

**TĀJ AND TRIBE:
THE KIZILBĀŞ AND SACRED KINSHIP DURING THE REIGN OF SHAH ʿABBĀS I
(1587-1629)**

by

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Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Budapest, Hungary

2020

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Chair, Examination Committee

Thesis Supervisor

Budapest
June 2020

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ABSTRACT

Since its inception in 1501, the Safavid realm was a marriage between a mystical order and a sovereign state. During the reign of Shah ‘Abbās I (r.1587-1629), it is said that the Safavids’ stalwart mystical disciples – the ẖıẖılbaş – were marginalized and replaced by slaves (Pers. *gholām*) due to the state’s efforts to suppress Sufism and assert a Twelver-Shi’ite orthodoxy. This thesis contests this claim by asserting that ‘Abbās’ reign coincided with an adjustment to the relationship between himself and his disciples. Previously the Safavid state frequently suffered inter-regnal civil wars due to the tribal social configuration of the ẖıẖılbaş in the Safavid realm. Reasserting himself as the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmīl*) of the Safavid mystical network, Shah ‘Abbās disciplined unruly tribes to be loyal under the Safavid mystical crown (the *tāj-i ḥaydarī*) worn by all disciples. Upon success against their border rivals, Ottomans and Uzbeks, Shah ‘Abbās utilized the deeply ingrained structures of the mystical network extending well beyond the borders of the Safavid realm to diffuse his image as a Sufi king (*pīr-shāh*). As the temporal head of the *Dergāh-i ‘Alī* (the Sublime Lodge), ‘Abbās prepared his disciples and courted Shi’ite-minded Sufi networks to build a realm fitting the faith of the Safavids’ mystical community. By rethinking ‘Abbās’ reign during this period, this thesis offers a model through which to reinterpret both the ẖıẖılbaş and, on another level, suggests the ẖıẖılbaş are one avenue for reinterpreting the Safavid realm’s confessional evolution as a whole.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I owe no small debt of gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Tijana Krstić. Her tireless guidance and constant support inspired many of the core ideas within this project. I also owe gratitude to my second reader, Dr. Ferenc Peter Csirkés, who during my stay as an Erasmus+ Study Mobility grantee at Sabancı University in Istanbul guided me through my first foray into Persian manuscripts and early Islamic history with tireless energy and humor. At Central European University, I would like to thank Drs. Jan Hennings, Mattias Riedl, Günhan Börekçi, Sona Grigoryan, Tolga Esmer, and Brett Wilson for their many insights and perspectives, as well as their enthusiastic support. Outside CEU, I would like to thank numerous scholars' support and discussion, including Kristóf Sztár, Drs. Tulay Artan, Christopher Rose, Alan Strathern, Nabil Al-Takriti, Rıza Yıldırım, and Stefan Winter. Particularly, back home in Texas, I would like to thank Dr. Azfar Moin at the University of Texas for consistently encouraging me to keep moving "onward and upward" at all stages. At the same university, I would also like to thank Alexander Kreger, who in many ways is to blame for me undertaking this field. At Sabancı University, owe particular appreciation to my *kardeş* (brother) M. Furkan Işın.

This project would not have been possible without significant financial support from the Center for Eastern Mediterranean Studies, which afforded me multiple conference travel grants to test various ideas of this thesis, and the Department of History, which not only afforded me the opportunity to study for a semester at Sabancı University but also provided a generous summer research grant. During the summer, I also benefitted from the generous financial support and opportunity to study Persian at the Mejlis Institute in Yerevan, Armenia, whose directors, Polina Ivanova and Mehdi Hesamizadeh, showed great hospitality and friendship.

A thesis is as much a personal journey as it is scholarly. There were many times when I relied on the people who, due to the limitations of space, cannot be mentioned in full. I would like to particularly thank people in CEU who contributed to this thesis' different parts, whether in discussion or suffering my rantings. In particular, Mila Bajić, Katarina Beširević, Antonia Cioanca, Handan Demir, Flora Khazarian, Isabelle Karabajakian, Doğan Karakelle, Marijana Kardum, Orchi Lohani, Nourhan Maher, Muhammet Mazı, Nemanja Nikolić, Nikola Pantić, María Paula Rey, Merve Savaş, Serkan Simen, Cevat Sucu, Ivona Vargek, Nukri Tabidze, Burak Yazıcı, and Gustavo Montagna von Zeschau. I owe a special thanks to Cankat Kaplan for helping me with translations. If anything, I hope to return their kindness in the coming years. I also owe gratitude to the many Alevi friends I've gained in pursuing this work, but in particular to the people who guided me through learning Alevism and learning to play the *saz*: Mansur Bildik (Dersim/Vienna), Can Uğur (Kayseri/İstanbul), to Cengiz Sarıkuş (Malatya/İstanbul), and to my late friend/teacher, Ümit Şimşek (Sivas/İstanbul).

For the past two years, I have been away from my family. Throughout this journey, they offered the love and support as if I had been home – making it easier to see this through. Without the support of my mom, Debra Lewis, my stepdad, Craig Lewis, my *Mimi* (Loulee Shaw), and our dog, Anna, I cannot imagine what life would have become. It is to them I dedicate this thesis. Keeping in mind the many mistakes herein, I have only myself to blame. Though, I hope that it represents growth worth their sacrifice.

NOTES ON USAGE

The Safavid realm was a cross-section of many different languages and peoples. To reflect their differences, this thesis employs a modified version of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*' (IJMES) transliteration system, including diacritical marks and spelling differences between Arabic, Turkish and Persian. Some specific notes are as follows:

1. Personal names of well-known figures such as Safavid monarchs (e.g. Isma‘il I, ‘Abbās I, Muḥammed Khudābandeh, etc.) are transliterated to reflect the trans-linguistic nature of their status for Persian and Turkish-speaking peoples in both realms.
2. Names of Kızılbaş tribes (e.g. Gerāylī, Qarāmānlū, Rūmlū, Şāmlū, Tāleş, Üstāclū and Zū'l-Kadr) are transliterated in Turkish.
3. Titles of offices within the Safavid mystical network are transliterated in Turkish (e.g. *delīl*, *halīfetü'l-hulefā*). The only exception is *murshid-i kāmīl* (Perfect Guide), which is transliterated in Arabic.
4. For the personal names of those broadly defined as disciples or Kızılbaş of the Safavid monarchs (e.g. Ya'qūb Khan), this thesis prioritizes Turkish transliteration. For titles like Khan, see note 7 on usage.
5. Titles of texts are transcribed according to their original languages; texts such as the History of the Kızılbaş (*Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*).
6. All quotes herein, especially those deriving from the *buyruk* ("commandment") texts are transliterated according to a simplified Turkish transcription system.
7. Certain titles (Beg, Khan, Shah and Sayyid) which are found in the Marriam-Webster dictionary are rendered in a simplified Romanized form.

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INTRODUCTION

The Safavids were the only mystical/Sufi network to establish a state.¹ Originating in Azerbaijan and northern Iran, Shah Ismā‘īl I (r.1501-1524) and his disciples, the Kızılbaş, conquered the Iranian plateau, modern-day Iraq, and shared a border with their rivals, the Ottomans and Uzbeks. The Safavids cultivated a unique, multi-tiered state. One face of the state mirrored other Islamic realms: court bureaucracy, religious clergy, governors and client states.² The other face, which was intertwined with the first, followed the contours of the Safavid mystical network and extended far beyond the temporal borders of the Safavid realm. Safavid monarchs maintained their roles as the *murshid-i kāmīl* (Perfect Spiritual Guide) of their own mystical network, with an anointed deputy in charge of the network’s affairs.³ For almost a century, the Kızılbaş – meaning “red head,” a pejorative term coined by the Ottomans referring to a hat/crown the Safavid disciples wore – held the highest positions of military and state bureaucracy.⁴ With the ascent of Shah ‘Abbās I (r.1587-1629), conventional narratives suggest, the Kızılbaş were marginalized from these positions.

¹ Secondary literature on Sufism typically refers to Sufi “orders,” translating the notion of a Sufi *ṭarīqa* (lit. path) in a way that underlines parallels with European monastic orders. For reasons that are expanded elsewhere in the thesis, I build on the suggestion made by Shahzad Bashir to refer to these as “networks.” Briefly stated, Bashir proposes the more neutral “network” to mean “religious confraternities held together on the basis of devotion to charismatic exemplars celebrated as God’s friends.” In effect, the change in nomenclature argues for reengaging with Sufi paths to reconceptualize aspects of Islamic esotericism that do not have similarities to European contexts. See Shehzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 11-3.

² On the nature of Safavid governance from Ismā‘īl I to ‘Abbās I see Colin Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric*. (London: I.B. Taurus, 2009). For developments throughout the Safavid reign see Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 2001).

³ Willem Floor provides the most insightful interpretation of the Safavids’ Sufi inclinations throughout their dynasty in “The *Khalifeh al-kholafa* of the Safavid Sufi Order,” *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 153:1 (2003): 51-86.

⁴ Shahzad Bashir follows the early uses of the term “Qizilbāsh” by rivals such as the Aqqayunlu and Ottomans, which eventually diffused into Safavid chronicles in “The Origins and Rhetorical Evolution of the Term Qizilbāsh in Persianate Literature,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 57 (2014): 372-80.

Orthodox ‘Abbās: Conventional Interpretations of a Ruler’s Relationship to his Disciples

Historians have tended to view Shah ‘Abbās I’s ascent to the Safavid throne in 1587 as a watershed moment. They have argued that ‘Abbās reformed the government to marginalize Kızılbaş influence and power in the realm, replacing them with slaves (*gholām*). These reforms are said to have signaled the advent of Twelver Shi’i absolutism in Iran for time to come and the “waning of the Kızılbaş”—that is, the suppression of the disciples of the Safavid Sufi network in the Ottoman and Safavid realms.⁵ The present thesis contests this claim.

Reassessing Abbas’ iconoclastic reign requires a brief understanding of Safavid confessional historiography. Until the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, the prevailing explanation for Iran’s conversion to Shi’ism relied on large groups of migrating religious scholars from Bahrain and Jabal ‘Amili.⁶ At the turn of the twenty-first century, in response to various historiographical ‘turns’, scholars diversified the methodological approaches to the Safavid realm’s confessional evolution toward Shi’ism. In particular, Rula Jurdi Abisaab and Kathrine Babayan spearheaded this movement. Abisaab’s interpretation focused on Arabic and Persian texts, emphasizing the socially contingent circumstances of Safavid ‘Shi’itization’. Furthermore, Abisaab weaves together intellectual history with political and, to some extent, social history by focusing predominantly on the lives of Shi’ite scholars. Notorious among these being the al-Karakī

⁵ Kathryn Babayan argues that the Kızılbaş were marginalized in this period. Referred to as the ‘waning of the Kızılbaş’ thesis, many subsequent historians reference her work in agreement. This argument has a longer historiographical origin, such as in Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 76-83. Babayan expands on this from a cultural historical perspective in *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002). Others remarking on this period generally accept this thesis. See, for instance, Ayşe Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, “Safavid Conversion Propaganda in Ottoman Anatolia and Ottoman Reactions, 1440s – 1660s,” (Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Ohio State University, 2016), 148, n.461; 171.

⁶ Andrew Newman reviews these studies in his seminal article, “The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran: Arab Shiite Opposition to ‘Alī al-Karakī and Safavid Shiism,” *Die Welt des Islams* 33.1 (1993): 66-112.

family who, from the early sixteenth century onwards carried out efforts to convert the Safavids' subjects to Twelver Shi'ism that was in many ways specifically unique to the Safavid realm.⁷

Babayan's work, meanwhile, focusing on cultural approaches, offered one of the most innovative renderings of the Ẓīzīlbāš's 'waning' political and religious hold over the Safavid state. Relying on anti-Ẓīzīlbāš and anti-Sufi heresiographies written by Shi'ite scholars. Additionally, Babayan used these heresiographies to further illustrate the Ẓīzīlbāš's distinct form of Islamic mysticism, branded "Ẓīzīlbāšism" in modern terminology.⁸ In this conceptualization, the disciples are noted for their exaggerated (*ghulāt/ghuluww*) mystical or "popular Sufi" beliefs,⁹ their tribal structures,¹⁰ even for cannibalism.¹¹ Babayan argued the Ẓīzīlbāš waned largely because of the Safavids' increasingly closer relationship with the 'orthodox' Twelver Shite scholars – the '*ulamā*' – which seems to have peaked in 'Abbās' reign. In Abisaab's and Babayan's influential interpretation, distinctly Safavid 'orthodox' Shi'ite faith gradually overshadowed all other forms of piety. The main target of the agents of Shi'ite orthodoxy, in addition to converting Sunnis, was to cleanse the realm of 'popular' forms of Sufism—including the king's mystical followers. The disciples' 'Ẓīzīlbāšism,' this narrative suggests, was totally incompatible with the spiritual destiny of the realm. However, recent studies on sacred kingship and mysticism between 'Abbās' period suggest different interpretations that challenge the 'waning of the Ẓīzīlbāš' theory.

⁷ Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

⁸ There are many renderings of "Ẓīzīlbāšism" as a catchall term, including "Ẓīzīlbāš Islam." See Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran*. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2002), 147. The book is overall organized in a fashion to separate the Qizilbash from other groups via the framing of *ghuluww* (exaggeration), "their common belief in unitive fusion (*ittihad*) and incarnation of part or all of the divine in humans (*hulul*)." Ibid., xlv. See also Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 2-3, 8-29.

⁹ Babayan expands on the notion of exaggerated mystical beliefs ascribed by scholars in *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*. Colin Mitchell suggests the Ẓīzīlbāš represented "popular" Sufi beliefs in *The Practice of Politics*.

¹⁰ This is expanded on below, but other historians refer to the Ẓīzīlbāš tribalism throughout their works, depicted as factor that frequently stood in the way of the Safavid internal security. See Reid, *Tribalism and Society*.

