Ottoman

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<sup>98</sup> IUK, F.1404, 20a, quoted in Yıldız, “Ottoman Historical Writing,” 477.

<sup>99</sup> IUK, F.1404, 25a; Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 128.

<sup>100</sup> *jahān jumla tābi<sup>c</sup> shahānash muṭī / bifarmān-ravā-yī sharīf u vażī<sup>c</sup>*

<sup>101</sup> Tuqmaq Khan was the son of Shahqūlī, the ruler of Erivan (or Yerevan) in Armenia and Nakhchivan (or Nahçevan) in Azerbaijan, who came to the Ottoman court as the shah’s ambassador in 1568 to express the shah’s condolences and to congratulate accession of Selim II, Murad III’s father. IUK, F.1404, 35a; Meḥmed Zā<sup>c</sup>īm, TSMK, R. 1382, 308b.

<sup>102</sup> IUK, F.1404, 38b-39a.

*shahnamas*. Ottomans deemed these ceremonial entries especially important for Safavid embassies to contemplate, for they were to be shown the magnificence of the sultan, as well as the ornament and the distinctiveness of his large army.<sup>103</sup> In the painting, the Safavids can be recognized through their distinctive turbans at the top left corner, watching the parade from behind two windows in the viewing kiosk (*temāşāgāh*) that was put up for them. On the right page, the sultan moves forward in the middle, mounted on his horse, surrounded by his attendants and courtiers, and fronted by a sea of soldiers. Contemporary observers note the extraordinary number of these soldiers, all dressed in their war uniforms and equipment.<sup>104</sup> According to the text, watching the parade, all the Safavid representatives were amazed and awestruck.<sup>105</sup>

Since this manuscript was completed after the Ottoman-Safavid war began in 1578, this painting could well have been included in it to reassure its audience, the Ottoman elite, that the Safavids were indeed very impressed, in fact intimidated by the sultan's commanders and army, and were convinced of the Ottoman state's superiority.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The sultan left the palace two days prior to the Safavid embassy's arrival to go on hunting to Halkalı, near Istanbul. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 113-4; Stephan Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü 1573-1576*, trans. Türkis Noyan, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006).

<sup>104</sup> Stephan Gerlach noted that nearly 10,000 soldiers attended the parade. Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*. Lokman gives the much more exaggerated number of 120,000 (*fuzūn az şad u bīst bīvar hazār*) IUK, F.1404, 35b.

<sup>105</sup> The couplet inscribed on the right page reads: *z[a] rūzan shud chashm-i qāşid birūn / qizilbāsh rā gasht hayrat fuzūn* IUK, F.1404, 38a

<sup>106</sup> According to Selaniki, each pasha had his own retinue, dressed in their best uniforms and mounted on horses decorated with superior textiles, ornaments and embellishments. While all of this was meant to impress the Safavid delegation, the display also signaled a competition amongst Ottoman dignitaries to put out the best show: *Pesendide olan mümtāz alay Sadri<sup>c</sup> azam Mehmed Paşa hazretleriniün güzide cebe-hānesinden geçicek Ahmed Paşa hazretleriniün idi, velākin Sinan Paşa hazretleriniün kesreti gerçi nihayetde idi, velākin Sinan Paşa hazretleriniün vilāyet-i Yemen uslūbında at geyimleriniün yeni serāser ve ağır çatmalardan tedārük olunmağla kemāl mertebe zīverī yaraşık düşdi. Ve Kızılbaş tā'ifesi dahi āmme-i ālem tahsīn eyledüğüni beğenmemeğe kādīr olamadılar. Ve*

In Lokman's words, the Safavids said, "Oh God! the sultan is firmly obeyed by the entire world!"<sup>107</sup> After establishing the superiority of the Ottoman forces, the *Şehinşehnâme* then dictates that it would only be an unsound decision to go to war with such an army.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, when the manuscript was completed, the Safavids and the Ottomans were in fact at war.

The emphasis on the power of the Ottoman state headed by the sultan, who is identified as the "shadow of God on earth," continues into the discussion of the display and presentation of Shah Tahmasp's gifts before the sultan. The double page painting about this presentation in the first volume of the *Şehinşehnâme* (Figure 2.16)<sup>109</sup> is a copy of the painting with the same theme from the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān* (Figure 2.12), which itself is a copy of the one found in the *Zafernâme* (Figure 2.11). The placement of the sultan's throne at the top right corner, the grandvizier and the viziers lined up to his right, the position of the envoy brought before him bowing down respectfully on the large Uşak carpet, and the gifts running horizontally on a single line from the left page into the right page closely emulate the model provided in the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān*. On the left page, the line of gatekeepers holding gifts also continue on a separate line, culminating at the top, with some members of the Safavid embassy holding the gates for the tent that was sent as one of the gifts. In this copy, architectural details allow us to identify the specific locations of the scene at the Topkapı Palace. Even though the light blue pastel color of

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*bi'l-cümle darbī nā-kabūllerün kabūli oldi.* Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 113-4. Lokman writes that moving forward, the soldiers fired their guns, which resembled sparkles coming out of a dragon's mouth, scaring "the enemies." These enemies must refer to none other than the Safavid delegation, for the author then writes that when the guns were fired, the envoy lost his head out of fright. IUK, F.1404, 36b-37a.

<sup>107</sup> *biguftand yārab khudāvandgār bi'alam muṭa'ī būd bar qarār* IUK, F.1404, 38a.

<sup>108</sup> IUK, F.1404, 39b.

<sup>109</sup> IUK, F.1404, 41b-42a.

the marble floor running through both pages might point to continuity between the two sections of the painting, the marble colonnade framing the scene on the top left suggests that that part of the scene takes place in the second courtyard of the palace. The strict principles of control and order that was introduced in the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān* painting is stated more clearly here, as more Safavid officials entered the scene, flanked on both sides by Ottoman courtiers, who keep them in a straight line, holding too either their arms or hands.

The portrayal of Shah Tahmasp's gifts in the painting reiterate the new image of the sultan both by citing the other painting and by forming a close tie between the gifts and the idea of servitude (*bandagī*). According to Lokman, Shah Tahmasp had sent beautiful gifts (*tuhfahā-yi laṭīf*) as "the head of servitude" (*bihangām-i pā-būs u afkandagī / pay-i pīshkash az sar-i bandagī*.)<sup>110</sup>

The *Şehinşehnâme* itself, archival documents, and contemporary accounts documenting these gifts all confirm that in 1576 many more gifts came from the Safavid shah than he had ever sent before.<sup>111</sup> In line with the new representational mode of displaying Safavid gifts in Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas*, both the painting and the text of the *Şehinşehnâme* begin citing the gifts with the manuscripts. The Qur'an copies, nine large and nine small in number according to other sources,<sup>112</sup> are likened by Lokman to "tablets filled with luminous verses of God." Though additionally other books are

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<sup>110</sup> IUK, F.1404, 42b.

<sup>111</sup> Many of these are cited in Kütükoğlu, "Cülüs Tebriki," 379-80. There is additionally a Venetian archival document (dated 27 May 1576) that lists them: ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 9, 96a-103a.

<sup>112</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 9, 100a; Seyyid Lokman, *Zübdeü't-Tevārīh* (The Cream of Histories), TIEM, 1973, 89a, cited in Kütükoğlu, "Cülüs Tebriki," 379.

mentioned by Lokman, they are not described in any detail in the *Şehinşehnâme*. Elsewhere, Lokman notes many volumes of poetry collections (*dīvān*) of famed Persian poets, which is confirmed by a Venetian account, noted therein as “epic stories and other books” (*libretti di canzone, et altre poesie*).<sup>113</sup> This report of the Venetian *bailo*, who was residing at the Ottoman capital at that time, additionally records 254 unbound pages of Persian calligraphy. This record possibly confirms the arrival of the famous Shah Tahmasp album currently at the Istanbul University Library,<sup>114</sup> and other Safavid calligraphy albums currently in the Topkapı Palace collection. The *bailo*’s account then records nine hawks and 6900 pieces of bird feathers. Two pairs of black feathers are held up in the painting by the gatekeeper standing next to those holding the books. Other gifts were twenty-nine bags filled with turquoise stones, bezoar stones in three boxes (*lacrime di cervo, scatole n[ume]ro 3*),<sup>115</sup> felts with landscape design, gold-embroidered silk carpets,<sup>116</sup> swords from Qum, Persian bows (*tīg-i Qumī va kamān-i ‘Ajām*),<sup>117</sup> and

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<sup>113</sup> Lokman gives the number of *dīvāns* as 60, TIEM, 1973, 89a, cited in Kütükoğlu, “Cülüs Tebriki,” 379; whereas the Venetian *bailo* Giovanni Corraro records only 12, ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 9, 100a.

<sup>114</sup> IUK, F.1422. The catalog entry definitively claims that this album was one of the gifts sent by Tahmasp in 1576, based on a note written much later on the flyleaf: “Formé pour Shah Tahmasp par Shah Quli Khalifah son garde des sceaux (*mühürdar*), cet album a du faire partie de présents du Shah, offerts à Murad III, en 1576.” Fehmi Edhem and Ivan Stchoukine, *Les manuscrits orientaux illustrés de la bibliothèque de l’Université de Stamboul* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1933), 40-3. For this album, see Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, 196-212. The album currently has 89 folios. David Roxburgh has argued that folios might have been removed from the album through the years, but “these can only be few in number, a hypothesis based on the premise that the thickness of the current gathering corresponds to the width of the spine.” Roxburgh, *The Persian Album*, 343-4, n35.

<sup>115</sup> Lokman notes that these boxes were many in number, all made of silver: *basī huqqa-yi sīmīn pur pādzhahr* IUK, F.1404, 42b.

<sup>116</sup> Only Giovanni Corraro itemizes these in detail as 34 large silk carpets, 2 very large silk carpets, 14 “mosque carpets,” which must be prayer rugs, see J. Michael Rogers, “Europe and the Ottoman Arts: Foreign Demand and Ottoman Consumption,” in *Europe*

saddles with matching saddle blankets. The display of gifts in the painting roughly follows textual accounts in showing the various types of objects sent by Shah Tahmasp in the order they were recorded in textual sources. Next to the gatekeeper holding four bird feathers are other gatekeepers holding a gold object and a box, which must hold the antidotes. The next object looks like a rolled-up carpet or textile, which might suggest that it represents one of the carpets or a large piece of felt. The next three gatekeepers (and two more behind them) carry two silk carpets, for they are quite soft, and very large such that the gatekeepers needed to wrap them around their shoulders to hold them up. Next are two more carpets, each rolled up and carried by an individual, followed by gatekeepers holding bows and arrows.

The rest of the items displayed on the left side of the composition are pieces of the great tent unanimously admired and highly praised by all observers, who recounted its magnificence by highlighting its beauty and rarity. In Selaniki's account of this embassy's mission in Istanbul, only the tent is mentioned among the gifts brought by Tuqmaq Khan:

Then, when the aforementioned envoy came to the sublime council hall and delivered the letter, a crowded council was summoned. The infinite and matchless gifts from Iran were presented. The great council hall was filled entirely with those carrying the gifts. Only a lofty-domed tent with forty sections, whose columns were studded with jewels and woven with figured fabrics was pitched. It was recorded

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*and Islam between the Fourteenth and Sixteenth Centuries*, eds. Michele Bernardini et al., 2 vols. (Naples: 2002), II: 721. Corraro's list also includes 9 velvet carpets in diverse colors, in addition to 5 very fine wool carpets.

<sup>117</sup> IUK, F.1404, 42b. The list provided by Corraro does not mention any bows and swords.



this way in the Protocol Register. No such gift had ever come to the Sublime Council from any other king.<sup>118</sup>

In the *Şehinşehnâme*, Lokman similarly singles out the tent. After completing his list of the other gifts, which were all “famed and without equal,” he went on to describe the tent. This magnificent tent had two gold-embroidered projecting roofs (*chīgh*). All of its threads were made of glittering silk; its foundation was made of a gold-woven coarse fabric (*‘abā*); its robes were all made of silk and gold; and each of its high columns were divided into three sections. Corraro wrote that the four columns of the tent were all jeweled and finely decorated (*tutti gioielate, et miniate*).<sup>119</sup> In the painting, two pairs of gatekeepers carry two blue columns, which are indeed divided into different sections through horizontal lines in gold, with each section decorated by scrolling designs. The gold dome of the tent carried by the adjacent two gatekeepers in the painting is likened in the text to the bright sun (*mīhr-i munīr*).

After the reception, when the envoy left the palace, the sultan ordered the tent-pitchers (*zumra<sup>c</sup>-i mihtarān*)<sup>120</sup> to assemble the tent in a courtyard in the palace. These verses, recording the sultan’s order, are inscribed on a single-page painting in the

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<sup>118</sup> *Ba<sup>c</sup>dehu Dīvān-ı adālet-unvāna ilçi-i mezbūr gelüp nāmeyi teslīm eyledükde azīm kalabalık dīvān oldu. Tuhaf u hedāyā-yı memālik-i Acem be-gāyet bī-hadd u bī-kıyās çekildi. Dīvān-ı mu<sup>c</sup>allānun dār u medārı tamāmen pişkeş çekenler ile mālī oldu. Yalnız kırk hazīnelük murassa<sup>c</sup> u mücevver sütün ile ve akmişe-i rengīn ile duhte bir otak-ı gerdūn-nitāk çekildi. Teşrifāt defterinde dahi bu tavr üzre yazıldı. Hiç bir tārīhde şāhān-ı pīşīnden Divān-ı āliye gelmiş ve yazılmış değildi. Selaniki, Tarih, I: 114.*

<sup>119</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 9, 100a.

<sup>120</sup> The tent pitchers (also called *çadır mehteri* in Turkish and *hayme-zen* or *khaima-zan* in Persian) were in charge of setting the imperial tents on military campaigns. Gustav Bayerle, *Pashas, Begg, and Effendis: A Historical Dictionary of Titles and Terms in the Ottoman Empire* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1997), 29.

*Şehinşehnāme*, which depicts the tent being installed before the sultan (Figure 2.17).<sup>121</sup>

Lokman writes that when the head tent-pitcher fixed the dome on top of the tents' high columns, it seemed as if its apex touched the sky. This painting immediately follows the scene in which Tuqmaq Khan presents Shah Tahmasp's gifts to Murad III in 1576, which visually underscores the primacy and value of the manuscripts over the remaining gifts in line with the new visual mode. However, the inclusion of a separate painting in the manuscript with an entirely novel design dedicated to the tent points to this gift's beauty and distinction by the sultan among all others, similar to contemporary sources. The formality of the reception ceremony is not repeated here, for the sultan observes the tent in a very private setting, dressed in modest clothes, and sitting on a gold stool—rather than his throne—in a garden. We get a frontal view of the tent displayed in the foreground, as if it is turned towards us so we can see how the sultan would have seen it. Murad III seems to contemplate the gift's beauty and splendor in a tranquil setting, with a fountain by his side. The text tells us that “the king of kings” came out into the garden, and he sat on a chair to see the tent. But then, in sharp contrast to his fixed position in the painting, it says that he glanced at it and passed by quickly and moved on, for it was too small for the greatness of the king.<sup>122</sup>

As we have seen, the admiration and acceptance of this gift is highlighted through its commanding visual presence in a painting of its own. But paradoxically, the text resists this, asserting the ephemeral pleasure it gave the sultan. It is noteworthy that such a belittling comment about a Safavid gift is made just as Shah Tahmasp dispatched a

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<sup>121</sup> IUK, F.1404, 43b.

<sup>122</sup> *bikursī nashast az pay-i sayr u gasht / nazar kard bar khaima va bāz gasht guzasht az tamāshā-yi ān khaima zūd / ki andar khur-i himmatash tang būd* IUK, F.1404, 44a.

group of gifts that by far surpassed any other group that he had ever sent an Ottoman sultan in terms of amount, variety, and praise that the gifts received from contemporary observers.

During the last decades of the sixteenth century, then, Safavid gifts turn into visual devices that play an important role in defining a new image for the sultan in the corpus of Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas*. In the rest of the manuscript, the sultan most frequently appears when he is giving audience to foreign envoys and vassals, where he always receives gifts in remarkably similar manner to the visual standards established for depicting the display of Safavid gifts before the sultan (Figures 2.18, 2.19, and 2.20).<sup>123</sup> Abiding by the strict courtly ceremonial tradition, the viziers line up by the sultan's side, and the envoy is held by his arms and brought before the sultan to kiss his feet, as the text insists. The emphasis on the sultan's ability to attract objects as the sole ruler of the world is again and again emphasized through the repetition of this same set-up, the same moment when the sultan, envoy and the gifts fall into the same axis. At the same time, the variety in the different types of gifts is spelled out by the artists in each composition. In the case of the French envoy (Figure 2.20), the sultan received a bejeweled gold clock, a mirror, and silks in different colors,<sup>124</sup> which are depicted as such and in that order from right to left in the painting. The pleasing manner with which these "tributes and gifts" (*pishkash u tuh̄fahā*) are accepted by the sultan became as such a marker of the presenter's subservience.

It is remarkable that just when the sultan's image was being reformulated in line with standards set down by Shah Tahmasp himself in terms of the correct manner of

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<sup>123</sup> IUK, F.1404, 54a, 122a, and 141b respectively.

<sup>124</sup> IUK, F.1404, 142a.

honoring the sultan, the Ottoman illustrated *shahnama* begins to resist and question the true sincerity of the shah and of the quality of the gifts he sends. While in the *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hān*, any event that had the potential to result in a diplomatic crisis, such as the murder of Shah Tahmasp’s envoy on his way to the Hajj (Figure 2.21),<sup>125</sup> is depicted with the disclaimer that it was in fact the Arabs who killed him, in the first volume of the *Şehinşehnâme*, completed three years after the outbreak of the Ottoman-Safavid war of 1578 to 1590, crisis itself entered the visual program of the book, showing the arrival from the warfront of severed heads of Safavid commanders—complete with their turbans of course—to the second courtyard of the imperial palace (Figure 2.22).<sup>126</sup>

### ***Şehinşehnâme (Book of the King of Kings) vol. 2***

The increasing military tension and conflict between the Ottoman and Safavid states into the 1580’s entered in full bloom into the visual programme of the second volume of the *Şehinşehnâme*, the last Ottoman *shahnama* written in Persian verse.<sup>127</sup> This volume covers Murad III’s reign, between the years 1580 and 1584. It was completed in 1592, two years after the signing of the Istanbul Peace Treaty in 1590, which ended the Ottoman-Safavid war, conferring significant advantages on the Ottomans.<sup>128</sup> By contrast with the first volume of the *Şehinşehnâme*, the role assumed by the sultan in its paintings

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<sup>125</sup> TSMK, A. 3595, 68a.

<sup>126</sup> IUK, F.1404, 61b-62a.

<sup>127</sup> TSMK, B 200. Karatay, *Farsça Yazmalar*, 274-5. Completed in 1592, it was presented to sultan Murad III’s son, Mehmed III in 1597/8 (1006), Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 152. This volume contains 95 paintings. Nurhan Atasoy, “III. Murad Şehinşehnamesi Sünnet Düğünü Bölümü ve Philadelphia Free Library’deki İki Minyatürlü Sayfa,” *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı 5* (1973): 359-87; Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı*, 152-5.

<sup>128</sup> For this treaty, see Chapter 3.

is not restricted to that of a sedentary ruler whose only contact with the world beyond his palace are audiences he gives to foreign envoys and his own vassals. While the sultan is still always depicted in the capital, he participates in various activities besides giving audiences to envoys. Nevertheless, he makes few appearances, which emphasizes the strength of his state's administrative and military institutions, which run perfectly well without always needing his approval or presence.

Among the ninety five illustrations contained in the manuscript, contacts with the Safavids is a major theme. These include scenes of the sultan's appointment of commanders to the warfront, military clashes, and diplomatic receptions. Between 1580 and 1584, Murad III received two Safavid embassies, which are illustrated with two pairs of paintings in the manuscript. The first embassy arrived in Istanbul in 1580, led by the ambassador Maqṣūd Khān, who was charged with the mission of requesting peace. The second embassy came for the occasion of the circumcision festival of 1582, organized as a long public celebration for prince Mehmed.

Similar to the entry of the embassy sent by Shah Tahmasp in Istanbul 1576, the arrival of both of these embassies were arranged to coincide with a military parade of the Ottoman army so the Safavids would see the extent and strength of Ottoman forces. The text recounting the bravery of each soldier and the strength of the whole army, likened to a mountain, is much longer in this volume of the *Şehinşehnâme* than the previous one. It was explained to the ambassador that many more soldiers were fighting at the Safavid front, and that what he saw in that procession was like "a drop in the sea."<sup>129</sup> A

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<sup>129</sup> TSMK, B.200, 26a.

contemporary observer tells a much different story, however, suggesting that Maqsud Khan was in reality not impressed at all:

When an Ottoman herald (*çavuş*) asked the Safavid ambassador whether he enjoyed the procession, he responded by saying, ‘not bad.’ Maqsud Khan then asked the herald where the sultan was coming from and why he was accompanied by such a large crowd. But when he learned that the sultan was coming back from a hunting party, he said: ‘Such a large crowd is unnecessary for this purpose, and a display of such vanity is inappropriate during hunting. Also, where are those animals that they’ve hunted? They did not bring anything with them. If the sultan instead wishes to demonstrate his power with this crowd, then the number of people here is not sufficient for that.’ Just at that time, a line of janissaries holding guns were passing by, and the herald asked him whether such weapons were used in Iran. The ambassador responded: ‘We do not use these weapons, we only take them by force from the Ottomans during war!’<sup>130</sup>

Two paintings depict the movement of the Ottoman procession in 1580 and 1582 in the second volume of the *Şehinşehnâme*. The first of these paintings (Figure 2.23)<sup>131</sup> closely emulates the former one found in the first volume of the work (Figure 2.15). Members of the Safavid delegation are in a kiosk placed at the top-left corner of the composition, watching the parade as it moves to the left, passing in front of them. Also similar to the previous painting, the sultan is extravagantly dressed, riding his horse near the middle of the left page, surrounded by countless soldiers. The second painting (Figure 2.24)<sup>132</sup> departs from this model, most significantly through the re-assignment of the sultan as a spectator, and the Safavids as participants to the procession. Here, the sultan

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<sup>130</sup> Salomon Schweigger, *Sultanlar Kentine Yolculuk 1578-1581*, ed. Heidi Stein, trans. S. Türkis Noyan (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2004), 87-8.

<sup>131</sup> TSMK, B.200, 24b-25a.

<sup>132</sup> TSMK, B.200, 33b-34a.

has switched places with the Safavid embassy, watching the procession at the top-left corner, as the Ottoman army and the Safavids behind them move to the right.

Similar military processions were organized when new Safavid embassies arrived in Istanbul in 1590 and 1596,<sup>133</sup> continuing this tradition. In 1596, rather than leaving the city solely for the purpose of putting on a show for the Safavid embassy with his entry, sultan Mehmed III arrived at the capital victoriously, coming back from the Eğri (Erlau) Campaign in Hungary. One of the four paintings in his *shahnama*, *Şehnâme-i Sultan Mehmed-i Sâlis* (Book of Kings of Sultan Mehmed), depicts his ceremonial entry into Istanbul, as the Safavid embassy watches the procession (Figure 2.25).<sup>134</sup> This painting quotes paintings of the Ottoman military parading before Safavid embassies in 1576, 1580, and 1582, found in the two volumes of *Şehinşehnâme*, making an intertextual link between itself and paintings of a procession of the Ottoman military contemplated by a Safavid embassy.

The paintings found in the *Şehinşehnâme* refer to a period of either high tension or open warfare between the Ottomans and the Safavids, when conclusively proving military superiority was a major political issue for both sides of the front. Citing and emulating these earlier paintings in 1596/7, nearly six years after the conclusion of the twelve-year war, must then also be read as demanding the viewers of the painting to recall the *Şehinşehnâme*, testifying to how the Safavids were convinced of Ottoman military superiority. The intertextuality among all these paintings should also be read in line with the reappearance in Ottoman *shahnama* texts of long sections about the

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<sup>133</sup> See Chapters 3 and 4 for these.

<sup>134</sup> TSMK, H. 1609, 68b-69a. This manuscript was written in Turkish verse by Talikizade Mehmed and is dated 1596/7. For this painting, and for the Safavid embassy, its reception at the Ottoman court, and the gifts sent with it by Shah Abbas, see Chapter 4.

amazement and shame of Safavid embassies at the sight of Ottoman military might. Salomon Schweigger's comments, as cited above, nevertheless attest to the circulation of rumors in Istanbul that the Safavid delegation might have been less impressed with the Ottoman show of power than the collective message endorsed by the Ottoman *shahnamas*.

While the manner in which Safavid gifts are displayed in paintings of Murad III's audiences with ambassadors Maqsud Khan in 1580 and Ibrāhim Khan in 1582 in the second volume of the *Şehinşehnāme* (Figures 2.26 and 2.27)<sup>135</sup> quote the new mode of representation, the composition of these two double-page paintings sets them apart from the others found in Ottoman illustrated *shahnamas* written in Persian, beginning with the *Zafernāme*. In these two paintings, which are copies, we get a view of the second courtyard of the Topkapı Palace on the right page, which continues on to the left page, where we see the end of this courtyard. Here, the Gate of Felicity opens into the third courtyard. The scene inside the Chamber of Petitions immediately beyond this gate, where the sultan received ambassadors, is placed in both images at the top right. As we have already seen, paintings in the new mode of representing Safavid gifts in Ottoman *shahnamas* zoomed rather into the inside of the Chamber of Peititons, showing us only the audience, with the gifts spread on a horizontal axis at the bottom of the composition. For those well-versed with the nature of the ceremony of receiving foreign envoys at the Ottoman court, the distancing of the gifts to the bottom of the page would be a sufficient visual cue to conjure the gifts' actual place in the ceremony, which is precisely how they are depicted in these two paintings: outside the Chamber of Petitions, held by gatekeepers

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<sup>135</sup> TSMK, B.200, 28b-29a and 36b-37a respectively.



who stand in a line inside the second courtyard. The consistent prominence of the audience taking place inside the Chamber of Petitions in earlier paintings is replaced here with the display of the Safavid gifts, spread over the whole courtyard and taking up more space in the composition than the audience itself.

The nature of the principle of control and order that governed earlier Ottoman *shahnama* paintings is also reworked in these paintings. The strict, almost monotonous manner used in earlier versions to depict the sultan, Ottoman dignitaries, and the Safavid representatives inside the reception hall is transformed in the *Şehinşehnâme*'s second volume to emulate the linear presentation of the gifts outside. The grandvizier and the other viziers stand side by side with members of the Safavid delegation, without holding their hands or arms. The position of the ambassadors in this book likewise departs from the subjugated pose forced on Safavid envoys by Ottoman courtiers in paintings we have discussed from the *Zafernâme*, *Şehnâme-i Selīm Hân*, and the first volume of the *Şehinşehnâme*. Neither Maqsud Khan nor Ibrahim Khan is made to bow down before the sultan, which brings to mind the position of Safavid ambassadors before Sultan Süleyman in the *Süleymānnâme*.

In 1580, Maqsud Khan was sent to Istanbul by the Safavid shah Muhammad Khudabanda to request peace.<sup>136</sup> According to the sources that mention Khudabanda's gifts to Murad III, this ambassador had brought a significantly fewer number of gifts coupled with a narrower variety. The short account of these gifts (*pishkash*) in the *Şehinşehnâme* includes Persian textiles, which are said to have come in great quantities

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<sup>136</sup> Khudabanda's letter to Murad III explains that the crops that year were barely sufficient to feed the *qizilbash*, which means that continuing the war would be a great disaster for Iran. TSMK, B.200, 29b.

(*jihān gasht pur az qumāsh-i ʿAjām*).<sup>137</sup> Besides these, which are not further specified, silk fabrics (*dība* or *dībāh*) are said to have filled up the whole palace. The Venetian *bailo* Paulo Contarini's report to the Senate also mentions silks, in addition to bags of cash, which amount to 100,000 aspers, gold-woven garments and richly decorated horses.<sup>138</sup> Salomon Schweigger instead wrote that Maqsud Khan presented the sultan many rough turquoise stones and two Qur'an copies.<sup>139</sup>

Even though all three authors record a different group of gifts, clearly, Khudabanda's gifts contrasted sharply on this occasion with those sent by Shah Tahmasp in 1568 and 1576 in both amount and variety. This detail would only be caught by a careful observer in the painting about Maqsud Khan's reception at the Topkapı Palace (Figure 2.26). Like the paintings of Safavid gifts displayed before the sultan in the *Zafarnāme*, *Şehnāme-i Selīm Hān*, and the first volume of the *Şehinşehnāme*—all of which had come from Shah Tahmasp—Khudabanda's gifts still dominate the lower register of the double-spread. Furthermore, the shah's gifts are carried by a larger number of gatekeepers than in any of the previous images. The first gift, held by the gatekeeper closest to the Gate of Felicity is a bound manuscript, followed by what appear to be gold objects, boxes or bags. Most of the rest are fabrics, either held in bundles, or rolled up. In groups of two or three, the gatekeepers shown at the right page carry larger fabrics, or carpets, displayed in the same manner as the painting in the first volume of the *Şehinşehnāme* (Figure 2.16).

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<sup>137</sup> TSMK, B.200, 26b.

<sup>138</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 14, 223a.

<sup>139</sup> Schweigger, *Sultanlar Kentine Yolculuk*, 89.

Only a close comparison of this painting with the one about the sultan's audience with Ibrahim Khan reveals that many more gifts came with the Safavid embassy in 1582 than in 1580. The text does not support this, however, for it only mentions Persian textiles with designs (*qumāsh-i ʿAjam jumla bā kash u fash*)<sup>140</sup> Other written sources document the entire group of these gifts, which constitutes a long list. According to the historian and bureaucrat Mustafa ʿĀlī, for example, Muhammad Khudabanda sent the sultan eighteen manuscripts including two copies of the Qur'an, a *Shahnama*, a *Khamsa* (Quintet) of the famed Persian poet Nizami (d. 1209), whose paintings were executed by the legendary artist Bihzad, a copy of the *Iskendernāme* (Book of Alexander), a *Muraqqaʿ* (calligraphy album), and a *Dīvān* (collection of poetry) of Hafiz (d. 1391). All of these manuscripts are praised by Mustafa Ali as "gifts of sound minds" (*her biri tuhf-i ulū'l-elbāb*).<sup>141</sup> Other gifts were silk textiles, woven with gold on three sides, satins, velvets, carpets from Yazd and Khurasan, felts, a gold-embroidered curtain with designs all over it, a jeweled container filled with an antidote, and three large dishes from China.<sup>142</sup> Mustafa Ali's account also shows that Muhammad Khudabanda sent other gifts specifically for the sultan's mother Nurbanu Sultan, and for the sultan's Harem. Other members of the Safavid court joined the shah, for it is recorded that Khudabanda's mother Sultanum Bekum sent gifts to the Ottoman queen-mother, his sister to the female attendants of the court, and the Safavid crown-prince Hamza Mirza also sent two groups

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<sup>140</sup> TSMK, B.200, 36a.

<sup>141</sup> Mustafa ʿĀlī, *Cāmiʿu'l-buhūr der Mecālis-i Sūr*, ed. Ali Öztekin, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1996), 25.

<sup>142</sup> ʿĀlī, *Cāmiʿu'l-buhūr*, 26.

of gifts for the sultan and for prince Mehmed.<sup>143</sup> All of these emulate the gifts sent from Khudabanda to Murad III, being shorter versions of that master list of gifts.

The painting of Ibrahim Khan's audience with the sultan alludes to the richness and sophistication contained in Khudabanda's gifts to sultan Murad III. The first three gatekeepers carry manuscripts whose covers are studded conspicuously with large jewels.<sup>144</sup> Some of the other gifts mentioned by Mustafa Ali, such as textiles and carpets, are also discernible in the painting. However, the last gift, placed on the bottom right corner of the composition is a tent, which is mentioned neither by Mustafa Ali, nor by Lokman in the text. Coupled with the text's failure to mention any of the valuable and tasteful gifts sent by Khudabanda (it mentions only the textiles), we might say that while the artists here were concerned with highlighting the arrival of a larger number of gifts from the Safavid shah compared to 1580, documental accuracy was less of a concern than intertextuality, that is, quoting earlier paintings of Safavid gifts displayed before the sultan, which careful observers would be able to recall.

The omission of even a partial list of gifts in the manuscript might also be tied to the rising tension between the two courts, heightened by a rekindling of clashes between Ottoman and Safavid forces just as the Circumcision Festival of 1582 was ongoing in Istanbul. A double-page painting in the same manuscript depicts how the Safavid ambassador was shamed when news of a military crisis in Shirvan arrived, and how he was made to leave the celebration (Figure 2.28).<sup>145</sup> The right page shows the envoy, with four members of the Safavid delegation following behind him. These attendants have

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<sup>143</sup> c'Ālī, *Cāmi'c'u'l-buhūr*, 26-8.

<sup>144</sup> For a detail of this image, see Uluç, *Turkman Governors*, 488.

<sup>145</sup> TSMK, B.200, 75b-76a.

packed their belongings too, for they each carry a large bundle. As they are shown the way out from the festival ground by Ottoman courtiers, jannisarries take down the loggia that had been set up for the Safavid delegation for them to watch the festivities. On the opposite page, we see a Safavid turban thrown on the ground, and a man dressed in red by its side with his bare head exposed. The ekphrastic commentary written in Turkish above the composition declares that “a heretic qizilbash had converted to Sunnism” (*bir mülhid kızilbaş ehl-i sünniye tâbi<sup>c</sup> olmağla*). Various other written and visual sources allude to this incident, highlighting the military crisis between the Ottoman and Safavid states, which surfaced during the festival, and the resulting confessional humiliation that the Safavids are said to have experienced.<sup>146</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Starting with the Amasya Peace Treaty of 1555 until the 1590s, Safavid shahs always sent Ottoman sultans extremely valuable, if not increasingly more valuable gifts, which reflected the shah’s access to such cultural and material treasures as well as his sophisticated taste in putting them together as a group. This trend unfolded concurrently with one that involved a key change in the projection of the sultanic image in the Ottoman chronicles, significantly called *shahnamas*, written in Persian in the same meter as the *Shahnama*.