¹¹ Bashir, "Shah Isma'il and the Qizilbash: Cannibalism in the Religious History of Early Safavid Iran," *History of Religions* 45.3 (2006): 234-56.

More recent scholarship has suggested both synchronic differences and offered diachronic conceptualizations that have shifted scholarly discourse about the confessional makeup of the Safavid realm. Focusing on the early seventeenth century, Andrew Newman suggests that heresiographies written by the *‘ulamā’* in this period were – despite being vehemently opposed to figures revered by the Kızılbaş, such as Abū Muslim – largely unpopular. Through a close reading of these texts, Newman underlines the often-desperate tone of these texts in their attempts to urge believers away from mystical practices such as singing and dancing – let alone venerating folk heroes.¹² The *‘ulamā’*’s austerity notwithstanding, it should also be said that modern scholars studying Safavid Iran generally emphasize Arabic and Persian texts. With the notable exception of Willem Floor and Hasan Javadi, who’s co-authored article on “The Role of Azerbaijani Turkish in Safavid Iran,” there is still a dearth of research about groups whose first language was not Arabic or Persian.¹³

From the perspective of sacred kingship, Azfar Moin’s recent study suggests that in post-Mongol Islamicate realms, successful monarchs had to rule the many constituent parts of their realm by simultaneously embodying different cultural molds and modes of sovereignty.¹⁴ Moin implicitly suggests that a king’s many – sometimes conflicting – relationships had to be accommodated. With the institutionalization of the Safavid mystical network throughout the dynasty’s tenure, scholarship has yet to closely analyze the relationship between the Safavid guide-kings and their disciples.¹⁵ In another advancement that encourages a closer look at the Safavids’

¹² Andrew Newman, “The limits of ‘Orthodoxy’? Notes on the Anti-Abū Muslim polemic of early 11th/17th Iran,” *Shi’i Islam and Sufism: Classical Views and Modern Perspectives*. Denis Hermann and Mathieu Terrier, eds. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2019), 65-122.

¹³ Willem Floor and Hasan Javadi, “The Role of Azerbaijani Turkish in Safavid Iran,” *Iranian Studies* 46.4 (2013): 569-81.

¹⁴ Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 68.

¹⁵ Willem Floor provides the most substantial case for the Safavid order’s institutionalized nature throughout the Safavid period in “*Khalifeh al-kholafa*”.

relationship with their followers, Ata Anzali has argued against scholars' insistence of a king- and court-driven policy marginalized Sufism. In his recent monograph, Anzali suggests that previous scholars' emphasis on mystical marginalization represents what he calls the "suppression model."¹⁶ As his case study shows, particular Alid- and Shite-minded shades of mysticism existed at all levels of the realm in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Anzali's study suggests that mystical experience in earlier periods of Safavid history was far more intense, as opposed to the later Safavid period. That being said, Anzali accepts the "waning" of the *Qızılbaş* narrative, implicitly suggesting that the Safavids' disciples were not part of a mystical tradition fueled by intellectual discourse. By complicating our understanding of Safavid sovereignty and its relationship to mysticism, Moin's and Anzali's perspectives provide grounds for reassessing the relationship between the Safavid guide-kings and their disciples.

The main issue in studying the *Qızılbaş* is their place within a nexus of both overlapping and, sometimes, conflicting relationships across the two imperial realms: Sunni/Shi'ite, orthodox/heterodox, esoteric/exoteric, Ottoman/Safavid, and scriptural versus ritual. In this discourse, the *Qızılbaş* figure into the Ottoman and Safavid narratives as both separate and a part of the Safavid yoke. In short, scholars have not sufficiently studied how the *Qızılbaş* fit into the Safavid milieu after Shah Ismā'īl I's messianic rise and rule, when patterns of tension between the Safavid kings and their disciples emerged. By reconceptualizing Safavid disciples in these narratives, this thesis tries to fill the gap between the "waning of the *Qızılbaş*" thesis and the "suppression model." In the former, the disciples' marginalization during 'Abbās' reign focuses on their religious otherness. That is, 'Abbās actively suppressed "*Qızılbaşism*" in order to favor

¹⁶ Ata Anzali, *Mysticism in Iran: The Safavid Roots of a Modern Concept*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2017), 25-6.

the ‘Amilī scholars’ conception of an “orthodox” Twelver Shi’ism. The latter, while critiquing the suppression of Sufism in the Safavid realm, excludes the Safavid disciples from the category of Sufism, suggesting ‘Abbās’ reign coincided with the marginalization of the Kızılbaş.¹⁷ However, the “suppression model” fits within the framework of reintegrating the Kızılbaş into the narrative of mystical networks in the Safavid realm by firmly situating them in Sufism with tribal backgrounds.

This thesis works towards an all-encompassing model for the Kızılbaş. Ottomanists and Anatolia-focused students of Alevi history concur that by ‘Abbās’ reign the Kızılbaş had largely become secretive, posing no real threat to the Ottomans.¹⁸ With the secrecy of the Kızılbaş in the Ottoman realm and marginalization in the Safavid one, there appears little ground for commonality during ‘Abbās’ reign. However, recent contributions by scholars focusing on Anatolian Alevi history suggest alternative sources for rethinking internal dynamics of the Safavid Sufi network in both Ottoman and Safavid history.¹⁹ In Safavid historiography, the Kızılbaş are rarely given the due attention they deserve. Rather, they are often treated as a threat to the cohesion of the Safavid state. Historiographies of both empires relegate the “redheaded” disciples of the Safavid monarch to a disruptive force. This thesis works toward a framework to reconceptualize the Kızılbaş as a center of influence and power within the Safavid realm, on the one hand, and, on the other, to

¹⁷ Anzali argues that by the time of Shah Šafī I’s (r.1629-42) coronation, Caucasian slaves (*gholām*) had taken full control of the political sphere. He cites Babayan, “The Safavid Synthesis” and “Waning of the Qizilbāsh.” Given that Šafī I’s reign followed ‘Abbās, this assertion appears problematic when we consider Willem Floor and Andrew Newman’s findings that by the end of Shah ‘Abbās’ reign, the Kızılbaş held the vast majority of governorships. See Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 104-5; Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 53; 185, n.22.

¹⁸ Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevi of Ottoman Anatolia*, chapter 6.

¹⁹ See, for example, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump. “Documents and *Buyruk* Manuscripts in the Private Archives of Alevi Dede Families: An Overview,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37:3 (2010): 273-86.

assess how those living within both realms reacted to the reforms in Iran. In short, I look at the Safavids' mystical network straddling the two empires holistically.

The Kızılbaş, rather than being a simple sacred-cum-tribal confederation transcending two realms, were a multifaceted, infinitely complex and to some extent incomprehensible matrix of groups with particular beliefs.²⁰ Far more than the bifurcation between the “Ottoman” and “Safavid” realms would suggest, these disciples negotiated boundaries – spiritual and social, pious and political. This thesis is an initial attempt to conceptualize them as a whole and think in terms of their own internal organization that may have envisioned different kinds of boundaries from imperial and modern scholars' classifications of people and divisions of space.

The “Kızılbaş” Problem: Nomenclatures, Sources, and Sacred/Tribal Kinship

As the historiography suggests, what scholarship has not addressed are the competing cultural imaginations of the Safavid kings and their disciples within the social history of the Safavids' mystical network. For those who read about the Kızılbaş in other contexts, the word itself still harkens to a particular image based on equal parts fact and fiction. For some, as is the case for Alevis (the modern Anatolian descendants of the Kızılbaş), it is part of a legacy in which their ancestors were oppressed and marginalized by the Ottomans and the Safavids. For others, often looking from the outside, the Kızılbaş remain mysterious and eye-catching for their supposed atrocities and religious innovation. Focusing on the relationship between the Safavid kings and their disciples, certain aspects that are taken for granted need closer attention.

²⁰ Rıza Yıldırım makes this point in “The Safavid-Qizilbash Ecumene and the Formation of the Qizilbash-Alevi Community in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1500-c.1700,” *Iranian Studies* 52.3-4 (2019): 449-83.

Cultural Baggage: The Nomenclatures of the Kızılbaş

Those who study the Kızılbaş from even a cursory perspective will immediately note differences in nomenclatures. Studied in relative isolation, these terms localize the perspective from which the Kızılbaş phenomenon is analyzed, using different spellings and pronunciations derived from Persian and Turkish. From the perspective of those studying this group in Anatolia, variations of Kizilbash, Kizilbash/Alevi,²¹ and Kızılbaş are deployed. Safavidist scholars, by contrast, generally use Qezelbāsh, Qizilbaş, Qizilbāsh, etc. to reflect either Persian pronunciation or philological specificity. This divergence in nomenclature highlights the non-comparative nature of research on this community as well as the boundaries between the fields of Ottoman and Safavid studies, with the Alevi Studies gradually carving its own niche somewhere in between, but focusing mainly on Anatolia and secondarily on Iraq.

The dichotomy of nomenclatures between the Ottomanist and Safavidist scholars working on the Kızılbaş is underexplored. That said, Safavidist scholars have touched on this, raising question of how to conceptualize the group. Following the publication of James Reid's book on *Tribalism and Politics in Safavid Iran, 1500 – 1629* in 1983, John Woods wrote a scathing review.²² In his rejoinder, Reid criticized Woods for not addressing Reid's distinction between Qizilbash with a "Q" and Kizilbash with a "K," with Reid defining the former as military and the latter as tribal.²³ Yet, Safavid sources make no such distinctions and in the Arabic script it is the

²¹ The term Alevi is a nineteenth century innovation not cited in any contemporary Ottoman, Safavid, or even Kızılbaş sources. Although modern Alevi believers sometimes call themselves Kızılbaş, the same cannot be said for Kızılbaş in the late fifteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries. For further reading, see Stefan Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule, 1516-1788*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 18, n. 30. See also Markus Dressler, *Writing Religion: The Making of Turkish Alevi Islam*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

²² James R. Reid, *Tribalism and Society in Islamic Iran, 1500-1629*. (Malibu: Undena Publications, 1983). John Woods, "Review: Tribalism and Society in Islamic Iran, 1500-1629," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 18.4 (1986): 529-32.

²³ See Reid, "Review: Tribalism and Society in Islamic Iran, 1500-1629," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 20.3 (1988): 408-410.

same word that is only transcribed and interpreted differently depending on a scholar's proclivities and formation. While Ottoman and Safavid contexts in which the Q/Kizilbash operated differed, it is impossible to make blanket statements about the group's profile and social roles based on spelling.²⁴

By contrast, this thesis is an attempt to explore other options to escape the endemic marginalization that the Kızılbaş have faced in both Ottoman and Safavid scholarship. Within Safavid historiography, they are depicted as exotic nuisances rather than a part of the state. From the Ottoman perspective, they are primarily targets of persecution or, recently, they are seen as striking their own path.²⁵ Aside from choosing the term of *Kızılbaş*, the project also uses "disciples" (of the Safavid mystical network) to capture the under-appreciated layer of the followers' social imagination. This shift away from "Kızılbaş" in its many forms to the more neutral "disciples" aims to reappraise the group on its own terms.²⁶ Considering the inherent qualities both contemporaries and modern scholars ascribe to this group, neutral terminologies aim, at once, to promote comparison with other mystical groups and reduce prejudices. In effect, the effort is to make the Kızılbaş less exotic, and more familiar.

Finding the Light: Sources for Interpreting the Safavids' Disciples

The main issue is that scholars accept the received wisdom from each side, be it Ottoman or Safavid scholarship. The boundaries between Anatolia and the Iranian plateau are still clear-cut. Whether for national or religious reasons, the area studies approach still hinders engaging with the

²⁴ Ayşe Baltacıoğlu-Brammer has recently discussed the evolving definitions of Kızılbaş in Ottoman contexts in "One Word, Many Implications: The Term Kızılbaş in the Early Modern Ottoman Context," in *Ottoman Sunnism: New Perspectives*. Vefa Erginbaş, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 47-70.

²⁵ Depending on the perspective of scholarship, one can typically decipher which of these approaches a particular scholar embraces. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump's recently published monograph offers a fresh perspective on these issues in *The Kizilbash/Alevi of Ottoman Anatolia*.

²⁶ This approach is inspired by Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 11-2.

groups straddling the Ottoman and Safavid realms. Scholars focusing on the Anatolian perspective of the Kızılbaş recently suggested that Safavid sources do not yield enough information about the disciples living in the Safavid realm to warrant interest.²⁷ As the first chapter intends to show, this claim is untenable.

This thesis' approach to sources, by contrast, is holistic. In arguing for a cultural interpretation of the Safavid disciples during this period, this work emphasizes synthesis and a creative approach to the sources to tell the disciples' story from a cultural perspective. A great many of the sources discussed here are well known, including the *buyruk* ("commandment") texts. Likened to catechisms, they were, until recently, better known to those who study the Kızılbaş in the Ottoman realm. Arguably, the most important sources that this study is based on are the *buyruks* compiled during Shah 'Abbās I's reign. Among modern scholars of the Kızılbaş in the Ottoman realm, the *buyruk* genre has recently come into focus as a source for examining the beliefs, practices and context of the Safavids' disciples.²⁸ The purpose of the commandments was similar to that of the Ottoman *ilm-i hāl* literature explored by Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu in that both genres aimed to correct belief. By the mid-sixteenth century, Ottoman authorities began compiling and diffusing texts to aid converting their subjects to a distinctly Ottoman Sunni "orthodoxy."²⁹ Ottoman catechisms often had different titles, mixed contents and inconsistent

²⁷ Rıza Yıldırım, "The Safavid-Qizilbash Ecumene," 451. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia*, 230.

²⁸ In particular, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump and Doğan Kaplan's 2008 dissertations reinvigorated the study of Alevi, Kızılbaş, Safavid, and mystical historiographies. For their dissertations, see Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "Subjects of the Sultan, Disciples of the Shah: Formation and Transformation of the Kizilbash/Alevi Communities in Ottoman Anatolia," (Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University, 2008); Doğan Kaplan, "Buyruklara Göre Kızılbaşlık," (Ph.D. Thesis, Selçuk University, 2008). Karakaya-Stump's work generally challenged outdated perceptions of Kızılbaş beliefs as an amalgamation of shamanistic and 'folk' Islam represented by the Köprülü paradigm. Kaplan, by contrast, compares several copies of *buyruk* manuscripts and their contents, including three that make the core of this thesis' analysis.

²⁹ *Ilm-i hal* is a catchall term which denotes the Ottoman genre of catechisms. Krstić explains these texts often had different names (*risāle*, *menākib*, *'aqā'id*) and the content organized in terms of questions and answers. Krstić contextualizes the growth of these texts in relation to the Ottomans' confessional evolution in *Contested*

structures that gradually, though not completely, became standardized by the late sixteenth century.³⁰ The *buyruks*, while seemingly following the same trajectory, were only for the eyes of the Safavids' agents of faith, the *halīfes*, and thus cannot be equated to early modern Christian or even Ottoman Sunni catechisms in terms of authorial intention and social impact.

The *buyruks* bring together a sacred knowledge combining mystical teachings and notions of spiritual authority that constituted the path (*tarīq*) that agents of faith (faith curators) taught to their disciples within the Safavid's mystical network. Scholars have determined they are a result of an evolutionary process, finding elements from the Qur'an, mystical texts (such as the *Sefatü's-Safa*, a hagiography of the Safavid Order's founder, Sheikh Şafī), canons from Hurufī mystical thought,³¹ and poems from seminal figures of the Safavids' early years (Shah Ismā'īl, Pīr Sulṭān 'Abdāl, and Kul Himmet).³² There are at least three *buyruks* from the reign of Shah 'Abbās, dated to 1601, 1608 and 1612.³³ This thesis puts these sources in dialogue to compare tenets of belief, symbolic imagery, and practices of faith (hierarches and rituals) they detailed. Collectively, they represent the codification of the disciples' belief since the reign of Ṭahmāsp and an idealized social imaginary that the Safavids' disciples shared across their network.³⁴ Whether in the Ottoman or

Conversions: Narratives of Religious Change in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

³⁰ For further details about the organization and diffusion of these texts, see Tijana Krstić, "From Shahāda to 'Aqīda: Conversion to Islam, Catechisation and Sunnitisation in Sixteenth-Century Ottoman Rumeli", in *Islamisation: Comparative Perspectives from History*. A.C.S. Peacock, ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017), 296-314.

³¹ Newman highlights the Hurufis' influence from Khorasan to Anatolia and Syria. See Newman, 149 n.20.

³² Kaplan, 64-81. Rıza Yıldırım has discussed the *Futuwwa* influences in the *buyruks* in "Inventing a Sufi Tradition: The Use of the Futuwwa Ritual Gathering as a Model for the Qizilbash Djem", in *Sufism and Society: Arrangements of the Mystical in the Muslim World, 1200-1800*, John Curry and Erik S. Ohlander, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2011), 164-82.

³³ *Kitab-ı Menâkıb-ı Şerif*, 1601, Ms. Gölpınarlı 198, Mevlana Müzesi Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı Kütüphanesi, Mevlana Müzesi, Konya, Turkey; *Menâkıbu'l-Esrâr Behcetü'l-Ahrâr*, 1608, Ms. Gölpınarlı 181, Mevlana Müzesi Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı Kütüphanesi, Mevlana Müzesi, Konya, Turkey; *Risâle-i Şeyh Şafî*, 1612, Ms. 1172, Konya Mevlana Müzesi Yazmaları, Ferit Uğur Library, Konya, Turkey. It is worth mentioning that Ms. 1172 was published. See Bîsâtî, *Şeyh Şafî Buyruğu*. Ahmet Taşğın, ed. (Konya: Çizgi Yayınları, 2013).

³⁴ Historians of the Kızılbaş in Ottoman Anatolia have traced the *buyruk*'s initial emergence during the reign of Shah Ṭahmāsp since at least 2008. See Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, "Disciples of the Shah," 33, 197-205; Kaplan,

Safavid realms, the idealized social imaginary was diffused through the practices, structures, and rituals to shape the belief of disciples of the Safavids' mystical network. I combine the information from the *buyruks* with other sources to retell the story of 'Abbās I's relationship with his disciples.

Furthermore, in this thesis I utilize entries from the *mühimme defterleri* (the Registry of Important Imperial Affairs) as well as two Ottoman reports from 1619 on interrogation of apprehended Kızılbaş to conceptualize 'Abbās' relationship with his disciples and how the latter practices their faith in the Ottoman realm. The rituals elaborated in one of the two 1619 reports, which has been published in Ottoman script and French translation, constitutes the basis for my reconstruction of the Safavid disciples' practices in the Ottoman realm.³⁵ The other report from 1619, translated and published by Andreas Tietze, focuses on particular cases of disciples located in Constantinople at that time.³⁶ Collectively, these sources are used to highlight the renewed efforts of 'Abbās and his Spiritual Deputies (*halīfes*) in the Ottoman realm in the midst of his growing diplomatic and military successes.

Sacred Kinship, Superimposed: A Model for Analyzing the Kızılbaş

Ayfer Karakaya-Stump has recently suggested that the Safavids superimposed themselves onto other Sufi networks in efforts to gain a greater following.³⁷ To expand on this argument, this thesis proposes a model for reinterpreting the Safavid kings' relationship with their disciples after Ismā'īl

"Buyruklara Göre Kızılbaşlık," 18-30. In a forthcoming article, Rıza Yıldırım suggests he has found what he terms "Tahmasp's vernacular" – denoting the earliest possible copy of a *buyruk* that certifies the genre emerged in Tahmāsp's reign. I am grateful to him for sharing with me a draft of his "The Commandment (Buyruk): An Introduction to the Sacred Texts of the Kızılbaş-Alevi Community," to appear in *Entangled Confessionalizations?*, edited by Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, forthcoming).

³⁵ M.A. Danon, "Un interrogatoire d'hérétiques Musulmans (1619)" *Journal Asiatique* 17 (1978): 281-93.

³⁶ Andreas Tietze, "A Document on the Persecution of Sectarians in Early Seventeenth-Century Istanbul", *Revue des études islamiques* 60.1 (1992): 161-6.

³⁷ Ayfer Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia: Sufism, Politics and Community*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 234.

I. In subsequent reigns, a pattern emerged wherein interregna were dominated by inter-tribal conflict, damaging the unity of the realm. This pattern shines a bright light on the pluralities of interacting symbolic meanings that were embodied in Ḥaydar's Crown, the ultimate symbol of the Safavid order. Worn by all within the Safavid mystical community, the Crown meant different things to different layers within the community, from Shah 'Abbās to a newly-initiated disciple. Of these meanings, the Crown encapsulated the tension of *kinship* above all else.

For historians of the Safavid realm, few have taken kinship as a frame of analysis seriously.³⁸ Maria Szuppe's study of marriage ties between the Safavid family and one tribal group, the Tekkelu, is one of few studies to focus on kinship.³⁹ Yet, kinship studied strictly through the lens of blood-relations to different powerbrokers is one of many types of kinship at play. Looking at the larger milieu of the Safavids' mystical network, and the Safavid realm in particular, Ḥaydar's Crown is much more than a symbol of a mystical path. Rather, the Crown reflects multiple, evolving layers of social imaginaries at odds with one another. For 'Abbās, being both a Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*) and a temporal ruler, the Crown represented *sacred kinship*. The others – his followers – lived between sacred and tribal kinships, with the latter in tension with the former.

Ḥaydar's Crown as a Symbol of Sacred Kinship: The Safavid Dynasts as Spiritual Guides

Rula Jurdi Abisaab has suggested that the rise of the Safavid state was concomitant with the rise in the Kızılbaş expectations of the Safavid kings to act according to their “theocratic office” as “master-kings.”⁴⁰ In effect, Ismā'īl I's rise as Shah (king) entailed his embodying the role of a Sufi master and a worldly king. Shahzad Bashir mentions the term “guide/king” in his exploration of

³⁸ Rudi Matthee briefly discusses kinship in *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012), 32, 68.

³⁹ Maria Szuppe, “Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbash Amirs in Late Sixteenth-Century Iran: a Case Study of the Political Career of Members of the Sharaf al-Din Oghli Tekelu Family,” *Safavid Persia: The History and Politics of an Islamic Society*, Charles Melville, ed. 4 (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996), 79-104.

⁴⁰ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 31-2.

cannibalism in “Kızılbaş” religion, further noting the dynamics between the Safavid dynasts as kings and spiritual guides and the Kızılbaş as “devotees and soldiers.”⁴¹ With soldiers ultimately deriving from tribal bases, it seems more reasonable to differentiate between sacred and tribal obligations. Abisaab and Bashir offer preliminary ideas to conceptualize the relationship between the Safavid kings and their disciples throughout the reign of the Safavid dynasty.

There are many symbolic values of Ḥaydar’s Crown that need more attention. First among these is its symbolism of a communal, symbiotic relationship: the Safavid kings’ and their disciples. There were few attempts by Safavid kings, including ‘Abbās, to embody tribal structures. Rather, they embodied a mystical path that emerged during the reign of Shah Ṭahmāsp through the *buyruk* texts. Although only found in a few examples in the 1601 and 1608 *buyruk*, there are numerous references to Ṭahmāsp (called ‘Dehmāz’) as *pīr-i shāh*, translated as “Guide of the King.”⁴² These terms should not be taken for granted. Their definitions arise from a tradition. For example, *pīr-i shāh* might suggest that the Safavid king’s role as a *pir*, that is, the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmīl*) of the Safavid Order, superseded his temporal role as king (*shāh*). In the *buyruk*, Imam Ali was also the *pir* of the Safavid path – making Ali the guide of the Safavid kings. From what scholars know, the use of similar dualistic terms was present in repertoires of sacred kingship, but with many intersecting identities and concepts that are interwoven and in a constant state of evolution.⁴³ In other words, these terms have changed meaning in different historical moments. By synthesizing scholars’ conceptions and source-based evidence from the *buyruk*, the term guide-

⁴¹ Bashir uses the term “guide/king” in “Cannibalism,” 254; Newman employs the term “shah/*pir*,” but only in passing. See Newman, 69.

⁴² These come out of poetry and discussions about lineage in Gölpınarlı 181, fols.21v; 20v-21r; Gölpınarlı 198, fols.57r-58v.

⁴³ For scholarly insights into sacred kingship’s conceptualization in the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal realms, see Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*; Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: A Comparative Study of the Late Medieval and Early Modern Periods*. (London: Routledge, 2009); Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

king (*pīr-shāh*) is used to refer to every Safavid monarch after Ismā‘īl. Thinking about the larger picture of *sacred* versus *tribal* kinship that came to a head in ‘Abbās’ reign, the term “guide-king” (*pīr-shāh*) tries to capture a more dynamic understanding of ‘Abbās’ reign and its goals. In the following chapters I explore the guide-kings’ relationship to their disciples, focusing on sacred kinship.

With the Kızılbaş wielding considerable temporal powers in the Safavid realm on the one hand, and, on the other, being persecuted by the Ottomans, sources from both contexts are an opportunity to reassess another side of Ḥaydar’s Crown, seen from the perspective of the disciples. The differences between the disciples in the Ottoman and Safavid realms amplify the tension between *sacred* and *tribal kinship*. In other words, the Safavid disciples’ perspective bridges seemingly incomparable realms by using a multi-focal approach. This thesis combines the perspectives from the top and bottom – representing a complex cross-section of the Safavids’ mystical network as a whole. To approach the disciples’ dual kinship, this thesis aims to take each strand and look at its content closely – for, the sum of the community lies in commonalities on each side of the Ottoman-Safavid border. Thus, while sacred kinship became the key focal point of ‘Abbās’ vision, we must also reassess its dynamic twin: the tribal kinship.

Haydar’s Crown as Tribal Kinship: Patterns of the Safavids Disciple’s Social Imaginary

Tribalism can often be misunderstood. The predominant model Safavidist historians generally use to describe the disciples’ tribal kinship is the *oymağ*.⁴⁴ This model operates on the notion that the

⁴⁴ The term *oymağ* has many different spellings. See Richard Tapper, *Frontier Nomads of Iran: A Political and Social History of the Shahsevan*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44-5. Study of Kızılbaş tribalism was, perhaps until Tapper, largely neglected by scholars since I.P. Petrushevsky’s 1949 article “očerki po istorii feodal’nykh otnoshenii v Azerbaidzhanе i Armenii v XVI - nachale XIX vekov” cited by Robert McChesney in his critique of the sweeping generalizations in one of Reid’s early articles. McChesney called for more case studies of the *oymağ* in “Comments on ‘The Qajar Uymaq in the Safavid Period, 1500-1722,’” *Iranian Studies* 14.1-2 (1981): 88 and 102 respectively. Since then, few scholars have engaged with the Kızılbaş’s tribal social backgrounds explicitly until Tapper. Aside from Tapper, John Woods explored tribalism of pre- and early-Safavid varieties in *The*

oymağ were closed groups of semi-pastoral nomads with strict hierarchies. The only way to become Kızılbaş was to be born into an *oymağ*.⁴⁵ This model creates a very limited space for understanding the perspective of the disciples themselves. Safavid chronicles in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries only mention the highest-ranking tribal chiefs and their religious status in association with a particular *oymağ* name.⁴⁶ In this way, it is easy to compartmentalize and divide tribes into neat, monolithic objects of study. Yet, if the rigid layers of the *oymağ* are peeled back, the tribalism of the Safavid disciples becomes more dynamic and complex, revealing the layers that tell the story of the Kızılbaş from a different perspective.