While in the *shahnama* of Sultan Süleyman gifts sent by the Safavid shah were visually marginalized, the text described them in detail praising excessively each gift’s beauty and rarity. Beginning with the *Zafernâme*, by contrast, Safavid gifts came to be

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<sup>146</sup> Terzioğlu, “Imperial Circumcision Festival,” 85-6.

fully integrated into the main composition of images of Safavid gifts being displayed before Ottoman sultans, depicted as real objects. This, as I have argued, demonstrates a new visual mode in depicting Safavid gifts, intricately tied to the new visual image of the sultan projected in Ottomans *shahnamas*. As the sultan makes fewer appearances, gifts received from the Safavid shah, as well as other foreign rulers act as major mediators of his contact with the outside world. The last Ottoman *shahnama* written in Persian, the two-volume *Şehinşehnāme*, complicates this picture even further, reflecting the transformation of the role assigned to magnificent Safavid gifts. As military tensions keep building up between the two states during the 1580s, emphasizing Safavid shame before the crushing power of the sultan and his state become a significant message that Ottoman *shahnamas* aim to convey. As Safavid gifts multiply visually in the paintings contained in these manuscripts, they come to receive little or no praise at all textually. This way, an intertextual link is formed between these paintings, requiring the viewer to recall similar paintings in previous *shahnamas* to piece together the subservient function they had previously, understood as a reflection of the shah's own subservience before the sultan, at a time when in reality the Safavid army was fighting the Ottomans, refusing to recognize their superiority.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**A Peace for a Prince:**  
**The Reception of a Safavid Child Hostage at the Ottoman Court**

The protracted war between the Ottoman and Safavid Empires (Figure 3.1), which ranged from 1578 to 1590, was concluded at the Safavids' expense with a very harsh condition: that the Ottoman sultan would receive and keep at his court a Safavid hostage prince. Negotiations took place amidst military and political crises of varying degrees on both sides of the border: the Ottoman army's discontent was fed by the weakening economy and the challenging geographical conditions of the region. In Iran, when Shah Abbas ascended the throne in 1587, taking down his own father, the country was on the brink of collapse. There was much internal unrest and the military assault of the neighboring powers of the Uzbeks and the Ottomans from the east and the west was ongoing. When negotiations were finalized, the Safavid king Shah Abbas agreed to send his 6-year-old nephew, Haydar Mirza. The "surrender" of this child prince by the Safavids—in addition to the treaty they agreed to sign—elicited much enthusiasm among Ottoman officials, and inspired historians, painters and poets to reflect on the arrival of the prince in a range of media. The terms of the treaty gave the Ottoman sultan official license to annex all of the Safavid territories into which his armies had entered during the campaign. Against this background, the prince's arrival at court was seen as material proof of Safavid subordination and placed a tangible seal on the agreement.

A painting found in the *Kitāb-ı Gencīne-i Fetḥ-i Gence* (*Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja*), an Ottoman chronicle glorifying the defeat to the Safavids in the

1580s, depicts the Safavid Shah, Abbas the Great, during his last encounter with his nephew Haydar Mirza before his departure for the Ottoman court (Figure 3.2).<sup>1</sup> The text around this imaginary scene explains that Shah Abbas was sending Haydar to the “abode of justice” with the request that he “go under the shadow of God”—words that, to an Ottoman audience, would indicate that Shah Abbas, as a Shi‘i, nevertheless recognized the Ottoman sultan as “Caliph.”<sup>2</sup> The lines immediately above the painting also record the shah’s words to Veli Agha, the Ottoman official who was there to accompany the prince on his journey: “From this day onwards, [may the sultan] consider me, like his other subjects, his slave.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This is a heroic account of Ferhad Pasha’s eastern campaign and the Ottoman conquest of Ganja. Penned by Rahimizade Ibrahim Çavuş, it was presented to Murad III in 1590 by the chief black eunuch Mehmed Agha. Two copies of the work exist: the lavish copy illustrated with twenty paintings is found in: TSMK, Revan 1296. The other, unillustrated copy completed a year later, is in IUK, TY 2372, 99a-160b. The Topkapı manuscript was recently published in full as a facsimile with an introduction and bibliography: Rahimizade Ibrahim Çavuş, *Harimî Kitâb-ı Gencîne-i Feth-i Gence: Osmanlı-Iran Savaşları ve Gence’nin Fethi (1583-1590)*, eds. Günay Karaağaç and Adnan Eskikurt (Istanbul: Çamlıca, 2010). For a discussion of the book’s patronage and pictorial cycle, see Emine Fetvacı, “Viziers to Eunuchs,” 164-168; Zeren Tanındı, “Bibliophile Aghas (Eunuchs) at Topkapı Saray,” *Muqarnas* 21 (Essays in Honor of J.M. Rogers) (2004), 334-5; Çağman and Tanındı, “Remarks on Some Manuscripts,” 144-45; Lale Uluç published all three paintings depicting Haydar Mirza (TSMK, R 1296, 46a, 48b and 53a) and discussed them within the context of gifts brought to the Ottoman court by the Safavids in *Turkman Governors*, 486-87, 490-91.

<sup>2</sup> *perverde’-i sāye’-i zıll-ı ilāhī olmakricāsıy la* The meaning of the expression “sāyaparvard” in Persian goes beyond “entering the domain of someone,” and further encompasses being nourished by the favors received, in this case of course, by the Ottoman sultan. Shah Abbas’ request for domination, according to Ottoman sources, is therefore not only deliberate but fervent too.

<sup>3</sup> *ben pādīshāh-ı islām hazretleriniñ sār kullarī gibi bendesiyim muqaddemā iğvā-yı şeytān-ı bedkār ve ilkā-yı a‘vān [u] enşārile tārīk-ı ‘ināda sālīk olduqca kuvvet-i kāhireleriyle cemī ‘vilāyetüm kabz u zabt idüüb eliümde bākī kalancasınıñ daḥi māl u menāl talān ve ricāl ü nisā ü eḫfālün nālān itdiler bu āna dek itdügümüz eḫ‘āle peşimān olub ‘afv u ihsānları ricāsına qarındaşum oḡlī sultān haydarī sizüñle der-i ‘adālet-i destgāha irsāl eylemege muqarrer itmişimdür.* TSMK, R 1296, 45b.



In exploring the nature of the prince's mediating role within the social relationships he forges, I will treat the prince as an object. In doing so, my starting point is an issue that has initiated an ongoing debate within anthropology and material culture studies: "our common-sense opposition between the person and the thing, the animate and the inanimate, the subject and the object."<sup>4</sup> In the 1980s, Igor Kopytoff has argued that such a conceptual duality is new, by pointing out the ambiguity between "individualized persons and commodified things" before modern times.<sup>5</sup> Like a slave, the prince was rendered an exchangeable thing; but unlike a slave on the market in the late sixteenth century, he was exchangeable only in this specific context. Kopytoff also draws attention to "things that are publicly precluded from being commoditized."<sup>6</sup> Such preclusion is enforced by individuals or groups holding political power, who limit the use and exchange of symbolically loaded objects amongst themselves. Along these lines, I think of the prince as likewise "singularized" by the Ottoman and Safavid kings.<sup>7</sup>

The case of the prince also attests to the interdependence of subjects and objects and the extent to which they shape social relations concurrently.<sup>8</sup> As we will see below,

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010), 5.

<sup>5</sup> Igor Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 64.

<sup>6</sup> Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography," 73.

<sup>7</sup> The term "singularization" is borrowed from Kopytoff, "The Cultural Biography," 73-77.

<sup>8</sup> The actor-network-theory for example, attributes agency to things just as much as people. See Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Alfred Gell's theory of the agency of art, which extends agency to material things in social contexts, has also significantly shaped my understanding of the Safavid prince, Alfred Gell, *Art and Agency: An Anthropological Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Arjun Appadurai also stresses the importance and centrality of objects within social relations, and their potential to shape those relations. His work on the biography of objects argues

the prince brought many gifts with him, which all participated in the conclusion of the peace. But the prince himself appears to be the leading gift in that entire group of gifts. One might also suggest that the prince may be taken as “tribute” since the agreement depended on his transfer. However, tribute rarely incites return favors, whereas gifts usually do. For this reason, his role aligns more with that of a precious gift, which, as anthropologists beginning with Marcel Mauss have shown, demand reciprocity.<sup>9</sup> We will see that Ottoman sources narrating the prince’s journey and reception at the Ottoman court fervently maintain that favors from the sultan in the form of feasts and entertainment, and of course material gifts (*inām*), were showered on the prince and the remaining members of the Safavid embassy. A variety of sources insist that the Safavids were in turn so impressed, and shamed by the sultan’s generosity, that they became convinced of the Ottoman superiority.<sup>10</sup> Such excessive insistence on Ottoman domination could easily be dismissed as typical imperial propaganda. However, a cross-reading of other sources suggests that it signals deep anxiety about the solidity of that domination.

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that they might move in and out of commodity status through their lives, which would imbue them with different values in different contexts, Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 3-63.

<sup>9</sup> Marcel Mauss’s *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. W.D. Halls (New York: W.W. Norton & Company Inc, 2000) has inspired not only anthropologists but also scholars from many other fields, who engaged with, built on, and even refuted some of his main premises, such as the principle of reciprocity. Particularly within the context of Ottoman-Safavid cultural exchange, there are many moments and periods when the definitions of “gift” and “tribute” overlapped and were contested, or sometimes deliberately misunderstood. Here, I will treat the prince as a gift, though he may have been conceived differently by either the Ottoman or the Safavid side.

<sup>10</sup> A larger discussion of Ottoman methods of impressing foreigners through striking fear in them can be found in Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*.

The embassy of about 600 people, led by the envoy Mahdiquli Khan, governor of Ardabil, and the prince's guardian,<sup>11</sup> left Qazvin in Fall 1589, and soon crossed into Ottoman territory. From this point on, the 6-year-old prince's life would be punctuated by his public appearances, which always occasioned material exchanges. The significance of these exchanges lies in the objects that the giver carefully selected for the taker to receive and keep. Also important, are other exchanges that took place during the ceremonies that bring members of the two courts together.

These are ephemeral exchanges in two forms. First are the visual and auidial displays, which had a competitive undertone. As visual testimonies to the might of the Ottoman political structure, they were designed to impress and even overwhelm the Safavids. Second, the feasts that were given in honor of the prince, the envoy, and their retinue were meant to serve a similar function. But looking closer at the visual and textual descriptions of food served by the Ottomans makes it clear that these edible and drinkable gifts were given a prominent place among Ottoman offerings. Their meticulous narration particularly emphasize the rarity and superior taste of each type of food as well as their overabundance. Furthermore, their supply is directly associated with the sultan's power. It was the sultan's ability to provide to whomever came to his court these delicacies that gave him such power. Similar to tangible gifts, such transient gifts required much effort to prepare and serve, but they were spontaneously consumed. Ottoman authors demand

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<sup>11</sup> Besides the prince's guardian (*ātābeg* or *lālā*) Shahimquli Khalifa, the most prominent members of the embassy were a certain Aliqoli Khan, and another Mahdiquli Khan. Ottoman authors have recorded the names of important members of the embassy in more detail than Safavid authors. The names given here are mentioned in TSMK, R 1296, 46b and in an Ottoman archival document discussed below (see appendix). However, only the envoy's name is mentioned by the Safavid historian Iskandar Beg Munshi. See Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 587.

the most amount of appreciation for these vaporous gifts, for they underscore, persistently, how stunned the prince and other Safavids were at the sight and taste of the dishes on offer, followed by an emphasis on the boundless character of the sultan's favors. Methodologically, I take these ephemeral exchanges and their representations as a sub-group of exchanges, which were especially organized for (and therefore only possible with) the arrival of the Safavid prince. Their analysis will illuminate the reception of the prince at the Ottoman court, himself taken here as an object exchanged between the Safavid and Ottoman courts.

**“The redhead was drowned in favors”**

In October 14<sup>th</sup> of 1589, the prince reached his first stop, the city of Erzurum, where the Ottoman army commander Ferhad Pasha was waiting for him. Soldiers of the army also gathered, all dressed up and aligned alongside the commander's tent in orderly manner. The description of the scene in the *Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja* conveys in a most lively manner the joy of the Ottoman commander upon welcoming the prince: “when they [the prince, the envoy and his retinue] approached the tent of the commander, the celebrated commander became visible from under the overhanging canopy. Like a falcon (*ṣāh-bāz-ī hümmā-pervāz*) in the game (he) hunts, with full caution and bright will, from horseback he seized [the prince] and hugged and kissed [him]”<sup>12</sup> The prince received such an intimate welcome mainly due to his premature age. Being only a child, his evident vulnerability and need for protection immediately received Ottoman recognition.

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<sup>12</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 48a.

The initial means through which favors and honors were showered on the little prince were the banquets given for him. The Ottoman commander Ferhad Pasha had already ordered the meal to be set up by the side of his own tent where approximately half the embassy was served food. This first one of the two formal banquets for the Safavids in Erzurum is specifically stated in Ottoman manuscripts to have been given by the sultan himself (*cenāb-ı pādişāhīden*).<sup>13</sup> Seyyid Lokman's *Şehnāme-i Āl-i ʿOsman* (*Book of Kings of the House of Osman*), a dynastic history in rhyming verse completed shortly after the prince's transfer to the Ottoman court, has a lengthy section about Haydar's journey and his reception in Istanbul. It is in this manuscript that these banquets are elaborated in lively detail.<sup>14</sup> Lokman explains that there was so much food that the Safavids were "drowned in favors" (*nazl ü tedārik görilüb serbeser/ niʿmete ğarķ olmuş*

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<sup>13</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 48a and 48b.

<sup>14</sup> British Library (Hereafter BL) Add 7931. The manuscript is dated 999 (1590/1591) on 178b. The text of this manuscript is complete but most of the marginal decorations and paintings in it are unfinished. It only includes portraits of sultans Osman, Orhan, and Mehmed I. We learn the theme of the intended paintings through couplets written on top of ruled, blank pages. See Charles Rieu, *Catalogue of the Turkish Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: British Museum, 1888), 16-7; Zeren Tanındı, "Transformation of Words to Images: Portraits of Ottoman Courtiers in the "Dîwâns" of Bâkî and Nâdirî," *Res* 43 (2003), 134-36. The banquets are described between folios 118a and 122b. For Seyyid Lokman's career and his authorship of this manuscript see Fetvacı, "Ottoman Court Historian," 18.

*idi surhser*).<sup>15</sup> This meal from the sultan was spread over sixty tables and countless items of food were brought in bejeweled serving plates (*sahn-ı murassa*).<sup>16</sup>

This scene is illustrated in a painting in the *Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja*.<sup>17</sup> (Figure 3.3) The painting shows the table around which sat the prince, the Ottoman commander Ferhad Pasha, the envoy, and his immediate retinue. Inside the top margin is a rounding inverted square motif wherein is inscribed the description of the scene: “Eighteenth painting (*meclis*): This is the place where Prince Haydar was feasted on account of the padshah in Erzurum.” We see the long large table, placed at the center of the composition, from an overhead view. But the dishes and the courtiers are depicted in frontal view as if they were paper figures folded out in a pop-up book. This manner of representation, favoring visibility for the viewer, allows us to see each person sitting with their legs crossed, their individual spoon and piece of bread placed in front of them on the table, and their bodily gestures as they interact with one another. A long piece of sheer fabric goes around the table, covering everyone’s lap to collect food crumbs. The high mountains of the area also figure in the painting, towering behind the prominent end of the table, in the top center, where the prince, commander, and the envoy sit. Curious commoners poke their heads from behind the hills in the scene, showing us the level of curiosity the prince’s arrival evoked. It also hints to the semi-secluded and semi-private

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<sup>15</sup> BL Add 7931, 118a. The word *ni‘met* is translated also as blessing, beneficence, kindness, bountiful gift, delight, comfort, pleasure, riches, wealth and prosperity. But it might well be understood simply as food, basic food or bread. If it is to be taken as “food,” then it is the kind of food that someone, in this case the sultan, gives. Therefore, considering the multiple meanings the word might denote, it should not be understood as detached from the act of being given as a favor. Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 1412; Sir James Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1987 [1890]), 2090.

<sup>16</sup> BL Add 7931, 118b.

<sup>17</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 48b.

nature of the feast, which allowed outsiders to catch a glimpse of the Safavid prince and how he was received.

The prince's pre-maturity is once again underscored by his small size in the painting. Otherwise, he is much venerated through his place at the table and his elegant outfit. His turban is decorated with a black bird feather much like the others in the scene. Additionally, his has a white one, which is matched only by the envoy Mahdiquli Khan's turban, similar in shape but in different colors. The prince and the envoy sit at the head of the table, on either side of the commander Ferhad Pasha. Ferhad Pasha surely has a commanding presence, especially with his larger turban, which is much enhanced by his contrast with the little prince sitting by his side. Across the table sit three Safavids. But this vertical symmetry is not mirrored on the right and left sides of the table. An Ottoman archival document listing robes of honor (*cāme*) given to the envoy's retinue mentions the names of fourteen Safavid dignitaries, which perfectly matches the number of people around the table.<sup>18</sup>

In contrast to such quantitative accuracy, the food is described in rather qualitative terms, placing much emphasis on its superfluity. Such assertions as “instead of water, honey-water splashed,” and “as if that ground was all sugar,” or qualifying expressions such as “without compare” abound, for example, in Lokman's text.<sup>19</sup> One particular word that is frequently used to refer to the food served at the feast is *nefīs* (pl. *nefāīs*). Lokman wrote: “in sixty tables more than agreeable to taste / in total were

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<sup>18</sup> This document is found in a treasury register at the Başbakanlık Arşivi (hereafter BA) in Istanbul, KK. 1773, 231. A transcription of the document can be found in full in Appendix 2.

<sup>19</sup> *altmış sofrada gayri bekām / cümle yüzer dürlü nefāīs-i tamām, su yerine çağlar idī şehd-āb / berre<sup>2</sup>-i biryān olunūr mī hesāb* BL Add 7931, 118b, 119b.

hundreds of excellent delicacies (*nefāīs*).” In Rahimizade’s text, the lines immediately above the painting within the picture ruling read: “above all, plentiful delicacies (*nefāīs*) were summoned and brought especially before the prince.” This word is alternately translated as “precious, delicate, exquisite, a wished-for object, great riches, good, excellent, precious, rare, or something that is a source of pride.” The consistent use of this word to refer to the food underscores the rarity of what was served in general terms. There is only occasional reference to what exactly was offered. Lokman explains that at the table were two types of bread: bagels (*nān-ı simit*) and sweet pizza (*yağlu bīde-i şekerī*). Besides these, meats and sweets dominated the menu, which included refreshing sweet drinks, rose jam, and meats of various birds and fish.

The sultan’s feast was followed by a presentation of “various types of precious robes of honor” (*hil<sup>c</sup>āt-ı müte<sup>c</sup>addid-i fāḥir*) for the Safavid embassy.<sup>20</sup> But in addition to these, they received other objects from the sultan, among which were lavishly decorated horses, swords, daggers, belts, and fabrics woven with silver and gold threads:

then robe(s) of honor with noble favors / bestowed on people of all ranks  
 bejeweled horse with decorated steed / its coquettish airs humble as a peacock  
 its blanket was gold-woven, luminous / sword, belt, and dagger set with pearls  
 loads of silver and gold without bounds / various fabrics, ornamented cloths  
 a string of loaded camels / a red heartcheering tent  
 favors and benevolence from the king of kings / generosity and munificence  
 from the heart’s desire<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 48b. According to Dal Mehmed

<sup>21</sup> *hil<sup>c</sup>atle şoñradan in<sup>c</sup>ām-ı ḥāş / eyledī mebzūl<sup>c</sup> avām u ḥavāşş, raḥt-ı muraşşala müzeyyen semend / cilvesī ṭāvūs gibī müstmend, yāpūgī hep şırma idī tābdār / tīg ü kemer*



The words in this last couplet used to refer to “generosity” and “favours” are *lutf* and *‘aṭā*, and *bezl* and *saḥā*, which are used in pairs. In addition to “generosity,” *lutf* also means “kindness, goodness, favor, gentleness and benevolence.” *‘Aṭā* is defined as “munificence and giving,” but could also denote a more actualized form of munificence, being “gift, favor, present, or a thing given.” *Bezl* is very close to the latter in meaning, being defined as “munificence, giving liberally, spending,” but also “a gift, present, expense.” Finally, the use of the word *saḥā* complements these three by repeating the principle of the sultans’ “liberality, generosity, beneficence.”<sup>22</sup>

Much like the food served at the feast, objects presented following the meal are described in a manner that brings forward the endless quantities in which they were provided, which was then directly tied to the sultan’s unending beneficence. In fact, to underscore this point, the greatness of the sultan’s generosity and favours are said to fill the whole world: “the universe, drowned in favours / the face of the earth was full of sugar and sweetmeats.”<sup>23</sup> While this couplet immediately follows the description of the feast, the couplet following the discussion of the sultanic gifts are as follows: “sprinkling always unparalleled favours / the people of God were thankful.”<sup>24</sup> The word used to indicate “favor” in both contexts is the same: *ni‘met* (pl. *ni‘m*). The multiple connotations that this word embodies helps demonstrate the extent to which ephemeral and material offerings were similarly tied in principle to the sultan’s generosity. While it might well be

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*hançer gevher nigār, yükler ile sīm ü zer bī hesab / aḳmişe-i elvān ü müzehheb siyāb, yüklü kaṭārīle mihār-ı füzūn / çetr-ı dilfürüz lālegūn, lutf ü ‘aṭā itdī şehinşāhdan / bezl ü saḥā şīme’-i dilhāhdan* BL Add 7931, 119a.

<sup>22</sup> Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 166, 660, 853, 1123; Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon*, 349, 1044, 1305, 1632.

<sup>23</sup> *ni‘mete müstağriḳ olub kāyināt / yeryüzī memlū idṭākd u nebā* † BL Add 7931, 118b.

<sup>24</sup> *ni‘met-i biçūnī ekiüp dāimā / şākir idī zümre’-i ehl-i hüdü* BL Add 7931, 119b.

understood simply as food, basic food or bread, it is also translated as “blessing, beneficence, kindness, bountiful gift, delight, comfort, pleasure, riches, wealth and prosperity.”<sup>25</sup> In all cases, it is to be understood as something given from a more powerful, more generous party to a lesser being in need. In the Qur’an, the recurrence of this term in a variety of forms “reinforces the key Islamic idea that all blessings are from God and that he is the only one that bestows them, on whomsoever he wills.”<sup>26</sup> A close parallel is drawn here, then, between the favors from the sultan and favors from God.

The parallel treatment of ephemeral favors consumed at the spot and tangible ones that the Safavids could continue to use through their journey and beyond is also evident in Ottoman narratives of how the Safavids perceived and consumed them. As mentioned in the last couplet (“sprinkling always unparalleled favors / the people of God were thankful”), the expression of Safavid feelings of gratitude, as well as happiness and awe, in reaction to the sultan’s favorable treatment (*ta’zīm*) and favors, is a trope that appears again and again in Ottoman accounts of the embassy’s reception. The Safavid amazement is particularly brought to the fore, for example, at the sight of everything that was offered to them: “this feast of great care / left in awe the high and low [people].” The couplet immediately following this last one is particularly important and hard to miss, for it is inscribed at the top of a double-spread left blank for paintings: “the son of shah, seeing glory and power / became much cheerful with the vizier”<sup>27</sup> At the end of the feast given by Ferhad Pasha soon after that of the sultan, it is said that the food was eaten with

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<sup>25</sup> Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 1412; Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon*, 2090.

<sup>26</sup> Rafik Berjak “Ni‘ma,” *The Qur’an: An Encyclopedia*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 457.

<sup>27</sup> *işbū ziyāfetden ‘azīm ihtimām / olmağla kâldī ‘aceb hāş u ‘ām, gördī şah oğlī şeref ü ‘izzetī / oldī ziyād āşafīle behcetī* BL Add 7931, 120a-121a.

feelings of gratitude and appreciation, followed by prayers.<sup>28</sup> Since these favors were in essence to be understood to have been given by God, the sultan, having provided them in this instance, gains added prestige.

The feast given by Ferhad Pasha communicated, through its extent, his position in the strict hierarchy of the Ottoman political establishment, while concurrently edifying that of the sultan. His feast was served in gold and silver dishes and spread over 40 tables<sup>29</sup> (that of the sultan had 60). Rahimizade explains the purpose of this feast as follows: “and on the third day of the mentioned month, which was a day of the Ramadan Holiday, the commander of good judgement, with all of his might and what is in his power, summoned forty tables of food on his own account for the protection and honor of the ruler of the world.”<sup>30</sup>

The sweet refreshing drinks (*şerbet*) came in cups inscribed in gold (*zerhülle yazılı şehkâse hep*). The modesty, ornaments and accessories of the servers (*çaşnigîr* lit. taster) are described as an extension of the food’s presentation on the tables in an exaggerated manner: “hundreds of servers with polite manners / with silver belt(s) and excellent ornaments.”<sup>31</sup>

At the same time as the commander’s feast is distinguished from the sultan’s by its lesser scope, in terms of actual content, it mimicked the latter closely. Sweets dominated the meal similar to the feast a few days before. More importantly, the

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<sup>28</sup> BL Add 7931, 122a.

<sup>29</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 49a.

<sup>30</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 49a.

<sup>31</sup> *birnîce yüz çaşnigîr üslûbile / sîm kemer zînet-i mergûbile, eyledîler cümlesî hîdmet ü edâ / bezme-i füzûn oldî nişât u şefâ* BL Add 7931, 122a.

excessive amounts of food and unmatched favors are given much emphasis in Lokman's text:

the delicacies were in this way spilled on the ground /  
it was enough for the present and the absent  
sweets stacked (like domes) everywhere /  
fruits would not be revered by lay people,  
the delicacies were actually heart-cheering /  
tray(s) of sweet would excite plunder<sup>32</sup>

Since the end of this feast coincided with prayer time, everyone performed their prayers in unison, following the imam's lead. After communal prayers, proper treatment of the guests continued with the serving of fruits and sweet drinks (*hoşāb*).<sup>33</sup> During this last serving, the guests were entertained with music, which, of course, pleased everyone.

Finally, Ferhad Pasha presented his own gifts to the embassy just like the sultan. The *Şehnāme-i Āl-i ʿOsman* gives a detailed account of these gifts, which are referred to as *pişkeş*, a word used in both Turkish and Persian to denote a gift from an inferior to a superior. The commander gave specifically to Prince Haydar 50 small bags (*kīse*) filled with gold and silver, five horses, many slaves, a bejeweled sword and a bejeweled belt, a dagger encrusted with bright niluferi diamonds, and hundreds of bundles (*boğçe*) filled with sumptuous fabrics (*fāhir libās*). The only items described in greater detail are the

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<sup>32</sup> *şöyle dökülmişdi nefāis yere / kāfi idī gāibe ü hāzıra*  
*kubbelenüb heryañā mısr-ı nebāt / miyveye halk itmez idī iltifāt*  
*nāz u niʿm gerçi dilārā idī / hān-ı şeker bāʿiṣ-i yağmā idī* BL Add 7931, 122a.

<sup>33</sup> The drinks were scented with anbergis and contained honey and rosewater. BL Add 7931, 122a.

horses, the first one of which is said to have had a blanket fully embroidered with gold (*yapuđı zerduđte bařdan bařa*), which would evoke wonder in whoever would see it. The other horses had horsecloths with dotted decorations (*dört bař at dahi benek ulla*). *Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja* points out that these gifts closely emulated those given by the sultan himself, and that they were presented in keeping with the appropriate manner of serving a feast, all of which delighted the Safavids.<sup>34</sup>

Just as the amounts and qualities of Ottoman gifts were strictly dictated by the presenter’s rank, the receiver’s rank correspondingly determined the quality of gifts that they would collect. To be sure, in this case, it was the Safavid prince that received the most precious gifts. Following him were the most prominent members of the Safavid embassy (*hānlara ve sultānlara*), who were given gold and silver, in addition to robes of honor. Safavid keepers of the armory (*zümre’-i kuruçilere*) were also highly ranked as to receive robes of honor. In addition to these eminent members of the embassy, there were others, referred to simply as “the rest” (*ğayrılere*), who were distributed “400 pieces of fabrics” (*aķmiře dörtüüz kıta*)<sup>35</sup>

All of these gifts were meant to display the extent of the might and generosity of the sultan, which was buttressed and enhanced further by those presented to the Safavids by the commander Ferhad Pasha, which were smaller in scale but very similar in content. Such extravagant and competitive exchanges in Erzurum would prefigure those to come in Istanbul, but at a much larger scale and involving a more diverse range of participants.

Meanwhile in Istanbul, extensive preparations were being made for the prince’s stay there. The grand vizier Sinan Pasha appointed Selaniki Mustafa Efendi as

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<sup>34</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 49a.

<sup>35</sup> BL Add 7931, 122b.

*mihmandar*, whose duties included overseeing repairs and redecoration of the Pertev Pasha Palace for the prince and his entourage. The palace had eleven rooms, including a council hall (*dīvānhāne*). Two rooms were prepared for the prince and two for the envoy. The rooms for the envoy were sumptuously decorated (*iki oda fāhir esbāb ile döşeniüp*), but those for the prince received best quality decorations (*hassü'l-has iki mükellef oda*). Besides these, one room was specifically assigned to the prince's wetnurse (*dāye*), one to the doctor (*tabīb*), and two to the other high-ranking officials (*sultanlara*).<sup>36</sup>

Extraordinary measures were also being taken to organize public and private welcoming ceremonies for the prince. The whole army was mobilized for the embassy's entry into the city. Rahimizade describes this scene as follows:

After that, on the twelfth day of the month, which was a Thursday, when it was certain that Prince Haydar would come, Hasan Pasha, son of the late Mehmed Pasha, and the previous governor of Damascus,<sup>37</sup> met him near the garden of Fener (*Fener bağçesi*) on the Anatolian side (*Üsküdar tarafında*) together with the aghas of the stirrup and the commanders of the standing cavalry, head of the imperial messengers and head of the corps of armorers and their own men, all of them dressed in full ceremonial and combat gear. Janissaries and cavalry corps were waiting at the dock, displaying the pomp and power of the king of the world and the splendor of this brave group was viewed. It was such that not even those who saw Noah, nor those who studied the stories of Dara and Jamshid could not have heard of such an account. The crowd of the people was at such a level that it seemed like the day of judgement.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 217-8.

<sup>37</sup> Hasan Pasha was the son of the late Sokollu Mehmed Pasha, who was a grandvizier during the reigns of Sultan Süleyman and Selim II. Lokman notes that after coming to Istanbul, Hasan Pasha was appointed to the post of governor-general of Anatolia BL, Add 7931, 126b; Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 218.

<sup>38</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 51a-51b.

The extraordinary importance and care that the Ottoman state laid on the reception and hosting of the prince is similarly emphasized in other sources. Lokman notes that the Ottoman soldiers formed ranks from Üsküdar to Maltepe, which is quite a lengthy distance of about 20 kilometers. This might be an overstatement, but evidently there was enough movement in the city and its outskirts that other eye-witness accounts similarly speak of the magnitude of the crowds consisting of men and women, who traveled far and wide with the hope of seeing the little prince.

This prevented, according to Selaniki, Haydar Mirza and his entourage from moving forward in a timely manner to reach the historical peninsula: “the abundance of the people was so unbounded that the feast of the sultan had to be delayed until the evening (*kesret u izdihām nihāyetde olmağla ziyāfet ve ni<sup>c</sup>met-i simāt-ı pādišāhī ahşama kalup.*)” During the feast, Selaniki notes that not only countless amounts of food and drinks were served, but the prince was also given loads of hard cash (*yük yük akçalar harçlık virildi*).<sup>39</sup>

Although most sources present the prince’s journey as a seamless progression of perfectly orchestrated events, the Venetian *bailo* Giovanni Moro’s report to the Senate mentions an incident of military misconduct, which, if accurate, must have dismayed the Ottomans much more than the Safavids. He wrote:

...there were more than one thousand men on horseback and about 5000 on foot, all of them lavishly dressed. Of these there were not more than two hundred cavalymen (*spahi*), who were not allowed to cross over to Üsküdar

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<sup>39</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 218. Other sources do not make note of a feast given for the embassy in Üsküdar. Rahimizade also notes that because of the largeness of the crowds, the prince was not able to reach his destination (*menzil-i mu<sup>c</sup>ayyenesine*) by supper time, when an extravagant meal was served (*ve ol zamanda simāṭ çekilüp envā<sup>c</sup>-ı ṭa<sup>c</sup>ām ve elvān-ı ḥulviyyat bir mertebede bezl olındı ki takrir*)

(*Scutaretto*), even though before it was ordered that 3000 should go there. This change of plans was caused, it was rumored, that their king was required to give them a certain donative gift (*donativo*) that they demanded along with a raise in their regular pay. They would not let the Persian cross from Üsküdar to Constantinople unless they were given satisfaction by the sultan. And, not to show how much this revolt outraged the sultan, he changed his target and got a petition (*arz*) from the judge (*cadi*) of Üsküdar, which explained that fewer cavalymen had passed according to the released order and they had done much damage in that town, and it instructed that they go forward in the quantity originally ordered. They nearly destroyed it. The jurist (*Mufti*) issued a judicial ruling (*fetfi*), which is a decree given by the supreme leader of the religion of the Turks with which he made the Gran Signor know that their law does not support honoring the schismatic Persians so greatly and that he should grant fewer [soldiers] to accompany them in Constantinople, but the cavalymen, who were well-informed about all of this, showed resentment, reasoning that they would wait for an opportunity, which would make them seem like they deserve such an increase in their pay. Other previous emperors had made it a habit of giving this donative gift whenever they returned victoriously to Constantinople. Whereas these had deserved to get much more payments as such, their Signor enjoys to rest and stay in his palace, putting their lives in danger. They conquered many places in his name, such that previous impressions do not even compare to these.<sup>40</sup>

Although other sources make no mention of a military discontent that delayed the prince's timely movement,<sup>41</sup> there is implicit mention of such a delay, as noted earlier.

The Ottoman historian Selaniki states in more than one occasion that the embassy

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<sup>40</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 333b.

<sup>41</sup> In a letter (*telhis*) to the sultan, the grand vizier Sinan Pasha explains that he had heard that "some merciless [people]" (*ba<sup>c</sup>z-ı bī-insāflar*) provoked soldiers to take advantage of the prince's arrival in order to get a salary increase (*terakki*) by holding the prince in Üsküdar. After questioning their commanders, however, Sinan Pasha learned that they had not even heard of such a plan. Halil Sahillioğlu, ed., *Koca Sinan Paşa'nın Telhisleri* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 2004), 166.



proceeded with difficulty, which he says was because of the overwhelming number of curious people and soldiers that filled the streets of the city and its outskirts. The *bailo*'s report is also plausible because at this time, Ottoman soldiers were frequently angered by current political and economic developments, which they sometimes expressed in open rebellion. One such incident of aggression over economic instability took place right inside the imperial palace several months before the arrival of the prince. According to Selaniki, cavalrymen returning from the Ganja Campaign found that the money they received as stipend had become much less in value. The furious soldiers even attacked their own superiors (*ağalarına dahi kötek çalup*). Attributing the cause of the devaluation to the wars with the Safavids, they insisted on punishing vizier Mehmed Pasha, who was named responsible for the minting of silver. In the end, the soldiers were powerful enough to take Mehmed Pasha and execute him on the spot.<sup>42</sup>

In Üsküdar, the head of the Ottoman fleet was present waiting with the soldiers under his command. Besides his own galley, there were fourteen other large ships waiting to accompany the embassy on their way to Istanbul. Giovanni Moro's report records that these ships were not already existing ones, but were specially constructed for welcoming Ferhad Pasha and the Persian prince into Istanbul.<sup>43</sup> When the embassy embarked on the ships, the commander of the Ottoman fleet served "a meal without compare" according to Lokman.<sup>44</sup> It was probably during this meal that cannons were fired from the ships, which must have left everyone in Istanbul awestruck. But for the Safavids, who were inside the ships, this must have been more frightening than delightful. This is precisely how

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<sup>42</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 209-11.