For Richard Tapper, the *oymağ* model does not fully apprehend the complexity of tribalism. Critiquing historians' usage of the term *oymağ*, Tapper argues that each constituent tribe that Safavidist historians refer to are clans with overlapping confederacies within and between clans. In this interpretation, individual confederations were economic powerbases which had open memberships and whose social fabric was heterogenous and complex.⁴⁷ Although substantially Turcoman, these confederations also consisted of Kurds.⁴⁸ Clan members would often change their affiliation from one clan to another for personal gain, redistributed by the Safavid guide-kings whether migrating from Ottoman Anatolia or not, and unsettled peasants who joined the clans.

Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire (Revised and Expanded Edition). (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1999).

⁴⁵ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, xxxix. Babayan's conception of the *oymağ* structure derives from Martin Dickson's dissertation, "Shah Tahmasp and the Uzbeks: The Duel for Khurasan with Ubayd Khan, 930-46/1524-40." (Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton University, 1958), 6-8. Dickson cites Minorsky's preceding work in "Shah Tahmasp and the Uzbeks," 11. Tapper criticizes Minorsky and other scholar's conception of tribalism in *Frontier Nomads*, 35-7, 44-51.

⁴⁶ See Reid, *Tribalism and Society*, 16-7.

⁴⁷ Tapper, *Frontier Nomads*, 43-7. Rudi Linder has also discussed tribal dynamics in Anatolia as part of the Ottomans' early history in *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia*. (Bloomington: Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies at the University of Indiana, 1983).

⁴⁸ Tapper, 44. Karakaya-Stump reflects on the Kızılbaş's linguistic and ethnic diversity in *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia* 249, n.29. In particular reference to Kurds, there is still almost no research about the connections between the Kurdish Kızılbaş and the modern *Ahl-i Hakk/Yaresan* in western Iran. For some insights to this issue, see M. Reza Hamzeh'ee, *The Yaresan: A Sociological, Historical and Religio-Historical Study of a Kurdish Community*. (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1990), 60-2.

Their loose membership and economic competition determined the Safavid guide-king's success in asserting their own power that transcended tribal kinship. Tapper also suggests these groups had no evident blood relation with their followers, making religious, economic, and political concerns more important than any familial structure.⁴⁹ In other words, tribal kinship was an unstable system of relations that often brought the tension with sacred kinship into sharp focus, but also facilitated a switch in emphasis from affinities based on tribal to sacred kinship. I argue that this is in essence what Shah 'Abbās' reforms entailed and what the story behind the "waning of the Qizilbash" is.

Learning the Nefes of Sacred Kinship: Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is structured as a *saz*. A cultural history of any group deserves metaphors which fit their collectivity. Much like Alevis today, during the reign of 'Abbās I one of the main symbols of their faith was the *saz*, the sacred instrument the Kızılbaş used to perform *nefes*, or sung poetry. Often referred to as a lute in English, the *saz* is a long- or short-necked string instrument. The accompanying *nefes* is broadly comparable to Catholic and Protestant hymns of the Reformation period, as their purpose was to teach the disciples essential characteristics of belief.⁵⁰ Yet, it was only when sung along with the *saz* that these *nefes* gained their meaning. The set of notes pressed in tandem with the strikes of one's fingers across the strings produced a melody with which disciples would modulate their voices and learn words of belief. The *nefes* colored the piety of disciples throughout these communities. While taking many shapes, sizes, and modifications, the *saz* takes center stage as a cultural symbol of Kızılbaş piety, suggesting it should be central to the thesis.

⁴⁹ Tapper, 45-7. This line of thought is also in Reid, *Tribalism and Society*, 29.

⁵⁰ R. Po-Chia Hsia describes the role of music in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century central Europe in *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe 1550-1750*. (London: Routledge, 1989), 99-104.

There are three essential qualities to the *saz*: the *perde*, or frets or positions from which one chooses certain notes to be played; *teller*, or strings by which different combinations of tunings play certain notes; and the *tekne*, or body from which the sound resonates. The thesis' three chapters are symbolized by each part of the *saz*.



In Chapter One, I detail sacred kinship in the Safavid realm during ‘Abbās’ reign represent the *perde* (frets) that cause a new set of dynamics to be produced, that could be likened to new notes leading to a new melody. The chapter revises the account of Shah ‘Abbās I’s reign, emphasizing his image as a guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) rather than the orthodox Shi‘ite Shah prevailing in the scholarship. While partially dedicated to retelling his story from a different perspective, the chapter’s focus are his disciples as they interacted with temporal power. Interpreting the Crown worn by many disciples, I argue that it symbolically marked the disciples as members of the Safavid family – not by blood, but *sacred* kinship. On the other hand, in the century leading to ‘Abbās’ reign, the Safavid realm suffered greatly due to their disciples’ *tribal* kinship that had

⁵¹ This figure derives from Osmanlı Müzik Aletleri. [Illustrations de Histoire des Othomans. Mœurs, usages, costumes des Othomans, et abrégé de leur histoire] Author: Unidentified. Publication Paris: Nepveu, 1812 Description 72 est.: grav. sur métal: n. et b.; 8,4 x 6,2 cm. BnF Gallica.

melded into the symbolism of Ḥaydar's Crown. As a whole, by reassessing 'Abbās' reign the chapter suggests that rather than marginalizing the Kızılbaş, he enacted policies to promote his image as guide-king (*pīr-shāh*), reassuring his disciples of their place within the spiritual hierarchy of the Safavid realm.

In Chapters Two and Three I focus on the teachings that are imparted by the shah to his disciples through his Sacred Deputies. The teachings represent the strings that *connect* the notes created by fingers on the frets (*perde*) to the body (*tekne*), which collectively creates the sound. Without the strings, there would be no sound at all. Primarily, each chapter explores the Safavid mystical path, codified in the *buyruk*, and the agents who guided the disciples toward perfect belief and, by extension, sacred kinship. In other words, they illustrate *how* belief *connected* the disciples bringing them under the unity of sacred kinship, represented by the Safavid's mystical path.

Chapter Two uses the *buyruk* texts to conceptualize the Safavid guide-king's authority linked by a relationship to the Twelve Imams. By this connection, the Safavid guide-kings became the rightful inheritors of a final revelation from Muḥammed that required perfect belief to achieve. In other words, the *buyruk* defines boundaries and structures of sacred kinship. Being that these texts were almost exclusively for the eyes of the sacred deputies and guides, the disciples were required to *embody* perfected belief. Consequently, Chapter Three focuses on the main figures through which disciples learned their path: *halīfe* (sacred deputies) and their assisting local guides (*rehber* and *delīl*) of the Safavid's mystical network. The chapter focuses on different sources to make a composite image of what these agents of faith curation did to shape the piety of the network's disciples. It recreates their hierarchies, social networks and structures to demonstrate their authority in the Ottoman and Safavid realms.

Finally, Chapter Four – symbolized by the *tekne*, or body of the *saz* – assesses the bodily processes and ritual practices of the Safavid disciples. The *tekne* (body) is a seminal part of creating perfected sounds. If the wrong type of wood is used, if it is damaged, if it is misshaped, the sound will be imperfect. It is, in other words, dependent on both craftsmanship and its future condition in the hands of its performer. Without craftsmanship and proper care by its performer, a perfected sound is impossible. As the Safavid guide-kings (*pīr-shāh*) institutionalized tribal kinship in the Safavid realm, when it was dismantled during the reign of ‘Abbās, there had to be other forms of kinship to take its place. In this, sacred kinship becomes the Safavid guide king’s vision: to replace tribal kinship with sacred kinship. Given Islamic mysticism’s focus on bodily and embodied practice, Chapter Four focuses on the rituals and embodied practices of the disciples. It focuses on an Ottoman interrogation report written about Kızılbaş in Constantinople from 1619 in tandem with the *buyruks*, to explore how sacred kinship was embodied and enforced. In other words, it assesses the diffusion of sacred kinship in different parts of the Safavid mystical network. With ‘Abbās’ battlefield and diplomatic successes, a unified body of disciples was necessary throughout the network. If his successes were to continue, he would need disciples in the Safavid realm under his conception of sacred kinship. Similarly, those awaiting his arrival in the Ottoman realm would need to be prepared. Both sides of the Ottoman-Safavid border, filled with the guide-king’s (*pīr-shāh*) disciples, whose belief had to be perfected in order to live up to the final revelation.

Chapter One

‘Abbās I the Perfect Guide: Reinterpreting a Ruler

The path of discipleship, and the rules governing the relationship between spiritual [guide] (pir) and disciple (murīd), require that true devotees do not relinquish the hand of their perfect spiritual [guide] (murshid-i kāmil) in good times or bad, but endure patiently every kind of hardship. They are required to put obedience to their perfect spiritual [guide] before their own worldly ambitions.⁵²

The reign of Shah ‘Abbās I (r. 1587-1629) is often associated with the “waning of the ẖızılbaş”—the reforms that wrangled power from the Safavid guide-king’s (*pīr-shāh*) disciples and suppressed their faith. Historians of Safavid Iran as well as scholars studying the ẖızılbaş in both the Ottoman and Safavid realms have generally accepted this narrative. In Safavid historiography, the ẖızılbaş are rarely given the due research they deserve. Rather, they are often treated by historians as a threat to the cohesion of the Safavid state and its efforts to unify around Twelver Shi’ite orthodoxy. However, recent studies on Islamic mysticism and sacred kingship suggest that this narrative may be too simplistic. Re-reading this story through the lens of ‘Abbās as the Spiritual Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*) of the Safavid’s mystical network, this chapter argues for a reinterpretation of Safavid guide-kings and their relationship with their disciples. By focusing on the tension that sacred and tribal kinship created in the Safavid realm, this chapter suggests that rather than suppressing ẖızılbaş religiosity, ‘Abbās reasserted his sacred status and institutionalized sacred kinship while de-emphasizing the tribal one.

⁵² Iskandar Beg Munshi, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great (Tārīkh-e ‘Ālam-ārā-ye ‘Abbāsī)*. Roger M. Savory, trans. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978): II: 1097. In his translation, Savory translates *murshid* as director. However, such stale terms detract from their religious significance. Thus, in accordance with wider scholarship of Sufi networks, I prefer the term Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*).

Ḥaydar's Crown: Disciples as Extensions of the Safavid Dynasty

To reinterpret this narrative, I focus on the headgear that tied Safavid kings and their disciples across the Ottoman, Mughal and Safavid realms: Ḥaydar's Crown (*tāj-i ḥaydarī*). The crown itself was initially a red, tall twelve-folded or gored cone-shaped top wrapped in a green or white wool or silk turban. Created by Sheikh Ḥaydar (d.1488), the crown became one of the most well-known symbols associated with the Safavids.⁵³ In order to understand the relationship between the Safavid guide-kings and their disciples, the evolution of their relationship has to be reviewed. As an object of material culture shared between both groups, Ḥaydar's Crown was the key symbol that represented community as a whole. That is, from the Safavid guide-kings to their deputies (*halīfe*), to their disciples (*murīd*) and even their aspiring trainees (*tālib*), we find the seemingly straightforward hierarchy of the Safavid mystical order. However, throughout this network, the thing that set the disciples apart from Safavid kings was *tribal kinship*. It was through the tribal confederacies that disciples with their various social backgrounds sought economic benefit and political influence. The Safavid kings, embodying sacred bondage, could not aspire to chiefdom. The vision that mattered for the Safavid guide-kings was what Ḥaydar's Crown represented for the lineage of their ancestors: *sacred kinship*. It was their mystical path's evolution to Shi'ism and their supposed lineage to the Twelve Imams starting in the fifteenth century that focuses the narrative of sacred kinship. Being related to the Twelve Imams, the Safavids were destined to avenge 'Alī's rightful succession to the Prophet Muḥammad which had been prevented since the eighth century.

⁵³ For a description of the crown in Haydar and Ismā'īl's period, see Mohammad Karim Youssef-Jamali, "The Life and Personality of Shāh Ismā'īl I (1487-1524)." (Unpublished PhD. Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1981), 43-7.

Ḥaydar's Crown was a symptom of a larger socio-religious transformation. Scholars such as Ahmet Karamustafa and Judith Pfeiffer have noted that prior to the time when Sheikh Ḥaydar (d.1486) created the crown, a new trend in the Islamicate realms took shape in which Sufis became more than esoteric practitioners of faith. In lieu of a dominant religious class (‘*ulamā*’) following the Mongol and especially Timurid invasions, Sufis (also referred to as mystics and saints) asserted themselves as primary brokers of faith.⁵⁴ Mystics transformed into street preachers and found themselves in high positions of state. In other words, they became a ubiquitous part of daily life, and, moreover, a central force within many bureaucracies in different realms.⁵⁵ They claimed messianic powers and filled the popular imagination with other-worldly feats of prognostication and foresight from God. They were, in effect, his friends (*awliyā* in Arabic and Persian, *evliyā* in Turkish).⁵⁶ It is through seeking connections with worldly power that Sufis were revered and followed, as well as aspiring to temporal power themselves – both divine and temporal.

By the late fifteenth century, the Safavids were a sizable Sufi network in northwestern Iran, transforming themselves into a movement that led to their eventual rise. Under the Sheikhdoms of Cüneyd (d.1460), and his son, Ḥaydar, the Safavid mystical network took new avenues unfamiliar under the previous four generations of sheikhs content with contemplative Sufism. Cüneyd connected his family to the Twelve Imams through the Safavids' recognized status as *sayyids*, or

⁵⁴ There is an ongoing debate concerning the commensurability of referring to Sufis as saints so often associated with European historiography. Vincent Cornell reflects on this topic, arguing for the use of saints and sainthood in Islam. See Cornell, *Realm of the Saint: Authority and Power in Moroccan Sufism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), xvii-xliv. Judith Pfeiffer reflects on Sufis asserting themselves as a primary means of faith curation in “Confessional Ambiguity vs Confessional Polarization: Politics and the Negotiation of Religious Boundaries in the Ilkhanate,” in Judith Pfeiffer, ed. *Politics, Patronage and the Transmission of Knowledge in 13th-15th Century Tabriz*. (Leiden: Brill, 2014): 129-168.

⁵⁵ Nile Green, *Sufism: A Global History*. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 71-180.

⁵⁶ On example of this other-worldly power is reflected in a meeting between the conqueror Timur and Ibn Khaldun in Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign*, 40-42. Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200-1550*. (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1994).

persons related to the Prophet through ‘Alī’s lineage.⁵⁷ In doing so, he imbued Safavid mysticism with Shi’ite beliefs of avenging the deaths of Imam ‘Alī’s sons, Hasan and Husayn, who had been martyred at the Battle of Karbala by the Umayyads in 680. ‘Alī’s line, or “Alids,” was never to claim temporal power, at least, not until the emergence of the Safavids who cast themselves as descendants of the Twelve Imams. They subscribed to a messianic Shi’ite drama in which they could avenge their shared bloodline. The wrongdoing of *Yezīd* – the Marwanid-Umayyad caliph (r. 680-83) whose name became synonymous with the Umayyads and, by extension, Sunnis – was used as justification to militarize, for *Yezīd* had prevented the Alid line from their destiny as the Prophet’s successors.⁵⁸ The Safavid sheikhs married into the Akkoyunlu tribal confederation, who initially joined the Safavids’ *ğazā* – meaning raiding and conquering in the name of spreading Islam – until one of the Akkoyunlu’s rulers tried to eliminate the Safavid family.⁵⁹

The turmoil between the Akkoyunlu tribal confederation and the Safavids’ messianic-cum-tribal movement brings the volatile legacy of tribalism of earlier periods into sharp focus. As Maria Subtelny argues, the region was dominated by Turco-Mongolian tribal elements with little authority over sedentary Islamic communities in Iran and Central Asia in the fourteenth century. Lacking a unifying force or person that was perceived as divine reflected in the frequently changing political landscape of Anatolia, the Iranian plateau, and Central Asia.⁶⁰ As the Safavid

⁵⁷ Cüneyd mentioned Şafī in a mystical chain of authority or sacred family tree (*silsila*) to show a direct line of descent from the Angel Gabriel, the Twelve Imams, to Sheikh Şafī. See Kaplan, 32-3.

⁵⁸ Michel Mazzoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Šī‘ism, Sūfism, and the Ghulat*. (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1972), 71-7; Rıza Yıldırım, “In the Name of Hoseyn’s Blood: The Memory of Karbala as Ideological Stimulus to the Safavid Revolution,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 8 (2015): 129-32.

⁵⁹ For Safavid-Akkoyunlu marriage ties, see Roger Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 17-8. For aspects concerning Safavid *ğazā*, see Tilmann Trausch, “*Ghazā* and *Ghazā* Terminology in Chronicles from the Sixteenth-Century Safavid Courtly Sphere,” *Journal of Persianate Studies* 10:2 (2017): 240-68. For the Akkoyunlu’s anti-Safavid movement, see Rıza Yıldırım, “Turkomans between Two Empires: The Origins of the Qizilbash Identity in Anatolia (1447-1514),” (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Bilkent University, 2016), 218-45.

⁶⁰ Maria Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran*. (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 14.

mystical order grew, moving from Iran to Syria, Anatolia, and eventually back to Iran, they drew from the vast numbers of disenchanted tribal groups throughout the region.⁶¹ The Safavids, meanwhile, in their dramatic rise to power by conquering the Akkoyunlu, filled a gap that had long been missing: sacred authority. It emerged in Shah Ismā‘īl I (r.1501-24) who embodied the charismatic image that his older disciples crafted.⁶² His reputation as a messiah, which was much discussed in Europe and shocked the Ottomans, reflected the Safavids’ swift expansion to conquer the Akkoyunlu and unify Iran for the first time in a century.⁶³ His eventual ascendance to the throne in Tabriz in 1501 was a particularly shocking event for the Ottomans, who, having close royal family ties to the Akkoyunlu, took in a great many refugees fleeing the Safavids’ rule.⁶⁴ There they spread contradictory rumors about the disciples, depicting them as flesh-eating cannibals of their blood-thirsty messiah, Shah Ismā‘īl.⁶⁵ Through this rhetoric and the increasing animosity with the Safavids’ movement, the Ottomans began referring to the Sufis of Ardabil as “Kızılbaş” – meaning “red head” in Turkish – referring to the Haydar’s Crown.⁶⁶

⁶¹ For the Safavids’ intake of mostly Turcoman tribal elements, see Ebru Boyar, “Ottoman Expansion in the East,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey, vol. II: The Ottoman Empire as a World Power, 1453–1603*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 97. Yıldırım provides one of the most detailed accounts of the Safavids’ mystical network’s growing Anatolian following in “Turkomans between Two Empires,” 168-244.

⁶² Yıldırım, “Turkomans,” 168-218. Also in Yıldırım, “Turkomans,” 190.

⁶³ There is a large literature of Shah Ismā‘īl’s messianic rise to power. For one example which compares Ismā‘īl’s rise in comparative perspective with that of the first Mughal king, Babur, see Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 69-106. Ali Anooshahr describes the ways in which Ismā‘īl’s protectors and tutors coordinated his success through the first years of the Safavid’s reign in “The Rise of the Safavids According to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi’s *Futuhāt-e Shahi*,” *Iranian Studies* 48.2 (2015): 249-67.

⁶⁴ Palmira Brummett shows the positive reception in Europe in “The Myth of Shah Ismail: Political Rhetoric and ‘Divine’ Kingship,” in *Medieval Christian Perceptions of Islam: A Book of Essays*. John Tolan, ed. (London: Garland Publishing Inc., 1996), 331-359; Margaret Meserve shows more negative reception in “The Sophy: News of Shah Ismail Safavi in Renaissance Europe,” *Journal of Early Modern History* 18 (2014): 579-608. Colin Mitchell provides a detailed account of the Safavid’s success in *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric*. (London: I.B. Taurus, 2012), 20-30.

⁶⁵ Christopher Markiewicz, *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 66-74.

⁶⁶ Bashir, “Shah Isma‘il and the Qizilbash,” 236-45.

⁶⁷ Bashir, “The Origins and Rhetorical Evolution of the Term Kızılbaş,”

The establishment of the Safavid realm in 1501 and the ascent of the ‘Kızılbaş’ tribal confederations as a favored group in Iran worked hand-in-hand. Shah Ismā‘īl appointed his disciples as governors and high-ranking military officers.⁶⁷ Furthermore, the relationship between the Safavid bloodline and their disciples intensified, given that disciples married into the Safavid family.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, in Anatolia, local Ottoman administrators resorted to punitive taxation and restricting representation, a factor cited by many scholars as a significant reason for rising tensions in the realm’s peripheries in addition to preexisting region-wide financial problems.⁶⁹ While preparing for their eventual battlefield success against Ismā‘īl’s messianic movement in 1514, the Ottomans galvanized “Kızılbaş” followers in Ottoman Anatolia through summary executions and massacres.⁷⁰ Many who survived the first of many phases of Ottoman persecution migrated to Iran, where their own security and religion had institutional acceptance.

Donning Ḥaydar’s Crown during the reign of Ismā‘īl I represented a seismic change in the social imagination of tribal-dominated Iran and Anatolia. For the first time in almost a century, a unifying religious figure of charismatic lineage emerged, leading disenchanted tribal clans to unparalleled success and dominion – inspired by a final revelation. The clans’ institutionalization throughout the Safavid realm meant that Ḥaydar’s Crown blurred the lines between sacred and tribal kinship. Institutionalizing Shi’ite mystical-cum-temporal power and tribal social patterns

⁶⁷ Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*, 28-30.

⁶⁸ One prominent example of Safavid-tribe marriage was during the reign of Ṭahmāsp I, between his daughter and ‘Alī Qūlī Khan of the Šāmlū tribe. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, I: 316. For a study of Tekkelu tribal elites’ marriage into the Safavid family, see Szuppe, “Kinship Ties between the Safavids and the Qizilbash Amirs in Late Sixteenth-Century Iran,” 79-104.

⁶⁹ Boyar, 100-2.

⁷⁰ For a perspective on legal institutionalization of anti-Safavid sentiments, see Abdurrahman Atçıl, “The Safavid Threat and Juristic Authority in the Ottoman Empire during the 16th Century,” *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 49 (2017): 295-314. For details about early Ottomans’ early persecution of the Kızılbaş, see Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Qizilbash ‘Heresy’ and Rebellion in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century,” *Anadolu Moderna* 7 (1997): 4-9.

proved no issue for Ismā‘īl I’s charismatic authority. For his successors, however, Ismā‘īl’s institutionalization led to patterns with which they had to contend.

The Second Pīr-Shāh: ‘Abbās’ Ascension to the Throne of Light

Sixty-five years later, the Safavid realm was on the verge of collapse. The realm had suffered the reigns of two ineffective kings Ismā‘īl II (r.1576-7) and Muḥammed Khudābandeh (r.1576-88), leaving state affairs to different Ẓıẓılbaş tribal confederations and alliances for almost a decade. These alliances were often tentative and weak, resulting in inter-tribal power struggles to control the state on behalf of their increasingly imperfect spiritual guide-kings. In the midst of this, the Ottomans and Uzbeks invaded and pillaged the Safavid realm in 1578 and 1588 respectively, resulting in territorial losses on the realm’s eastern and western borders. In short, when the seventeen-year old ‘Abbās I ascended the Safavid throne in 1588, he faced the possibility that the Safavid dynastic line might die with his reign. In the year following his ascension to the throne, ‘Abbās dealt with a number of external threats and internal liabilities that consolidated his rule – setting the tone of a new imperial vision.

‘Abbās is reputed for moving quickly to stamp out any form of revolt – real or rumored. His turbulent youth and intense training by his Ẓıẓılbaş tutor convinced him to assert his lineage as a Safavid *sayyid* – that is, a direct descendent of the Prophet Muḥammed and ‘Alī.⁷¹ From his youth, ‘Abbās was under the protection of certain Ẓıẓılbaş tribes—the most important of these were the Şāmlū, but also included the Zū’l-Ḳadr and Ḳarāmānlū.⁷² Under their guidance, engaging in his followers’ rituals and practices, ‘Abbās learned how to craft the state and save it from what seemed like its imminent destruction. In the Safavid mystical philosophy, the family were destined

⁷¹ For more about the Safavid’s *sayyidhood* in earlier periods, see Newman, 11-4.

⁷² The most important of these were the Şāmlū, but also included the Zū’l-Ḳadr and Ḳarāmānlū. See Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 103-6.

to fulfill the Prophet's final revelation of 'Alī's succession to guide the flock of Muslims toward spiritual perfection. They, at the head of the realm, were meant to be the embodiment of perfection. These principles, explored more in the next chapter, were taught within the Safavid mystical network during the reign of Ṭahmāsp I (r.1524-76), who codified Safavid mystical beliefs in the *buyruk*. With his Sunni-minded uncle, Ismā'īl II, having tried to assassinate him, 'Abbās clung to the memory of Ṭahmāsp – whose own reign inspired 'Abbās' imperial vision.⁷³ Under the protection of his tutor, he learned the principles of rulership – embodied in the first example of a guide-king (*pīr-shāh*), Ṭahmāsp, who brought harmony among the tribes through his own reputation as a Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*). Ṭahmāsp set a number of precedents, including suppressing inter-tribal warfare.⁷⁴ His tutor – the man who shaped 'Abbās' sacred worldview – was from the Šāmlū tribe, who received considerable favor after the second civil war.⁷⁵ When 'Abbās' *dede* or *lālā* (tutor) was eventually killed by a rival tribe, the Ūstāclū, 'Abbās had already received a substantial education.⁷⁶

Although the Ūstāclū ultimately brought 'Abbās to power, his new caretaker, Murshid Ḳūlī Khan – who was effectively his kidnapper – forbade 'Abbās to make any decisions.⁷⁷ 'Abbās used his otherwise fractious relationship with his abductor/protector to assert himself as guide-king. At a moment when a group of Ūstāclū tribal nobles planned Murshid Ḳūlī Khan's assassination, 'Abbās took advantage of the insufferable inter-tribal struggle by exerting his succession to the throne. In 1589, he took his role as Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*) from his living predecessor/father,

⁷³ For the details of this assassination attempt, see Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 455-79; Quinn summarizes this in *Shah Abbas*, 18-21.

⁷⁴ A substantial number of historians discuss Ṭahmāsp's successful suppression of inter-tribal feuding. For some examples, see Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I:184, 283-92; Newman, 26-8.

⁷⁵ Reid discusses their post-war esteem in, *Tribalism and Society*, 10.

⁷⁶ For more information about *dede* and *lālā*, see Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 104. For the betrayal of the Ūstāclū, see Newman, 50.

⁷⁷ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, 178-9.