<sup>43</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 334b.

<sup>44</sup> BL Add 7931, 128b.

Stephan Gerlach, a member of the Austrian embassy, related the Safavid envoy Toqmaq Sultan's experience in 1576: "In the ship was set a table covered with a gold-embroidered tablecloth, on which were various dishes. Uluç Ali [commander of the fleet] had told his men to fire all of the cannons as soon as the envoy took his first bite. According to tradition, once the cannons were fired, the Persians were so scared that they collapsed on each other." Gerlach also noted how much the sight of this terror rejoiced Uluç Ali, who mischievously told them not to be upset.<sup>45</sup> The *bailo*'s report also notes that the arrival of the Persians was celebrated "with the firing of artillery not only from the galleys but also from the palace of the Grand Signor."<sup>46</sup>

### **Haydar Mirza enters Istanbul**

The prince's entry into Istanbul has inspired multiple authors and painters to record their impressions in lively accounts. Selaniki recorded that when the embassy set sail from Üsküdar, "Istanbul's women, nobles and commoners, young and old, filled up all the shops and markets to observe [the embassy]."<sup>47</sup> Lokman, in his *Şehnâme-i Âl-i 'Osman* wrote:

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<sup>45</sup> Gerlach, *Türkiye Günlüğü*, I: 335.

<sup>46</sup> *lo aspettavano à Scutaretto honorandolo con molti tiri d'artiglieria sbarati non solo dalle galee ma anco dal seraglio del Gran Sg'* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 333a. Other sources from this period, however, note only Tophane –named after the Imperial Cannon Foundry there- as the district from which cannons would be fired during public celebrations. See Salim Ayduz, *Tophane-i Amire ve Osmanlı Devletinde Top Döküm Faaliyetleri* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2006), 470-4.

<sup>47</sup> The prince arrived late in the day, which made people's trip back home difficult or impossible. This posed a problem particularly for women. Those who had acquaintances living nearby stayed with them. Others stayed out on the street or inside a bathhouse until the next day, which caused many women to be divorced by their husbands who questioned their loyalty the previous night. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 218-9; BL Add 7931, 129b. In a letter to the sultan, the grand vizier Sinan Pasha accepts that women could not

The fortunate ones came to the dock/  
The son of the Shah disembarked from the ship and mounted a horse  
The Redheads embraced the prince /  
Artists drew his likeness  
His glorious procession was led by Hasan Pasha/  
And various aghas and high-ranking officials following behind<sup>48</sup>

This description of the prince entering the city was also meant to have been pictured in the same book. In this incomplete double-page composition, in place are only the rulings and a couplet inscribed right below the upper end of the frames on either page.<sup>49</sup>

Though not in this book, the prince's procession was indeed painted by painters as Lokman recorded, for several images of the procession are extant, two of which depict the prince himself. (Figure 3.4) One of these belongs in a group of paintings in an album commissioned for Rudolf II probably by his ambassador to the Ottoman court, Bartolomeo di Pezzana.<sup>50</sup> In this painting the prince is mounted on a black horse with

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get back home due to the prince's delayed arrival, but disputes the accusations that their safety could not be provided by Ottoman soldiers. Sahillioğlu, ed., *Koca Sinan*, 134-5.

<sup>48</sup> *iskeleye karşı çıkūb kamyāb / çıkdī şah oğlī gemiden bindī āt  
mirzāya şarıldī kızılbaşlar / resmini naqş eyledī naqkaşlar  
düşdī hasan paşa öñe şanla / sāyir ağalar dahī erkānla* BL Add 7931, 128b.

<sup>49</sup> BL Add 7931, 130b-131a.

<sup>50</sup> Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626 (hereafter Cod. 8626), 123r-128r. The painter(s) of the album are unidentified. It must have been completed sometime in or after 1590 since it includes paintings of the Safavid embassy that arrived in Istanbul in 1590. The painting of the prince in this album is mentioned in Zeren Tanındı, "Transformation of Words," 134 n25; Franz Babinger, "Drei Stadtansichten von Kostantinopel, Galata ("Pera") und Skutari aus dem ende des 16. Jahrhunderts," *Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Denkschriften* 77, Band 3 (1959). For the album, see Alberto Arbasino, *I Turchi: Codex Vindobonensis 8626* (Parma: F.M. Ricci, 1971); F. Unterkircher, "The Imperial Codex" *Franco Maria Ricci* 5 (1984): 112-4. Unterkircher dates the album between 1590

gold trappings, led in front and on either side by three Safavid men. Compared to those men, he is more lavishly dressed. Most noticeably, a gold, profusely jeweled band goes around his turban, which is topped by a single fan-shaped black bird feather and an extension that is also jeweled all around. The inscription on the lower part of the page credits the grand vizier for the prince's transfer: "The King of Persia's son, who by the wily plans of Sinan Pasha was sent to Constantinople in 1590."<sup>51</sup>

The second one is a painting from a dispersed *dīvān* (collection of poetry) of the renowned Ottoman poet Bākī currently at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) in New York (Figure 3.5).<sup>52</sup> This single folio depicting the prince's ceremonial entry into the city has recently been identified as such by Zeren Tanındı.<sup>53</sup> It was previously thought to be a procession of an Ottoman sultan, or Murad III, leading his army into a city.<sup>54</sup> An accurate reading of the couplets inscribed above and below the painting in tandem with a close examination of the painting itself led to this new attribution. Based on stylistic analysis, Tanındı further argued that it was most likely produced in the Ottoman province of Baghdad at the end of the sixteenth or beginning of the seventeenth centuries. This argument found further support through the original manuscript's likely ties to Hasan

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and 1593, the dates of the Persian prince's entry into the Ottoman capital and the beginning of the Ottoman-Habsburg war.

<sup>51</sup> *Des kinigs [Koenigs] aus Persia son [Sohn] so 1590 auff Constandinopll durch list unnd prattica des Sinam Wascha ist geschickt worden* Cod. 8626, 128.

<sup>52</sup> Metropolitan Museum of Art, 45.174.5. This single page is thought to belong in one of the four known illustrated copies of Bākī's *dīvān*. For a discussion of the three intact copies and the dispersed one, see Rachel Milstein, *Miniature Painting in Ottoman Baghdad* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1990), 99.

<sup>53</sup> Tanındı, "Transformation of Words," 133-4, Norah M. Titley, *Persian Miniature Painting and Its Influence on the Art of Turkey and India* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1984), 121.

<sup>54</sup> Ernst J. Grube et al., "The Ottoman Empire" *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 26, no. 5 (1968), 215; Milstein, *Miniature Painting*, 99.

Pasha, who was responsible for accompanying the prince into Istanbul as noted above. Between 1598 and 1602 he served as the governor of Baghdad and is known to be an active patron of the arts. Moreover, he probably knew the poet Bākī personally. Therefore, as Tanındı argues, it is entirely possible that this dispersed manuscript was originally prepared for him.<sup>55</sup>

In this painting, it is an Ottoman figure on horseback that is at the heart of the composition rather than the Safavid prince. This central figure is distinguished through his large and tall white turban, which contrasts with the background, and the space separating him from soldiers at his front and back. This figure, as Zanındı suggested, is most probably Hasan Pasha. He is led in front by Ottoman soldiers on foot carrying firearms that appear to be muskets, and followed behind by mounted soldiers, who are also in their military gear; most of them are wearing helmets and carrying shields. This procession is aligned with the city walls and is moving towards the citygate, through which the head of the procession have already passed. Above the gateway, we see many musicians blowing their horns to announce the entry of Haydar Mirza into Istanbul. Beyond the citywalls and around the gate curious residents of the city, men and women, had gathered to see the prince. The prince himself is seen in the foreground, separated from the city walls by a small hill. In fact, the whole Safavid procession is sandwiched between two lines of the Ottoman procession- the first above, moving along the walls, and the second bordering the lower frame of the composition.

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<sup>55</sup> Tanındı, "Transformation of Words," 136.

The Safavids are distinguished from the Ottomans most noticeably by their turbans, which are wrapped around a tall red extension (*tāj* or *tāj-i Haydarī*).<sup>56</sup> Those of the prince and his two attendants are decorated additionally with tall, thick, and rounding white bird feathers, which contrast effectively with the tall round turbans of the two Ottoman officials in the scene which are adorned with black, fan-shaped feathers. Gülru Necipoğlu has shown that a new Ottoman visual vocabulary was formulated during Sultan Süleyman's reign, which favored large floral motifs in contrasting colors, multiplied infinitely. This new aesthetic not only redefined the previously popular intricate motifs in subtle colors, but it also strictly eliminated human imagery, which was so widely used in Safavid artistic production. Necipoğlu further argued, by underscoring the frequency with which foreign observers noted the divergent attitudes of Safavids and Ottomans towards the use of human forms, that "the aniconicism of the official Ottoman decorative arts might indeed have been a consequence of the orthodox religious climate which took shape in response to constant conflicts with the Habsburgs and Safavids."<sup>57</sup> It is possible to expand this formulation of imperial identity by way of an emphasis on visual difference to include the noticeably contrasting shapes of Ottoman and Safavid turbans here.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The distinctive Safavid headgear consists of a tall red baton, wrapped around a white turban. Sources emphasize the turban's reference to Twelver Shi'ism, some stating that the turban was folded twelve times around the red baton, and others saying that the baton itself was divided into twelve sections. For visual representations of the Safavid headgear throughout the sixteenth century, and its transformation during the reign of Shah Abbas, see Barbara Schmitz, "On a Special Hat Introduced During the Reign of Shah 'Abbās the Great" *Iran* 22 (1984): 103-12.

<sup>57</sup> Necipoğlu, "Kanun for the State," 214.

<sup>58</sup> In fact, elsewhere Necipoğlu mentions that the round white Ottoman turban with many folds (*mücevveze*) was invented during the time of Sultan Süleyman to distinguish high-ranking members of the state from the regular folk, Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 34.

Mirroring the Ottoman organization, the prince is headed in front by members of the embassy on foot and followed by those on horses. This way, he is also vertically aligned with Hasan Pasha in the composition. By contrast with the pasha, however, the prince does not lead the horse on his own, for the horse's reins are held in front by an attendant. Moreover, the prince is flanked by two Safavid dignitaries with grey beards. They look forward but with their hands they make sure that Haydar sits properly on the horse. These two figures are thought to be two of the four most honored members of the embassy: the prince's guardian (*lala* or *atabeg*) Shahimquli Khalifa (or Şahim Kuli Halife), and Aliqoli Khan (°Ali Halife Sultan, or °Ali Kuli Sultan).<sup>59</sup>

This image of the dependent prince enhances the idea that he was forced to come as a manifestation of the reach of the sultan's power. When the painting is read together with the poem that it is inspired from, it becomes more clear that the prince himself objectifies the Ottoman conviction that theirs is the superior ruler to all others. The prince's arrival attests to the sultan's ability to receive those other rulers and commanders who come to pay homage to him. Furthermore, a direct link is here formed between the Ottoman sultan's image as a ruler able to transmit countless favors to the entire world and the prince's arrival.

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Prior to the Ottoman-Safavid wars immediately before the peace treaty of 1590, it was during Sultan Süleyman's time that the Ottomans and the Safavids more intensely confronted one another on the battlefield.

<sup>59</sup> Tanındı, "Transformation of Words," 136. These names are recorded therein as Şah Kulu Halife and Ali Ağa. The second person could also be the envoy's namesake who came second in rank to the envoy. He is honored as such when the prince is received by the sultan at the court, and based on the document recording the gifts distributed to the highest ranking members of the embassy.

**“With splendid words of pearls and jewels, poets of the world told poems and stories”<sup>60</sup>**

At the end of his account on the prince’s arrival, the historian Selaniki mentions this way how this event prompted numerous poets. Indeed, there are two such poems (*kaşide*)<sup>61</sup> written in praise of Sultan Murad III that draw direct connections between the might of the sultan and the subjugation of all rulers of the world to him. More precisely, the prince’s transfer embodies the Safavid shah’s subjugation within this scheme.

The first poem is found in the *dīvān* of the renowned Ottoman historian Gelibolulu Mustafa Āli and is titled “Panegyric poem in praise of the esteemed prince for the coming of the son of the shah of Iran” (*kaşide der-medh-i şehzāde-i muhterem berāy-i āmeden-i püser-i şāh-ı ʿacem*).<sup>62</sup> The second poem is the same one that inspired the painting of the prince’s procession at the MET. In most copies of Bākī’s *dīvān*, it is titled: “In praise of Sultan Murad Khan” (*der sitāyiş-i Sulṭan Murad Ḥan*).<sup>63</sup> There are other copies, however, in which the change in the title reveals how the section about the prince’s arrival had a powerful impact on the poem’s reception. This alternative title is: “In praise of Sultan Murad Khan, on whom be God’s mercy and pardon, by way of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ve halk-ı ālem şuaʿrāsı, fusahā-i devrān aʿlā dürer-i gurer-i cevāhir-nazm ile kaşideler ve tārīhler didiler Selaniki, Tarih, I: 219.*

<sup>61</sup> *Kaşide* is a poetic form written most often to eulogize a person of high rank and power. See Walter G. Andrews, “Speaking of Power: The ‘Ottoman Kaside,’” in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa: Classical Traditions and Modern Meanings*, eds. Stefan Sperl and Christopher Schakle (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 281-300. The established formats and creative strategies of its construction are discussed in E.J.W. Gibb, *A History of Ottoman Poetry*, 6 vols. (London: Luzac and Company, 1958 [1900]), I: 83-7.

<sup>62</sup> Gelibolulu Mustafa Āli, *Divan: Textual Analysis and Critical Edition*, ed., I. Hakkı Aksoyak, 3 vols. (Harvard University: The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, 2006), I: 230-231.

<sup>63</sup> For example, *Dīvān-ı Bākī*, (Istanbul: Muzika-i Hümayun-ı Hazret-i Mülukane Litografya Destgahı, 1276/1859-1860), 23.



congratulations for the arrival of the son<sup>64</sup> of the Shah of Iran” (*Der medh-i Sulṭān Murād Ḥān ‘aleyhi’r-rahmetü ve’l-ġufrān berāy-ı tehniye-i kudüm-ı ciger-gūşe-i Şāh-ı ‘Ācem.*)<sup>65</sup>

This poem’s impact within Ottoman scholarly circles is also attested by a citation to it.

The seventeenth-century Ottoman historian Peçevi recollected Bākī’s poem in reference to the prince by citing those lines inscribed on top of the painting in his history:<sup>66</sup> “Let the Persians be happy, let their eyes be illumined<sup>67</sup> / Prince Haydar, light of the eyes of the Persian king, comes.”<sup>68</sup> Since the preceding page is not extant, the title given to the poem in the original manuscript is unknown. However, we know that the lines about the prince are found towards the middle of the poem, followed by five couplets that are omitted in this particular copy. This is why the two lines inscribed at the bottom of the painting seem to bear no relation to those at the top. They read: “On the surface of the silver morning endures the golden globe (i.e. the sun) / Until the curl of the hooked stick of the sky bewilders one.”

In order to place these couplets within the context of the entire poem, and to better explicate my arguments about the reception of the Safavid prince, it is worth giving the second part of the poem<sup>69</sup> in its entirety:

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<sup>64</sup> The word translated as “son” here, *ciger-gūşe*, literally means “a corner of the liver” or “a part of the liver” and is used in the genitive case in Persian, in affectionate reference to a child or loved one. See the entry *jigar-gūsha* in Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 336; *Loghatnāma-yi Dehkhuda*.

<sup>65</sup> Bākī, *Bākī Dīvānu*, ed. Sabahattin Küçük (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu, 1994), 15.

<sup>66</sup> Peçevî (Peçuyî), İbrahim Efendi, *Tārih-i Peçevî*, 2 vols. (Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi, 1980 [fac. of the 1281-83/ 1864-67 ed.]), II:121.

<sup>67</sup> This is an expression in Turkish used to congratulate someone or to express good wishes for someone whose family member or friend came back after a long time of separation, or who received good news for something s/he had been in anticipation of.

<sup>68</sup> Tanındı, “Transformation of Words,” 136. I have changed her translation slightly.

<sup>69</sup> The first part of the poem follows the format of a *gazel*, and is therefore addressed to a beloved. This is a common strategy in constructing a *kaşîde*. Gibb, *A History*, 83-7.

It would add life to my soul if news of the arrival of the beloved came  
 As if a breeze of favors from the illustrious king of kings [Murad III] comes  
 Sultan Murad, the prosperous qibla of the universe  
 To whose court of pilgrimage come kings and dervishes  
 For the experts who contemplate your capital city of justice  
 The land of milk and honey seems to be in ruins  
 For he has served feasts with no obligation  
 Kings and princes come to his court as guests  
 The khan of Crimea made the earth of his threshold [his] mansion  
 One day you will see that the emperor of Turkistan comes  
 If he suspects an offense and contracts his eyebrows<sup>70</sup>  
 The emperors of China and Central Asia strive to come to his court  
 So long as the flock of hair springing from your standard troubles Frengistan  
 (Europe)

Longing for the shadow of your cypress tall of stature, the catkin<sup>71</sup> comes  
 Let the Persians be happy, let their eyes be illumined  
 Prince Haydar, light of the eyes of the Persian king, comes  
 Where are those ignorant ones who would bet he would not come  
 The truth is that to the wise ones those seem extremely uninformed  
 After now [he] mounted on the horse of the reed  
 [But] do not think that skillful cavaliers can show tricks like Baki  
 Now the world listens eagerly to my poem  
 Wherever I praise you, all living things gather  
 [As I] state your eulogy, from every corner come to listen  
 The life of Selman<sup>72</sup> [and] the immaculate soul of Hasan<sup>73</sup>  
 It is impossible to match and return your infinite favors  
 Although endless ideas come to mind  
 On the surface of the silver morning endures the golden globe (the sun)  
 Until the curl of the hooked stick of the sky bewilders one

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<sup>70</sup> Two words used in this line, *ḥatā* (error, mistake, offense) and *çīn* (to turn, twist, bend) both also mean China, foreshadowing and underscoring the reference to that country in the next line.

<sup>71</sup> The word for catkin, “bān” is synonymous with the word for a Slavonian prince or governor. An analogy is made here between the contrast between the tall tree and small bush on the one hand, and on the other hand the Ottoman sultan and a Bān, or a foreign prince.

<sup>72</sup> This semi-legendary figure is more commonly known as Salman the Persian in the Islamic tradition. A companion of prophet Muhammad, he is believed to be the first convert to Islam of Persian origin. See Vida, G. Levi Della, “Salmān al-Fārisī or Salmān Pāk” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, XII: 701.

<sup>73</sup> The eldest grandson of the prophet Muhammad and the second *imam* in the Shia tradition. See “Ḥasan b. °Ali b. Abi Ṭāleb” *Encyclopedia Iranica Online Edition*. Zeren Tanındı has drawn attention to the poet’s evoking here the name of Hasan b. °Ali when the governor charged with leading the prince into the city had the same name (Hasan Pasha).

May the enemy of rebellion be submissive to the dust of your footstep  
If he refuses to become submissive, one day his head comes rolling down

Similar to many other examples in this genre of eulogistic poetry, this poem consists of multiple sections tied to one another rather loosely. Here I take the lines referring to the prince's arrival as one with the preceding section in order to examine Bākī's strategy of constructing a certain view of the prince's reception at the Ottoman court. According to this view, the sultan is likened to a sort of sun. He is superior to all other rulers, both political and spiritual. The source of his supremacy comes first from his power to rule over the most exalted capital city, i.e. Istanbul. Second, he is able to endow endless favors on all the lesser rulers. The source of their dependence on the sultan, in turn, is precisely these favors that they come to receive at his court. Moreover, although the poem projects an image of the sultan that attracts all rulers, from both the east and west of his empire, some come more eagerly, being struck with awe, such as the khans of Crimea.<sup>74</sup> Others, such as the Europeans, come to the Ottoman court rather halfheartedly and out of fear. Within this scheme, the Safavid prince is said to come with much joy and enthusiasm, which aligns him closer to the former group, the long-time vassals of the Ottomans.<sup>75</sup> The Safavid prince hence embodies Safavid compliance, and is understood to be an object of their submission.

The final couplets state all of these ideas more forcefully. A proclamation of the matchless and infinite nature of the sultan's favors, or generosity (*lutf*), is followed by the

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<sup>74</sup> Mustafa Āli draws the same analogy in his poem: "you are that renowned king, who is the Khan of Crimea or the Shah of Iran?" *o ŧāh-ı nāmversin kim Kırum Hān'ı* 'Acem ŧāhu Mustafa Ali, *Divan*, I: 231.

<sup>75</sup> Lokman, too, draws a similar parallel between the khans of Crimea and the shahs of Iran: *hān-ı kırum bende<sup>2</sup>-i dīrīnesī / ŧāh-ı 'acem çāker-i bī kīnesī* BL Add 7931, 133a.

vertiginous effect of the sun. Last, Bākī states that the unending generosity of the sultan and his dizzying power by extension should incite awe and draw those nourished by his favors close and be submissive to him. Finally, however, in the last couplet, he warns that if this process does not happen naturally, the sultan himself will severely punish any disobedient elements.

The lines about the dizzying sun are ones that are inscribed right below the painting. The leap to these lines from the couplet indicating the excitement and happiness of the Safavids for the transfer of their prince might be deliberate rather than accidental. Lokman's text similarly underscores the wonder (*hīre kalub*) that the prince, along with all the residents of Istanbul (*hayretle bakub*), felt as the embassy entered the city.

Although Bākī portrays the obedience of the Safavids as natural and expected, Lokman engages more directly with the reality of the state of affairs between the two powers by placing much more emphasis on how the Safavids were obliged to be obedient. This idea was also meant to be captured in a painting in the manuscript. (Figure 3.6) This blank double-spread is inscribed at the top as follows: "First went Hasan Pasha mounted on his horse/ The axis of obedience, the prince, followed [behind.]"<sup>76</sup> This obligation was made possible by the military success of the Ottomans, but more significantly, it was ordered by God himself:

What was unknown became visible with [the aid of] those who arrived at the truth/

God rendered the Redheads powerless

With war, the East opened just as the West/

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<sup>76</sup> *önce Hasan Paşa yürürdī süvār / peyrevī mīrzāy iṭa<sup>c</sup>āt medār* BL Add 7931, 130b-131a.

With God's consent the enemy was injured

No man of obstinacy was left in the world/

[They] became submissive to the king, full of firm belief<sup>77</sup>

The handing over of the prince from Shah Abbas to Murad III is portrayed further as the tangible proof of his submission to the sultan. The prince's transfer was understood as a crucial, inevitable, and eager move on the part of the shah. Lokman wrote: "Persians opened their country from one end to the other / the Redhead saved his head thanks to the [arrival of the] hostage."<sup>78</sup> The shah's offer to send the prince is also understood as an act that stopped the Ottomans from conquering all of the lands that the Safavids ruled over rather than an agreement reached with the joint consent of both sides in order to prevent the depletion of further human and material resources. However, as much as there is such emphasis on the shah's obligation to be subservient to the sultan, most tangibly expressed through his sending of Haydar Mirza to the sultan, Bākī's poem gives away the elusive nature of this concept before the actual arrival of the prince. The lines in the poem that ridicule those who previously did not believe the prince would come attests to the existence of such a debate, and the existence of doubt, possibly among the high-ranking officials of the court.

## Istanbul

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<sup>77</sup> *hazır olub gāyib erenlerle hep / kıldı kızılbaş berüftād rab  
ğarb gibī şark açılub harble / kâbil-i haq oldī °aduvv zarble (darble)  
kalmadī °ālemde bir ehl-i °inād / oldī muṭī° şaha pāk i°tikād* BL Add 7931, 131b.

<sup>78</sup> *açdī °acem memleketinī serbeser / rehīn ile kurtardī başın sürhser* BL Add 7931, 132a.

When the prince reached Pertev Pasha Palace,<sup>79</sup> the residence assigned to him and his entourage, it was already dark and the prince was exhausted. In the morning, the chief administrator of the imperial kitchen (*maṭbah emīnī*) came here to bring some presents from the sultan, including large amounts of fruits and heavy robes of honor (*miyye<sup>2</sup>-i bīhad geturüb şahdan / ħil<sup>c</sup>at-ı vazr sāye-i allahdan*). Since it was also customary for the Ottoman state to supply the kitchen staples of foreign embassies during their stay,<sup>80</sup> Lokman explains that the *maṭbah emīnī* also brought with him such items as sugar, honey, butter, sheep, lamb, chicken and goose meats, fish, various grains (*ħubūbāt*), as well as powerful pharmaceutical drugs (*edviye<sup>2</sup>-i ħarre*).

Following the sultan's example, the grand vizier Sinan Pasha also sent similar items of foodstuffs, especially loads of sugar and sweetmeats, and fruits. Additionally, this pasha sent chests full of gold-embroidered robes, and other unidentified items for which the prince and everyone under his command were, according to Lokman, grateful.<sup>81</sup> Like the grand vizier, other viziers too met with the prince and the envoy. These encounters were mandated by courtly tradition and prefaced the eventual audience of the envoy with the sultan. But beyond that, these were integral to the negotiations between the two sides, for during these meetings heated discussions took place that could potentially have changed the whole direction of negotiations between the two states. For

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<sup>79</sup> Abdulkadir Erdoğan, "Pertev Paşa'nın Hayatı ve Eserleri" *Vakıflar Dergisi* II (1942): 233-40; A. Sami Ülgen, "Pertev Mehmed Paşa'nın Eserleri Hakkında Mimari İzahat," *Vakıflar Dergisi* II (1942): 241-4.

<sup>80</sup> Mehmed İpşirli, "Elçi" *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: ISAM, 1995), XI: 3-15.

<sup>81</sup> *ğayr-ı levāzım dahī añā göre / bezl ü nişār eylediler hepsiyle lütfile şāh oğlī olüb serferāz / eyledī ħüddām vezīre niyāz* Add 7931, 137a. In a correspondence with the sultan, Sinan Pasha asked the sultan for approval to grant robes of honor to the prince and the envoy when they came to see him in his own residence. Sahillioğlu, ed., *Koca Sinan*, 243

example, the Safavid historian Afushtah-i Natanzi notes that Ottoman officials tried to recruit Mahdiquli Khan by offering him the rulership of Baghdad, which he politely refused.<sup>82</sup> Though the Ottomans relatively had a greater negotiating power at this time, which rendered the treaty they signed in the end a much greater diplomatic success for them, these little details reveal the extent to which they sought to push this negotiating power in the process. The gifts they presented to Mahdiquli Khan and the prince should be seen in this light and be interpreted as direct participants in this process. According to Ottoman sources, “following ancient tradition,” the second and third viziers, and other high-ranking members of the court sent gifts in abundance to the prince and the envoy. Among the gifts, or favors from these courtiers, Ottoman sources only mention robes of honor (*hil'at*) with no further description of any of these garments.<sup>83</sup> However, the giving of robes of honor connotes a hierarchical relationship between Ottoman officials and the Safavid envoy, assigning the former a superior position within the exchange and the latter an inferior one.

Sources hint at the presentation of other objects in addition to robes of honor during vizierial exchanges. These were presented in diminishing amounts based on courtly rank; however, the specific names and qualities of objects seem to be second to the exchange, or the act of giving itself. Instead of detailed descriptions, these objects are often described collectively as *nuzl*, to mean anything given to a guest. Moreover, qualifying adjectives such as *bīhad* (with no bounds), *firāvān* (many), or *füzūn az hisāb*

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<sup>82</sup> Though the envoy refused this offer, that it later circulated among Safavid ruling class, coupled with news of the intimacy with which he was welcomed in Istanbul, angered the shah and cost the envoy his life shortly after his return to Iran. Mahmud b. Hidāyat Allāh Afushtah-i Naṭanzī, *Nuqavat al-āṣār fī zikr al-akhyār*, ed. Ihsan Ishraqi (Tehran, 1350/1971), 379.

<sup>83</sup> Add 7931, 137b.

(more than can be counted) are used to indicate that these were given in great numbers or amounts. Verbs such as *bezl* and *nişār*, meaning “to give liberally,” or “to scatter or disseminate” are likewise used frequently to convey this same idea. This forms quite an interesting parallel to the manner in which the presentation of food is described during the feasts given for the prince.<sup>84</sup> Furthermore, as a group, these gifts are said to treat the prince with respect, to honor him (*şeref*), and to elevate him or to make him eminent.<sup>85</sup> One word used this way, *ikrām*, translates as “a showing honor to; a treating as noble or illustrious.” But it can also mean “a gift to an inferior.”<sup>86</sup> This subtle expression of the flow of objects from a superior to an inferior is communicated much more forcefully when we turn to the word most regularly used for the gifts presented from the prince to the Ottoman courtiers during the following week. This word is *pīşkeş*, meaning “a magnificent present, such as is only presented to princes, great men, superiors, or sometimes to equals (particularly on receiving a great appointment); tribute, quit-rent.”<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 51b. Rahimizade wrote: “...and at that time tables were set and all sorts of dishes and various sweetmeats were disseminated at such an extent that it is beyond (verbal and written) expression” (*ve ol zamānda simāṭ çekilüb envā<sup>c</sup>-i ta<sup>c</sup>ām ve elvān-ı hūlviyyāt bir mertebede bezl olındaki taḫrīr ü taḫrīrden müstağnī idī.*) Notice also here that the helping verb used in the expression translated as “tables were set” is *çekmek* (literally, to pull). The same verb is used often in both Ottoman and Safavid sources to say that gifts were presented i.e. *pīşkeş çekmek* and *pishkash kashīdan*

<sup>85</sup> For example, *oldī şahun oğluna ḥaṭirniivāz / bahşiş-i i<sup>c</sup>cāmīle hep serefrāz* Add, 7931, 136b.

<sup>86</sup> Redhouse, *Turkish and English Lexicon*, 172; *yolladī herbirīnī ikrām ile / aḫmişe ü ḥil<sup>c</sup>at-i i<sup>c</sup>cām ile* Add 7931, 137a. Rahimizade’s choice of words is consistent with this when he describes exchanges of gifts between the prince and the envoy, and the Ottoman officials: *Ve māh-ı mezbūruñ onsekizinci günü ki, yevm-i erba<sup>c</sup>ādīür, Erdebīl Ḥanı Mehdī Kulu Ḥan vezīr-i a<sup>c</sup>zam Sinān Paşa ḥazretlerine ve sāyir vūzerā-yı mūkerrem ḥazretlerine bölüşüp hedāyāların ve nāmelerin teslīm idüp anlar da şadr-ı sa<sup>c</sup>ādetlerine lāyık olan kemāl-i ri<sup>c</sup>āyet ü iḥsān birle ta<sup>c</sup>zīm ü ikrām eylemeleriyle ḥoşḥāl olmuşlardī.* TSMK, R 1296, 51b.

<sup>87</sup> Steingass, *Persian-English Dictionary*, 267. Although in modern Persian *pishkash* is understood simply as gift or present, in both the Safavid and Ottoman contexts, its



These gifts, identified this way as gifts from inferior givers to superior receivers, are not specified item by item but praised collectively as follows: “his gifts were heart-rejoicing/ the royal Persian presents were beautiful” (*pīşkeşī cümle dilārā idī / haşşa ‘acem tuhfesī zībā idī*).<sup>88</sup>

After a few days, on January 29th 1590, the prince would finally be received by the sultan himself. At the palace, extensive preparations had been made for the ceremony to receive the embassy, the prince and the gifts they had brought for the sultan. The two high-ranking officials of the court<sup>89</sup> sent to the prince’s residence led the embassy into the palace on horseback. Everyone was dressed lavishly for the occasion (*müretteb ü mükemmel*).<sup>90</sup> Lokman explains that the gifts, described as “gifts of tax and tribute of the world” (*pīşkeşī bāc u harāc-ı cihān*) were brought to the palace prior to the embassy. This author only singled out a tent among these gifts.<sup>91</sup> The prominence of this tent was surely due to the large size and weight of its various parts, carried by multiple tent-

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meaning was closer to “tribute,” given to a person of higher status. Ann Lambton has shown that in Persia, from the mid-fifteenth century till the nineteenth, it was used to mean payments in kind and in cash paid or given both on a regular and *ad hoc* basis as gifts, taxes, tributes and levies. It had a comparably wide and pervasive scope within the Ottoman court system. Lambton, “Present or Tribute?”; Filiz Karaca, “Pīşkeş,” *Diyanet İşleri Ansiklopedisi*, (Istanbul: ISAM, 2007), 34: 294-6.

<sup>88</sup> BL Add 7931, 138a. This customary ritual of visits which occasioned the exchange of gifts between envoys and the highest ranking Ottoman bureaucrats was in this instance a matter of controversy between Ferhad Pasha and Sinan Pasha. According to the Venetian *bailo*’s report, Ferhad Pasha insisted that “it did not make sense that the son of such a great prince should go to the grand vizier.” ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 390. This is confirmed by a letter to the sultan from Sinan Pasha, who complained that Ferhad Pasha would not let the prince visit him. Sahillioğlu, ed., *Koca Sinan*, 210-11.

<sup>89</sup> These were the *sağ ulūfeci başı* and the *çavuşbaşı*.

<sup>90</sup> TSMK, R 1296, 52a; BL Add 7931, 138b-139a.

<sup>91</sup> *oldīlar āgāh kızılbaşlar / yüklediler çādirī ferraşlar oldī kaţār ile muqaddem revān / pīşkeşī bāc u harāc-ı cihān* BL Add 7931, 138b.

pitchers. However, we will see below that other authors too discerned this particular gift because of its beauty.

Passing through the Imperial Gate (*bāb-ı hümayūn*), the prince is said to be most impressed by the ornament and size of the first courtyard of the palace.<sup>92</sup> In keeping with tradition, Haydar dismounted his horse at the Middle Gate as did all others.<sup>93</sup> According to Lokman, awestruck by the magnificence of the palace, which signaled the reach of the sultan's power, Haydar Mirza "lowered his head with wonder / contracted his two eyebrows with shame."<sup>94</sup>

The prince was then taken to the Imperial Council Hall together with his guardian (*lala*) and the envoy. Here, he was given a seat between the grandvizier Sinan Pasha and the commander Ferhad Pasha. Across from them a chair was fixed for Mahdiquli Khan to sit. This initial ceremonial encounter was followed by the most magnificent of the feasts served to the embassy so far. This is another scene that was planned to be pictured in the *Şehnāme-i Āl-i ʿOsmān*.<sup>95</sup> The accompanying text gives a detailed description of the various types of food, the dishes and containers in which these served, and the manner in which these were served. What is emphasized through repetition is the unending quantity and matchless quality of the favors bestowed on the Safavids. Throughout, much like the manner in which gifts presented to the prince by the high-ranking members of the court, adjectives such as countless (*bīhesāb*), peerless (*bīmişāl*), and immeasurable (*bīkıyās*)

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<sup>92</sup> *saḥaʿ-i zībende arīz u vesīʿ / bünyeʿ-i cedrānī metīn ü refīʿ*

*çekse alayī ānda hezārān süvār / yüzbīn alayīn daḥī boş yerī vār* BL Add 7931, 138b.

<sup>93</sup> Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 50-2. Rahimizade instead calls it the Gate of Felicity (*bāb-ı saʿādet*).

<sup>94</sup> *ḥayretle dikdi yere başını / çatdı ḥacāletden ikī kışını* BL Add 7931, 139a.

<sup>95</sup> BL Add 7931, 139b-140a.

describing each dish abound.<sup>96</sup> The food served to the embassy is also described as appealing to all senses. Some of them diffused fragrances of saffron and ambergris. Moreover, the sight of such abundance was meant to evoke foods promised in heaven, which is described in the Qur'an as a place with endless amounts of fruits and meats of various birds.<sup>97</sup> This reference expressed through the abundance, variety and perfect harmony of different flavors is also stated openly in reference to the sweets served to the embassy: “the bowls were filled with sweets and sugar-candy / resembling the food in heaven.”<sup>98</sup>

After the meal, the prince was taken out and sat down by the Gate of Felicity, or the Third Gate. (Figure 3.7) Here, he was donned three robes of honor –one of them lined with sable fur-in front of the Public Treasury, where the robes probably came from.<sup>99</sup> The envoy was also bestowed here two robes of honor. Finally, fifteen most eminent men in the embassy were distributed one each.<sup>100</sup> As the Safavids waited under the vestibule of the Gate of Felicity, around them were lavishly dressed courtiers lined up waiting patiently in an orderly manner.<sup>101</sup> Lokman tells us that this scene stupefied Haydar Mirza, whose “lips spread, lost in thought.”<sup>102</sup> Meanwhile, the sultan proceeded to the Chamber of Petitions. Customarily, after the sultan settled in his throne, the gifts would be brought

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<sup>96</sup> BL Add 7931, 141a, 141b.

<sup>97</sup> 56:20-21, 38:53-54; 55:68;

<sup>98</sup> *kāseleri pür şeker ü kand idī / aṭ'ime<sup>2</sup>-i cennete mānend idī* BL Add 7931, 140b.

<sup>99</sup> Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 79.

<sup>100</sup> For all of these robes of honor, see the Appendix.

<sup>101</sup> BL Add 7931, 144a; Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 101-102.

<sup>102</sup> *ḳāldī bu āyīne şah oḡlī 'aceb / fikre ṭālūb ḥayretle āçdī leb idī ne hoş leşker-i zībendedür / resm-i dılfürüz u şekībendedür* BL Add 7931, 144a.

and paraded by gatekeepers in front of a ceremonial window of this hall so the sultan would see them.<sup>103</sup>

These objects were collectively characterized in one source as “countless gifts” (*tuḥaf-ı bīḥesāb*). The Venetian *bailo* Giovanni Moro, who was a witness to the procession, wrote that they included “books, carpets, bows, and other similar things.” Besides the *bailo*’s report, a full list of these gifts are given in three sources. One is a previously unknown archival document (see the appendix), and the others are found in Ottoman illustrated manuscripts: the *Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja* and the *Book of Kings of the House of Osman*. In all cases, the list begins with the books, among which were one small and two large gilded and jeweled copies of the Qur’an, and fifteen other books including a *shahnama* and a *muraqqa* glowingly described by Lokman as follows:

a *muraqqa*, or calligraphy album, replete with numerous calligraphic specimens/  
its sections sweeten the heart and the soul, like honey  
most of it beautifully written in *talik*/  
ruled with lines like the face of the beloved  
say if its rulings and illuminations, and drawings were seen by an expert/  
he would be impressed in his mind and soul/ he would think it is the essence of  
figuration<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> The gifts would ordinarily be brought to the palace a day before the audience so that their contents would be recorded and so they would be arranged for display under the left portico of the Third Gate. Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial and Power*, 66, 102.

<sup>104</sup> *dürlü ḥuṭūṭile muraqqa<sup>c</sup> tamām / kıṭ<sup>c</sup>alarından dil ü cān şehdkām  
ekşerī ta<sup>c</sup>lik ile hoşḥaṭṭ idī / çehre<sup>2</sup>-i cānān gibī muḥaṭṭat idī  
cedvel ü tezḥiblerini mişāl / baksa teşāvīrine ehl-i kemāl  
fikr idinüb<sup>c</sup> aql ile cānlar cānī / rūḥ-ı muşavver şānūr idī ānī* BL Add 7931, 145a.

Besides these books, the gifts included a gold embroidered tablecloth, a handkerchief for the sultan, nine pieces of gold embroidered woolen cloths with *seraser* borders, felts from Khorasan, twelve small Persian carpets in total -most of them gold-woven (*zerduhte*)-, an antidote in a golden inkwell, and a mineral drug in its own small bag.

The last item mentioned in all sources including the account of the Venetian *bailo* is the large commanding tent. This twelve-part blue satin tent was gold embroidered inside and out, and through its jeweled silk robes ran gold threads. The dome likewise was decorated all over with precious stones. Lokman likens it to the firmament both because of its magnificence and height. Indeed, he says if it was to be set up, one would think it a mountain. While the Venetian *bailo*, too, describes the jewels and the large size of the tent, he shares a different view about how this gift was received at the Ottoman court. He wrote: "...these jewels were more large than fine, and they say that these presents were greatly inferior to those that other Persian kings have sent here with their ambassadors."<sup>105</sup> This is an observation that finds support not by other contemporary accounts but by way of a comparison between Shah Abbas' gifts, and those sent by Shah Tahmasp. For example, in 1576, an uninvited embassy of the shah had come to congratulate the enthronement of the same sultan, Murad III, carrying a significantly higher number of gifts. That group of gifts included eighteen copies of the Qur'an, sixty *dīvāns* of Persian poets, several *muraqqas*, a magnificent tent, forty silk carpets, ten thousand bird feathers, chests encrusted with precious stones, bows, arrows, swords, antidotes, drugs, and even wild animals.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 390.

<sup>106</sup> Kütükoğlu, "III. Murad'a Cülüs Tebriki," 375-97. The specific amount of each type of gift differs on occasion from source to source.

In the presence of the sultan, the envoy was asked whether he had anything to say. He responded by saying first: “Shah Abbas, a loyal subject of the sultan, asks for mercy and forgiveness.” Continuing in the same tone, he added that all of the lands conquered by Ottoman armies belong to the sultan. And, if the sultan wishes, what is left to the shah is also his. Indeed, according to the harsh conditions of the peace treaty signed afterwards, the Safavids agreed to recognize Azerbaijan, Georgia, Qarabagh, Khuzistan, Shirvan, Kurdistan and even Tabriz as Ottoman territory. The treaty also dictated, as in the earlier Amasya Treaty signed between Shah Tahmasp and Süleyman the Magnificent in 1555, that the Safavids cease cursing the first three caliphs.<sup>107</sup>

Parallel to the peace treaty, the gifts presented in this context, are understood by the Ottomans as signs of obedience and submission (*‘ubūdiyyet*). Even though fewer in number and inferior in quality, as a group they were composed of objects that Ottoman sultans were accustomed to receiving from Safavid kings. However, it is the prince himself that stands out as the Safavid gift *par excellence*. In a poem by the Ottoman author Rahimizade about the embassy’s reception at the court, he writes:

The Shah became your slave of servitude /

And the captive became your prisoner tied on his neck

The world is humbled by your sword / And you have opponents no more

From one end of the world to the other, there’s nothing perpetual/

That equals your peerless domain

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<sup>107</sup> The terms of the treaty are recorded in Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe‘ātü’s-selātin*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1264-65/ 1848-49), II: 249-252. See also Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 197; Remzi Kılıç, *XVI. ve XVII. Yüzyıllarda Osmanlı-Iran Siyasi Antlaşmaları*, (İstanbul: Tez Yayınları, 2001), 129-31.

The prince, in this way, becomes an object that embodies Safavid subordination and the sultan's dominance over the shah's domain. The Ottoman historian Mustafa Āli's poem for Sultan Murad makes a similar case in the opening couplet by asserting that the Safavid shah : "Oh king! Universal rulership became possible with your pure nature/ The son of the king of Iran came and became a slave in your domain"<sup>108</sup>

But how is this concept expressed visually? On a number of levels, the only surviving painting of the sultan's audience with the embassy departs dramatically from the established norms of depicting the Ottoman sultan giving audience to a Safavid ambassador. (Figures 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11) In these earlier depictions, the subservience of Safavid envoys is conveyed through their prostrate pose before the sultan, held on their arms by Ottoman courtiers. In these earlier images, gifts coming from the Persian shah horizontally dominate the lower section of the painting, thereby participating in the envoy's action and they take part in the ceremony. In reality, however, they would be held and paraded by courtiers outside of the Audience Hall. In the scene from the *Book of Treasury of the Conquest of Ganja*, by contrast, Shah Abbas' material gifts are completely omitted from the scene and rather than the envoy, the prince confronts the sultan. We might say, then, that the prince himself replaces both the gesture of obedience (i.e. the envoy's prostration), and the materials of obedience (i.e. the material gifts). With Veli Agha's assistance, Haydar stands close to the sultan, holding his robe with two hands to kiss it. Though Ottoman and foreign authors frequently note that in the presence of the sultan, envoys and courtiers "kiss his hands" or "kiss his robe," these expressions are figurative rather than literal, for especially foreigners would not even be strictly kept

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<sup>108</sup> *Şehā şāhib-ķıranlık zāt-ı pākūñle temām oldu / Ācem şāhunuñ ođlı geldi kūyuñda ğulām oldu* Mustafa Ali, *Divan*, 230.

at a distance from the throne.<sup>109</sup> The prince's closeness to and his actual act of touching and kissing the sultan signals a kind of intimacy that would only be possible with the sultan's own permission. Such closeness visually distinguishes him from other gifts, which were accepted in a formal, almost cold manner. I would argue that such a warm welcome for the prince stemmed in part from Ottoman anticipation that the prince would not simply live at the court from then on as a prisoner, but would eventually be incorporated into it so he could one day become shah himself and make Iran an Ottoman vassal state once and for all.

By purely political standards, Shah Abbas' agreement to this humiliating peace treaty could be interpreted as an admission of his inferior position before the sultan. However, in order to clarify this position he also had to send a material object, the little Prince Haydar, for the sultan to keep. The sultan, then, by making the prince his dependent, his slave (or *kul*), rendered the Shah of Iran, too, in the words of Lokman and Mustafa Āli, slave to his command and servant to [his] domain along with his progeny. However, such excessive rhetoric about the sultan's domination or enslavement of the prince, and, by extension, the Shah himself, is at the same time indicative of a certain Ottoman anxiety that this conviction stands on shaky ground. We have seen that some authors poetically relate the amazement and thankfulness of the Safavid embassy for all the favors bestowed on them and their eager subjugation as a result. But another contemporary Ottoman historian, Selaniki, gives us a very different picture of the Safavids' behavior. In his discussion of the provisions dispatched to the prince's palace, he wrote: "while countless abundant foods and favors were generously given and such

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<sup>109</sup> The Italian expression "kissing the hand [of the sultan]" (*baciare la mano*) is often used in sources to refer to having audience with the sultan.



power was dispatched, it was observed that the ingratitude of the ill-behaving qizilbash was beyond measure; their blaspheme and perdition seemed worse than the deeds of infidels and sinners.”<sup>110</sup>

Similarly, the Venetian *bailo* Giovanni Moro raised his own doubts about the effectiveness of Ottoman diplomacy. In his report, he insisted that Safavid diplomats in the embassy had told him that Shah Abbas surrendered his nephew only to put an end to the Ottoman attacks on his western borders, at a time when he had to deal with the Uzbek threat to the east. The Safavids had therefore come to Istanbul knowing that the treaty would not be permanent because of its unacceptable conditions. Meanwhile, he also reported that the Ottomans, in turn, were afraid that if they put too much pressure on Abbas, he would be unable to stand strong against the powerful Uzbeks, who might ultimately represent an even more serious threat to the Ottomans than Abbas. Furthermore, unable to learn the details of the peace agreement despite considerable effort, Moro suspected that the extravagant and expensive public celebrations were intended more to convince the dissatisfied Ottoman soldiery about the health of the empire’s finances, rather than celebrating a meaningful political victory.<sup>111</sup>

Though this claim is up for debate, it is worthy of note that about a year after this embassy’s return to Iran, new embassies began to come from Abbas, because of disagreements about the exact place of borders between the two states. These embassies also came with the request of checking on the prince and providing whatever needs he might have had. The prince, unfortunately, died in Istanbul from the plague about five

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<sup>110</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 218.

<sup>111</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli, filza 30, 390.

years after his arrival, when he was about eleven years old.<sup>112</sup> A Venetian account notes that while an embassy from Shah Abbas came to Constantinople a few months after the prince's death, there was much Ottoman discontent, expressed openly, about the "suspicious conditions" under which the prince died at such a young age.<sup>113</sup>

Sadly, the envoy too died soon after he returned to Iran. The Safavid historian Afushtah-i Natanzi relates that the shah was infuriated by how favorably Sultan Murad's letter spoke of Mahdiquli Khan, and ordered the envoy's immediate execution.<sup>114</sup> It is equally likely that the shah was unsatisfied with the precise conditions of the peace treaty. Mahdiquli Khan's execution is also brought up in the Vienna album, (Figure 3.12) in a double portrait of him with a bearded Ottoman official, both on their horses. Here, while the envoy returns our gaze, the Ottoman official looks forward. The extravagant dress of the envoy is highlighted by the turban he is wearing, which is very similar to the one on the prince in the same album. The bright colors of his dress and the human figures that decorate his inner robe are lacking in the other person, highlighting the latter's modesty. The inscription below the painting reads: "The child's master of ceremonies,

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<sup>112</sup> Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 216.

<sup>113</sup> ASVe, Senato, Copie Ottocentesche dei Dispacci, Registro 11, 254. The Ottoman historian Selaniki likewise claims that the Safavids were plotting to poison the prince to break the peace. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 268; Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 216. According to tradition, the prince's tomb was stolen one night to be brought back to Safavid Iran. Hasanbeyzade Ahmed, *Hasan Bey-zāde Tārīhi*, ed. Nezihi Aykut, 3 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004), II: 365.

<sup>114</sup> Natanzi is openly critical of the shah on this issue, for he refers to Mahdiquli Khan in this instance as "that aggrieved guiltless one" (*ān bī-gunāh-i mazlūm*). Afushtah-i Natanzi, *Nuquvat*, 383.

who brought [him] from Persia to Constantinople, later had his head struck off by his king, because he did not bring the child back again.”<sup>115</sup>

### Conclusion

It is the multiplicity and circulation of such tales, poems and images, as we have seen, about Haydar Mirza’s transfer to the Ottoman court that enrich the story of the prince and highlight the relations and memories it set in motion. Furthermore, all of these attest to the prince’s role as a “social agent.” Alfred Gell has defined an agent most succinctly as “the source, the origin, of causal events independently of the state of the physical universe.”<sup>116</sup> Causality and intention need not be directly originating from a human source here, which opens the methodological possibility to see “art objects as persons.”<sup>117</sup> This theory is inspired in part by Marcel Mauss, who argued that “the thing given is not inactive. [It is] invested with life, often possessing individuality...”<sup>118</sup> For Mauss, it is this agency, or the spirit that the gift carries, that is tightly tied to the obligation to reciprocate. My case study here, the prince, is important to consider as a such a social agent. The specific historical circumstances, especially the Ottoman-Safavid historical rivalry over territories but also the Sunni-Shii divide among them, imbue the story of the prince with many layers of meaning through this gift’s journey. The prince, and the visual and literary responses to his transfer, illuminate Ottoman-Safavid relations by forming a direct link between an Ottoman victory and a Safavid defeat. At the same

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<sup>115</sup> *Des Kindts [Kindes] Hoffmeister ders [der es] aus Persthia hatt gen [gegen] Constantinopll bracht ht im darnach von seinem kinig [Koenig] den kopff abgeschlagen worden das er das kindt nicht hatt wider [wieder] gebracht* Cod. 8626, 125.

<sup>116</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 16.

<sup>117</sup> Gell, *Art and Agency*, 9.

<sup>118</sup> Mauss, *The Gift*, 13.

time, the specific literary and visual strategies employed to argue for such a link as well as the excessive insistence for it points to many uncertainties and insecurities about it rather than its true firmness.

Modern historians of the Safavid and Ottoman empires concur that the Istanbul Peace Treaty was a clear political achievement for the Ottomans. However, this success came at a time when there was much doubt about the status quo. Within this context, we have seen that objects that moved between the two courts carried potent messages and significantly shaped the powerful image that the Ottoman sultan sought to project. The gifts that Shah Abbas sent to Murad III for the conclusion of the peace, in particular his nephew sent as a hostage, were received at the Ottoman court as material expressions of Shah Abbas' subjugation to the level of vassalage. In turn, more than his ability to receive gifts as tribute from the inferior adversary, what pulled the sultan up to the level of a superior king was his ability to overwhelm with endless favors the members of the embassy and the prince himself. This Ottoman concept of a second stage of Safavid defeat, after the military one, was directly tied to the Safavid obligation to recognize the sultan's favors precisely in this manner.

## APPENDIX

1) GIFTS PRESENTED TO SULTAN MURAD III BY THE SAFAVID PRINCE HAYDAR MIRZA (Başbakanlık Arşivi [Prime Ministry Archive], Kamil Kepeci 1772, fol. 153)

[Yev]mü'l-ehad. Fî 22 şehr-i Rebî'ü'l-evvel sene 998 (1/29/1590).

An pişkeş-i °Abbas Mîrzâ Şâh-ı Vilâyet-i °Acem der vaqt-i firistâden-i Mîrzâ Haydar birâderzâde-i hod be-dergâh-ı °âlî berâ-yı meşâlih. Fî 22 Rebî'ü'l-evvel sene 998

Kelâm-ı kadîm, cild 3

Küçük an zer-i muraşsa°, cild 1

Büzürk münakkaş ve müzehheb, cild 2

Kitabhâ-i mütennevi°a, cild 15

Şahnâme°-i müzehheb ve muşavver, cild 1

Hamse-i Şeyh Nizâmî, cild 1

Külliyât-ı Hâkânî, cild 1

Yusuf u Züleyhâ, cild 1

Bostan, cild 1

Dîvân-ı Hâfız, cild 1

Mağzen al esrâr, cild 1

Heft Manzar-ı Hâtifî, cild 1

Rubâ°iyyât-ı Hayyâm, cild 1

Cemşid u Hurşid, cild 1

Külliyât-ı ehl?, cild 1

Sevâhir al ?, cild 1

Hulâşat al ahbâr, cild 1

Külliyât-ı Şeyh Sa°dî, cild 1

Muraqqa°-i müzehheb, cild 1

Destâr-ı Hâkânî altun doquma, °aded 1

Şofra-i zer-duhte, kît°a 1

°Abâ-yi zer-duhte, kît°a 9

Kâliçehâ-i °Acem, kît°a 3

kadife-i zer duhte, kît°a 1

zerd-i dîz zer-duhte, kît°a 1

an zer-duhte, kît°a 1

Keçehâ-i Horasânî, kît°a 2

Hayme-i atlas-ı muqatta° ? dîz ve bilezik zer-i muraşsa° ve muşamma° an ?

dîz, bâb 1

Ḳālīçehā-i °Acem, ḳıṭ°a 9

an zerd-i dīz zer-duḥte, ḳıṭ°a 2

ḳadife-i heft-renk, ḳıṭ°a 2

an dīz u tār zer-duḥte, lāciverd, ḳıṭ°a 2

an dīz u tār zer-duḥte ḳırmızı, ḳıṭ°a 4

Pān-zehr bā-ḥoḳḳa°-i zer, ḳıṭ°a 1

Mumyān-ı ma°denī, aded 27

Bā-kise°-i tāfta-i ḳırmızı, memhūr

کتابخانه سلطنتی  
وزارت معارف و اوقاف  
پنجاب

کتابخانه سلطنتی  
وزارت معارف و اوقاف  
پنجاب  
۱۲۴۵ قمری  
۱۸۳۰ میلادی

کلام قدیم  
خط  
مجلس  
کتابخانه سلطنتی  
پنجاب  
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۱۸۳۰ میلادی

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Başbakanlık Arşivi  
[Prime Ministry  
Archive], Kamil  
Kepeci 1772, fol.  
153

2) THINGS GIVEN TO THE SAFAVID PRINCE HAYDAR MIRZA AND HIS  
RETINUE (Başbakanlık Arşivi [Prime Ministry Archive], Kamil Kepeci 1773, fol.  
231)

[Yev]mü'l-ehad. Fî 22 şehr-i Rebî'ülevvel sene 998 (29.I.1590).

Teşrif be-mezkürin ki an vilâyet-i °Acem be-dergâh-ı °âlî berâ-yı muşâlâha âmedend  
Be-Ḥaydar Mîrzâ birâderzâde-i Şâh-ı °Acem

Nağdiye 100.000

Câmeḥâ-i mirâḥūrî an dîbâ°-i frengî°-i batrâķî°-i ā°lâ bā-bitâne°-i atlas ve  
sencef-i atlas, sevb 2,

batrâķî, sevb 1

frengî, sevb 1

Dolama an dîbâ°-i frengî°-i zerd bā-bitâne°-i tafta°-i Şâmî

An Enderün dâde

Be-Mehdî Kūlî Ḥan ḥâkim-i Erdebil, elçi°-i Şâh-ı müşârünileyh ki bā-pişkeş behem-  
âmede

Nağdiye 50.000

Câmeḥâ°-i mirâḥūrî an serâser-i İstanbul °alâ, sevb 2

Be-ciḥet-i merdümân-ı Şâh-ı müşârünileyh ki bā-Mîrzâ-yı merķûm ve elçi°-i mezkûr  
behem âmedend

Be-Mehdî Kūlî Sultan Ḥâkim-i Tâliş?

Câme°-i mirâḥūrî an serâser, sevb 1

Be-°Ali Ḥalîfe Sultan

Câme-i mirâḥūrî, sevb 1, misli

Be-Şâhım Kūlî Ḥalîfe Lala

Câme-i mirâḥūrî an serâser, 1 sevb

Be-Hakem Ebū Ṭâlib

Câme, misli

Be-Ḥamza Beg

Câme, misli

Be-Ḥâce Ağa Emîr

Câme, misli

Be-°Ali Beg

Câme, misli

Be-Îmâm Kuli

Câme, misli



Be-Fethi Beg

Cāme, misli

Be-Mehdī Kūli Beg

Cāme, misli

Be-Otmaz? Ağa

Cāme, misli

Be-Mihter Kūbedīn

Cāme, misli

Be-Muḥammad °Ali Beg

Cāme, misli

Be-Veli Ağa merdüm-i Ḥazret-i Pādişāh-ı °ālempenāh -hullidet hılāfetuhū- ki bā

Mirzā behem āmede

Cāme, misli

Yekūn: Naḫdiye 150.000, guruş dāde şüd, 1875 aded

Cāmeḥā°-i mirāḥūrī, 18 sevb

Dolama, 1 sevb

۱۲۱۱  
شهر د ۹۹۸۲

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله الذي جعلنا من ذرية نبيه  
محمد وآله الطيبين الطاهرين  
الذين هم ائمة المرسلين  
والصالحين والبررة  
والقائمين على حرمات الله  
والعقوبات والحدود  
والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين  
والقائمين على حرمات الله  
والعقوبات والحدود  
والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله الذي جعلنا من ذرية نبيه  
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والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين  
والقائمين على حرمات الله  
والعقوبات والحدود  
والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم  
الحمد لله الذي جعلنا من ذرية نبيه  
محمد وآله الطيبين الطاهرين  
الذين هم ائمة المرسلين  
والصالحين والبررة  
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والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين  
والقائمين على حرمات الله  
والعقوبات والحدود  
والنهي عن المنكر  
والإمامين والهادين

## **CHAPTER 4:**

### **The New Rules of Shah Abbas:**

#### **How the Safavid Shah Re-invented a Tradition of Diplomacy**

In August 1599, the Ottoman sultan Mehmed III received an ambassador from Shah Abbas, bearing a highly submissive letter that described the shah as the sultan's slave and the dust beneath his feet. Yet the gifts accompanying this message, twelve gold and twelve silver keys to fortresses that the shah claimed to have conquered in the name of the sultan, infuriated Mehmed--to the extent that, according to Venetian archival sources, he angrily ordered the keys to be returned to the envoy. By then, Shah Abbas had already been sending numerous embassies to European rulers asking for their support against the Ottomans in exchange for high-quality Persian silk.

This chapter examines the agency and instrumentality of gifts in negotiating power at a time when power itself came to depend as much on the control of trade as territories. It opens with a discussion of the revolutionary military, administrative and religious reforms undertaken by Abbas, and how these relate and respond specifically to the historical Ottoman-Safavid dialogue. It is in light of this discussion that I interpret Shah Abbas's complete break with the established tradition of Ottoman-Safavid gift exchange. This involved a sea-change not only in the types and amounts of objects sent and received, but also in the ceremonial etiquette of their presentation. In the opening decades of the seventeenth century, Abbas's active search for political and commercial allies in Europe against the Ottomans forced both the shah and the sultan to re-negotiate

the gifts they came to exchange. The nature of these new gifts was directly correlated to the extent to which these rulers could participate in a globally connected trade network.

### **From devastated state to world empire: Shah Abbas and his reforms within Ottoman-Safavid rivalry**

The historical memory of Shah Abbas as a strong political leader, a cultivated patron of the arts, and a determined military commander becomes ever more impressive when it is weighed against the conditions under which he inherited the Safavid state. He was only in his teens when he ascended the throne in 1587. The period between the death of his grandfather Shah Tahmasp, in 1576, and the beginning of his own rule was characterized by a weaker central authority, ideological uncertainties, and even numerous confrontations among courtiers and *qizilbash* elites, whose support the court depended on.<sup>1</sup> The new shah also faced opposition on dynastic grounds, which questioned his legitimacy as a ruler, for his father was still alive. Added to this was a spiritual challenge, initiated by millenarian Sufi movements such as the Nuqtavi, whose “prophetic forecast” predicted new leadership at the beginning of the new millennium.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, the neighboring powers, with whom the Safavid state had a considerable history of military and ideological struggle, were quick to attempt to take advantage of its vulnerabilities. During this period, the lands under Safavid rule came under attack by the Ottomans in the west and the Uzbeks in the east.

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of the reigns of Ismail II (1576-1577) and Muhammad Khudabanda (1578-1587), see Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (I.B. Tauris: London, 2006), 41-49; Sheila Canby, *The Golden Age of Persian Art, 1501-1722* (The British Museum Press: London, 1999), 81-91.

<sup>2</sup> Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard Middle Eastern Monographs, 2003).

Within this context, Abbas agreed to the peace conditions put forth by the Ottomans, which assigned to them Georgia, Armenia, and Azarbaijan, including the city of Tabriz, and those territories that were loosely held or newly attacked by Ottoman forces such as Nahavand. Moreover, similar to the previous peace signed between Shah Tahmasp and Sultan Süleyman in 1555, the Ottomans stipulated that the Safavid ritual practice of cursing the first three caliphs be stopped.<sup>3</sup> Also in line with Ottoman demands, the child-prince Haydar Mirza was taken to Istanbul, to be held there as a captive.

During the following decade, Abbas first turned his attention to subduing rebellions and constructing his state with a strong military and administrative establishment. The *qizilbash*, Turkoman followers of the early Safavids who were so influential in building the state during the reign of Shah Ismail, had by now gained so much power that they came to undermine the authority of the shah. Significantly, during the formative years of the Safavid polity, these Sufi disciples viewed the shah not just as a political leader, but also as a divine or semi-divine leader. During the opening decades of the sixteenth century, *qizilbash* tribal leaders were appointed as governors and generals, constituting the military and administrative backbone of the nascent Safavid state until the reign of Shah Abbas. The occasional clashes among these powerful tribal leaders hit the strength of the state particularly hard during times of weak central authority, for instance during the civil war that preceded Shah Abbas's reign.<sup>4</sup> At the

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<sup>3</sup> Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe'ātü's-selātin*, II: 249-252; Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 197; Kılıç, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 129-131.

<sup>4</sup> A previous civil war that had broken out following the death of Shah Ismail (1524-36) propelled Shah Tahmasp to pursue an alternative military force formed by Circassian, Georgian and Armenian slaves (*ghulām*). However, "it was Shah Abbas who fully institutionalized military and domestic slavery and broke with the Safavid tribal and messianic past." Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran* (London

beginning of his reign, it also became clear to Shah Abbas that there was uncertainty and even clashing views among the *qizilbash* with regard to his spiritual leadership.

In order to confront the challenges to his leadership, and to diminish the influence of the *qizilbash*, Shah Abbas then went on to building a central army formed by converted slave soldiers (*ghulam*), similar in principle to the Ottoman military organization. In addition to a new standing army, these slave soldiers also formed a newly designed administrative class. The shah's relationship to his new classes of military and administrative leaders inverted the "master-disciple" principle that had previously governed his relationship to influential tribal leaders, for *ghulamhood* depended on the slaves' complete break with their socio-cultural backgrounds and their conversion to Islam.<sup>5</sup>

The new identity given to these slaves, combined with their economic and social dependence on Shah Abbas, were meant to guarantee full and continuous loyalty and devotion to the shah. Whereas previously, Safavid military forces were formed by the *qizilbash*, summoned on an *ad hoc* basis, Shah Abbas initiated a standing army consisting

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and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), 6; see also Roger Savory, *Iran under the Safavids* (New York: Chicago University Press, 2007; reprint, Cambridge University Press, 1980), 76-78.

<sup>5</sup> Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 7. The authors also discuss the manner in which Shah Abbas recruited individual tribal members, referred to as *shahsevan*, or those who love the Shah. The *shahsevan* also had a secular attachment to the shah as opposed to the militant supporters of Shah Ismail, who were expected to have a spiritual attachment, or *ṣūfīgārī* (conduct suitable for Sufis). V. Minorsky, "Shah-sewan" *E.J. Brill's First Encyclopedia of Islam, 1913-1936* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993; reprint, E.J. Brill, 1927), 267-8; Roemer, "The Safavid Period," 214; Moojan Momen, *An Introduction to Shi'ism: The History and Doctrines of Twelver Shi'ism* (New York and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 111; Richard Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1997).

of cavalry, musketeers, and an artillery corps.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the equipment of the army with the latest technology, weapons and firearms, has been interpreted as a measure that Shah Abbas took in order to face up to the technologically up-to-date Ottoman army.<sup>7</sup> In order to pay the army directly, the shah made appropriate changes to the Safavid land system. He took away the fiefs assigned to the *qizilbash*, and incorporated those into crown lands. He then began to collect taxes directly, with the aid of his new slaves as administrators. This way, he limited the power and influence of the *qizilbash*, who used to have the liberty to act as independent local princes.<sup>8</sup>

Another major blow on *qizilbash* power was the transfer of the state capital from Qazvin to Isfahan in 1597/98 (Figure 4.1).<sup>9</sup> The new capital was designed so as to emphasize a strong link between the royal court and commerce. At the heart of the new city was built a great public square (*maydan*), known as the *Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (lit. the Square of the Image of the World) (Figure 4.2). This great quadrangle was organized around buildings with public, royal, religious and commercial functions. As such, in addition to the royal quadrangle's centrality in commercial activity, Shah Abbas envisioned it also as a ceremonial, entertainment and feasting arena. On one end of the

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<sup>6</sup> For the various units of the army before and after Shah Abbas's reign, see M. Haneda "Army, iii. Safavid Period" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

<sup>7</sup> As will be discussed below, on various occasions, Shah Abbas ordered firearms from Europe, or received them as gifts. For the use and history of firearms during the Safavid period, see Rudi Matthee "Firearms, i. History" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>; Rudi Matthee, "Unwalled Cities and Restless Nomads: Gunpowder and Artillery in Safavid Iran," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 389-416.

<sup>8</sup> Roger Savory estimates the full army to number about 40,000 soldiers. In addition, Shah Abbas expanded the royal bodyguard to about 3,000 officials, formed entirely by the *ghulams*. For a comparison of the Shah Abbas's slaves to their Ottoman counterparts (*kapikullari*) see Savory, *Iran under Safavids*, 79-80.

<sup>9</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 724.

square was an imperial bazaar complex (*qaysariyya*). Directly on the other end was an imperial congregational mosque (*Masjid-i Shah*) (Figure 4.3). The buildings at the heart of the two remaining sides of the square, along the east-west axis, were a royal palace (*Ali Qapu*) (Figure 4.4), and a private mosque for royal use (*Masjid-i Shaykh Lutf-Allah*) (Figure 4.5).<sup>10</sup>

The construction of a congregational mosque by Shah Abbas was particularly significant.<sup>11</sup> In Safavid Iran, the issue of congregational prayer had been a source of debate for over a century by this time. Beyond purely a religious issue, this debate had important political implications, with roots going back to the time of the prophet. Following his historic migration to Medina in 622, the prophet himself had, for the first time, led the Friday noon prayer. Soon, attendance to this communal prayer was made obligatory, which was also supported by Qur'anic revelation.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, from the very beginning, Friday prayer had been loaded with political meaning. Participation not only

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<sup>10</sup> There is a growing literature on Shah Abbas's Isfahan. An excellent new book with a comprehensive bibliography is Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces: Statecraft, Shi'ism and the Architecture of Conviviality in Early Modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). See also Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, esp. 80-113; Stephen Blake, *Half the World: The Social Architecture of Safavid Isfahan 1590-1722* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999); Robert McChesney, "Four Sources on Shah Abbas's Building of Isfahan," *Muqarnas* 5 (1988): 103-34.

<sup>11</sup> Sussan Babaie argues that even though the foundations for the *Masjid-i Shah* were not laid till 1611, "the reasons for raising such a congregational mosque must have been rooted in the very initial plans for the refashioning of Isfahan as the capital." As Babaie points out, unlike his predecessors, Shah Abbas did not make any additions to the Great Mosque of Isfahan, the venerated Seljuk mosque that had received some sort of architectural imprint from all of that shah's predecessors. Rather, he devoted his complete attention to building a new capital city. Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 86.