Muḥammed Khudābandeh. In the lineage of the Safavid mystical path, there could only be one Perfect Guide on earth. Khudābandeh became the Perfect Guide of the Safavid realm upon his ascension as king in 1579. Whatever his faults, he was still the sacred leader. Upon an outburst from ‘Abbās, asking an assembly of high-level Ẕızbāş “who is the Pir?!” Khudābandeh forsook the title, retiring to be forgotten.⁷⁸ We might say that ‘Abbās I had two enthronements: although he unsuccessfully tried to become a king a year earlier, this time he became both the king and the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*).⁷⁹ Shortly after, Murşid Ẕülī Khan was assassinated possibly with the implicit permission of ‘Abbās in 1589, instigating ‘Abbās’ realm-wide reformation to discipline ‘rebellious’ tribes who did not submit to the will of their Spiritual Guide.⁸⁰

Then aged sixteen, ‘Abbās’ undertook an extensive tour of his realm in which he resolved a number of internal issues and external threats. These included the humiliating 1591 peace treaty with the Ottomans and defeating the Uzbeks.⁸¹ For almost a year, between December 1589 and January 1591, ‘Abbās traversed 2,250 kilometers across the Safavid realm to present himself to his subjects as their new king. When discussing the dynamics and purposes of this extensive tour, scholars have primarily highlighted his subjugation of inter-tribal rebellions and showcasing of his temporal authority over his subjects.⁸² This style of introduction becomes much more understandable if seen from the perspective of the disciples throughout the Safavid realm. Some contemporary sources show a more intimate, personal process of ‘Abbās’ assuming the role of

⁷⁸ Roger Savory, “The Office of ‘*khalīfat al-khulafā*’ Under the Şafavids,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 85.4 (1965): 501. Iskandar Beg Munshi, I: 502-13.

⁷⁹ Numerous scholars discuss his first brief reign followed by his second and final enthronement. See, for example, Quinn, *Shah Abbas*, 19-21.

⁸⁰ Quinn discusses the Ūstāclū’s plan to assassinate Murşid Ẕülī Khan, ‘Abbās’ response, an Murşid Ẕülī Khan’s execution in *Shah Abbas*, 22-3. Iskandar Beg also relays the increasing animosity ‘Abbās’ had internalized toward Murşid Ẕülī Khan in *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 576-8.

⁸¹ Sinem Arcak, “A Peace for a Prince: The Reception of a Safavid Child Hostage at the Ottoman Court”, *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016): 39-62.

⁸² Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics*, 178-9; Charles Melville, “From Qars to Qandahar: The Itineraries of Shah ‘Abbas I (995–1038/1587–1629),” in *Études Safavides*, ed. J. Calmard (Paris: 1993), 193–207.

guide-king (*pīr-shāh*). In this process, ‘Abbās’ development and embodiment of his sacred role shows a different picture of his reign.

Good and Bad Sufis: The Intimate Rhetoric of Sacred Kinship in Safavid Chronicles

While chronicles from this period map the imperial vision that ‘Abbās inaugurated, they also reflect strands of social memory from different cultural outlooks. As Sholeh Quinn has shown, one of the most written-about ẖızılbaş executions during ‘Abbās’ long tour was that of Ya’qūb Khan, a chief of the Zū’l-ẖadr tribe – whose death is said to have shocked the ẖızılbaş. Her cross-analysis of different chronicles that discuss his execution exposes different social groups in the Safavid realm and their outlook on the ẖızılbaş. One chronicle written by a Persian bureaucrat, in almost predictable fashion, insists on ‘Abbās’ passion to remove the ẖızılbaş from power – using Ya’qūb as a primary example.⁸³ Others, meanwhile, focus on ‘Abbās’ efforts to correct the belief of his wayward follower who insisted on his “estrangement” from the Safavid family.⁸⁴

One of these authors was Iskandar Beg Munshi (d.1634), who as a court secretary had access to official documents and proximity to power.⁸⁵ His chronicle’s rhetoric is both authoritative and intimate. The language displays the complexity of the Safavid social world by explaining its many different groups and beliefs on the one hand, and, on the other, presents a web of social relations which ‘Abbās was perhaps all too aware of on a personal level. In other words, Iskandar Beg presents a social imagination of relationships. In the relationship between the Perfect Guide and his tribal devotees, there is a recognition of each side’s structures. Despite the disciples’

⁸³ Sholeh Quinn, *Historical Writing in the Reign of Shah ‘Abbas: Ideology, Imitation, and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles*. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000), 99-102. This “anti-ẖızılbaş/pro-Timurid” rhetoric was part of a “Turk/Tajik” distinction that pitted the mostly Turkish ẖızılbaş against Tajik elements in Safavid bureaucracy. For some insight to this issue, see Newman, 29-31.

⁸⁴ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 105-24.

⁸⁵ Ibid, 116.

tribalism, they ultimately had to abide by the decisions of their Perfect Guide. Only the Safavid guide-king had the divine foresight from his lineage to command the realm.⁸⁶ Thus, perfected belief was submission to his authority and guidance on the mystical path. The realm could only unify under these circumstances. In other words, the disciples had to turn away from their “worldly ambitions.”⁸⁷

Reflecting on his ascent to the throne and the circumstances of his youth, ‘Abbās came to the conclusion that an attack on a tribe – if not ordered by him – was an attack on the community of disciples and the Safavid family as a whole.⁸⁸ Corruption of their path began in the mind, in which “seditious ideas” from various tribal actors could sway others away from the Perfect Guide’s teachings.⁸⁹ The mind was a dangerous place, leaving Iskandar Beg to remark that ‘Abbās’ followers had “grown accustomed to being their own master.”⁹⁰ A sign of weakness and arrogance, these greedy thoughts of worldly ambition made these people ‘troublemakers’⁹¹ with sometimes domineering personalities⁹² – reflecting on their avarice and lack of generosity.⁹³ Those who were apprehensive to comply were replaced or fined, as was customary in the Safavids’ mystical practice.⁹⁴ One of Ya’kūb Khan’s many crimes was to kill one of ‘Abbās’ family – a *halīfe* (Sacred Deputy) from the Şāmlū tribe who, being a *sayyid*, was linked to the Safavid sacred family.⁹⁵ All of these ‘bad’ embodiments of belief by followers who wore Ḥaydar’s Crown came to one point:

⁸⁶ Iskandar Beg states that upon Abbas’ successor taking the throne, “All the [*halīfe*], Sufis and disciples and devotees of the Safavid house who were at court accepted the order of their [Perfect Guide] unquestioningly,” in *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1302.

⁸⁷ Ibid, II: 1097.

⁸⁸ This argument is explained further in Chapter Two.

⁸⁹ Iskandar Beg explicitly mentions “seditious ideas” in *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 579.

⁹⁰ Ibid, II: 608.

⁹¹ Ibid, 578.

⁹² Ibid, 581.

⁹³ Ibid, 595.

⁹⁴ For an example of disciples being dismissed and fined rather than executed, see *ibid*, II: 554, 577, 85.

⁹⁵ Ibid, II:595-7.

the disciple's corruption and deviation from the Safavids' mystical path. The Safavids' success in realizing the Prophet's final revelation, passed down from 'Alī, depended on the purity of their disciples' faith. If a disciple was corrupt in some way or falling from the path, as the next chapter explains, the final revelation could not be fully realized or more easily faced threats from outside. Their sedition and communal disagreements threatened the unity of the realm, making them what might be called 'bad' Sufis.⁹⁶

Those of consistent faith, sometimes referred to as 'good' Sufis, were given nothing but praise. Iskandar Beg implies a dichotomy between those disciples who demonstrated consistent loyalty to the Safavid guide-kings, separating them from those whose faith in the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*) wavered. He records 'good' Sufis' battlefield bravery and elevation in the Safavid realm's hierarchies.⁹⁷ One such example, a member of the Rūmlū tribe, sent as ambassador to the Mughals, was considered a "Sufi of pure faith."⁹⁸ Celebrating 'good' Sufis and memorializing their loyal ancestors, the Safavids' official chronicles highlight the intimately intertwined lineages of exemplary discipleship throughout the history of the Safavid realm.⁹⁹ In

⁹⁶ There is no reference to "bad" or "good" Sufis in chronicles explicitly. Historians generally use the terms *Sūfīgarī* and *na Sūfīgarī* to denote behavior that is respectively in accordance with or against accepted patterns of behavior in the Safavids' eyes. For one example of this, see Floor, "*Khalīfeh al-kholāfa*," 67-8. An example of this in Iskandar Beg can be found in, Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 465. This term is equally corrupted in its own way, given that in the same article, Floor uses an example of 'na Sufigari' to make a point about the Kızılbaş's decline in stature for the Safavids, when in fact it deals with a particular group of rebellious disciples who tried to put Hamza Mīrzā on the throne instead of Abbas. See Floor, "*Khalīfeh al-kholāfa*," 68-70; Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 463.

I prefer the distinction of 'good' and 'bad' to denote similar tendencies. Employing these terminologies seeks to expand on methods of comparability with other mystical groups outside the Safavid realm. However, to remain consistent with this dynamic's implications, I adopt the term "bad Sufis" to denote a larger perspective that encompasses different labels that in summation mean their faith and loyalty was corrupted.

⁹⁷ Floor discusses several examples in *Safavid Government Institutions*, 30.

⁹⁸ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 606.

⁹⁹ For one example of ancestral praise, see Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, I: 499; Another example of a 'perfect disciple' is discussed more fully in chapter three.

short, ‘Abbās’ vision for the Safavid realm included the Kızılbaş, but only those disciples who followed their spiritual and temporal leader.

More striking than labeling two types of followers, Iskandar Beg’s chronicle describes an intimate relationship between with the Safavid guide-kings (*pīr-shāh*) and their disciples. Upon ‘Abbās’ tour, he used this rhetoric to persuade the disciples’ turn away from their desires to rule the realm. The chronicles reflect the intimate nature of ‘Abbās’ relationship with his followers in tribal settings: they were based on a deep, personal relationship with different tribes’ leaders. Whether through direct conversation, letters, or commands, the relationship is directed to his symbolic authority.¹⁰⁰ Using examples of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Sufis throughout the history of the Safavid realm up to and including ‘Abbās delineated a pattern of service (*hizmet*). These patterns were reflected in a disciple’s embodied in perfected belief on one hand, and, on the other hand, the worldly ambitions of tribal kinship. If the Sufi followed his Perfect Guide, they were central members of the community’s mission. If not, they failed their Perfect Guide and their brothers in the community.

It should not be forgotten that ‘Abbās’ extensive tour of the realm happened simultaneously with or immediately preceding his reforms. Thus, while visiting the provinces to convince his disciples to follow his cause, he likely engaged in similar worship rituals as his semi-itinerant role model, Ṭahmāsp.¹⁰¹ At the very least, ‘Abbās used the rhetoric of sacred kinship to unite his realm through personal engagement with his followers’ faith. This intimate process not always being

¹⁰⁰ Quinn discusses letters shared between Abbas and Ya’kūb Khan in *Historical Writing*, 106-110. See also Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 597-607.

¹⁰¹ Morton discusses Ṭahmāsp’s visits to villages that welcomed the monarch who worshipped with local disciples. These practices reinforced solidarity among the disciples. See A.H. Morton, “The *Chūb-i Tarīq* and *Qizilbāsh* Ritual in Safavid Persia,” in *Etudes Safavides*, Jean Calmard, ed. (Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1993), 225-45.

successful, as Ya'qūb Khan's eventual execution demonstrates, 'Abbās' reforms consolidated his absolute authority under Ḥaydar's Crown.

Institutionalizing Perfection: Sacred Kinship and Rethinking 'Abbās I's Reforms

One might argue that the rhetoric of sacred kinship was another means of soothing 'Abbās' disciples' who were being marginalized from the state through the reforms of this period. 'Abbās' enforcement of absolute loyalty to the ruling dynast throughout his reign is almost universally recognized in scholarship. Part of asserting himself as a temporal king in his first years of rule, however, was intimately intertwined with 'Abbās' role as the Perfect Guide of his disciples. Assuming his mystical lineage set the tone for his entire reign: loyalty to his absolute charismatic authority. The most practical way to ensure loyalty was to enforce it systematically, to have a society in which different groups balanced one another. 'Abbās' reforms thus institutionalized a balance between different power groups.¹⁰²

With each vying for power or influence, their mutual claims and vilifications against another group in the realm depended on the approval of the Safavid guide-king (*pīr-shāh*). It was 'Abbās' embodiment of absolute power – sacred and temporal – that controlled each group's relative influence within the Safavid realm. In other words, 'Abbās' vision of empire was even more inclusive of different groups that fit the religious fabric of the Safavid realm than has been argued by scholarship. Viewing 'Abbās' reforms from the perspective of the disciples, there is a pattern in which 'Abbās subdued institutionalized tribal influence while reinforcing his intimacy with his followers as their spiritual guide. This recalibration prioritized a sacred brotherhood over earthly ambitions – meaning that sacred kinship was now more closely tied to his embodiment as

¹⁰² Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 24.

a guide-king.¹⁰³ Those who aspired to *serve* his sacred path had to understand their place under Ḥaydar's Crown: behind the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*).

The introduction of the slave (*gholām*) class into the Safavid bureaucratic and military apparatus is said to have signaled Ḳızılbaş decline. It has been repeatedly argued that their loyalty was ensured because they fell under the direct command of 'Abbās.¹⁰⁴ While mostly true, this argument takes neither 'Abbās' dynamism nor the Ḳızılbaş' perspective into consideration.¹⁰⁵ With the rhetoric of sacred kinship, 'Abbās reassured his disciples of their place in the realm – provided they were 'good' Sufis. As such, while the *gholām* military grew, so too did a group of royal guards, drawn from Ḳızılbaş tribes and to a very limited extent from *gholām* and Ottoman defectors, the *ḵūrçī*.¹⁰⁶ As the personal guard of the *pīr-shāh*, the *ḵūrçī* were directly reliant on, paid by, and loyal to 'Abbās over any tribal chief.¹⁰⁷ Established during the reign of Ismā'īl I, the *ḵūrçīs*' numbers were never particularly significant, ranging between 3,000 under Ismā'īl I to 6,000 under Ismā'īl II.¹⁰⁸ During 'Abbās' reign, the *ḵūrçī* corps grew to three times their previous number.¹⁰⁹ Especially in 'Abbās' early reign, several *ḵūrçī* were appointed chiefs and governors.¹¹⁰ From the perspective of disciples convinced by the rhetoric of sacred kinship, becoming a *ḵūrçī*

¹⁰³ This is especially poignant in an example discussed in Chapter Three: "As is well known, the [Ḳızılbaş] tribes are the servants of the Safavid house, and if they fall from the favor of their benefactor and incur the wrath of their supreme spiritual director [Perfect Guide], they are expected to regard this loss of favor as due to their own shortcomings and to consider it as purifying their souls. They are expected to endure patiently a thousand physical and spiritual hurts and to remain loyal to their supreme spiritual director until they have cleansed the stain of their sins with the sweat of remorse and humility and rendered themselves worthy of again being received into favor." See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 650-1

¹⁰⁴ Some examples Rudi Matthee, *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 63.