<sup>12</sup> Qur'an, 62:9-10: "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew!"  
"And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah: and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper"



fulfilled a religious obligation, and publicly declared one's faith, but also connoted allegiance to the ruler who led the prayer, or whose name was read after the prayer, during the imam's sermon (*khutba*).<sup>13</sup> From the perspective of Muslim rulers, this uttering of their name in the Friday sermon had traditionally been a fundamental source of legitimacy both for the establishment and the continuous declaration of their authority. From a theological perspective, however, while the legality of Friday prayers was an uncontested issue in the Sunni tradition, Shi'ite clerics disagreed on whether it was desirable or even permissible to perform them. One issue that complicated matters was, of course, the Shi'ite rejection of the Sunni tradition of leadership after 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (d. 661), the cousin and son-in-law of prophet Muhammad. In Imami Shi'ism, the debate also involved the question of whether performing communal prayers was permissible in the absence of the last Imam (Occultation, or *ghayba*), hence without his consent.<sup>14</sup>

In the Safavid period, the issue of Friday prayer continued to dominate theological debates, with various clerics expressing their support and others fiercely opposing it.<sup>15</sup> The absence of this public ritual posed a challenge for Safavid rulers, who saw how effectively the Friday prayer had been used as a tool of legitimacy by Sunni

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<sup>13</sup> S.D. Goitein "DJuma" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, Shi'ite religious scholars had been expressing a variety of opinions on the issue since the 10<sup>th</sup> century. See Hamid Algar "Emām-e Jom'ā" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

<sup>15</sup> For this debate and the various treatises on the issue written in Safavid Iran, see Devin J. Stewart, "Polemics and Patronage in Safavid Iran: The Debate on Friday Prayer during the Reign of Shah Tahmasb," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 72, no.3 (2009): 425-457; Rula Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004); Andrew J. Newman, "Fayd al-Kashani and the Rejection of the Clergy/State Alliance: Friday Prayer as Politics in the Safavid Period," in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja' Taqlid*, ed. Linda S. Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 34-52.

rulers. Though Safavid rulers did order the performing of Friday prayers under their rule—meanwhile encouraging scholarly debates on the issue—the practice could never be institutionalized and was executed only intermittently.<sup>16</sup>

As a consequence, up until the reign of Shah Abbas, no Safavid ruler built a congregational mosque in his own name. Ottoman sultans, by contrast, built great congregational mosques, which proudly declared their authority and effectively testified to Ottoman Sunni orthodoxy in architectural terms. In the Ottoman context, this visual articulation was supported and praised by various authors throughout the sixteenth century. Chroniclers of the reign of Sultan Süleyman, for example, frequently praised the prosperity of the sultan's kingdom by emphasizing its mosques and pious foundations built around them (Figure 4.6). These socio-religious complexes provided various social, educational and commercial services, facilitating urbanization and comfortable travel for merchants and travelers, especially those going on pilgrimage.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, they were testaments to the sultan's authority and his adherence to the shari'a.<sup>18</sup> As Gülru

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<sup>16</sup> For example, during the reign of Shah Tahmasp, Syrian 'Amili scholars, al-Karaki in particular, encouraged participation in Friday prayer by arguing that a deputy (*mujtahid*) of the Hidden Imam could lead the prayer; in that case, the ritual could be optional, but not obligatory. During the reign of Shah Abbas, leading religious scholars concurred that it was "licit but optional." Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, esp. 20-22, 37-39, 56, 79-86, 112-114; Devin J. Stewart, "Notes on the Migration of 'Amili Scholars to Safavid Iran," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies*, 55, no. 2 (1996): 81-103; Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 134-44.

<sup>17</sup> Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 31-32, 34-35. For Ottoman mosque complexes, see also Godfrey Goodwin, *A History of Ottoman Architecture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971).

<sup>18</sup> The Friday sermon (*khutba*) in all of these mosques would be read in the sultan's name. As discussed above, the Friday sermon always carried political legitimacy for the ruling power. But the marked emphasis on the state's Sunni orthodoxy during Sultan Süleyman's time, coupled with the sultan's new titles of the "caliph of the world" (*halife-i rû-yi zemîn*), and "caliph of all muslims" (*halîfet'-ül müslimîn*) gave the Friday sermon added significance. For the systematic integration of Sunni Orthodoxy into Ottoman state

Necipoğlu has demonstrated, Ottoman authors' emphasis on the prosperity of Ottoman lands often makes implicit or explicit reference to the lack of mosques, and hence congregational prayer, in Safavid Iran.<sup>19</sup>

The long struggle between Sultan Süleyman and Shah Tahmasp prior to the Amasya Treaty of 1555 must have played a significant role in the Ottoman formulation of rulership, which projected the sultan as the Caliph, and the sole defender of Sunni Islam against Safavid heresy.<sup>20</sup> In fact, as Colin Imber has argued, such formulation of the sultan's position directly depended on a definition of Safavid shahs as Shi'ite heretics, who distorted Sunni Islam by amending clear rules of the religion, such as congregational prayer, who denigrated the Prophet's wife, Aisha, and publicly cursed the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs. All of these figures were, of course, highly respected in the Sunni tradition. In the mid-sixteenth century, during the reign of Sultan Süleyman, the eminent Ottoman jurist Ebusuud was highly influential in explicating the idea that Safavid shahs and all of their subjects were heretics. This argument was in turn integrated flawlessly into official propaganda, and Ebusuud's *fatwas* legitimated fighting the Safavids. This way, "Ottoman Sultans were able to present all their campaigns as holy

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identity and its relationship to state-sponsored architecture, including the legal enforcement of Friday prayer, see Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 47-70.

<sup>19</sup> For example, in his chronicle of the conquest of Tabriz in 1585, the Ottoman court historian Talikizade, for example, mentions how the Akkoyunlu congregational mosque, which was abandoned under Safavid rule, was immediately put to use by initiating the call to prayer from the mosque and by holding the communal Friday prayer there. Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 34.

<sup>20</sup> Concurrently, Süleyman's ambitions respond to the Roman Imperial title of the Habsburg king, and his claim to rulership over all Christians. Indeed, the Ottoman-Habsburg peace treaty of 1547 refers to Charles V as "Spanish king" rather than "Emperor." With this treaty, Charles V and his brother Ferdinand I agreed to pay a yearly tribute to the Ottoman sultan, which was understood as signifying the formers' subordination. Colin Imber, *Ebu's-Su'ud: The Islamic Legal Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 74, 85-86.

wars.”<sup>21</sup> If Ebusuud’s *fatwas* were audacious tools of military propaganda aimed at persuading the Ottoman military to fight a Muslim enemy, the foundation inscription of Sultan Süleyman’s congregational mosque by Ebusuud’s pen was a more subtle, symbolic gesture that communicated the same idea by defining the sultan as the universal caliph. This inscription, placed over the portal of the Süleymaniye Mosque, addresses the sultan as “Possessor of the Kingdoms of the World/ Shadow of God over all Peoples, Sultan of the Sultans of the Arabs and the Persians.” Moreover, he is said to have achieved this title both with the help and support of God himself, and his successful armies, indicating his own excellency in leadership.<sup>22</sup>

But how was the sultan’s claim to universal rulership then communicated to the Safavids? During the second half of the sixteenth century, Safavid embassies to Constantinople were often taken on excursions in the Ottoman capital, which featured especially the hammams of the capital, the Hagia Sophia, and the mosque complexes of Sultan Süleyman and his father Selim I.<sup>23</sup> These tours “expressed an unabashed pride in

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<sup>21</sup> Imber, *Ebu’s-Su’ud*, 86. For Ebusuud’s *fatwas* on the Safavids, see also M. Ertuğrul Düzdağ *Şeyhülislam Ebussuud Efendi Fetvaları Işığında 16. Asır Türk Hayatı* (Istanbul: Enderun, 1972)

<sup>22</sup> For a translation of the entire inscription, and for a discussion of Süleyman’s claim to universal sovereignty by both secular and divine right, see Imber, *Ebu’s-Su’ud*, 75-76, and Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 207-208.

<sup>23</sup> For example, in 1568, the embassy sent by Shah Tahmasp to congratulate the enthronement of Selim II, who succeeded Sultan Süleyman, were made to stop in Istanbul on their way to Edirne. Selaniki, *Tarih* I: 69. Such juxtaposition of the Süleymaniye Mosque with the Hagia Sophia may also be seen as quite strategic, as both monuments cited the mythical Temple of Solomon, and the former Byzantine church served as a model for Süleyman’s mosque. The latter in fact sought to surpass the former by refining it with uniquely Ottoman technical and aesthetic elements. Many contemporary authors and modern scholars have commented on the citation of the Hagia Sophia in Ottoman architecture in general, and in the Süleymaniye in particular. See especially Goodwin, *Ottoman Architecture*; Doğan Kuban, “The Style of Sinan’s Domed

the spectacle value of Istanbul, designed as a showcase for sultanic mosque complexes built as victory memorials.”<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, these visits compelled the envoy and his retinue to observe and take part in prayer at these Friday mosques. These “propagandistic tours” were rather symbolic gestures to impress, if not intimidate, messengers of Safavid shahs. But the lack of mosques in Safavid lands was stated much more forcefully in official correspondence with the shahs by directly questioning their religiosity and hence their authority as Muslim rulers. In one such letter to Shah Abbas’s grandfather, Shah Tahmasp, the Ottoman grandvizier wrote:

You (Shah Tahmasp) claim to be of the true faith of Islam. In your letters, you cite verses from the Qur’an. [However,] those padshahs subscribing to the true faith have in their countries mosques and places of prostration (*cāmi’ler ve mescidler*), wherein are held communally the five daily prayers, following the call to prayer (*ezān* or *adhān*) [from these places of worship]. Friday prayers are held in those mosques, and Friday sermons (*khutba*) are read, in which the prophet, his family and companions are praised. In all fairness, then, can you say there is a hint of piety and Islam in your conducts?<sup>25</sup>

The letter goes on to argue that the Safavid custom of cursing the companions of the prophet is flawed and that kings who allow people under their rule to practice such profanity would in turn be infidels themselves. Pushing the insult further, and in order to assert that the shahs are in fact worse than infidels, and that they are rather heretics—just as Ebusuud describes the Safavids in his *fatwas*—, the grandvizier goes back to the issue

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Structures,” *Muqarnas* 4 (1987), 84; Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 221-222; J.M. Rogers, *Sinan* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006), 41-48.

<sup>24</sup> Necipoğlu, *Age of Sinan*, 68.

<sup>25</sup> Ibrahim Peçevi (Peçuyi), *Tārīḫ-i Peçevî*, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1283/ 1866-67), I: 320.

of worship and says that infidels would at least have churches under their domains, whereas Iran under the shahs “even lack churches.”<sup>26</sup>

By the reign of Shah Abbas, this line of argument, which openly accuses Safavid shahs of blasphemy, had become a commonplace in Ottoman propaganda, and continued to appear again and again in similar harsh language in official correspondence with the Safavid court, especially during times of military conflict. As a consequence, in 1590, early in his reign, the peace treaty Shah Abbas signed with the Ottomans obligated him to agree to stop the ritual cursing of the first three caliphs. In 1555, Shah Tahmasp similarly had promised to do the same when he had concluded the first official treaty with the Ottomans. In fact, just as the grandvizier pointed out in his abovementioned letter to the shah, Tahmasp always wrote long ornate letters peppered with verses from the Qur’an, which attested to his knowledge of Islam and his piety, and with couplets from Persian epics and the work of famed poets, in order to assert his intellectual distinction and sophisticated taste in literature. As I have argued, his selection of priceless gifts for Ottoman sultans states this same idea even more forcefully.

In turn, over the course of the sixteenth century, Ottomans had responded in a variety of ways to Tahmasp’s use of figural excess in his gifts and rhetorical excess in his letters. On certain occasions, such as in 1576 and 1582, some Ottoman high ranking officials and authors have remained silent about such superfluity, assuming that this was the natural and expected manner of treating the sultan. At other times, such as in 1590, Ottoman authors made a special effort to show that the shah’s extraordinary gifts declared his imperative and voluntary subordination to the sultan. In 1590, Shah Abbas’s

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<sup>26</sup> Peçevi, *Tārīḫ*, I: 320.

strategy in selecting and presenting his gifts to the sultan closely followed the tradition established by Shah Tahmasp. However, we will see that as Shah Abbas reformed his state and became more powerful politically, commercially, and militarily, the manner in which he responded to Ottoman accusations began to deviate significantly from that of Shah Tahmasp. Whereas Shah Tahmasp had always let Qur'anic and literary citations engage with Ottoman challenges, and sent Ottoman sultans precious gifts of enormous monetary, cultural and historical value, Shah Abbas chose to completely break with this trend. Under Shah Abbas's new rules of diplomacy, I argue, gifts figured as a primary mechanism to express his refusal to be, or appear to be, subservient to the Ottoman sultan.

### **The Istanbul Peace Treaty of 1590 and Shah Abbas's Subsequent Embassies to the Ottoman court**

All of the conditions put forth by the Ottomans were accepted in principle by Shah Abbas, so that peace would be concluded in 1590. In modern scholarship, this peace treaty has been interpreted as a clear victory for the Ottoman sultan and a humiliating defeat for the Safavid shah.<sup>27</sup> However, as Bekir Kütükoğlu has pointed out, numerous disagreements about the exact place of borders already began to surface during and immediately after the conclusion of peace.<sup>28</sup> Shah Abbas explained in his letters to

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 52; Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*; Kılıç, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 126-32.

<sup>28</sup> For example, whether the region of Karacadağ (or Qarajadāgh) should remain under Safavid rule was an issue of debate during the negotiations. There was disagreement even among Ottoman officials on whether that region was conquered, which encouraged the Safavid envoy to insist that he could not agree to leave those lands to the Ottomans. Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 202-6.

Istanbul that Mahdiquli Khan, the Safavid envoy sent to Istanbul to conclude the peace treaty, was executed after his return to Iran because of his failure to raise some of the shah's objections to the Ottoman territorial demands.<sup>29</sup> Complicating the situation even more for Abbas was the transfer of his nephew, Haydar Mirza, to the Ottoman capital as a condition that the Ottomans had put forth in order to sign the peace agreement. Keeping Haydar Mirza in Istanbul gave the Ottoman sultan significant diplomatic leverage. The Safavid shah's vulnerability with regard to this issue is also evident in Ottoman-Safavid exchanges throughout the prince's residence in Istanbul.

The first Safavid ambassador to discuss the disagreements about border designation was Qara Ahmad Sultan, who arrived in Istanbul at the end of August 1591.<sup>30</sup> A week later, he was received at the Ottoman court. There is no record of any gifts that this envoy might have brought with him. Based on the weight of the issues he came to discuss, and the modest manner in which he was received, however, it seems likely that he did not bring a significant group of gifts that participated in the exchange. Furthermore, also absent in this instance are the extraordinary Ottoman care and effort in giving return gifts as objects and favors to Safavid envoys (as in our case studies of 1568 and 1590), for the envoy was given nothing but a robe of honor and some cash to cover his expenses.<sup>31</sup>

Before the envoy's audience with the sultan, seeing that the shah's letter raised objections about leaving the region of Nahavand to the Ottomans, the courtiers pressured

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<sup>29</sup> Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 203.

<sup>30</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 251.

<sup>31</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 253.



Qara Ahmad to not even mention this issue to the sultan.<sup>32</sup> Qara Ahmad was also charged with asking the sultan for a reassignment of the hostage prince Haydar Mirza's guardian. This was rejected saying "the prince has a fine guardian!"<sup>33</sup> The shah's final demand, which was to receive military support from the Ottomans against the Uzbeks, was also refused, for the Ottomans did not want to break ties with the Sunni Uzbeks.<sup>34</sup>

As if receiving cold responses to all of the shah's demands was not harsh enough, a final disappointment for Qara Ahmad was the arrival at the Ottoman court of an envoy from Khan Ahmad, the governor of Gilan.<sup>35</sup> According to the Ottoman historian Selaniki, upon seeing the lavish festivities organized for the reception of Khan Ahmad's envoy, and the gifts and favors showered on him, Qara Ahmad was devastated.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the envoy's worries were not ungrounded. In addition to the many gifts the governor of Gilan had sent, in his letter he was offering to grant the sultan half of the lands under his rule.<sup>37</sup> Khan Ahmad, who was a Sunni, also complained about religious and political pressure

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<sup>32</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 253. For the dispute over Nahavand, see also Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 204-6.

<sup>33</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 253.

<sup>34</sup> Kılıç, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 135.

<sup>35</sup> Falling on the southwest corner of the Caspian Sea, the region of Gilan held great political, geographic and commercial significance for both the Ottoman and Safavid states. Besides Mazandaran and Shirvan, Gilan was one of the major providers of raw silk in Iran that Ottoman centers of silk production depended on. A major motivation for Ottomans in fighting the Safavids in the 1580s was an anticipation to take control over these regions. On the importance of Gilan in silk production see Inalcık, *Economic and Social History*, 219-230; Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 1999), esp. chapters 2&3. For an overview of the competition over this area, see Carl Max Kortepeter, "Complex Goals of the Ottomans, Persians, and Muscovites in the Caucasus, 1578-1640," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (London and New York: Routledge, 2011), 59-83.

<sup>36</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 252-3.

<sup>37</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 255.

that Shah Abbas supposedly put on him, and was asking for the sultan's help.<sup>38</sup> In response, Shah Abbas sent an envoy to the Ottoman court with a letter of protest regarding a possibility of alliance between the sultan and Khan Ahmad. In this letter, Shah Abbas explained that Gilan has long been a semi-autonomous tributary to the Safavids, and therefore it was not Khan Ahmad's territory to offer the sultan.<sup>39</sup> Fearing the shah, Khan Ahmad fled to the Ottoman court, leaving behind his wife and daughter, who were at the same time the daughter and granddaughter of Shah Tahmasp.<sup>40</sup> The Ottoman response to Shah Abbas was cautious, but vague at best. The letter dated June/July 1592 explained that the governors of Gilan have long paid homage to the Ottoman sultans, and that Khan Ahmad's request for protection was therefore not an impediment to the Ottoman-Safavid peace.<sup>41</sup> When Khan Ahmad reached Istanbul, he was received and hosted for three months with much reverence. In fact, the historian Selaniki, who was assigned as the governor's host (*mihmandar*), compares him to other rulers and princes, such as Shah Tahmasp's brother Alqas Mirza, who had taken refuge at the Ottoman court during the reign of Sultan Süleyman. Unlike Alqas Mirza, however, Khan Ahmad could never secure Ottoman military and political support. Given also that Gilan was conquered by Shah Abbas in the meantime, he could not go back home, and

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<sup>38</sup> According to Selaniki, the Ottoman establishment did not credit such a pressure from Shah Abbas, for no such news had previously come to their attention. They also did not want to jeopardize the peace treaty they had just signed with Abbas. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 255. For a more detailed discussion of the actual correspondence between the Ottoman court, Khan Ahmad, and Shah Abbas, see Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 207-8, n20.

<sup>39</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 267. Seeing that Khan Ahmad was denying having appealed to the Ottoman sultan, Shah Abbas also proceeded to assign his forces on Gilan. Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 622-623.

<sup>40</sup> Shah Tahmasp's daughter Maryam Sultan Begom was married to Khan Ahmad in 1578. Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 339, II: 624.

<sup>41</sup> Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 209-210. It is also clear from the correspondence between the two courts that the Ottomans were threatened by the shah's offensive on Gilan.

died in exile in Istanbul in 1600.<sup>42</sup> In the end, then, it was Shah Abbas who emerged victorious, for he incorporated Gilan into his territories. This issue of Gilan added to the problems and frustrations left unresolved in the Istanbul peace treaty of 1590. Furthermore, the way in which this incident unfolded within Ottoman-Safavid relations also attests to the growing tension and mistrust between the two sides in the aftermath of the peace treaty.

During and following the Khan Ahmad incident, Shah Abbas occupied himself further with renewing the infrastructure of his state, and dealing with the Uzbeks, who had attacked and took a hold of Khurasan, including the cities of Herat and Mashhad.<sup>43</sup> The Ottoman sultan, too, was confronted with major challenges inside and outside the confines of his empire: in the west, war had broken out with the Habsburgs in 1593, when they refused to send the heavy yearly tribute they had been paying the Ottomans since the peace treaty of 1547. There was also much unrest among the Ottoman military, which extended to the famous turn-of-the-century incidents of banditry and rebellion in Anatolia.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> After his three-month-stay in Istanbul, Khan Ahmad headed for Iraq to visit the holy Shi'ite shrines in Najaf and Karbala (with Ottoman permission and financial support). Later, he planned to appeal the Uzbeks but failed and returned to Istanbul. For Khan Ahmad's stay in Istanbul, see Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 295-301. For further discussion of the Khan Ahmad incident, including Ottoman and Safavid sources regarding the issue and how the issue continued to dominate Ottoman-Safavid relations in the first half of the 1590s, see Küttükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 206-213; Manouchehr Kasheff "Gilan, v. History under the Safavids," in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

<sup>43</sup> Robert D. McChesney, "The Conquest of Herat 995-96/1587-88: Sources for the Study of Safavid/ Qizilbash-Shibānid-Uzbek Relations," in *Études safavides*, ed. J. Calmard (Paris and Tehran: Institut français de recherche en Iran, 1993), 69-107.

<sup>44</sup> Mustafa Akdağ, *Türk Halkının Dirlik ve Düzenlik Kavgası: Celali İsyanları* (Ankara, 1975); William J. Griswold, *The Great Anatolian Rebellion, 1000-1020/1591-1611* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1983); Karen Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats: The Ottoman Route to State Centralization* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). For a

All the same, as mentioned earlier, the Safavid prince Haydar Mirza's residence in Istanbul continued to keep the Ottomans at a true diplomatic advantage in their relations with the Safavids. With the mission of renewing peace and leaving behind all the frictions that arose after 1590, Shah Abbas sent an embassy to Istanbul in early 1595. The envoy Kerem Khan also wished "to check on the prince" and had brought with him the prince's nurse (*dāya* or *dāye*).<sup>45</sup> By the time this envoy and his retinue reached the capital, however, sultan Murad III had passed away and his son Mehmed III had assumed the throne.

The envoy and Haydar Mirza took audience with the sultan together, for the prince had not yet congratulated Mehmed III on his enthronement. The Ottoman historian Selaniki refers only to "excellent Persian textiles" (*nefis Acem kuma larıyle*) among the gifts that Shah Abbas had sent the sultan.<sup>46</sup> Mehmed III's letter to Shah Abbas gave news of Murad III's death, his subsequent enthronement, and asked for the prayers and good wishes of the Safavid religious establishment in the western campaign the sultan was preparing to embark on. Mehmed III also granted permission that Abbas send two officials to Baghdad, which was under Ottoman rule, so the poor and needy around the holy Shi'ite shrines there would be fed.<sup>47</sup>

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recent analysis that takes as the main source of troubles as drastic changes in climate, see Sam White, *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 163-187.

<sup>45</sup> *Şehzāde Haydar Mirza'yı pürsiş-i hâtır itmek ve dāyesin getürmek takribiyle Selaniki, Tarih, II: 446.*

<sup>46</sup> The gifts are referred to collectively as "tuhaf," that is, "gifts" rather than tribute.

<sup>47</sup> The sultan did not, however, allow the Shah to complete the project of changing the path of the Euphrates, so it would go by the holy Shi'ite shrine in Najaf, which was a project first formulated by Shah Ismail. A copy of the letter is given in Feridun Ahmed Beg, *Münşe'atü's-selâtin*, II: 328-31. Shah Abbas's letter to Sultan Murad is partly cited

Despite its modest scale, this exchange marks a high point in Ottoman-Safavid relations as suggested by the courteous correspondence and the pleasing quality of favors presented back and forth. At this politically vulnerable moment for both states, it was most sensible to preserve amicable relations. Furthermore, though sources do not give a complete list of the gifts exchanged here, we already begin to see a break with tradition. As noted above, highlighted only are Persian textiles, possibly silks, rather than a long list of numerous objects led by manuscripts.

As such, while at this moment it might be possible to detect the roots of change in Shah Abbas's pattern of gift-giving, on the Ottoman side, this idea would take a while to be digested. The opening double-page painting in a manuscript on Mehmed III's Eğri (Erlau) Campaign of 1596 (the campaign that the sultan refers to in his letter to Shah Abbas) makes a significant allusion to Haydar Mirza's congratulatory audience with the sultan. This manuscript, titled *Tarih-i Feth-i Eğri* (History of the Conquest of Eğri) is undated and was recently sold at a Sotheby's auction in London (Figure 4.7). The painting in question depicts sultan Mehmed III enthroned in the Chamber of Petitions, beyond the third gate of the Topkapı Palace. The inscriptions on the double-spread read: "With felicity Sultan Mehmed was enthroned / The exalted one commanded, and kettledrums were beaten, Soldiers kissed [his] hand, and favors were dispensed / The khans of Crimea and the Persian prince."<sup>48</sup>

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and discussed in Nasrallah Falsafi, *Zindagānī-yi Shah ʿAbbas-i Avval*, 5 vols. (Tehran, 1364/ 1985-6), V: 1688-91.

<sup>48</sup> *Saʿādetle sulṭān Meḥmed cülüs / buyurdī bülend oldī avāz kūs el öpdī sipah çıkdī in ʿām hem / Kıırım ḥānlārī, Mīrzā-yi ʿAcem Arts of the Islamic World Including Fine Carpets and Textiles London 7 October 2009 Sotheby's, Lot 58, fols. 30-31.*

This rare painting of Mehmed III's enthronement departs significantly from Ottoman paintings depicting accession ceremonies in the second half of the sixteenth century and beginning of the seventeenth century. Paintings from this period showing the accession ceremonies of sultans Selim I (r. 1512-20), Süleyman I (r. 1520-66), Selim II (r. 1566-74), Murad III (r. 1574-95), and Ahmed I (r. 1603-17) all follow a compositional and thematic program in accordance with previous models as well as legal codes and protocol registers.<sup>49</sup> If the ceremony takes place in the palace, the sultan sits in his throne in the second courtyard, surrounded by the highest-ranking officials of the court. Those sultans who assumed the throne outside the palace, such as Selim I and Selim II, are shown in imperial tents, but the organization of the ceremony is consistent in all cases. Furthermore, facing the throne is a soldier or a statesman bowing down, taking his oath of allegiance to the sultan, as an indication of the approval of the entire military and political establishment.<sup>50</sup>

By contrast, rather than taking this established mode of visualizing the sultan's enthronement as its model, the painting of Mehmed III's enthronement follows a different tradition: that of the sultan receiving foreign envoys and his high-ranking officials. In the upper left side, the sultan, the grandvizier and other viziers are shown in the Chamber of Petitions in the third courtyard of the palace.<sup>51</sup> Vertically aligned with the

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<sup>49</sup> These paintings have been analyzed in Zeynep Tarım Ertuğ, "The Depiction of Ceremonies in Ottoman Miniatures: Historical Record or a Matter of Protocol?," *Muqarnas* 27 (2010): 251-75.

<sup>50</sup> Tarım Ertuğ, "The Depiction of Ceremonies," 255-8. As Tarım Ertuğ argues, a novelty in the painting of Ahmed I's accession is the depiction of the second court from a wider angle. Also, unlike previous examples, the statesman before Ahmed I kisses his hand rather than keeping a distance from him.

<sup>51</sup> For the third courtyard, where the royal household lived, and the Chamber of Petitions, where the sultan gave audience, see Gülru Necipoğlu, *Architecture, Ceremonial, and*

sultan's audience, at the upper left side of the composition, is the Imperial Council Hall, where the head of the chancery (*ni anci*), finance ministers and secretaries are busy at work. In the foreground on the same page are laid boxes and bags of cash to be distributed. Though there is harmony within each group of officials scattered throughout the palace, unlike other Ottoman accession paintings, the whole ceremony and attention is not aimed towards one direction, namely the sultan. Instead, this manner of organizing the second and third courtyards in a double-spread very closely follows paintings in which the sultan receives foreign ambassadors. Compare, for example, Mehmed III's accession in this copy of the *History of the Conquest of Eğri*, with a painting of the previous sultan Murad III's audience with the Moroccan ambassador in the second volume of the *Book of the King of Kings* (*ehin ehname*) (Figure 4.8).<sup>52</sup> The accession painting is unmistakably a copy of this earlier one. But how should we read this clear and deliberate citation? Instead of bringing forth exclusively the seamless transfer of power to the new sultan manifested in the enthusiasm, deference, and approval of the state establishment, this representation of Mehmed III's accession equally emphasizes the submission of the khans of Crimea, the historical vassals of the Ottomans, together with the Safavid prince. In the painting, the figure of the soldier or the statesman kneeling before the sultan is also absent. Perhaps this figure is replaced here with the vassals or the prince. Indeed, aligned roughly with the Gate of Felicity on the left page, in front of the cypress tree, is a tiny figure, much smaller in scale than those surrounding him, and

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*Power: The Topkapı Palace in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: MIT Press and The Architectural History Foundation, 1991), esp. 91-110.

<sup>52</sup> TSMK, B.200, 142b-143a. Other paintings in this manuscript, for example 28b-29a and 36b-37a, which are about the sultan's audience with Safavid ambassadors Maqsud Khan and Ibrahim Khan in 1580 and 1582 respectively, also are copies of this same composition.

wearing a different style turban. If this is Haydar Mirza, then his presence in this painting surely indicates how significant he had become, not just for the continuation of the Ottoman-Safavid peace, but at this point he came to be directly associated with the sultan's image, a symbol that asserts his legitimacy and power.

### **The Death of a Gift and Its Aftermath**

The court chronicler of Shah Abbas, Iskandar Beg Munshi, mentions among the events of the year 1595 one that “all the people of Iran, considered [as] yet another manifestation of the good fortune that attended this dynasty (the Safavids).” He was referring to the death of Haydar Mirza, the eleven-year-old nephew of Shah Abbas, who was being held as hostage in Istanbul since 1590. Iskandar Munshi further elaborates on the relief this event provided as follows: “Since he was the Shah’s nephew and it was not fitting that a Safavid prince, a *seyyed*’s son and a Shi‘ite of pure faith, should sire children while he was in Ottoman hands, among the enemies of the faith, it was a merciful providence that decreed he should die a natural death of the plague at Istanbul, before he had had any children.”<sup>53</sup> On the Ottoman side, by contrast, the sudden death of this young prince instigated much anxiety, and even suspicion. The Ottoman historian Selaniki, who was also the prince’s host at the Ottoman court, wrote that during the Khan

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<sup>53</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 707. While the Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevi also confirms that the prince died suddenly of the plague, he adds that at a later time Safavids secretly dug up his tomb in Eyüp, and took his body back to Iran, for they did not want it to remain on Ottoman soil. Peçevi, *Tārīḫ-i Peçevî*, I: 320.



Ahmad affair, the high-ranking officials feared for Haydar Mirza's life, for they believed the Safavids were scheming to kill the prince in order to break the peace settlement.<sup>54</sup>

Before the arrival in Istanbul of the last Safavid envoy, Kerem Beg, in February 1595, the new sultan Mehmed III had written to the Safavid court declaring the death of his father and of his enthronement. Following the death of Haydar Mirza in December of the same year, the worries of the Ottoman courtiers began to intensify, for there was no news of an envoy headed for the Ottoman court to congratulate the new sultan. Finally, in April 1596 the grandvizier Sinan Pasha wrote to Shah Abbas to pressure him so he would send an ambassador to congratulate the new sultan and to wish condolences for Murad III's passing. The grandvizier also reminded the shah that he had previously promised, though orally, that he would send one of his own sons had the sultan not found Haydar Mirza an appropriate prince to sign the treaty. Sinan Pasha asked the shah to keep his promise, so that peace could be renewed.<sup>55</sup>

Then, Shah Abbas quickly approved the dispatch of Zulfaqar Khan Qaramanlu, the governor of Ardabil, as ambassador to the court of Mehmed III. Zulfaqar Khan left Khurasan at the end of May 1596.<sup>56</sup> Against Sinan Pasha's expectations, however, the envoy was not going to bring with him a different Safavid prince. His retinue was

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<sup>54</sup> *“Ve bunda Südde-i sa'adet-medârda olan Hamza Mirza ođlı Haydar Mirza'ya bir tarîk ile gezend irişdürmek Kızılbaş-ı bed-ma'âş tâ'îfesiniün aksâ-yı merâmları olup ve mâ-beynde olan sulh u salâhi ber-taraf eyeleüüp, yine ke'l-evvel hâl-i âlem zârî olmak için kâr-zâra başlamak evbâşlarınınun murâdı idüğü rüşen ü müberhendür”* diyü hüşmendân iş'âr eylediler idi. Selaniki, *Tarih*, I: 268.

<sup>55</sup> The letter is summarized in Kütükođlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 217.

<sup>56</sup> Mulla Jalal al-Din Munajjim Yazdi, *Tarikh-i Abbasi ya Ruznama-yi Mulla Jalal*, ed. S. Vahid Niya (Tehran, 1366/1987), 147.

sizeable, consisting of about 300 people, “all picked men, in full panoply.”<sup>57</sup> When the embassy reached Ottoman territory, it was held in Erzurum for a short period, for the sultan had left the capital to go on the Eğri campaign and had reached Sofia.<sup>58</sup> Meanwhile, orders were sent to Istanbul so appropriate preparations were made for the embassy’s entry into the city and stay there.

Similar to the ceremonial entries organized for Safavid embassies that arrived at the Ottoman capital in 1568, 1576, 1580, 1582, and 1590, the Ottoman army and high-ranking state officials were all assembled in military and ceremonial gear to meet the envoy and his retinue on the outskirts of the city. Additionally, on this occasion, 1500 members of the Community of Artists and Artisans of Istanbul (*Asitāne-i sa‘ādetde bin be yüz nefer ehl-i hiref cemā‘ati*) joined the welcome festivities. As in the previous occasions, the embassy passed the Bosphorus on lavish boats, feasting and watching the firing of cannons. The parade continued on the other side, filling the streets of Istanbul. In the plaza fronting the Imperial Gate of the Topkapı Palace, there was an unprecedented display waiting for the embassy to pass by: a giraffe, lions, and an elephant scattering coins.<sup>59</sup>

The way in which the Safavid embassy responded to Ottoman displays of ornament and power did not go unnoticed by contemporary observers. The Ottoman historian Selaniki noted that Safavid officials were dressed “in a strange manner, not like the former *qizilbash* that came from the Eastern Land:” the caps on their turbans (*taç* or

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<sup>57</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 688. Selaniki records that the embassy consisted of 1000 people. Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 653.

<sup>58</sup> Kütükoğlu, *Osmanlı-Iran*, 217.

<sup>59</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 640. The display of these animals is also mentioned in a report from the Venetian ambassadors to the Senate. ASVe, Senato, Copie ottocentesche dei dispacci, Registro XI, 156.

tāj) were quite small and their turbans were round, in the Sufi tradition, crowned with heron feathers. The envoy's turban was different from all others, made of multicolored Indian silk. Some men in his immediate retinue rode their horses alongside him on jeweled Uzbek saddles, bragging that they had received those as tribute.<sup>60</sup> The Venetian ambassadors (*baili*) Marco Venier and Girolamo Capello, who were then residing at the Ottoman capital, similarly mention the Safavids' elegant dress, recording especially the "pearls and jewels decorating their turbans and robes."<sup>61</sup>

Ambassadors Venier and Capello also state, contrary to Ottoman accounts, that the Safavid embassy was accompanied by relatively few Ottoman soldiers and statesmen on horseback due to the current shortage of horses, poor treatment of the existing ones, and broader problems within the military organization.<sup>62</sup> However, the display of military might was a particularly important concern for Ottomans during this encounter. When the sultan returned to Istanbul from the Eğri campaign, the envoy and his retinue were summoned at a place called A çıba ı Evleri, near the funerary mosque complex of ehzade Mehmed. There, they were made to join the crowds to watch the triumphal military parade as it entered the city. One of the four paintings in the well-known manuscript of

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<sup>60</sup> *Ve şimdiye dek Asitâne-i sa'âdeti diyâr-ı Şark'dan gelen Kızılbaşlar tavrına muhâlif uslûb-ı garîb ihtirâ' eyleyüp, taçları gayet küçük ve sendereslu ve sarıkları müdevver edebde sūfiyâne haşa irsâliyyesi de var ve üstüne murassa' balıkcın sorguç dahi takınmışlar ve Han'un saruğı hindî alaca harîrden vâkı olmuş hatta önünce bir yedek saruğı dahi getirülüp giderdi. Ve yanınca peykler ve ardınca tîr u kemân ile kafadarları ve yedi yorgun ve turgun murassa' eğerlü yedekleri ve üç eğeri Özbek'den alınmış murassa' kaltaklar ki aktarmamızdur diyü arz-ı kâlâ eylediler. Selaniki, Tarih, II: 639-40.*

<sup>61</sup> ASVe, Senato, Copie ottocenteschi dei dispacci, Registro XI, 253.

<sup>62</sup> *La causa di cosi poca compagnia Turchesca che viene attribuita al mancamente de cavalli essendo comparsi anco maltrattati quelli che vi erano et perchè ancora la gente di questa militia si trova in male stato* ASVe, Senato, Copie ottocenteschi dei dispacci, Registro XI, 253-254.

the *ehnāme-i Sultan Mehmed-i Sālis* (Book of Kings of Sultan Mehmed) or *Eğri Fethi Tārihi* (History of the Conquest of Eğri)<sup>63</sup> depicts this event (Figure 4.9). In this painting, the procession, formed around the sultan, moves from right to left, passing through two lines of curious spectators lined up along the opposite sides of the avenue. The sultan rides his horse near the middle, dressed in royal garments decorated with jewels, and his large turban is topped by two plumes of heron feathers.<sup>64</sup> The only other turban that has

<sup>63</sup> TSMK, H. 1609, 68b-69a. Three of these paintings are double-spreads. The entire manuscript was written in verse, in the genre of *gazanama* (campaign monograph), and tells the story of Mehmed III's Eğri campaign, in which the sultan conquered the Fortress of Eğri, and his defeat of the Habsburg army at the Battle of Haçova (Mezőkeresztes). The text was written by Talikizade Mehmed, who personally attended the campaign. For Talikizade, see Christine Woodhead, "From Scribe to Litterateur: The Career of a Sixteenth-Century Ottoman *Kātib*," *Bulletin (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies)* 9, no.1 (1982): 55-74. The paintings of the manuscript were executed by Nakkaş Hasan. For this manuscript and its paintings, see Zeren Akalay (Tanındı), "Nakkaş Hasan Paşa," *Sanat VI* (1977): 114-25; Géza Fehér, *Turkish Miniatures from the Period of Hungary's Turkish Occupation* (Budapest: Corvina Press, 1978); Vahid Çabuk, "Tālikī-zāde Mehmed Subhī Efendi'nin Eğri Seferi Şehnāmesi" (PhD dissertation, Istanbul Üniversitesi, 1986); Christine Woodhead, "Ottoman Historiography on the Hungarian Campaigns: 1596, the Eger Fethnamesi," in *VII. CIEPO Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1994), 469-477; Christine Woodhead, "The Ottoman *gazanama*: Stylistic Influences on the Writing of Campaign Narratives," in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, eds. Kemal Çiçek et al., 4 vols. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), III: 55-60; Bağcı et al., *Osmanlı Resim Sanatı* (Istanbul: T.C. Kültür ve Turizm Bakanlığı, 2006), 180-81.

<sup>64</sup> In the *History of the Conquest of Eğri*, Talikizade Mehmed has a long section about the military parade entering Istanbul, in highly eulogistic language. In this section, the sultan, together with his dress, and all of his equipment in jeweled gold, is likened to a sun. This text also frequently evokes the *Shahnama* in reference to the sultan, arguing that he was superior to the best kings in the epic. Consider, for example:

*Bu āyīn ü bu ferr ü bu şevketi*

*Bu satvet ile hevl ile heybeti*

*Ne gördi Arab ne işitdi Acem*

*Bu ferri Firīdūn u bu cem'i Ceml*

This ritual, this glory, this grandeur

This power, this awe and terror

Neither has the Arab seen, nor has the Persian heard

[Nor] Faridun this glory, [and] Jam (Jamshid) this assembly

the same feathers is that of the Safavid envoy, who watches the sultan on his feet from an observation booth at the top right corner of the painting. People standing closest to the procession on both sides hold up long pieces of luxurious textiles in different colors, which form a spectacular barrier between the spectators and the procession. In fact, these men have been identified as Istanbul's textile merchants, and "Jews, Christians and Armenians," (*Yahūd ve Nasārā ve Ermeniyye tāifesi*) who brought their most precious merchandise, silks, satins, and velvets of the highest quality.<sup>65</sup> Among the large crowd, other Safavids are distinguishable through their elegant turbans with extensions in gold woven cloth, instead of the more conventional red. Some of these men can be seen at the front line, holding the textiles. Selaniki records that the Safavids were especially handed these various types of European and Persian textiles,<sup>66</sup> obliging them to take part in the celebrations organized for the sultan's triumph, rather than being its passive observers. Among the thousands of people gathered to watch the parade were religious figures, who kept praying, and reciting the Qur'an, giving thanks to God for the success of the sultan.

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The word for "glory" here, is "*fer* or *farr*," which is also translated as "luminous glory" or "divine glory." In ancient Iranian concepts of kingship, as in the *Shahnama*, *farr* frequently appears as the most significant attribute of kingship. *Farr* connotes God's approval of the king's authority, which endows him with sovereignty, beyond pure power. The application of this concept is also fitting here, for *farr* is believed to manifest itself as radiance and brilliance. Everything about the Mehmed III in this manuscript, from his turban to his dress to the trappings on his horse are said to radiate blinding light. For the verses above, see Çabuk, "Eğri Seferi Şehnāmesi," 243; for the concept of *farr*, see Iraj Bashiri, *Firdowsi's Shahname: 1000 Years After* (Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, 1994), 178-88; Abolala Soudavar, *The Aura of Kings: Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2003).

<sup>65</sup> *al'ā serāser ve dībālar ve atlas ve kemhālar ve çatmalar ve sirenkler* (serenkler) Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 652. For these fabrics, see Hülya Tezcan, *Atlaslar Atlası: Pamuklu, Yün ve Ipek Koleksiyonu*, (Istanbul: Yapı Kredi, 1993), 30-34; Julian Raby and Alison Effeny, eds., *Ipek, The Crescent and the Rose: Imperial Ottoman Silks and Velvets* (Istanbul and London: T.E.B., 2001), 341.

<sup>66</sup> *envā ve ecnās-ı akmişe-i Acem ve Frengi çeküip Kızılbaşlar'un ellerine viriüp* Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 653.

Meanwhile, as Mehmed III passed through the streets of Istanbul, hundreds of sheep were slaughtered in honor of his conquest.<sup>67</sup>

In the end, if we are to trust the Ottoman historian Selaniki's detailed account, unlike the previous Safavid ambassadors that he had seen, Zulfaqar Khan was not particularly humbled by the courteous and affable manner in which his embassy was treated. The envoy refused to stay at the palace prepared for him, for it was previously assigned to the hostage Safavid prince Haydar Mirza, who had died there. Selaniki also accused Zulfaqar Khan for being ill-fitted for this mission; he was "illiterate and vulgar, a black-hearted and ignorant good-for-nothing." It seems that what really infuriated Selaniki, if accurate, was the envoy's refusal to visit the grandvizier saying "I have come for the *padshah*, not for the grandvizier; that is not our custom, I am a khan and *sipahsalar* (commander-in-chief)!"<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, as we have seen in previous chapters, it was standard Ottoman protocol for important envoys to pay visits to the grandvizier and other viziers before their audience with the sultan. The conversations and gifts exchanged during these encounters were in fact very much part of the negotiation when significant issues were at stake, for it was these high-ranking officials, the grand vizier in

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<sup>67</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 652-54; Çabuk, "Eğri Seferi Şehnāmesi," 242-49. We also learn from Talikizade's account that women also came to see the sultan's entry. Indeed, the painting in the *History of the Conquest of Eğri* shows women watching the parade from behind two windows at the upper right.

<sup>68</sup> *Sipahsalar* was one of the highest military positions in the Safavid military system, lower in rank than the post of *qurchibashi*. See Vladimir Minorsky, trans. and ed., *Tadhkirat Al-Muluk: A Manual of Safavid Administration (circa 1137/1725)* (London: Messrs. Luzac & Co., 1943), 75-6; Roger Savory, "The Office of *Sipahsalar* (Commander-in-Chief) in the Safavid State," in *Proceedings of the Second European Conference of Iranian Studies*, eds. Bert G. Fragner et al. (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1995), 597-615; Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001), 17-18. The grandvizier did give a private feast for the envoy before he left for Iran (see below) in March 1597. Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 676-77.

particular, that acted as the true liaison between the sultan and the envoy. We have also seen that the Ottoman state assumed complete financial responsibility for the daily expenses of such embassies, giving them a per diem in cash, and providing their kitchen staples. Considering these favors from the sultan insufficient, Zulfaqar Khan is said to have gone shopping for more provisions at high prices in Istanbul.<sup>69</sup> If accurate, these small frictions must have added to the growing uneasiness and suspicion that the Ottomans felt towards the Safavids and the continuation of peace with them.

On the day of his audience with the the sultan, the envoy was first taken into the Imperial Council Hall at the Topkapı Palace for a brief meeting with the grandvizier. During this customary meeting that preceded a great feast, the grandvizier Ibrahim Pasha quizzed Zulfaqar Khan about Shah Abbas. But first, Ibrahim Pasha asked him who was the head of the religious classes (*sadr-ı ulemā*)<sup>70</sup> at the court of Shah Abbas. To the surprise of the grandvizier and other viziers, however, Zulfaqar Khan could not remember who it was. Ibrahim Pasha then wanted to know whether Shah Abbas engages in intellectual pursuit, like his grandfather Shah Tahmasp. But when pressed further about what sciences, or disciplines of knowledge, interest the shah, Zulfaqar Khan did not have much to say. According to Selaniki, then “they (grand vizier and other viziers) all saw

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<sup>69</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 634, 640, 675.

<sup>70</sup> For the office of *sadr* in the Safavid administrative system, which had roots in the Timurid and Turkoman courts, see Minorsky, *Tadhkirat Al-Muluk*, 111; R.M. Savory, “The Safavid Administrative System,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, eds. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 351-72; Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam: Religion, Political Order, and Societal Change in Shi'ite Iran from the Beginning to 1890* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 123-125; C.P. Turner “Şadr, 4. In the Safavid Period” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online; Willem Floor, “The *sadr* or Head of the Safavid Religious Administration,” *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 150, (2000): 461-500.

that the envoy was highly ineloquent and undistinguished, they all agreed he was a rather ordinary man.”<sup>71</sup>

As was the custom, after the feast, the gifts that Zulfaqar Khan had brought were paraded in the palace, held by the gatekeepers (*kapıcılar*). Where the gatekeepers fell short, the janissaries helped with carrying the remaining gifts. Indeed, there were an impressive number of gifts that Shah Abbas had sent, enumerated in the list provided by the Venetian *baili*, attached to the end of their report to the Senate, dated January 1597 (see the Appendix).<sup>72</sup>

In selecting this group of gifts, Shah Abbas had unmistakably taken his cue from Shah Tahmasp, as he did in 1590, for the list follows the example set by him closely, both in terms of the variety and number of each type of object. The list begins with two copies of the Qur’an.<sup>73</sup> Following these are seven volumes of various other books, consisting of collections of poems, such as a *Divan* of the renown fourteenth-century Persian poet Hafiz, and stories in verse, such as a *Gulistan* (Rose Garden) of the thirteenth-century Persian poet Sa‘di. The gifts also included luxury textiles, including velvets, brocades, and damasks, all woven with gold threads. Like Shah Tahmasp, Shah

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<sup>71</sup> *Gördiler ki ilçiniñ suhan-verlik ile münāsebeti yok āmiyāne kişi mikdārınca söylediler.* Selaniki, *Tarih*, II: 656-7.

<sup>72</sup> ASVe, Senato, Copie ottocenteschi dei dispacci, Registro XI, 257-9. Ottoman and Safavid chronicles mention these gifts in passing. Though Selaniki states that they have been recorded in an Ottoman protocol register, I have not yet been able to locate this document.

<sup>73</sup> The list also indicates who penned these books. Though unidentifiable from the Italian rendition of their names, they are probably influential calligraphers. Shah Tahmasp had sent a Qur’an allegedly by the hand of ‘Ali ibn Abi Talib, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet. I have argued that this was a daring gesture, expressing his Shi‘ite identity and his royal lineage going back to this most venerated figure in Shi‘ism after the prophet.



Abbas sent Mehmed III antidotes and drugs, called mumies<sup>74</sup> and bezoar stones,<sup>75</sup> both of which were in high demand through the early modern period among the wealthy, and brought high profits to merchants trading them. Reminiscent of Shah Tahmasp's tent to Murad III sent in 1576, among the gifts were a large velvet tent, embroidered with gold and satin threads. Its ropes were made of silk and decorated with gold rings and precious stones. The canopy to go over the entrance of the tent was similarly made of gold-woven velvet, with silk ropes and silver columns. Other highlights among the gifts were small and large carpets from Khurasan and Kerman,<sup>76</sup> some of which are indicated in the list as velvet and gold-woven. The list ends with bows, arrows and horses that came with damask blankets.

These gifts, then, conformed to the norms of court etiquette, as a group of properly assembled luxury objects that Ottoman sultans had by then been accustomed to receiving from Safavid shahs. Even though Shah Abbas has clearly followed the trend set by Shah Tahmasp in his selection of gifts on this occasion, as he did for the Istanbul

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<sup>74</sup> *Mumia*, or *mumiya* in Persian and Turkish, refers to bitumen used as a drug for healing wounds, and aches. For more on these drugs, see Chapter 1 above.

<sup>75</sup> Bezoar or bezuar is a word deriving from the Persian *pānzahr*, to mean a strong antidote against poison. These were not rocks, but concretions that formed in various organs of animals. In the early modern period, the best bezoars were believed to come from Persia. For a thorough study on the origins, circulation, and various attitudes towards the effectiveness of bezoar stones in the early modern period, see Peter Borschberg, "The Euro-Asian Trade in Bezoar Stones (approx. 1500 to 1700)," in *Artistic and Cultural Exchanges between Europe and Asia, 1400-1900: Rethinking Markets, Workshops and Collections*, ed. Michael North (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 29-44.

<sup>76</sup> According to the Portuguese traveler Pedro Teixeira, "the richest and finest and most esteemed" carpets of Iran at this time were made in Yazd. "The second best are those from the kingdom of Kermon (Kirman), the third from Karason (Khurasan)." Pedro Teixeira, *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira*, trans. W.F. Sinclair and D. Ferguson, Hakluyt Soc., Ser. II, vol. 9 (London: Hakluyt Society, 1902), 243 n2. We have seen that in 1568, Shah Tahmasp had likewise sent Selim II carpets from Khurasan. In 1576, the same shah's gifts to the next sultan, Murad III also included similar carpets, though they were much greater in number.

Peace Treaty in 1590, the relations that this group of gifts evoked and the reactions they elicited were not the same. We have seen that during the last decades of the sixteenth century, Safavid gifts to the Ottoman court had come to acquire a definition close to tribute, symbolizing the shah's servitude to the sultan. A paradoxical quality of this servitude was the insistence in Ottoman sources that Safavid gifts came because it was the shah's obligation to do so. At the same time, however, Ottoman authors delightedly underscored that the shah's servitude was a deliberate, if not an enthusiastic one. By contrast, in 1597, the Ottoman delight in receiving Safavid gifts had turned bittersweet. Widespread suspicion about Shah Abbas's character and the unpredictability of his future plans were mixed with contempt towards the seemingly discourteous ambassador. The giving of traditional gifts, in this context, far from reaffirming tradition, were rather understood as reminders of a moment in time that was by then lost. The court chronicler of Shah Abbas, Iskandar Munshi, wrote the following about the gifts presented to Mehmed III: "On this mission, [Zulfaqar Khan] bestowed gifts with such liberality that certain mean-spirited Ottomans accused him of foolishness and extravagance."<sup>77</sup>

During his audience with the sultan, according to Selaniki, Zulfaqar Khan presented the letter from the shah,<sup>78</sup> and was allowed to speak only briefly; he wished that the sultan's rule be blessed, and his opponents be forever suppressed. The Venetian ambassadors Venier and Capello wrote, however, that the ambassador also brought up important business yet to be resolved. According to their report, the ambassador remained

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<sup>77</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 688.

<sup>78</sup> The letter expressed the shah's condolences for the death of Murad III, and congratulations to the new sultan Mehmed III on his enthronement. Shah Abbas also apologized for the delay in the dispatch of the embassy, which was due to his military engagement in Khurasan. This letter is partly cited in Falsafi, *Shah 'Abbas-i Avval*, V: 1693-5.

in audience for a very long time to discuss the issue of Tabriz. They state that when the two powers had signed the peace treaty, the sultan had promised to keep Tabriz until Prince Haydar, who was very young at the time, would reach a certain age. Since the prince had died in the meantime, the shah was demanding that that territory be returned to him.<sup>79</sup> Ottoman and Safavid sources make no mention of such a negotiation. There is also no ambiguity in the Treaty of 1590 itself about the territorial assignment of Tabriz: the Shah agreed to recognize it as Ottoman territory. Still, it is quite likely that either the shah singlehandedly raised an objection about the Ottoman claim over Tabriz or some other land, or the Ottomans themselves questioned the ambassador about the suspicious conditions under which the prince had suddenly died, to imply that the Safavids had a hand in it. In any case, the possibility of such an unresolved or tension-raising issue in 1597 is also supported by the fact that Zulfaqar Khan remained in Istanbul for another two months. The envoy left for Iran in March that year, after having a final audience with the sultan, after which, he was presented with many gifts. Zulfaqar Khan received a horse with silver chains and saddle, and many precious robes of honor; he was also given another horse with gold chains and saddle to bring to Shah Abbas. Additionally, fifty men in his retinue were given precious robes of honor of the highest quality (*hil<sup>c</sup>at-ı serāser-i*

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<sup>79</sup> ... [il] Persiano habbia egli mandato questo suo Ambasciatore a far l'ufficio di congratulatione; ma essendo stato l'Ambasciatore lungamente dentro la camera del Gran Signore a trattar seco ciò ha dato occasione molto di discorrere dicendosi che nella capitulatione di pace seguita tra questi due potentati il Gran Signore habbi promesso di tenir in deposito Tauris sino a tanto che il figliuolo del Persiano all'hora piccolo fusse pervenuto a certa età ma che essendo morto il detto figliuolo con sospetto che possa esser stato avitato da questa parte l'Ambasciator a nome del Re di Persia ricerche hora che le sia restituita questa piazza, il tempo farà conoscere la verità di queste trattationi ASVe, Senato, Copie ottocenteschi dei dispacci, Registro XI, 254-5.

*fāhireler*).<sup>80</sup> Among Safavid sources, only Iskandar Munshi mentions briefly that Zulfaqar Khan arrived in Iran “bearing appropriate gifts.”<sup>81</sup>

Significantly, before his departure, the envoy also paid multiple visits to the grandvizier Ibrahim Pasha’s own residence. During the grandvizier’s feasts, “boundless dishes beyond compare” were served, and Zulfaqar Khan was given three hundred robes of honor, two horses, silver dishes, and “excessive amounts of various kinds of textiles.”<sup>82</sup> Another one of these meetings was a private audience that took place at night, in which the grandvizier showered the envoy with many favors, which included “multiple gifts and robes of honor” (*envā<sup>c</sup>-ı tuhaf ve hila<sup>c</sup>-i fāhireleriyle*).<sup>83</sup> As noted in previous chapters, such visits were customary, though they would take place as soon as envoys reached Istanbul, rather than months after their audience with the sultan. Accordingly, the favors presented to envoys and their retinues in these encounters were meant for them to put to use during their stay, rather than only as objects to bring back home and keep as mementos of their mission. Just like the robes of honor given to them by the sultan, which they would be forced to wear during their audience with him, all of these gifts from the high-ranking Ottoman officials were objects of domination to be used and worn in public in Istanbul. The timing of these specific encounters is therefore quite unusual and against established tradition.

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<sup>80</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 675.

<sup>81</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 689.

<sup>82</sup> *Ve envā-ı et‘ime-i nefise-i bī-hadd u bī-kıyās çekilüp ve sâ’ir zamānda vüzerā-i mütekaddimīn eyledikleri harc u masārifden fevka’l-hadd ve’l-gāye olup, üç yüz hil<sup>c</sup>at-ı fāhire-i serāser ve iki esb-i mükemmel ve evānī-i nukre ve akmişe-i mütenevvi<sup>c</sup>a hadden efzūn virilüp* Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 676.

<sup>83</sup> Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 677.

## The End of the Era of Boundless Gifts

Soon after Zulfaqar Khan's return to Iran, Shah Abbas found himself in a situation in which he could make military moves with relatively more freedom, unrestrained by the Uzbek threat to the east. In 1598, Abbas had already begun making plans to restore the region of Khurasan, which had been conquered by the Uzbeks early in his reign. Sovereignty over this region must have been a particularly important for Shah Abbas, for he was born and raised there, in the city of Herat, just as had his grandfather Shah Tahmasp. Khurasan also carried the legacy of Timurid Iran, and was home to the shrine of Imam Reza in Mashhad, the most important Shi'ite holy site in Safavid Iran (Figure 4.10).<sup>84</sup> As the shah's preparations for an attack on Khurasan were already underway, news of the death of the Uzbek ruler Abdullah Khan reached the Safavid court. Soon after that, the shah and his military commanders were able to take back Khurasan.<sup>85</sup>

The reconquest of Khurasan was a great source of pride for Shah Abbas, who extended tax cuts to people living under his rule in celebration of his regaining of these territories, and pompously announced his victory to neighboring rulers. To this end, as Iskandar Munshi writes, the shah promptly dispatched embassies to the Ottoman and Mughal courts.<sup>86</sup> Led by the courtier (*ishik-āghāsī*) Muhammad-quli Beg Arabgirli,<sup>87</sup> the

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<sup>84</sup> Kishwar Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran* (I.B. Tauris: London, 2011), see esp. 159-186.

<sup>85</sup> The Uzbek throne was shaken further by dynastic quarrels and struggles after Abdollah Khan's death. For these struggles and Shah Abbas's eventual victory over the Uzbeks, see Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 727-63. For Safavid-Uzbek relations during the reign of Shah Abbas, see Falsafi, *Shah 'Abbas-i Avval*, IV: 1435-52.

<sup>86</sup> Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 773.

<sup>87</sup> Lucien-Louis Bellan, *Chah Abbas I, Sa Vie, Son Histoire* (Paris: Geuthner, 1932), 76-86; E. Denison Ross, *Sir Anthony Sherley and his Persian Adventure* (London, 1933), 26-

embassy to Istanbul reached there in July 1599. In his report, the Venetian *bailo* Girolamo Capello noted how much suspicion the arrival of this embassy aroused in the minds of Ottoman officials, who were charged with the welcoming ceremonies in Istanbul. The Ottomans were also much disturbed by the sheer size of the delegation, which numbered over five hundred people.<sup>88</sup> Certainly, unlike this unexpected mission, throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, such impressive embassies from Safavid Iran had only come to Istanbul in response to official correspondence, with the aim of congratulating new sultans on their enthronements. If the disproportion between the pomp and the purpose of the Safavid embassy on this occasion mildly disturbed the Ottomans, the gifts that they brought were to astound, even scandalize them.

Shah Abbas's victory over the Uzbeks truly marked a turning point in Ottoman-Safavid relations, which was manifested most concretely and significantly in the unusual gifts he sent for the sultan. In stark contrast to his previous gifts, which closely mimicked those sent by Shah Tahmasp to the Ottoman court in the preceding decades, this time, Abbas sent nothing but keys to the fortresses and cities he had just conquered in Khurasan. Girolamo Capello describes how these highly symbolic gifts were presented as follows:

[The ambassador] during his audience, presented to the king twelve gold keys and twelve silver keys placed on two illuminated wooden platters. He said that his king—with the support of God, and with the kind friendship of the Gran Signore (the sultan)—had conquered and thereby stripped his country of his enemy and impostors. In an effort to renew and conserve peace with His Majesty, he

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27. These sources cite Iskandar Beg Munshi; however, as Kütükoğlu points out, Munshi does not give the name of the ambassador *Osmanlı-Iran*, 220. Selaniki notes the name of the ambassador as “eşik ağası Karahan Ağa.” Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 814.

<sup>88</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 49, 307a.

was sending [the sultan] twenty four keys to cities and fortresses that were reconquered, and these were being offered as if they were his.<sup>89</sup>

Against established diplomatic tradition, as Capello further writes, the keys came “with no other sort of present, neither with any offering (*donativo*) for the sultan, nor for the high-ranking officials (*Bassà*), as is common practice.”<sup>90</sup> Significantly, though some Ottoman sources mention the keys,<sup>91</sup> the widespread disappointment with these ambitious gifts coupled with profound feelings of “doubt and suspicion” towards this Safavid mission are underscored only in the *bailo*’s report to Venice.

As Capello observed, the contents of these gifts and their presentation are different from all other Safavid gifts in the living memory of any member of the Ottoman elite and sultan. The keys do evoke, however, some of the objects exchanged between Shah Ismail, the first ruler of the Safavid dynasty, and his contemporary, the Ottoman sultan Selim I, in the early sixteenth century. While those openly offensive objects came with letters that had equally provoking, even insulting messages, Shah Abbas’s gifts

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<sup>89</sup> *Egli nell’audientia sua presentò al Re dodici chiavi d’oro, et dodici di argento sopra due piatti di legno miniate; et disse, che havendo che suo Re con il favor di Dio, et con le buona amicitia del Gran Sig[no]re soggiogato, et superato il suo nemico, et impostori cosi del suo paese, egli riconoscendo il tutto della pace, che conserva con S[ua] M[ae]stà le mandava à presentar quelle chiavi do venti quattro città, et castelli requistati, le quali egli come sue le offeriva* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 49, 340b-341a. The Ottoman historian Selaniki phrases the message from the shah in the first person: “My fortresses and my own self belong to the padshah, the refuge of the world.” Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 814.

<sup>90</sup> ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 49, 341a.

<sup>91</sup> Two Ottoman sources briefly mention the keys as Bekir Kütükoğlu has noted. The seventeenth century Ottoman chronicler Karaçelebizade Abdülaziz wrote: “When the shah of Iran claimed Khurasan and Mashhad without litigation, he sent twenty four keys to fortresses he had conquered as a gift to the Porte of the king of kings by way of reverence” (*şüret-i şadâkatden tuhfe’-i dergâh-ı şehinşâh sitâre*). Karaçelebizade Abdülaziz, *Ravzatü’l-Ebrâr* (Cairo: Bulaq, 1248/ 1832), 487. In Selaniki’s account, the twenty four keys are said to have been presented in one gold and one silver tray (*biri altun tebsi ve biri gümüüş tebsi içinde koyup*). Selaniki, *Tarih* II: 814.

made a calculated effort to disguise such an overt proposition. Rather than directly challenging the sultan by bluntly questioning his power and legitimacy to provoke him into war, Shah Abbas's keys made an unabashed declaration of his increasing military power on the one hand, and on the other, they audaciously declared his allegiance to Twelver Shi'ism.

As stated earlier, such a presentation of keys to cities and fortresses as gifts was unprecedented within Ottoman-Safavid diplomatic gift exchanges.<sup>92</sup> Nor does this act have any roots within the Islamic gift-giving tradition. However, there was an established practice that attests to the frequent movement of such objects: as booty (*ghanīma*).<sup>93</sup> Comprising usually of cash, portable objects, land, captives, and animals, booty would be

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<sup>92</sup> At the Topkapı Palace Museum, there remain a few dozen keys of fortresses that have either been conquered or presented to sultans through the centuries. Most of these, especially those that bear inscriptions and dates are from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. For these keys, see İsmail Ünal, "Kale Anahtarları," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 11 (1963): 119-52; Oktay Aslanapa, "Topkapı Sarayında Kalmış Bazı Kale Anahtarları," *Sanat Tarihi Yıllığı* 11 (1983): 13-26. Though we know little about the ceremonial use of these keys to various fortresses, there is relatively more information about the keys to the Kaba, which were also held, with great pride, by the Ottomans. For the keys to the Kaba, see Tercan Yılmaz, *The Holy Ka'ba: A Study on the Collection of Locks and Keys Kept at the Topkapı Palace Museum in Istanbul* (Istanbul: IRCICA, 1993) (in Arabic); Hilmi Aydın, *Pavilion of the Sacred Relics: The Sacred Trusts, Topkapı Palace Museum* (Istanbul: Işık Yayınları, 2004); Süleyman Beyoğlu, "The Ottoman and the Islamic Sacred Relics," in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilisation*, eds. Kemal Çiçek et al., 4 vols. (Ankara: Yeni Türkiye, 2000), IV: 36-44; See also Tahsin Öz, *Hırka-i Saadet Dairesi ve Emanat-ı Mukaddese*, İstanbul 1953; Yaşar İslam and Nebil Fazıl Alsan, *Mukaddes Emanetler*, İstanbul 1985; Haluk Şehsuvaroğlu, "Müslümanlığın Mukaddes Emanetleri," *Tarih-i Osmani Encümeni Mecmuası* 42 (1923).

<sup>93</sup> According to Islamic law, war booty was to be distributed such that one fifth went to orphans, the poor and the needy, and the descendants of the Prophet (Qur'an 8:41). The rest was usually shared between the ruler, the public treasury and the army. See F. Løkkegaard, "Ghanīma," *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online. For Medieval objects that changed hands through looting, or taken as booty or ransom see Aḥmad b. al-Raḥīd Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts and Rarities (Kitāb al-Hadāyā wa al-Tuḥaf)*, trans. Ghāda al-Ḥijjāwī al-Qaddūmī (Cambridge, Mass.: Center for Middle Eastern Studies, 1996), 166-224, 225-6.



taken, of course, against an enemy's will. Not only were objects or land taken as such significant for their monetary value, but their possession also epitomized victory and domination over the adversary. It was especially objects with significant histories, for example those imbued with the original owner's identity, that were most prized. The trajectory of this tradition through the first five centuries of Islamic rule can be traced from Ibn al-Zubayr's famous eleventh-century *Book of Gifts and Rarities*. In this book, such "inalienable possessions"<sup>94</sup> are emphasized and described in most detail when compared with cash or other objects procured as booty.<sup>95</sup>

In similar fashion, throughout the sixteenth century, such inalienable possessions played a significant role within Ottoman-Safavid relations. In fact, the movement of these objects—whether given voluntarily or taken forcibly—not just mirrored these relations but defined them in diverse ways. After the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514, the victorious Ottoman sultan Selim I brought back to his court from Tabriz a significant amount of booty, including artists and many objects that originally belonged to the contemporary Safavid ruler Shah Ismail, his archenemy. It was those objects inscribed with Shah Ismail's names and titles that were kept as some of the most prized items in the Ottoman treasury for centuries to come, and some of them are on display at the Topkapı Palace

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<sup>94</sup> Annette Weiner calls inalienable possessions those objects "that are imbued with the intrinsic and ineffable identities of their owners, which are not easy to give away." When compared to similar objects that lack such qualities, because of their prestigious histories, inalienable possessions carry more authority as they change hands. Annette B. Weiner, *Inalienable Possessions: The Paradox of Keeping-While-Giving* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and Oxford: University of California Press, 1992).

<sup>95</sup> As al-Qaddumi points out, cash and luxury objects acquired as booty from Persia take pride of place in this work. Ibn al-Zubayr, *Book of Gifts*, 43, 166-174, 225-7.

Museum today.<sup>96</sup> The significance of such heirloom objects is evident further in the enduring demand for them by the Ottomans, stemming from their strong desire to continue acquiring similar objects. A request sent to the Safavid court from Sultan Süleyman’s grandvizier, Ibrahim Pasha, in the 1530s vividly demonstrates this point. In his memoirs, Shah Tahmasp relates Ibrahim Pasha’s request, written in the imperative, as follows: “[You (Shah Tahmasp)] send *as gifts* some of the weapons and other bejeweled equipment left from the time of Shah Ismail, I (Ibrahim Pasha) will present them to the sultan and make an effort to convince him to retract from these lands and return this country to you.”<sup>97</sup> Such a demand attests to the centrality of unique objects—normally kept out of circulation—in shaping Ottoman-Safavid relations. Consequently, victory was neither contingent on, nor contained in, winning battles, acquiring land, or securing the allegiance of people. Objects that once belonged to Shah Ismail were desired at the Ottoman court for their potential to act as testaments of victory, as reminders of political dependencies and asymmetries. Furthermore, Ibrahim Pasha was asking the shah to send his father’s possessions at his own will, as gifts. But his doing so would only underscore the latter point, and ensure that both sides of the transaction recognize the objects’

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<sup>96</sup> These consist of jade cups and flasks, as well as an armband and belt, see the Introduction above.