¹⁰⁵ It is only mostly true because there are several examples of 'rebellious' *gholām* in Abbas' reign. For example, the *gholām* whom he appointed governor of Isfahan – the new imperial capital – once claimed the city for himself while Abbas was away, see Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 603.

¹⁰⁶ Floor highlights the inclusion of at least two *gholām* in Abbas' reign along with one Kurdish tribal chief during Tahmāsp's period in the *ḵūrçī* in *Safavid Government Institutions*, 150-1.

¹⁰⁷ Floor discusses the purpose and hierarchies of the *ḵūrçī* in *ibid*, 137-65.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 159.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, 161.

¹¹⁰ Iskandar Beg mentions some of Abbas' *ḵūrçī* appointments to governorships in *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 576, 579.

was likely appealing. Many became *ḵūrḵīs* owing to the frequently changing loyalties between tribes and an increased chance of financial poverty, along with the opportunity to have ensured hierarchies and income directly from their Spiritual Guide, ‘Abbās.¹¹¹ Furthermore, the *ḵūrḵīs* placed as governors helped reform local tax collection away from tribal levies to streamlined formula – ensuring better pay to disciples who served in the regular military.¹¹² Many worked with the Safavid mystical network’s Chief Spiritual Deputy, a roll addressed further in chapter Three, to make sure the *Ḳızılbaş* army and the *ḵūrḵī* received their due from different tribes.¹¹³ In the battles against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, *Ḳızılbaş* and *gholām* served side-by-side.¹¹⁴ The former’s improved financial security and better enforced social structures made the Safavids ready for the many victories ahead. In this perspective, the *Ḳızılbaş*, while certainly aware of the growing presence of other groups in the Safavid realm, trusted ‘Abbās’ guidance as brothers of the Safavid cause.

On another level, there was the increasingly influential role of a religious orthodox class. While Rula Jurdi Abisaab addresses connections between the ‘*ulamā*’ and the *Ḳızılbaş* in the reign of Ismā‘īl II – against whom the two joined forces, leading to Ismā‘īl’s assassination – we know

¹¹¹ Rudolf Matthee discusses Abbas’ financial reforms in *Politics of Trade*, 63-9.

¹¹² For more about the transition from tribal levies to a streamlined financial system, see Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 161. It is important to stress that while the *ḵūrḵī* were an organization separate from most disciples, including wearing a decorated version of Haydar’s Crown, they were ultimately disciples of the Safavid’s mystical path. For some discussion of this similarity, see Floor, *ibid*, 155-6; Barbara Schmitz, “On a Special Hat Introduced during the Reign of Shāh ‘Abbās the Great,” *Iran* 22 (1984): 103-112.

On the other hand, this is a somewhat idealized picture, given the case of a *ḵūrḵī* governor’s execution in 1612-3 for stealing from the increased flow of predictable income. This example is also explained below, but Iskandar Beg discusses this incident in *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1068-9.

¹¹³ “The vizier, Hatem Beg, the [head of the *ḵūrḵīs*], and various other officers were ordered to look into the affairs of the army, and to see that they received their pay, allowances, and fodder allowance. They were also ordered to scrutinize the rolls of the [*Ḳızılbaş*] tribes and other tribes liable for military service, and if they found any soldier drawing pay, in possession of a horse, and capable of bearing arms who had not reported for duty in Khorasan, he was to be charged with failing to report for duty, this time, delinquents were to be fined, and the money distributed as bounty to those retainers of the court and *ḵūrḵīs* who had been the first to answer the call to arms and had endured the hardships of the campaign. This was to be both a punishment for and a warning to the guilty parties. In future, anyone failing to answer a mobilization call would be subject to a variety of penalties” Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 628. See also Floor, “*Khalifeh al-kholafa*,” 67.

¹¹⁴ Newman, 53.

almost nothing about interactions between the ‘*ulamā*’ and the Ẓıẓılbāş during ‘Abbās’ period.¹¹⁵ In ‘Abbās’ reign the ‘*ulamā*’ were increasingly bestowed titles like Mir (meaning ‘chief’) in front of their *sayyid* status.¹¹⁶ The ‘*ulamā*’ were institutionalized as the temporal-theological law of the state since the reign of Ismā‘īl I. Often, the guide-kings (*pīr-shāh*) of the Safavid realm, including ‘Abbās, had to contend with their empowerment as well – leading to some frustrations with some of the ‘*ulamā*’.¹¹⁷

In another major reform, ‘Abbās abolished the practice of sending his offspring to different governorships to be tutored by a *lālā* (tutor in Mongol). These were usually tribe chiefs with different functions in the Safavid mystical order’s hierarchies, charged with preparing princes in the arts of governance and the beliefs of the Safavid network.¹¹⁸ A practice initiated by Ṭahmāsp I to centralize authority and curtail inter-tribal contests for power, the *lālā*/tutorial governance system was deeply flawed.¹¹⁹ Despite fond memories of his own tutor, the patterns of the guardianship model blurred the lines between sacred and tribal kinship, undermining Safavid authority.¹²⁰ A practice initiated by Ismā‘īl I, *lālās* often sparked an inter-regnum with Ẓıẓılbāş de-facto rule.¹²¹ The fault lay in Ismā‘īl’s own upbringing by a *lālā* and other Ẓıẓılbāş veterans who led him to victory in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.¹²² In this dynamic, princes

¹¹⁵ Ismā‘īl II’s assassination and ‘common ground’ between the ‘*ulamā*’ and the Ẓıẓılbāş are in Abisaab, 48-52.

¹¹⁶ Abisaab, 55-8.

¹¹⁷ Scholars have dealt with numerous issues between the ‘*ulamā*’ themselves, but not sufficiently engaged with their relationship with the Safavid kings’ relationship with the ‘*ulamā*’ aside from their usefulness against ‘popular’ Sufism of the Ẓıẓılbāş. Abisaab describes a number of frictions between the ‘*ulamā*’s temporal-legalistic theological authority as it faced off against Abbas’ role as a monarch, whether contending with his sacred person or his temporal position in Abisaab, 68-70.

¹¹⁸ Sussan Babaie, Kathryn Babayan, Ina Baghdiantz-McCabe, and Massumeh Farhad. *Slaves of the Shah: New Elites of Safavid Iran*. (London: I.B. Taurus, 2004), 24-5.

¹¹⁹ For Ṭahmāsp I’s institutionalization of the *lālā* system, see Newman, 30.

¹²⁰ Iskandar Beg describes Ṭahmāsp I and Abbas’ tutor in *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, I: 75, II: 551. Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 104. *Lālā*’s guardianship as an added layer to frequent bouts of inter-tribal conflict. See Floor, *Safavid Government institutions*, 104.

¹²¹ Ibid, 29.

¹²² Ali Anooshahr, “The Rise of the Safavids according to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi’s *Futuhat-e Shahi*”, *Iranian Studies* 48.2 (2015): 249-67.

became pawns of the disciples themselves. Despite being the only ones who could potentially rule, princes were often subject to the *lālā*/tribal chief's decisions.

In addition to a spiritual *reformation* of the Kızılbaş, which is the topic of this thesis, there was equally reform that changed the nature of the guide-king's (*pīr-shāh*) relationship with the disciples systematically, resulting in sacred kinship overpowering tribal allegiance. Unlike Ṭahmāsp I, who while successful in asserting himself over the ties of tribal kinship could not enact reforms that would balance the overwhelming influence and, at times, de facto rule of tribes, 'Abbās' reformation was all-encompassing.¹²³ By balancing out different power groups in the realm at the most powerful levels of bureaucratic and military affairs, 'Abbās ensured the Kızılbaş remained a prominent part of the Safavid state. Rather than curtailing their overall power, his belief in the Safavids' mystical path and, more importantly, his role as the Perfect Guide added layers – both institutional and spiritual – of complex relationships. As opposed to his predecessors, 'Abbās' reformation was sacred in nature, aimed at eliminating tribal kinship structures that undermined his unifying figure.

An Imperfect Reformation? Kızılbaş Response to Sacred Kinship in the Safavid Realm

Although the *reform* and *reformation* to enforce sacred kinship substantially reduced the likelihood of inter-tribal conflict and its spread throughout the Safavid realm, it did not eliminate it. 'Abbās' privileging certain 'loyal' tribes of 'good' Sufis created resentment among the disadvantaged tribes. Sometime between 1598 and 1605, the anonymously compiled *History of the Qizilbash* (*Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*) relays the importance of the Kızılbaş tribes to the Safavid realm.¹²⁴ Scholars

¹²³ For further detail about Ṭahmāsp I's relationship with the Kızılbaş during his reign, see Newman, 26-7, 28-9, 31-33.

¹²⁴ This work has been published in two editions – one edited in Persian and the other translated to Turkish. For the Persian edition, see Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddiṣ, *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān*. (Tīhrān: Intishārāt-i Bihnām, 1982). For the Turkish translation, see Şefaattin Deniz and Ḥasan Asadī, eds. *Kızılbaşlığın Tarihi (Târîh-i Kızılbaşîyye)*. (İstanbul Bilgi Kültür Sanat, 2015).

have puzzled over the text's place in the Safavid cultural fabric, relying on narratives of the ẖızılbaş' total decline in the Safavid realm.¹²⁵ The *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān* does not explicitly mention notions of sacred kinship emanating from the *buyruk* texts, which are explored in the next chapter. Instead, the text is steeped in the language of tribal kinship. It relays the success, heroism, and loyalty of the ẖızılbaş throughout the history of the Safavid realm from Sheikh Ḥaydar to Shah 'Abbās.¹²⁶

Each of the major tribes within the Safavid realm has its own section in the text, with special attention to Ya'qūb Khan, executed by 'Abbās in 1590¹²⁷ In this text, possibly written by a disgruntled chief from the Ūstāclū, Zū'l-Ḳadr, or another tribe, Ya'qūb Khan is described as 'stubborn and rebellious' – which in the rhetoric of sacred kinship meant he was a bad Sufi.¹²⁸ The *Tārīkh-i Qizilbāshān* casts a dark cloud over Ya'qūb Khan, distancing him from the glorious legacy of the ẖızılbaş tribalism. In some ways, the text makes a case for how compatible tribal kinship was for the Safavid success in the name of their guide-kings. In the context of 'Abbās' reforms, although perhaps a great many disciples were satisfied with their place within the hierarchy of the Safavid realm, others were not. The influence of tribal kinship, now deemphasized by the shah's reforms within the Safavid realm, was memorialized in the text, leaving its contents for posterity.

On more than one occasion, 'Abbās' reformation was not without resurgences of corruption in the community of disciples. Even in such a streamlined model, new issues emerged. In one such example, Allah ẖulī Beg, a *ḳūrçī*, who had been appointed governor, was blinded and beaten to

¹²⁵ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 20-1.

¹²⁶ Quinn suggests the text does not mention Shah Abbas at all, but the Turkish translation of this text suggests Abbas is addressed by various religious and temporal titles familiar to the ẖızılbaş. See *ibid*, 53; Deniz et al, 11.

¹²⁷ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 103.

¹²⁸ Quinn proposes the circumstances of its compilation in *ibid*, 53.

death with his family for corruption in 1612-3. At the core of these issues was Allah ẖūlī's sinfulness. For, he "was extremely worldly and avaricious in regard to the accumulation of money, property, and estates."¹²⁹ His family's enjoyment "led him to entertain foolish thoughts and harbor suspicions regarding his [Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*)] and benefactor."¹³⁰ His particular crime was taking money from the increased stream of taxes for his personal use, giving much to his own tribal kinsmen.¹³¹ His corruption was a crime against the natural law of 'Abbās, who as the Perfect Guide embodied an entire community of disciples. Suffice it to say, though sacred kinship perhaps dominated the larger social imaginary of the Safavid realm's disciples at this time, it also linked an individual's weakness to their spiritual path. Deviation through sin, sometimes linked to tribal tendencies of yesteryear, was linked to the individual's belief in the Safavid mystical path. This seems to have been a notion that was widely understood, given the examples of unity shown through 'Abbās' overall success.

The Sublime Lodge and the Pīr-Shāh: The Remainder of 'Abbās I's Reign

As Barry Wood's work suggests, in later periods, storytellers (*naqqālān*) of urban coffeehouses – which 'Abbās himself frequented during his lifetime – showed plays depicting an enduring cultural legacy of the ẖızılbaş as loyal supporters of their Perfect Guide.¹³² While story focuses primarily on Ismā'īl I's messianic figure, it also displays the disciples' heroism and loyalty.¹³³ These plays, while likely existing throughout the Safavid reign in Iran, are conspicuous for their popularity in

¹²⁹ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 1068-9.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Barry Wood, *Adventures of Shāh Esmā'il: A Seventeenth-Century Persian Popular Romance*. (Leiden: Brill, 2018), xiv-xxiii.

¹³³ On one such occasion, a disciple from the Tāleš tribe enthusiastically exclaiming that he had "made his soul a sacrifice for the Perfect Guide on the path of Sufism." See Wood, 282.