<sup>97</sup> Italics, my emphasis. Shah Tahmasp mentions that the letter was addressed to “bīgum,” which probably refers to one of his daughters or his powerful sister Pari Khan Khanum. He adds that this same lady had also previously received a letter from a member of the Ottoman religious establishment (*‘ulamā*) with a similar request: *mazmūn-i kitābat ānki az yarāq u murassa‘ ālāt ki az ḥazrat-i shāh isma‘īl (‘alaihi al-raḥmat va al-rizvan) mānda chizī chand bituḥfa befrastand ki man ānha ra biḥidmat-i ḥazrat-i ḥvāndagār firistāda iltimās-i sulḥ nimāyam va neguzāram ki ḥud mutavajjih-i īn diyār shavad va bāz in mulk ra bi shomā musallam darad va mā nīz bāz gardīm. Va ulama nīz darīn bāb ‘arīza bibīgum navashta būd.* Shah Tahmasp, *Tazkira-yi Tahmasp*, ed. D.C. Phillott (Calcutta: Asiatic Society, 1912), 25.

meaning as such, as objects bearing material witness to Ottoman victory on the one hand, and Safavid subjugation and humiliation on the other.

In response, Shah Tahmasp never sent heirlooms to the Ottoman court as gifts. But among his gifts were inalienable objects, significant not for their direct and pure allusion to Shah Ismail, who was famously defeated by the Ottomans. Instead, Shah Tahmasp's gifts expressed strong Safavid identities, with compelling and evocative ties to the dynasty's Persian cultural heritage and to its religious orientation, Twelver Shi'ism. At the same time, these important gifts were accompanied and enhanced by many others, lesser in value and significance. All of these came with eloquent letters from the shah, wherein he responded to Ottoman accusations of blasphemy with verses from the Qur'an and selections from the work of famed Persian poets, all the while adopting an excessively submissive tone. In consequence, the complaisant manner in which Shah Tahmasp's assertive gifts were presented to the sultan opened them up for interpretation, leaving enough room for them to be received as objects of submission and obedience.

By contrast, Shah Abbas's gifts of two sets of twelve keys to fortresses he allegedly conquered in the name of the sultan just could not be taken as submissive gifts at the Ottoman court. Regardless of whether the exact number of fortresses conquered by Shah Abbas was twenty four, the distribution of these keys in two trays with twelve on each before Mehmed III must be taken as an explicit allusion to the Twelve Imams<sup>98</sup> so venerated by the Safavids.

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<sup>98</sup> In Shi'ism, the prophets are believed to be accompanied and succeeded in their mission by minor prophets, imams and saints, or descendents of imams (sing. *imāmzāda*), which are collectively referred to as "Friends of God" (*valī*, pl. *avliyā*<sup>9</sup> *Allāh*). In Twelver or

Twelver Shi'ism was instituted as state religion by Shah Ismail in the early sixteenth century in a land dominated above all by Sunni Muslims. While Ismail's concept of state accommodated various military, economic and political needs of his *qizilbash* followers, his concept of religion, besides being overtly Twelver Shi'i, depended also on his self-fashioning as a new prophet, at times 'Ali, or even as God himself. During his successor's reign, the ruler's image as simultaneously the supreme warlord and the holy Imam underwent significant changes. A devout Twelver Shi'i, Shah Tahmasp himself aimed to differentiate between the political and religious spheres in his state. This involved establishing a religious class that would define and execute the Safavid state's religious agenda based on Twelver Shi'i principles. Tahmasp's project has been identified as an unfinished one, due partly to the continued existence of clashing theological viewpoints on key issues, such as the debate over the permissibility of Friday prayer in the absence of the Twelfth Imam. Also, certain practices that recognized the ruler as a figure akin to God, such as the subjects' prostration (*sajda*) before the shah,

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Imami Shi'ism, this group consists first and foremost of the Fourteen Infallible or Impeccable Ones: the prophet, his daughter Fatima, and the Twelve Imams (*isnā 'ashar*). The Twelve Imams include 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, Prophet Muhammad's cousin and son-in-law, his sons Hasan and Husayn, and their descendants. The Twelfth Imam (*imām-i ghā'ib*) is believed to have disappeared, only to reappear at a future day as the *mahdi*, or messiah. The primary point of contention between Twelver Shi'is and orthodox Sunnis is based on the Twelver conviction that 'Ali and Fatima's descendents (*ahl al-bayt*) were the only legitimate successors to the prophet. Accordingly, Shi'ites fiercely reject the authority of the first three Rightly Guided Caliphs, who succeeded the prophet in leading the Muslim community. For an introduction to the principles of Twelver Shi'ism, see Momen, *Shi'i Islam*; S.H. Nasr, "Ithnā 'Ashariyya" *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online; Mohammad Ali Amir-Moezzi "Shi'ite Doctrine" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>; For the Fourteen Infallible ones, see Hamid Algar "Charhārdah Ma'šūm" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>.

were not wholly abandoned until the seventeenth century.<sup>99</sup> Throughout the sixteenth century, the Ottomans continuously accused the Safavids of blasphemy precisely for practices of this kind.

In line with Shah Abbas's major reforms, aimed primarily towards creating a strong centralized government with renewed military and administrative institutions, the face of religion and its relationship to the state in Safavid Iran transformed concurrently at the turn of the seventeenth century. After gradually but systematically limiting power held by the *qizilbash*, who had posed a threat to Abbas's rule at the beginning of his reign, the shah took several measures to create an organized class of religious scholars (*ulamā*) to promote Twelver Shi'ism. This new class of Safavid clerics "lent support to imperial concerns with political integration, social discipline, and the Persianization of Shi'ism."<sup>100</sup> Clerics such as Shaykh Baha'i and Shaykh Lutf-Allah, who both served as the *shaykh al-Islam* (chief theologian) of Isfahan, were instrumental in codifying Shi'i

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<sup>99</sup> Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 178-87; B.S. Amoretti, "Religion in the Timurid and Safavid Periods" in *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, eds. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 610-55; Hamid Algar "Iran ix. Religions in Iran (2) Islam in Iran (2.3) Shi'ism in Iran since the Safavids" in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, online, <http://www.iranicaonline.org>. To be sure, the history of Shi'i ideas, the establishment of Shi'i orthodoxy in Iran, and the country's conversion to Twelver Shi'ism under Safavid rulers are much more complex and multifaceted than the simplified summary given above. Excellent recent studies have provided deeper analyses on these issues. See especially Arjomand, *Shadow of God*; Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs*; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*.

<sup>100</sup> Abisaab also shows how 'Amili theologians came to prominence, with the support of Shah Abbas, after a period in which they had fallen out of favor in the aftermath of Shah Tahmasp's death. During the reign of Shah Abbas, 'Amili commentaries on important legal texts were made more accessible through their translation into Persian, which was used effectively to promote and reinforce the Shi'ite Tradition not only among the religious elite but also in the daily activities and worship of a wider public. The contents of predominant debates, together with the resulting edicts and rulings, by religious scholars on mundane issues indicate a conscious effort for "political control from above and the gradual diffusion of social discipline from below." Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 53-87.

orthodoxy, compliant with the rules of *shari'ca*. Both of these theologians actively promoted the performance of Friday prayer,<sup>101</sup> and were fittingly involved in Shah Abbas's larger design of weaving close ties between his state and *shari'ca*-based Twelver Shi'ism.<sup>102</sup> Accordingly, the entire project of Shah Abbas's rebuilding of Isfahan gave architectural form and symbolic function to the political order he conceived. Among the most significant and forceful material outputs of Shah Abbas's quest for spiritual legitimacy were two mosques he built in Isfahan, both in the *Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (Figure 4.2) One of these, the *Masjid-i Shaykh Lutf-Allah* was small and for private royal use, but was strategically located in the square, facing the royal palace (Figure 4.5).<sup>103</sup> The other one, the great *Masjid-i Shah* (Figure 4.3), was the first congregational mosque to be built by a Safavid shah, and faced the bazaar complex (*qaysariyya*).<sup>104</sup> As such, the

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<sup>101</sup> This contention, however, was not backed by other contemporary theologians. For Baha'i and Lutf-Allah, see Andrew Newman, "Towards a Reconsideration of the 'Isfahan School of Philosophy': Shaykh Baha'i and the Role of the Safawid 'Ulamā," *Studia Iranica* 15, no. 2 (1986): 165-99; Devin J. Stewart, "The Lost Biography of Baha' al-Din al-'Amili and the Reign of Shah Isma'il II in Safavid Historiography," *Iranian Studies* 31 (1998): 1-29; Newman, "Friday Prayer as Politics"; Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 53-87.

<sup>102</sup> For example, Baha'i wrote an important treatise in Persian on this. Commissioned by Shah Abbas, this work "made accessible to the court the principles of Imami faith; as such it contributed significantly to the court-sponsored process of the Persianization of Shi'ism." Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 98-99.

<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, an inscription dated 1012/ 1603-4 emphasizes specifically Shah Abbas's spiritual leadership as the propagator of Twelver Shi'ism: "the greatest and most dignified sultan...the reviver of the customs of his forefathers, the propagator of the Infallible Imams... Abbas, the Husaynid, the Musavid." Partial translation is in Newman, 57. Full inscription is given in Lutf-Allah Hunarfar, *Ganjīna'-i Āṣār-i Tārikhī-yi Isfahān* (Isfahan, 1344/ 1965-6), 402. For more on the Lutf-Allah Mosque, see Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 401-15; Robert Hillenbrand, "Safavid Architecture," in *The Cambridge History of Iran, vol. 6: Timurid and Safavid Periods*, eds. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 784-6; Blake, *Half the World*, 147-50; Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, 85-6.

<sup>104</sup> For the Masjid-i Shah, see Hillenbrand, "Safavid Architecture," 786-9; Blake, *Half the World*, 140-70; Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*. The Masjid-i Shah had two madrasas

royal palace was flanked on either end of the royal square by two key institutions of religion and commerce, two key sources of legitimacy and power for Shah Abbas's new order.<sup>105</sup> The contemporary court chronicler Iskandar Munshi's comments disclose the bold ideas that Abbas wanted to communicate with his construction of these two mosques, and other socio-religious institutions in Isfahan: "the Shah wanted its mosques, seminaries, and pious foundations also to be the finest of their kind in Iran, and to rival the temple at Mecca and the mosque at Jerusalem."<sup>106</sup>

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flanking its great dome chamber. The attachment of these theological seminaries to the mosque is seen as yet another way in which Shah Abbas sought to assert his spiritual authority and to promote the education of orthodox Twelver Shi'ism. In fact, these and other state-sponsored madrasas built in Isfahan made the new Safavid capital "the principle centre of Shi'i scholarship." Momen, *Shi'i Islam*, 111. Momen suggests that even though madrasas existed prior to Abbas's reign in Safavid Iran, the prominent method of religious training was previously much more informal, taking place mainly in the homes of prominent scholars.

<sup>105</sup> For an interpretation of these two mosques, their place in the Maydan, and the establishment of Isfahan as "the capital of Shi'ism," see Babaie, *Isfahan and Its Palaces*, chapt. 3, esp. 85-7, 90-8.

<sup>106</sup> Munshi also records that in fact, the chronogram for the laying of the Masjid-i Shah declared: "a second Kaba has been built." Eskandar Beg Monshi, *Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 1038-9. Similar to the nearby Lutf-Allah Mosque, Masjid-i Shah's inscriptions praised God, the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fatima, and his son-in-law Imam 'Ali, in addition to the remaining Shi'i Imams, from whom Shah Abbas claimed descent. These inscriptions were carefully selected to promote the Twelver Shi'i orthodoxy instigated by Shah Abbas's new state. In fact, as Gülru Necipoğlu has noted, rather than Quranic verses, these inscriptions feature disproportionately more prophetic traditions (*hadith*) such as the famous "I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate," which is frequently cited in Shi'i traditions as attesting to Muhammad's own designation of 'Ali as his successor. The weaving together of the names of the Fourteen Infallibles with such sayings of the prophet is, then, aimed towards proving the true line of succession to the Prophet, which is the main source of dispute between Sunnism and Shi'ism. As such, the Masjid-i Shah proudly declares Shah Abbas's position as the protector and propagator of the Twelver Shi'i faith. The inscriptions have been interpreted as discussed here in Gülru Necipoğlu, "Qur'anic Inscriptions on Sinan's Imperial Mosques: A Comparison with Their Safavid and Mughal Counterparts," in *Word of God, Art of Man: The Qur'an and Its Creative Expressions*, ed. Fahmida Suleman (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69-104. The inscriptions are given in Hunarfar, *Ganjīna*, 427-64.

Shah Abbas's promotion of the Twelver Shi'ī faith by commissioning religious institutions of learning and devotion was not limited to the mosques and madrasas he built in the capital city. In fact, he interlaced similar social projects with personal acts of devotion that underscored his own allegiance to the faith. Most noteworthy among these are his multiple pilgrimages on foot to the shrine of Imam Reza and his significant renovations to its buildings (Figure 4.10).<sup>107</sup> His pilgrimage from Isfahan to this shrine of the eighth Shi'ī Imam in Mashhad in 1601 was particularly promulgated, making his devotion to the faith publicly known.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> From at least the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, the shrine was a major site of pilgrimage, receiving royal support and protection at various levels, from both Sunni and Shi'ī patrons. During the Safavid period, it kept its importance, upheld by the devotional and financial support of many members of the dynasty, who visited the shrine, renovated its buildings and adorned it with objects ranging from jewels and fine porcelain to candlesticks and books. See, for example, Abolala Soudavar, "A Chinese Dish from the Lost Endowment of Princess Sultanum (925-69/ 1519-62)," in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami (Princeton: Zagros Press, 1998), 125-36. By the time of Shah Abbas, the shrine had become a large complex with a mosque, madrasas and other tombs. During the sixteenth century, it was raided by the Uzbeks when the region fell into their hands, including the 1590s. For the shrine of Imam Reza and Shah Abbas's investment and pilgrimage there, see Robert McChesney, "Waqf and Public Policy: The Waqfs of Shāh 'Abbās, 1011-1023/ 1602-1616," *Asian and African Studies* 15 (1981): 165-190; Charles Melville "Shah 'Abbās and the Pilgrimage to Mashhad," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 191-229; May Farhat, "Islamic Piety and Dynastic Legitimacy: The Case of the Shrine of 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Rīdā in Mashhad (10<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> century)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Harvard University, 2002), 174-229; Sheila Canby, *Shah 'Abbās: The Remaking of Iran* (London: The British Museum Press, 2009), 186-95; Rizvi, *Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, 174-85.

<sup>108</sup> Pilgrimage to the shrines of Imams (*ziyarat*) had been a common and popular practice in Safavid Iran. But if Shah Abbas aimed to encourage people under his rule to visit important shrines in Iran, the most important being the one in Mashhad, it could by extension mean fewer people would go on the *hajj*, or the pilgrimage to Mecca. This would have important ideological and economic consequences for Ottoman-Safavid relations. Mecca and Medina had come under Ottoman rule early in the sixteenth century. The major pilgrimage routes were also controlled by the Ottoman government, and the sultan claimed the prestigious responsibility of providing safety to pilgrims coming from all over the world on their way to the holy lands of Islam. As we have seen, Shah



In modern scholarship, in addition to personal devotion, Shah Abbas's ideological and financial investments in the shrine have been closely associated with his recent liberation of the region from the Uzbeks, who had raided the shrine, stripping it of its valuable Safavid additions.<sup>109</sup> To be sure, for the Sunni Uzbeks, attacking such an important space of Shi'ite piety was an ideologically loaded act, as it was an economically motivated one. It was therefore particularly meaningful for Shah Abbas to bring the shrine back to life after his re-conquest of this region. Furthermore, the successful and often violent campaign of Uzbeks to spread the Sunni faith in northeastern Iran in the 1590s was met with Abbas's severe persecution of Sunnis after he regained those territories, not just in Khurasan but elsewhere in Iran. Such instances have been

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Tahmasp continuously appealed to Ottoman sultans for permission and promise of safe travel for Safavid pilgrims since there were evidently hardships they faced on their way to Mecca and Medina. According to Arjomand, one important feature of "the new and violent anti-Sunnism characteristic of Safavid Shi'ism" at the end of the sixteenth century is the emphasis placed on *ziyarat*. The scholar Mir Makhdum wrote, for example, that *ziyarat* diminished one's desire to go on the *hajj*. Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 165. But beyond religious polemics and ideological considerations, Rudi Matthee has argued that Shah Abbas had an important economic motivation for encouraging the visitation of the tomb of Imam Riza in Mashhad over the *hajj*: currency flight. Pilgrims had to carry gold ducats to pay for various expenses, including tolls, alms and presents while performing the *hajj*. Diverting the flow of large amounts of gold out of the Safavid economy during the yearly *hajj*, then, was an important consideration for the shah. Rudi Matthee, "Between Venice and Surat: The Trade in Gold in Late Safavid Iran," *Modern Asian Studies* 34, no.1 (2000): 223-255. For the *hajj* during the early modern era and the Ottoman responsibility of protecting pilgrims, see Farooqi, *Pilgrims and Sultans*; Michael N. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience 1500-1800* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener, 1996); Naim R. Farooqi, "Moguls, Ottomans, and Pilgrims: Protecting the Routes to Mecca in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," *The International History Review* 10, no.2 (May 1988): 198-220.

<sup>109</sup> Farhat, "Islamic Piety," 183-4.

recorded, for example, in 1599, the same year that Abbas dispatched the keys to the Ottoman court.<sup>110</sup>

Against this background, Shah Abbas's presentation of keys to fortresses and cities he conquered in Khurasan was similarly a symbolic gesture that asserted both his own ascending military power, and his haughty claim to Twelver Shi'ite leadership. What additionally enhanced this point was the manner in which the keys were conveyed to the Ottoman sultan. Had the keys been accompanied by other objects, which made reference to previous Safavid gifts to the sultan, altogether they might have signaled sincere submission. Instead, it was this complete break from tradition, the absence of any traditional gift of friendship and subservience that underscored the unruliness of the gifts, and the offensiveness of the whole gesture.

The irony in Shah Abbas's message to the sultan must have been realized at the Ottoman court, for the keys were returned to the envoy the next day. Girolamo Capello writes in a report to the Venetian Senate: "[The ambassador] related, through the mediation of the Dragoman, that [the Ottomans] accepted the keys; but then gave [them] back, to be returned to [Shah Abbas], thanking him for the kindness he had shown with them. These were told to the Dragoman by the ambassador with a laugh, telling him that they did not quite know how to interpret this gift."<sup>111</sup> The presentation of these keys not

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<sup>110</sup> In 1599, Abbas ordered the persecution of Sunnis in Surkheh, or Simnan, in northwestern Iran. There is also a record of the execution of a local leader (*kadkhuda*) in Hamadan in 1608, on account of his maltreatment of Shi'ites under his jurisdiction. Shah Abbas punished the Sunnis by other methods as well, for example by excluding them from occasional tax exemptions. Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 120-1.

<sup>111</sup> *Disse medesimam[en]te al Dragomano, che havevano questi accettate le chiavi, mà restituite poi p[er] essere ritornate al Rè ringratiandolo di questa sua cortese dimostrata, il che fù detto dall'Amb[asciato]re al Dragomano con riso, dicendogli, che*

only instigated a diplomatic crisis between Ottoman and Safavid courts, but it also intensified worries at the Ottoman court about the troubled political state of affairs within the empire. Capello's report states how much "the Turks were in deep thought," for they suspected that the ongoing uprisings all over Anatolia (commonly known as the Celali Rebellions), might be backed in fact by the Safavids. The shah's re-conquest of former Safavid territories that had fallen to the Uzbeks indicated his increasing power, and the keys he sent to the sultan in honor of this victory was a daring, if not provoking gesture that suggested to the Ottomans that he was willing to fight in more fronts than one.

At the Ottoman court, the overwhelming anxiety and apprehension about the future of relations with the Safavids is correlated in Capello's report directly with favors given to this ambassador. An extraordinary feast was served to Muhammad-quli Beg at the Topkapı Palace before his audience with the sultan and he was presented with more robes of honor than was customary. The Venetian *bailo*'s prediction that all of these favors point to how "afraid" the Ottomans were of the Safavid king was confirmed also by the Safavid envoy himself, who said: "this show of gifts and honor will not be sufficient to win over his lord, because his demand is that Tabriz be returned to him." Muhammad-quli Beg further explained that even though he was sent there to discuss this issue, the Ottomans did not address it, focusing instead on impressing him with words and favors. In the end, he said, Shah Abbas will have to claim Tabriz and Nahavand by force.<sup>112</sup>

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*non havevano bene intesa la interpretatione di questo presente, ne volse passar più oltre.* ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 49, 396b-397a.

<sup>112</sup> The *bailo* notes that he relates these remarks through the mediation of the ambassador's dragoman. ASVe, Senato, Dispacci Costantinopoli filza 49, 396b.

Just as Shah Abbas's defiant keys were on their way to Mehmed III's court, ambassadors from the sultan were headed for the shah's court. The Carmelite friar Emmanuel de Santos related the arrival of an Ottoman embassy in Isfahan in June 1599 with the request that Shah Abbas vow to renew peace by sending his son as a hostage to the Ottoman court:

There arrived at two or three days' interval, one after the other, three ambassadors sent by the Sultan to the Persian king: they were demanding the latter's eldest son as a hostage, and guarantees of friendship. He (Fr. Emmanuel) says that the Persian king received with much honour and very great welcome those ambassadors, to whom, however he gave no answer, except on one day when he entertained them at a great banquet, at which were present all the nobles of Persia. Then he said at table in a loud voice these very words: "the Grand Turk (i.e. Sultan of Turkey) by these ambassadors who have come here demands of me my son, the prince, as a hostage: and I reply to you, the ambassadors, that my son, the Prince, is and will be king too of all I possess: and since I have no power to send a king as hostage to a king, you will make answer to the Turkish Sultan that I am not willing to send him my son," the Persian king saying this with great haughtiness. With that the three ambassadors in question received their dismissal.<sup>113</sup>

If such a demand from the sultan reflected his want of Abbas's continuing subservience through the replacement of Haydar Mirza with a new prince, Shah Abbas's terse refusal to this request proved he had no intention to do so. What is more, Abbas's keys to the sultan were a far cry from standard gifts of friendship, let alone subservience. On top of this highly symbolic gesture, if news about Shah Abbas's determination to recover Tabriz—as related by his ambassador—circulated in Constantinople

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<sup>113</sup> Anonymous, *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, 2 vols. (London, 1939), I: 79-80.

, it would disclose the shah's determination to re-open the western front. Indeed, as we will see, in 1603 he did exactly that, and subsequently took back almost all of the territory lost to the Ottomans with the Istanbul Peace Treaty of 1590.

### **The struggle over control of the silk trade**

By 1599, when the keys were presented to the sultan and refused by him subsequently, Shah Abbas had defeated the Uzbeks, suppressed internal revolts, subdued oppositions, and established a permanent standing army. He also had newly moved his capital from Qazvin to Isfahan, whose urban fabric was being shaped according to Abbas's vision of his new centralized state in line with Twelver Shi'i principles.<sup>114</sup> As discussed above, the organization of the royal quadrangle at the new capital mirrored "the integration of commercial and political space in Isfahan's center."<sup>115</sup> Beyond the display of the shah's political and religious ambitions, the royal quadrangle's principle purpose has been identified as commerce.<sup>116</sup> Indeed, establishing a state monopoly on foreign

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<sup>114</sup> In addition to the religious institutions he established, such as the two mosques and the madrasas in the royal square in Isfahan, Shah Abbas endowed pious institutions in honor of the Fourteen Infallibles, which were supported by his entire wealth and income. These included income from the imperial bazaar complex (*Qaysariyya*), *khans* and baths in Isfahan, and valuable objects such as rare manuscripts in Arabic with religious content, other literary and historical books in Persian, porcelain, jewels, goldware and silverware. For these pious endowments and their ideological underpinnings, see McChesney, "Waqf and Public Policy." Among other architectural expressions of the strong tie between Shah Abbas's new state and his devotion were a shrine attached to the royal palace in Isfahan and a stone associated with the first Shi'i imam 'Ali, which was placed in front of the palace's gate overlooking the imperial square ('Ali Qapu). For the shrine, the stone, and the rituals associated with it, see Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces," *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993): 309.

<sup>115</sup> Rudi Matthee also highlights the history of the strong ties between state and commerce in Safavid Iran, arguing that Abbas "either revived traditions or enhanced the scope and scale of existing arrangements." Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 66.

<sup>116</sup> Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze," 310.

trade was one of the backbones of Shah Abbas's centralized state. While the shah took under his control the trade of countless commodities, silk took pride of place among these. As we will see in further detail below, competition over the control of centers of silk production had frequently been an important instigator of Ottoman-Safavid rivalry during the sixteenth century. Fittingly, the measures Shah Abbas took in order to monopolize silk production and to establish direct trading relations with European powers were meant to eliminate the mediation of Ottoman merchants and export centers within the flow of silk from his country into Europe. In this attempt, Shah Abbas sent loads of high-quality Persian silk as diplomatic gifts to various European rulers, asking for political and military alliance against the Ottoman sultan, and anticipating direct purchases of silk. In the first decades of the seventeenth century, as the Ottoman-Safavid warfront re-opened, embassies between Iran and Europe continued to be exchanged. During this time, silk proved to be a key item within Ottoman-Safavid rivalry that involved more contenders than these two courts, and represented something in which the categories of gift and commodity came extremely close.

In popular historical imagination, the international trade of silk is readily associated with China and the Silk Road. Iran lays on the famed Silk Road, and has been an important point of silk transfer from China to the Levant. At the same time, through the medieval and early modern periods, Iran itself has been a significant source of raw silk and silk products.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>117</sup> Following the Mongol invasions, Tabriz, the Ilkhanid capital, for example, emerged as a major center in world trade. Iranian silk originating in Gilan, Mazandaran and Astarabad—as well as other goods—passed through Tabriz and Anatolia into Europe. Italian merchants frequented the city to buy silk in return for European cloth. After the Ilkhanids fell in the mid-14<sup>th</sup> century, the role of Tabriz as a hub of trade between Asia

The commercial infrastructure based on silk production and distribution during the time of Shah Abbas, however, was unprecedented.<sup>118</sup> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Shah Abbas's new economic policy made silk Iran's most important export commodity. To be sure, the motivation behind the shah's systematic effort to promote Iranian silk in international trade was directly tied with an expectation of high monetary gain in his transactions. But Shah Abbas's economic agenda was also correlated with, in fact motivated by, his competition with the neighboring Ottomans.

Throughout the sixteenth century, Ottoman-Safavid rivalry was primarily governed by political and religious disputes, which resulted in a long series of military confrontations. Meanwhile, economic hostilities also surfaced, which obstructed silk trade along the territories of both states and beyond. Prior to and after the Battle of Chaldiran in 1514—the first major Ottoman-Safavid war—the Ottoman sultan Selim I sought to weaken his rival, Shah Ismail, by imposing “an embargo on all silk imports

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and Europe went through major changes, and a significant portion of the economic activity shifted towards Anatolia, making Bursa a major outlet of Iranian silk for European merchants. After Bursa became the Ottoman capital, that city also became a major center of silk production, for which most of the raw silk came from Iran. This is not to say that Tabriz lost its commercial importance altogether. To the contrary, sources continue to note how merchants convened there. Nevertheless, it definitely suffered from a lack of continuous political stability, for the city changed hands numerous times, for example, throughout the sixteenth century. On late medieval Tabriz and Bursa, see Halil Inalcık and Donald Quataert, eds., *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300- 1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Halil Inalcık, “Ḥarīr, ii. The Ottoman Empire” *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*, eds. P. Bearman et al., (Brill, 2011). Brill Online; Fahri Dalsar, *Türk Sanayi ve Ticaret Tarihinde Bursa'da Ipekçilik* (Sermat Matbaası: Istanbul, 1960). Sultaniya was another commercial center in Iran, which attracted merchants from both the east and west of Iran looking to buy Persian silk. See Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 19.

<sup>118</sup> Minorsky conceived of Shah Abbas's control of silk trade as a milestone marking the leap from feudalism to capitalism in Iran. Minorsky, *Tadhkirat Al-Muluk*, 14

from Iran and prohibited trade in raw silk in the Ottoman territories.”<sup>119</sup> Furthermore, Selim announced that the possessions of any merchant caught with Iranian raw silk on Ottoman territory would be confiscated. These measures would not only block European access to Iranian silk to a large extent, but would also prevent merchants living under Ottoman or Safavid rule to suffer losses. Halil Inalcık explains that Selim’s embargo could hardly be maintained on legal ground. Moreover, in the long run, it had dire consequences not only for the Safavid economy, but also for the Ottoman economy itself. During Selim’s embargo between 1514 and 1518, and again during the Ottoman-Safavid wars between 1578 and 1590, the setback in trade caused raw silk prices in Bursa to skyrocket.<sup>120</sup> Selim’s son, Sultan Süleyman, who was known for his justice (hence his epithet “the lawgiver”), lifted the embargo in 1520, and continued attack on the Safavids through political and military means.<sup>121</sup> Throughout Süleyman’s reign and beyond, though intermittent periods of conflict surely impacted silk trade, economic activity never broke completely as during the reign of Selim I for extended periods of time. Meanwhile, gaining control over trade routes and hubs, such as Azarbaijan, and centers of production for key products, such as silk, proved to be significant motivations for Ottoman-Safavid military clashes.

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<sup>119</sup> Inalcık, *Economic and Social History*, 228.

<sup>120</sup> Silk production in Bursa depended on a continuous flow of cheap raw silk from Iran. Inalcık, *Economic and Social History*, 228-29.

<sup>121</sup> Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont has compared the reigns of Selim and Süleyman in terms of the two consecutive rulers’ policies towards the Safavids, showing that Sultan Süleyman adopted a relatively less aggressive stance. Jean-Louis Bacqué-Grammont, "The Eastern Policy of Süleyman the Magnificent 1520-1533," in *Süleymân the Second [i.e. the First] and His Time*, eds. Halil Inalcık and Cemal Kafadar (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1993), 219-228.



On their way to Europe, spices and other goods coming from India passed through the area falling between the Persian Gulf and the Levant. These lands, including Baghdad and Aleppo, came under Ottoman control in the 1530s. The area around the Ottoman-Safavid border, however, remained mostly under Safavid control until the 1580s. The treaty of 1590 signed between Shah Abbas and Murad III gave the Ottomans definitive territorial authority over Azarbaijan, Georgia and Shirvan, wherein were major centers of silk production. Gilan and Mazandaran, which were equally significant centers of silk cultivation, were conquered by Abbas at the end of the sixteenth century. Then, Azarbaijan and Shirvan were reclaimed by the Safavids during the first decade of the seventeenth century, as the warfront with the Ottomans re-opened. Concurrently, the shah's intention to weave an international network of silk trade bypassing the Ottomans showed that power resided as much in control over territories at this time as it was in control over trade routes.

The centralization of economic activity under the rule of Shah Abbas and his re-orientation of silk trade depended on several measures he actively facilitated.<sup>122</sup> These ranged from technical and logistical measures such as establishing his own local administration for the harvesting, collecting and the storing of silk to marketing and selling it in international markets.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, the shah oversaw the expansion of the

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<sup>122</sup> These measures are detailed in Linda K. Steinmann, "Shah 'Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade 1599-1629," *Bulletin (British Society for middle Eastern Studies)* 14, no.1 (1987): 68-74; see also Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century: The East India Companies and the Decline of the Caravan Trade* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974).

<sup>123</sup> Steinmann, "Royal Silk Trade," 70; Rudi Matthee shows that Abbas took prohibitionist measures in addition to stimulating ones. For example, he encouraged the consumption of cotton cloth in the domestic market "to reduce the importation of Indian cloth and to increase domestic silk exports." Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 67-8.

caravan network in Iran, by building many caravanserais and guaranteed safety for travelers and merchants.<sup>124</sup> In the interest of accumulating wealth, the shah took measures to discourage currency flight, and eventually issued a ban on the export of gold and silver.<sup>125</sup>

In addition to building an infrastructure for the production and distribution of silk, Abbas also arranged the forced migration of the primary exporters of Iran's international silk trade, Armenian merchants, who lived in Julfa in Azarbaijan, and settled them in New Julfa in the outskirts of his new capital of Isfahan.<sup>126</sup> Integrated fully into the Safavid royal system as merchants and diplomats, the wealthy Armenian community facilitated the exchange of Persian silk for European silver. The royal monopoly on silk production and distribution was also crucial for Shah Abbas's overall centralizing policies, since the silver that Armenians brought into Iran paid the salaries of the shah's new elite class of slaves (sing. *ghulam*), and his standing army.<sup>127</sup>

Without doubt, Shah Abbas took all of these measures to facilitate the expansion of commerce. As Rudi Matthee has noted, at this time, the convergence of commerce and

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<sup>124</sup> Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 67.

<sup>125</sup> The shah's active encouragement of his people to go on pilgrimage to Shi'ite shrines in Iran rather than the hajj is one such measure. The ban was issued in 1618. Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 67-8.

<sup>126</sup> For Julfan Armenian merchants and their recruitment by Shah Abbas at the beginning of the seventeenth century, see Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities of Ispahan: The Armenian Community of Ispahan, 1587-1722," *Iranian Studies* 7, no. 2 (1974): 652-81; Edmund Herzig, "The Rise of the Julfa Merchants in the Late Sixteenth Century," in *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, ed. Charles Melville (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 305-322; Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, *The Shah's Silk for Europe's Silver: The Eurasian Silk Trade of the Julfan Armenians in Safavid Iran and India (1590-1750)* (Atlanta, Ga.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 84-90; Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*.

<sup>127</sup> For a discussion of Armenian merchants' financing of the Safavid treasury, see Babaie et al., *Slaves of the Shah*, 49-79.

politics was hardly a new phenomenon in Iran or elsewhere in the early modern world. However, it is important to note that the level of Shah Abbas's active engagement with commerce through his systematic and multifaceted effort to stimulate exports was unprecedented. Accordingly, the shah may be viewed as a true mercantilist,<sup>128</sup> even though his main objective remained maximizing royal revenue in order to protect his realm against outside threats and internal rebellion, rather than facilitating the formation of a "national economy" - the orderly procedure and expansion of agriculture and commerce."<sup>129</sup> Moreover, in line with Iranian political theory and practice, the king's role as a distributor rather than accumulator of wealth prevailed during the reign of Abbas. Personal and intimate methods of circulating wealth, in the forms of tribute and gifts, continued to become an integral part of the Safavid fiscal system.

### **Silk and the Shah's Quest for Alliances in Europe**

The foregoing discussion about silk trade is significant here because silk was quite creatively used by Shah Abbas to provoke and even attack the Ottomans in a manner and scale unmatched by any Safavid ruler before him. While the strong military and administrative institutions he established succeeded in conquering a considerable portion of the territories that had been lost to the Ottomans in the preceding decades, Abbas concurrently aimed to hinder the enemy's economy, by searching for alliances in Europe against the Ottomans. Numerous embassies that he sent to Europe carried large

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<sup>128</sup> Minorsky has conceived of Abbas a great capitalist, Minorsky, *Tadhkirat Al-Muluk*, 14. A thought-provoking discussion of Shah Abbas's approach to commerce with respect to mercantilism can be found in Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 69-74. Matthee goes into current debates about the definition of the term mercantilism itself and how Shah Abbas's version diverges from some of the European examples.

<sup>129</sup> Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 73.

amounts of high-quality silk to be presented as diplomatic gifts. These gifts did not just represent the shah's sincerity in his requests and his promise of friendship, but they were also meant to facilitate future orders of silk to be purchased directly from Abbas himself. Frequently, Shah Abbas also openly pointed out the effectiveness of moving silk to Europe through Hormuz in the Persian Gulf and even around the Cape of Good Hope, rather than the traditional routes which passed through Aleppo, Bursa and Izmir, which were under Ottoman rule at that time. Obviously, Abbas aspired to strip the Ottoman economy of all the taxes and other profits resulting from the passage of large amounts of Persian silk through their territory.

Shah Abbas's plan to establish contacts with the outside world to promote Iran's raw silk and to seek support for his struggle with the Ottomans was already set in motion when his offensive gifts of keys arrived at the Ottoman court in the summer of 1599. During the 1590s, embassies that carried large amounts of silk were sent to Russia, a country that openly shared Abbas's anti-Ottoman sentiments. While there, these embassies also traded Iran's luxurious textiles for Russia's sable fur and weapons.<sup>130</sup>

A more focused diplomatic offensive began after the arrival, in late 1598, of the English gentleman Anthony Sherley in Persia (Figure 4.11), who persuaded Shah Abbas to send him to Europe to specifically gather support for an alliance against the Ottomans. The shah dispatched Sherley as an ambassador, together with Husain Ali Beg, to a number of European courts.<sup>131</sup> Making their first stop in Moscow, they went from there to Prague and were received favorably by Emperor Rudolf II, who was at war with the

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<sup>130</sup> Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 77-8.

<sup>131</sup> R.W. Ferrier, "The European Diplomacy of Shah °Abbas I and the First Persian Embassy to England," *Iran* 11 (1973): 75-92.

Ottomans at that time. Moving south, in Rome the embassy was received by the pope with comparable enthusiasm. Disagreements between Sherley and Husain Beg caused the mission to almost fall apart, for Sherley left the embassy. Husain Beg continued on to Spain on his own, but lost three more members of the embassy there, who converted to Christianity.

The unfortunate story of this embassy has been interpreted in modern literature as one of failure, as were the ones dispatched to Europe from Iran during the first two decades of the seventeenth century. But at the time Abbas was not discouraged at all, for concurrent with his declaration of war on the Ottomans in 1603, he initiated a much more organized diplomatic campaign to seek allies in Europe in his struggle with the Ottomans. The shah's bargaining power lay in the high-quality silk he could supply Europe and his methods in communicating this varied widely. Here, I would like to take one case in point that demonstrates how Shah Abbas used gifts creatively, tailoring them to his audience meanwhile, to incite curiosity and underscore each gift's potential to become a commodity.

Months before the outbreak of the Ottoman-Safavid war in 1603, an embassy arrived in Venice from Iran bearing valuable gifts.<sup>132</sup> The reception of the envoy Fathi

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<sup>132</sup> The earliest embassy from Iran to Venice was sent in 1600. The ambassador Efet Beg related to the doge the shah's wish for reciprocal commerce between the two states, and expressed how "the Republic is not only loved but also respected greatly in Persia." On this occasion, Shah Abbas had sent as a gift, a precious gold-woven silk velvet fabric depicting the scene of the Annunciation of Virgin Mary, custom-made to be presented to the doge. The shah was also offering to supply whatever the doge would like in the future, as a testament to their friendship. For this embassy and a copy of the shah's letter in Italian translation, see Guglielmo Berchet, *Venezia e la Persia*, 43, 192-3. This textile with the scene of the Annunciation was quite large, measuring approximately 5 meters on each side, and was later stored in the Sala del Maggior Consiglio dei Dieci at the Palazzo

Beg has been depicted by Gabriele Caliari in a painting that decorates the Sale delle quattro porte at the Palazzo Ducale in Venice (Figure 4.12).<sup>133</sup> According to Venetian archival records, the gifts from Shah Abbas included a silk gold-embroidered mantle (*manto*), a silk velvet carpet woven with gold and silver threads (Figure 4.13),<sup>134</sup> a gold-embroidered velvet fabric with the figures of Jesus and his mother Mary (Figure 4.14),<sup>135</sup> and six other garments, three of which were gold-embroidered silk, and the rest were also silk in various colors.<sup>136</sup> The ambassador's account about these gifts during his ceremonial reception reveals how carefully Shah Abbas had prepared them and how he had even tended to their presentation. Fathi Beg explained to the doge that the mantle was specially produced for him, and it was made in one single piece, without any stitching. The shah had wished the doge to take it as a sign of his friendship and hoped that he would wear it thinking of him. For the silk carpet (Figure 4.15), Fathi Beg said that "the shah, having understood that every year the Treasury of San Marco is put on display, sent this carpet, which is of the highest quality produced in Persia, so that every time the treasury is displayed, this beautiful carpet will also be put on view." The doge thanked

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Ducale. Rodolfo Gallo, *Il Tesoro di S. Marco e la Sua Storia* (Venice and Rome: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1967), 260-1.

<sup>133</sup> Berchet, *Venezia e la Persia*, 44-7.

<sup>134</sup> This carpet is at the treasury of San Marco in Venice (Basilica di San Marco, inv. n.26). See *Eredità dell'Islam: Arte islamica in Italia*, ed. Giovanni Curatola (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 1993), cat. 277, 431-2; *Venezia e L'Islam, 828-1797*, ed. Stefano Carboni (Venice: Marsilio, 2007), cat. 66, 188, 339.

<sup>135</sup> This textile is today in the collection of the Museo Correr in Venice (Museo Civico Correr, inv. no. Cl. XXII, n.37), see Curatola, *Eredità dell'Islam*, cat. 275, 429-30. See also Carboni, *Venezia e L'Islam*, cat. 58, 71, 338. A similar Safavid textile fragment with a pair of diagonally rendered mother and child figures is in the David Collection in Copenhagen. Kjeld von Folsach and Anne-Marie Keblow Bernsted, *Woven Treasures-Textiles from the Word of Islam* (Copenhagen: The David Collection, 1993), cat. 34, 112-3; Kjeld von Folsach, *Art from the World of Islam in the David Collection* (Copenhagen, 2001), cat. 665, 389.

<sup>136</sup> The full list of gifts is given in Berchet, *Venezia e la Persia*, 197.

the shah for his kindness and sent back for him such return-gifts as a gold-plated bowl engraved with figures, two silver flasks studded with glass, a full body mail, and four arquebuses, which were hand guns, decorated on one end with gold and studded with pearls.

In addition to such exchanges of gifts and letters expressing friendship, an important aspect of Persian embassies to Europe were the amount of direct commercial transactions. Accordingly, before his departure, Fathi Beg had purchased tens of body mail and weapons among other things, which were all confiscated by the Ottomans in Aleppo, for by then they were at war with the Safavids.

During the Ottoman-Safavid war, Shah Abbas proved extremely successful, recovering almost all the territories he had lost in 1590, including the major centers of silk production in that area. But the lack of a concrete promise from Europe for collective political support, combined with the signing of the Ottoman-Habsburg peace treaty in 1606 led him to be more aggressive in his quest for diverting the silk route from Anatolia. A mission sent to Spain in 1608, for example, directly expressed this idea to the king. The envoys explained to the king that if he sent ships to Goa on the western coast of India and Hormuz in the Persian Gulf twice a year, both sides would benefit immensely, which would also inflict a heavy blow on the Ottoman economy. The embassy had also brought a very large amount of silk. Even though the shah expected his envoys to sell it in Spain, to see how much profit it would yield, it was presented as a gift to Phillip III. Infuriated, the shah executed the responsible envoy upon his return to Iran. Another embassy to Portugal travelled around the Cape of Good Hope to reach there, in order to demonstrate the feasibility of alternative routes in carrying silk.

These, and other embassies from Shah Abbas neither resulted in long-term contacts of commerce, nor his anticipated political alliance against the common enemy. However, an extraordinary amount of written and visual records documenting these contacts, primarily consisting of portraits, have remained. Rather than merely visual records of these missions, or mementos for the posers of the foreign land they had visited or had come from, I would like to suggest that they represented the unique nature of Shah Abbas's embassies. For example, in a life-size oil painting of Robert Sherley (Figure 4.16), he is dressed as someone of the highest rank at the Safavid court. He wears a gold woven patterned silk velvet cloak on top. His underrobe is of black silk with a repeated pattern of a male youth raising a large piece of rock with two arms above his head, to throw it at the dragon facing him behind bushes and flowers.<sup>137</sup> As art historians have shown, the scene probably originates from a story in the *Shahnama*,<sup>138</sup> or Book of Kings, the Persian national epic about pre-Islamic kings of Iran. Like these two garments, Sherley's sash signals the Safavid haute couture during the reign of Shah Abbas. At the Safavid court, the sash's quality accorded with the wearer's rank. The variety in colors and the use of gold that we see here were reserved for highest ranking members of the court. Furthermore, the use of pale colors in the cloak and large lotuses were unmistakable novelties of the time of Abbas, repeated frequently in a variety of luxury objects of the time.

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<sup>137</sup> For a discussion of this robe, see Patricia Baker, "Wrought of Gold and Silver: Honorific Garments in Seventeenth Century Iran," in *Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World, 1400-1700*, eds. Thompson et al. (London and Genoa: Ashmolean Museum, 2010), 161-2.

<sup>138</sup> Baker argues that while Phyllis Ackerman had previously identified the scene as the fight between Iskandar and a dragon, it more likely depicts a battle between a hero and a dragon in the story about Hushang in the *Shahnama*. Baker, "Wrought of Gold and Silver," 162.



But what did such an expression of the highest Safavid quality and taste mean within the context of Sherley's mission? As we have seen, earlier embassies carried gifts that would specifically appeal to the receiver's taste and religious orientation, such as the textiles with images of Jesus and Mary Abbas sent the doge. Here, we see a complete reversal, in favor of the giver's own preferences and taste, which reflect at the same time the technical capabilities of artists and artisans under his protection. If these garments reflect the kinds of silks that Shah Abbas sent or promised to send European courts after 1603, then they require a specific reading within the context of the more aggressive and assertive political nature of these embassies with regard to their proposal to directly trade silk without Ottoman mediation. Like the doge's mantle, the quality of the textile reflects here the highest quality of production under Abbas's rule. But unlike the doge's mantle, these garments have an unmistakably Persian and Safavid character, peppered distinctively with stylistic novelties of his reign. Abbas was offering to attack the Ottoman economy with his proposals of trade partnership with European powers, just as he was entering into military conflict with the Ottomans himself. Trading garments such as these and developing a taste for them would assault the Ottomans on a symbolic level as well, for the Ottoman elite would never wear garments with such figural imagery. A good example to demonstrate this point is an album painting depicting the Safavid envoy to the Ottoman court in 1590 (Figure 4.17 and 4.18).<sup>139</sup> One of the most discernable differences between the Ottoman and Safavid courtiers is the latter's robe, decorated boldly with human figures.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626, 125b.

<sup>140</sup> Gülru Necipoğlu dates the creation of a distinctive Ottoman artistic canon that favored the use of large naturalistic floral motifs in striking colors to the middle of the sixteenth

### From “heart-cheering gifts” to “strange presents”

During the first years of the Ottoman-Safavid war, the Ottomans were also fighting on their western front with the Habsburgs, and trying to deal with widespread rebellions all over Anatolia.<sup>141</sup> Soon after a peace was concluded with the Habsburgs in 1606, they managed to subdue the rebellions as well and were ready to confront the Safavid shah full on. After 1610, when the Ottoman army reached Tabriz, both sides found it difficult to proceed further. The offer to make peace came first from Abbas, which was received favorably. Shah Abbas’s ambassador reached Constantinople in 1612, bearing many unusual gifts among which were 200 bales of silk,<sup>142</sup> and 400 animals including camels and horses. According to the peace treaty, both sides agreed to recognize the borders determined by the first Ottoman-Safavid peace, signed between Sultan Süleyman and Shah Tahmasp in 1555.<sup>143</sup> Having felt the bitter consequences of the silk embargo Shah Abbas had launched against the Ottomans, the sultan had

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century. One of the main characteristics of this new aesthetic was its strict elimination of figural imagery. Necipoğlu explains the development for such a taste within the context of the empire’s renewed self-definition at this time. This new identity emphasized the ruling elite’s growing religious orthodoxy, and was acutely conscious of the empire’s differences from its western and eastern neighbors. Necipoğlu, “Kanun for the State.” For a discussion of Safavid textiles with figural imagery, see Jennifer Scarce, “The Court Dress of Safavid Iran in the Sixteenth Century: An Interpretation of Some Textiles Represented in Contemporary Illustration,” in *Carpets and Textiles in the Iranian World, 1400-1700*, eds. Thompson et al. (London and Genoa: Ashmolean Museum, 2010), 143-57.

<sup>141</sup> The Ottoman chronicler Hasan Beyzade’s account notes that Shah Abbas attacked the Ottomans taking advantage of the rebellions in Anatolia with the intention of recovering the city of Tabriz. Hasan Beyzade, *Hasan Bey-zāde Tārīhi*, ed. Nezihi Aykut, 3 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2004), III: 754.

<sup>142</sup> The Ottoman court chronicler Mustafa Safi gives the amount of the silk as “200 ass-loads” (*dü-vist hür-vār-ı harir.*) Mustafa Safi, *Mustafa Sâfî’nin Zübdetü’t-tevārīh’i*, ed. İbrahim Hakkı Çuhadar, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), II: 142.

<sup>143</sup> Yazdi, *Tarikh-i Abbasi*, 427; Mustafa Safi, *Zübdetü’t-tevārīh*, II: 144.

additionally asked to receive a yearly tribute of 200 bales of silk,<sup>144</sup> as compensation for all the territories from which the Ottomans had withdrawn. Even though this condition is repeated by a range of sources, it is lacking from the original text of the treaty. Clearly, Shah Abbas refused to send such a tribute, and that was one reason why the front reopened after three years.<sup>145</sup> Meanwhile, Abbas was in communication with the British discussing a plan that would in fact hurt the Ottoman market, in which case Persian silk would be carried by the East India Company. The Spanish king, who neither wanted the shah to conclude a trade deal with the British, nor a peace treaty with the Ottomans, dispatched an embassy to Isfahan.<sup>146</sup> But in the meantime the Ottoman army had come dangerously close to Ardabil, and Abbas had to give in to the demands of the Ottomans and agreed to pay the reduced amount of 100 bales of silk plus gifts an equal amount of

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<sup>144</sup> Ottoman chroniclers concur that Abbas agreed to sending 200 bales of silk every year with this treaty. Mustafa Safi, *Zübde'tü't-tevārih*, II: 144; Peçevî, *Tārih-i Peçevî*, II: 340; Topçular Katibi Abdülkadir Efendi, *Topçular Kātibi 'Abdülkādir (Kadrî) Efendi Tarihi (Metin ve Tahli)*, ed. Ziya Yılmaz, 2 vols. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2003), II: 602. In his report of 1612, Simon Contarini mentioned that Shah Abbas agreed to send silk thereafter as tribute in return for keeping Tabriz. *Relazioni di ambasciatori veneti al senato*, vol. 14: *Costantinopoli, Relazioni inedite (1512-1789)*, ed. Maria Pia Pedani-Fabris (Padua: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1996), 194.

<sup>145</sup> Pietro della Valle, *Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, il pellegrino: con minuto ragguaglio di tutte le cose notabili osservate in essi discritti da lui medesimo in 54 lettere familiari mandate in Napoli all'erudito Mario Schipano divisi in tre parti, cioè la Turchia, la Persia, e l'India*, 3 vols. (Rome, 1650-63). The Ottoman court chronicler Naima wrote: “[Even though] Shah Abbas had previously agreed to send one hundred loads of silk and one hundred loads of unequalled goods, he did not send any of these within the course of the next two years, saying “Will I be subjected to extortion?” (*Şah Abbas her sene yüz yük harîr ve yüz yük emti'a-i bî-nazîr göndermeğe müte'addid iken iki sene mürrür edip göndermemekle ve “Ben harāca mı kesilsem gerek” demekle...*) Naima, *Tārih-i Na'imā*, ed. Mehmet İpşirli, 4 vols., (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2007), II: 421; Peçevî wrote that according to the treaty of 1612, Shah Abbas was supposed to send the Ottoman sultan every year 200 loads of silk, plus 100 loads of other goods. Peçevî, *Tārih-i Peçevî*, II:340.

<sup>146</sup> Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, 83.

unspecified gifts yearly to the sultan.<sup>147</sup> The embassy bringing these gifts / tributes is pictured in Nādirī's *ehname*, an Ottoman illustrated manuscript about the short reign of the current sultan, Osman II (Figure 4.19).<sup>148</sup> In the painting, we see the Safavid envoy Tohta Beg on horseback, led by Ottoman officials as they all approach the Topkapı Palace. Behind, we see camels with the promised silk on their backs, two elephants, a rhinoceros and a caged tiger.<sup>149</sup> The text emphasizes the wonder that these gifts incited in Istanbul, and collectively describes them as "strange presents."<sup>150</sup>

Such a qualification in 1618 of the Safavid gifts/ tributes consisting of rare animals and the predetermined amount of silk signals another sea-change in relations between the two empires. While the gifts presented to Ottoman sultans by Shah Tahmasp in the sixteenth century were frequently admired as "heart-cheering," "beautiful," or

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<sup>147</sup> *mu<sup>c</sup>ayyen o miqdār ipek her yile / yanınca hedayā-yı bīhad ile* Nādirī, *Şehnāme*, Süleymaniye Manuscript Library, Ahmed Paşa 280, 28a; Numan Külekçi, "Ganī-zāde Nādirī: Hayatı, Edebi Kişiliği, Eserleri, Dīvānı ve Şeh-nāmesi'nin Tenkidli Metni" (PhD dissertation, Atatürk Üniversitesi, 1985), 352.

<sup>148</sup> TSMK, H.1124, 24b-25a. For a discussion of this manuscript and its place within the Ottoman tradition of royal history writing, see Tülün Değirmenci, "Resmedilen Siyaset: II. Osman Devri (1618-1622) Resimli Elyazmalarında Değişen İktidar Sembolleri" (PhD dissertation, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2007), esp. 167-172. The entire text of the manuscript has been edited and transliterated in Külekçi, "Ganī-zāde Nādirī." Given that I did not have access to the illustrated copy of Nādirī's *Şehname* at the Topkapı Palace Library, I consulted one of the copies of the manuscript at the Süleymaniye Manuscript Library: Ahmed Paşa 280.

<sup>149</sup> Katip Çelebi's chronicle recorded these as: "one hundred bales of silk and four elephants and one rhinoceros and some other gifts" (*yüz yük ipek ve dört fil ve bir gergedan ve ba<sup>c</sup>zı hedāyā*) Zeynep Aycibin, "Katip Çelebi, Fezleke, Tahlil ve Metin," (Ph.D. dissertation, Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, 2007), 644.

<sup>150</sup> *Garāyib hedāyası var cümleden / Getürdi nice pil ile gergedan* Külekçi, "Ganī-zāde Nādirī," 352. It is noteworthy that in the text, Nādirī uses the words *hedāyā* and *tuḥaf* (gifts), rather than *pişkeş* (tribute) here to refer to Shah Abbas's gifts/ tributes to the sultan. The way in which the author describes the envoy's reception, that is, how he was hosted, feasted, and given precious robes of honor is very similar to previous examples discussed above. Accordingly, Nādirī brings to the fore the envoy's amazement with all these Ottoman favors and his gratitude for them in return.

“pleasant,” Shah Abbas’s gifts elicited different reactions. As we have seen, Abbas’s growing military power and his pompous pronouncement of his Twelver Shi’i identity brought about a re-negotiation of Ottoman-Safavid disagreements and hostilities at military, political and religious levels. As the new century opened, the two empire’s powers also came to be tested against each other within a globally linked economy. As a result, the objects that travelled between the Ottoman and Safavid courts came to be defined as much by international commerce as the personal ambitions of their givers.

The turn of the seventeenth century witnessed a dramatic change in the nature and agency of objects exchanged between the Ottomans and Safavid courts. Abbas’s gifts of keys in 1599 broke completely from the established tradition in their nature and even offended the sultan on so many levels that the sultan gave them back, refusing to recognize them as objects of generosity. Pierre Bourdieu has underscored the dynamics of calculation involved in gift-giving: that the time passing in between giving and taking is what allows both sides to disregard any calculation involved in the exchange, associate the gesture with generosity and define the object as a gift.<sup>151</sup> Following Bourdieu’s conception that economic calculation governs in reality both gift and commodity exchange, anthropologists have stressed the problems involved in making sharp distinctions between gifts and commodities.<sup>152</sup> While our case study speaks also to the fluidity between gifts and commodities, it also points out the importance of the specific context in which objects may quickly move from being gifts to commodities and back. In the case of Safavid silk, this movement depended as much on the personal aspirations of

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<sup>151</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, “Selections from *The Logic of Practice*,” in *The Logic of the Gift: Toward an Ethic of Generosity*, ed. Alan D. Schrift (New York and London: Routledge, 1997), 204-215.

<sup>152</sup> Appadurai, “Politics of Value;” Igor Kopytoff, “The Cultural Biography of Things.”

Shah Abbas in his struggles with the Ottomans as it did on his quest and ability to participate in an internationally connected trade network. By 1618, the manner in which the Ottomans took part in this network was expressed in their power to receive silk as gifts.

## APPENDIX

List of gifts presented to the Ottoman sultan Mehmed III from Shah Abbas in January 1597 by his ambassador Zulfaqar Khan from the Archivio di Stato di Venezia, Senato, Copie ottocenteschi dei dispacci, Registro XI, 257-9. This is a report from the Venetian ambassadors Venier and Capello to the Senate, and signed “14 Genaro 1596 [1597] (m.v.), Marco Venier & Girolamo Capello, *baili*.” It is from a register that was copied from the damaged original collection of dispatches to the Senate (*Dispacci*). It seems very likely that there are typos here and the illegible parts in the original are marked here with ellipses.

p.257

Nota del presente fatto al Gran  
Signor dall’Ambasciator del Re  
di Persia

Un libro d’Alcoran scritte scitto di mano di Artimon di Brun.

Un altro scritto di man di Isnat.

Un libro che si chiama Murechagi

p. 258

Un libro che si chiama Nusetusafà che vuol dire paradiso di allegrezza

Un altro simile.

Un libro nominato Gralistan [Gulistan], che vuol dire Rosario. L’autore di questo libro è stato Sesade [Sadi] predicatore.

Un altro libro che si chiama Divanafis [Divan-i Hafiz] che vuol dire libro di rime.

Un libro che si chiama Seilvemegranon che vuol dire innamoramento.

Un altro libro che si chiama Devanesai che vuol dire croniche de Imperatori.

Veluti tessuti a oro con opera vesti N 9

Brocadi tessuti con ~~opera~~ oro veste N 18

Rizzo sopra rizzo d’oro (.....) veste N 9 gold brocade

Bezuar pietre contra veneni legate in oro et muschio N 5 (veleno-poison, legare-chain, tie, musk)

Mumia miticali 27 che vuol dire un peso veludi di diversi colori schietti veste N 18

Damasco (.....) Veste N 18

Damasco a opera(.....) Veste 9

mezzo raso veste N 27 } fatte nella città

tabino veste N 18 } di Grè.

Un padiglione da campo di velluto ricamato d'oro, et raso con le corde di seta et con le vere d'oro con gioie.

Un baldacchin di veluto ricamato d'oro a opera con corde di seta et mazze d'argento

Tappedi grandi fatti in Chiermani N 2 di brazza 14 di lunghezza

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Tapedi fatti in Corassan [Khurasan] N 2 di brazza 10

l'uno

Tapedi fatti in Nesaheti tessuti con oro grandi N 2

Tapedi di velluti tessuti con oro N 2

Tapedo tessuto con oro N 1

Chiezze fatti a opera in Chierman N 3

Pelizze del color del cielo N 9

Archi fatti in Coresson N 27

Frezze [freccie] mazzi 9 a 30 per mazzo

Cavalli corsieri con le stoffe et coperte di damasco (.....) N 9

Ahacchi? in Gen (.....) N 9

Carcassi da frezze (.....) N 9



## Figures



Figure 0.1  
Jade cup, Topkapı Palace Museum, Hazine, no. 1844



Figure 0.2  
Belt and armband, Topkapı Palace Museum, H. 1842 & H. 1843



Figure 1.1  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1517, 374a



Figure 1.2  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1517, 550a.



Figure 1.3  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1517, 600a



Figure 1.4  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1517, 603a



Figure 1.5  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1339, 244b



Figure 1.6  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3595, 53b-54a





Figure 1.7  
Ottoman ceremonial robe of a prince, late 16<sup>th</sup> c  
Topkapı Palace Museum



Figure 1.8  
Velvet robe, Safavid Persia, 1620-30  
Cleveland Museum of Art



Figure 1.9  
Qur'an fragment, 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> century  
Private collection



Figure 1.10  
Page from the Tahmasp Shahnama  
“Rustam’s Battle with the Great White Div (demon)”  
Cleveland Museum of Art



Figure 1.11  
Page from the Tahmasp Shahnama  
“Zal Sighted by a Caravan”  
Sackler Gallery, Washington, D.C.



Figure 1.12  
Tahmasp Shahnama  
Dedicatory rosette



Figure 1.13  
Page from the Tahmasp Shahnama  
“Ship of Faith”  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Figure 1.14  
Prophet Muhammad and the Ship of Faith  
From a *Shahnama* manuscript, British Library, Add. 15531





Figure 1.15  
The Martyrdom of Husain  
From an Ottoman book of *Maqatal-i Al-i Rasul*, late 16<sup>th</sup> century, Baghdad  
Metropolitan Museum of Art



Figure 1.16  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1344, 276b-277a



Figure 1.17  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A.3595, 68a



Figure 2.1  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1517, 189b



Figure 2.2  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 260a



Figure 2.3  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H 1517, 332a



Figure 2.4  
View of the entrance to the Chamber of Petitions, Topkapı Palace Museum



Figure 2.5  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 346a





Figure 2.6  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 503a.

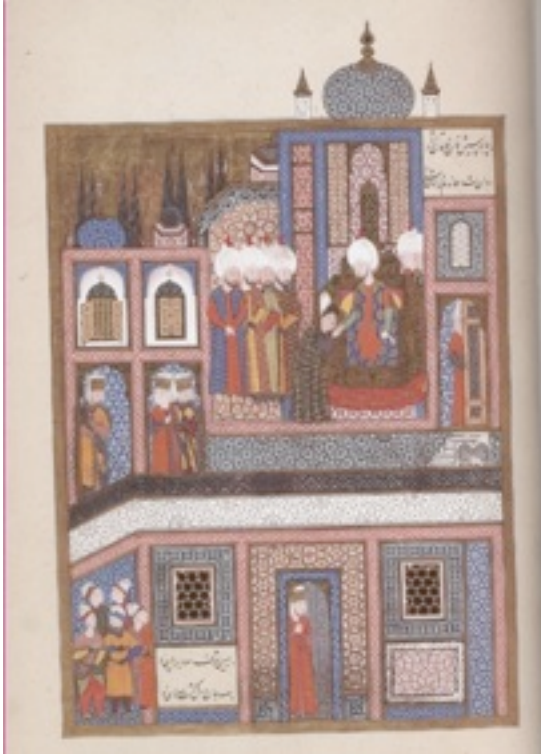


Figure 2.7  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 519a



Figure 2.8  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 498b.



Figure 2.9  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 600a



Figure 2.10  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H.1517, 603a.



Figure 2.11  
Chester Beatty Library, T.413, 14b



Figure 2.12  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3595, 53b-54a



Figure 2.13  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1339, 244b



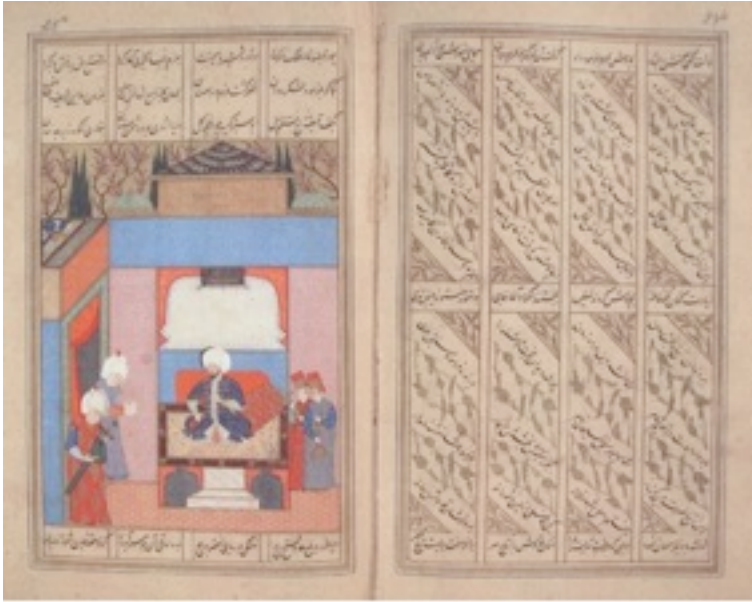


Figure 2.14  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 25a



Figure 2.15  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 38b-39a



Figure 2.16  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 41b-42a.



Figure 2.17  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 43b



Figure 2.18  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 54a



Figure 2.19  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 122a



Figure 2.20  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 141b



Figure 2.21  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3595, 68a





Figure 2.22  
Istanbul University Library, F.1404, 61b-62a



Figure 2.23  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 24b-25a



Figure 2.24  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 33b-34a



Figure 2.25  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1609, 68b-69a



Figure 2.26  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 28b-29a



Figure 2.27  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 36b-37a



Figure 2.28  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B. 200, 75b-76a



Figure 3.1  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 108b-109a





Figure 3.2  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, R. 1296, 46a



Figure 3.3  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, R. 1296, 48b



Figure 3.4  
Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626, 128a



Figure 3.5  
Metropolitan Museum of Art, 45.174.5



Figure 3.6  
Seyyid Lokman, Book of Kings of the House of Osman (*Şehnâme-i Āl-i ʿOsman*)  
British Library, Add 7931, 130b-131a



Figure 3.7  
Gate of Felicity, Topkapı Palace Museum, Istanbul



Figure 3.8  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, R. 1296, 52b-53a.



Figure 3.9  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, A. 3595, 53b-54a





Figure 3.10  
Istanbul University Library, F. 1404, 41b-42a



Figure 3.11  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 36b-37a



Figure 3.12

Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626, 125a



Figure 4.1  
Map Showing the Borders of the Ottoman and Safavid Empires, 16<sup>th</sup> Century



Figure 4.2  
*Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (The Square of the Image of the World)  
Isfahan, 1598-

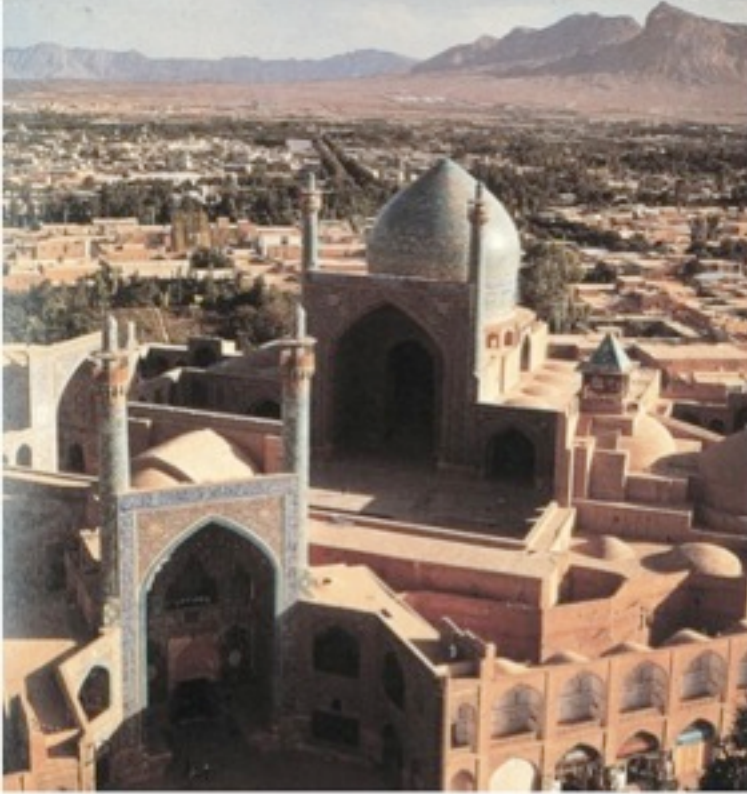


Figure 4.3  
*Masjed-i Shah* (Congregational Mosque),  
*Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (The Square of the Image of the World)  
Isfahan, 1598-



Figure 4.4  
Ali Qapu,  
*Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (The Square of the Image of the World)  
Isfahan, 1598-



Figure 4.5  
Private mosque for royal use (*Masjid-i Shaykh Lutf-Allah*),  
*Maydan-i Naqsh-i Jahan* (The Square of the Image of the World)  
Isfahan, 1598-





Figure 4.6  
Süleymaniye Mosque Complex, Istanbul, 1557



Figure 4.7

Double-spread from a copy of the *Tarih-i Feth-i Eđri* (History of the Conquest of Eđri)  
*Arts of the Islamic World Including Fine Carpets and Textiles* London 7 October 2009  
*Sotheby's*, Lot 58, fols. 30-31



Figure 4.8  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, B.200, 142b-143a



Figure 4.9  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1609, 68b-69a



Figure 4.10  
Imam Riza Complex, Mashhad



Figure 4.11  
Portrait of Anthony Shirley  
E. Denison Ross, *Sir Anthony Sherley and His Persian Adventure, Including Some Contemporary Narratives Relating Thereto*, 1933.



Figure 4.12

*Doge Marino Grimani Receiving the Ambassadors of Shah Abbas*, Gabriele Caliari, 1603  
Sala delle Quattro Porte, Palazzo Ducale, Venice



Figure 4.13  
Safavid Carpet  
Procuratoria di San Marco, Venice





Figure 4.14

Mother and child

Safavid cut voided silk velvet fragment on a satin ground, first quarter 17<sup>th</sup> century  
Museo Correr in Venice (Museo Civico Correr, inv. no. Cl. XXII, n.37)



Figure 4.15  
Sir Robert Sherley,  
Portrait by an Unknown Artist, Before 1628  
Berkeley Castle, Gloucestershire



Figure 4.16

Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626, 125a



Figure 4.17  
Detail, Vienna Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Codex Vindobonensis 8626, 125a



Figure 4.18  
Topkapı Palace Museum Library, H. 1124, 24b-25a

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