‘Abbās’ period.¹³⁴ They not only reinforce an image of the disciples’ place in Safavid society, but moreover reflect ‘Abbās’ consistent efforts to display himself as the Perfect Guide in the eyes of his disciples. Looking at the wider cultural landscape of the Safavid realm, in real terms ‘Abbās celebrated his disciples’ status under his sacred family.

Upon his ascension, ‘Abbās accepted the dualistic role as the *pīr* (temporal leader) of the ‘Sublime Lodge’ (*Dergāh-i ‘Ālī*). Symbolizing a throne and a unified practice of belief, it intertwined him with other mystical groups of similar beliefs, such as the *Bektaşī*, who were primarily in Ottoman-controlled Anatolia, the Balkans, and Iraq.¹³⁵ Rather than a particular place, the Sublime Lodge was a marker of unity among different mystical paths. Within the Safavid realm, ‘Abbās patronized and attended the rituals of the influential urban Nuqtavi mystics who held similar beliefs as the Safavid path.¹³⁶ As the head of the ubiquitous Sublime Lodge, ‘Abbās was the temporal representation of these different paths coming together. As such, his appearance in Nuqtavi gatherings, corresponding with other mystical groups under the Sublime Lodge was part of his status.¹³⁷ In some cases, his role as head of the Sublime Lodge led to in different path’s *sayyids* being promoted to *halīfes* in the Safavid path.¹³⁸ Some elements of the Nuqtavi proclaimed their divine time to replace the Safavid family in 1593. However, this was as a direct challenge to

¹³⁴ Popularity here is not only a matter of their content that suggests these stories were intended for wide consumption. Rather, it also reflects the likelihood that these panegyric plays had frequent performances.

¹³⁵ Ayfer Karakaya-Stump addresses this concept, defining it as an imperial palace and Sufi lodge in *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık: Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarihyazımını Yeniden Düşünmek*. 2nd ed. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 23. Yıldırım echoes, but does not expand on Karakaya-Stump’s assertion in “The Safavid-Qizilbāsh Ecumene,” 460-71.

¹³⁶ Similarities between the Safavid and Nuqtavi paths are discussed in the next chapter.

¹³⁷ Babayan argues that Abbas’ participation in the Nuqtavi milieu was a sign of his stepping away from the role of Perfect Guide, with chronicles only relaying a “sentimental” and “pious” image. See Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 349.

¹³⁸ Karakaya-Stump echoes this argument in a translation of a letter between Abbas and a *Bektaşī* sheikh in Baghdad in “Kızılbaş, Bektaşī, Safevi İlişkilerine Dair 17. Yüzyıldan bir Belge,” *Journal of Turkish Studies*, 30.2 (2006): 117-30. This letter has subsequently been translated into English by Yıldırım, “The Safavid-Qizilbāsh Ecumene,” 470-1.

‘Abbās’ authority. Although the Nuqtavis’ astrological projection to replace ‘Abbās undermined his authority and emboldened some disenchanted disciples to join their movement – their subsequent persecution reinforced ‘Abbās’ place as the Perfect Guide.¹³⁹

After the reforms, ‘Abbās renovated and expanded the dynastic shrine in Ardabil at several points between 1605 and 1611, including additions from favored tribes like the Ẕarāmānlū.¹⁴⁰ One of these rooms included a *jannatsara* (Persian for Paradisal Palace) for ritual practices he conducted with his disciples.¹⁴¹ This particular room was closely replicated in the newly constructed (1590-1) imperial palace in Isfahan, referred to as the Hall of Unity (Pers. *tawḥīdkhāne*/Tr. *tevḥīdhāne*).¹⁴² With passers-by kissing the imperial palace’s entranceway, the palace was “hallowed ground” – sacred in nature.¹⁴³ A contemporary chronicle reports that within these spiritually charged spaces, and the Hall of Unity in particular, ‘Abbās conducted cannibalistic rituals that reenacted earlier stories of Ismā‘īl I ordering his disciples to eat the flesh of their enemies.¹⁴⁴ As subsequent chapters reinforce, these reenactments reflected wider efforts to tie the disciples into a closer relationship with their Perfect Guide.

By the middle of ‘Abbās’ reign in 1608, the Safavids’ fortunes had completely turned. ‘Abbās’ image as a charismatic guide-king in the eyes of his disciples crystalized after a series of diplomatic and military victories against the Ottomans and the Uzbeks.¹⁴⁵ ‘Abbās was the first

¹³⁹ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 4-5, 225-30.

¹⁴⁰ Kishwar Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine: Architecture, Religion and Power in Early Modern Iran*. (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 129-158. For further detail about the Ẕarāmānlū’s contribution, see Rizvi, 133. More about the shrine is explored in chapter three.

¹⁴¹ Rizvi, 83-116.

¹⁴² Ibid, 129.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 130.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, Bashir, “Shah Isma‘il and the Qizilbash,” 248-51.

¹⁴⁵ Abisaab provides the essential details about Abbas’ practice of politics and war with the Ottomans, *Converting Persia*, 56-61.

ruler to defeat the Ottomans, signing a treaty that was advantageous to the expansion of the Safavid realm in 1612.¹⁴⁶ The treaty itself was negotiated by a ẔıẔılbāş diplomat, about whom more will be said in Chapter Three.¹⁴⁷ One of the main reasons for ‘Abbās’ success was his consolidation of power through a powerful reformation which reasserted the bonds of sacred kinship between himself and his followers. They balanced different power groups in the realm on the one hand, and, on the other, curtailed the likelihood of inter-tribal conflict. For the remainder of ‘Abbās’ reign, any inter-tribal conflict was a violation of the Safavids’ mystical community. After nearly a century of Ottoman ‘Sunni’ occupation, the height of ‘Abbās’ reign was commanding a unified force that conquered Baghdad in 1624.¹⁴⁸ This represented the achievement of returning his family to their rightful place in the land in which their ancestors, Husayn and Hassan, had been martyred.¹⁴⁹ All of this was achieved in part by a balance of different groups – and his disciples’ faith in particular. By the end of ‘Abbās’ reign, of the ninety-two governorships in the realm, the ẔıẔılbāş occupied seventy-two while the others were filled by *gholām*.¹⁵⁰

Perde of Piety: A Conclusion

Rereading the Safavid primary sources with the ẔıẔılbāş’s perspective in mind underlines the tension between sacred and tribal kinship took center stage. This chapter used these sources to paint an almost completely different picture in comparison to prevailing narratives of ẔıẔılbāş marginalization during Shah ‘Abbās’ reign. Rather than an absolutist orthodox Shiite king who

¹⁴⁶ For details about the 1612 treaty, see Günhan Börekçi, “Ahmed I”, in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters, eds. (New York: Facts on File, 2009), 23.

¹⁴⁷ Muḥammed Beg of the Rūmlū tribe; son of a the *khalifa al-khulafa* (chief sacred deputy) of the Safavid mystical order during the reign of Ismā‘īl II.

¹⁴⁸ The account of his campaign is in Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 1255-60; 1265-72.

¹⁴⁹ Rudi Matthee suggests it was a long-standing wish to recover Iraq in, “The Ottoman-Safavid Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids”, *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*. Kemal H. Karpat and Robert W. Zens, eds. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 162. For details about shrine visits and endowments in Iraq by Abbas, see Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 1221, 1233.

¹⁵⁰ See Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 104-5; Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 53; 185, n.22.

drove the Kızılbaş from all corners of power in the Safavid realm, the image presented here suggests a more complex chain of events. By focusing on his embodiment as Perfect Guide and his relationship with his disciples, we find a perspective of ‘Abbās that – engrossed by an imperial vision – demanded loyalty to his status as a *pīr-shāh*. He was cruel and absolutist in many ways: dismissing long-term servants of the Safavid realm over minor issues and institutionalizing cannibalistic rituals in the *tevḥīdhāne* (prayer room), in which he practiced his perfected status.¹⁵¹ This was a reign in which ‘Abbās was uncompromising in securing the loyalty of his disciples by direct, intimate movements and institutionalizing sacred kinship through his reforms. Equally, it appears, he was uncompromising in his disciples’ place in the realm – as part of the Safavids’ eternal family. Thus, as while many scholars highlight the close relationship between ‘Abbās and the orthodox Shi’ite religious class, the *‘ulamā*’, the story presented here its mirror opposite. His reign demonstrates a vision for sacred kinship that not only applied to his disciples, but the entire realm which included many different powerful groups. Inspired by his ‘father,’ Ṭahmāsp, ‘Abbās’ reign embodied an inclusive imperial vision – one in which his place as a *pīr-shāh* was equal to and in some ways superior to that of his temporal position as king.

¹⁵¹ For some examples of these dismissals, see Mitchell, *Practice of Politics*, 177-8. Bashir and Floor discuss Abbas’ cannibalistic practices in Bashir, “Shah Isma’il and the Qizilbash,” 248-50; Floor, “*Khalifeh al-Kholafa*,” 63-4. Rituals feature in Chapter Four.

Chapter Two

The Way of Muḥammed-‘Alī’s Light: The Safavid Mystical Path between Two Realms

*The Shah had a premonition, deriving from the insight he possessed by virtue of the saintly authority, the supranatural powers and the function as spiritual guide he had inherited from his ancestors.*¹⁵²

Sacred kinship was much more than the rhetoric of chronicles and absolutist kings. On a larger scale, it encompassed the intimacy among the disciples and their Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*), ‘Abbās I. The Safavid mystical community stretched well beyond the temporal boundaries of the realm itself, with many disciples living in Ottoman-controlled Anatolia, the Balkans, and Iraq. Living under the watchful eye of Ottoman authorities and often persecuted, the perspective of disciples in the Ottoman becomes all the more essential when reconceptualizing the dynamics explained in the previous chapter. Rather than a sudden turn toward absolutist rhetoric, Shah ‘Abbās I’s role as the Perfect Guide as well as the path along which he was to guide his disciples had already been shaped and codified by his ancestors. According to recent studies, the *buyruḳ* (“commandment”) texts were initially compiled sometime during the reign of ‘Abbās’ grandfather, Ṭahmāsp I.¹⁵³ They lay a foundational understanding of the Safavid mystical path (*ṭarīqa*) and suggest how best it should be embodied to perfect their faith. While the previous chapter focused on broader trends within the Safavid realm between ‘Abbās and his disciples, the question arises as to *how* or even *if* ‘Abbās’ efforts to reform his followers extended throughout the Safavid community of disciples. Architecture, rhetoric, and ‘Abbās’ will were not enough: the disciple had to *believe*. In the following chapters, I address these questions.

¹⁵² Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1084.

¹⁵³ Scholars have argued since 2008 that the *buyruḳ* genre took shape during Ṭahmāsp’s reign, mentioning him directly in the text in copies well after his death. Abbas is the next Perfect Guide to appear in the 1612 compilation. For further discussion about this issue, see footnote 30.

The Safavid guide-kings' (*pīr-shāh*) sacred authority was one of the central tenets of the path charted out in the *buyruk*. By ascending the throne of light and subsequent asserting his rightful authority, 'Abbās enacted a tradition that had been neglected by the fallible guides, Ismā'īl II and Muḥammed Khudābandeh. Through his own persona and the sacred deputies (*halīfe*), 'Abbās reasserted a form of sacred kinship espoused by Ismā'īl I and Ṭahmāsp I throughout the community of disciples. The sacred deputies were not only religious authorities but in their various roles and responsibilities acted to prepare their flock for their *pīr-shāh* (guide-king), 'Abbās. Their ritual practices, which are explored in depth in the last chapter, would have been empty without the concepts and ideas that curators of faith instilled in 'Abbās' disciples. In order to develop a framework for understanding the beliefs of the Kızılbaş more generally, this chapter focuses on the concepts and ideas that were imparted to 'Abbās in his youth, and subsequently to his disciples, whether in the Ottoman or Safavid realms, during his reign. These concepts converged to create an image of the Perfect Disciple to which every follower of the *pīr-shāh* should aspire.

A Convergence of Paths: An Introduction

What kind of “social imaginary” did faith curators seek to impart to their disciples? In anthropology and sociology, social imaginary is “the creative and symbolic dimension of the social world, the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.”¹⁵⁴ In the *buyruk*, tenets of faith, historical figures, and objects of material culture converged to draw a route to spiritual attainment within the Safavid mystical community. This chapter discerns the logic and content of the Safavid mystical path through the *buyruk* texts that were compiled during 'Abbās' reign, dated 1601, 1608, and 1612. Delving into the Safavid mystical 'path,' however, needs further distinction. A mystical “path”

¹⁵⁴ James B. Thompson, *Studies in the Theory of Ideology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 6.

(*tarīq* or *ṭarīqa*) was the overarching concept meaningful to Sufi communities across Islamic world. As Ahmet Karamustafa explains:

This was the ‘spiritual lineage’, the idea that those who studied under a particular master shared a common spiritual heritage in the form of the master’s unique ‘path’ or ‘method’ (*tarīq* or *ṭarīqa*) and were thus connected with one another, even across time and space, into a far-flung spiritual family.¹⁵⁵

Ṭarīqa was not only about a luminous “order” which might impose rigorous hierarchies and create imaginary borders between other mystical paths. Rather, to conceptualize a community of faith, one should focus on two aspects: (a) the teachings and esoteric knowledge circulating within – and possibly between – networks, called *ṭarīqa*; and (b) how this knowledge interacts with practicing their faith in everyday life, called *yol*. The former, *ṭarīqa*, is a prerequisite of conceptualizing *yol*. *Yol*, meaning path in Turkish, is addressed in the following two chapters.¹⁵⁶ *Yol* is far more difficult to account for, especially with the shortage of sources from this perspective. In the *buyruk*, *yol* is employed in a proscriptive and idealized manner and in equal standing with *ṭarīqa*. In order to emphasize these two different aspects of the Safavid mystical network, this thesis separates spiritual knowledge (*ṭarīqa*) from the social experience of traveling the path and practicing faith (*yol*).

The Perfect Disciple

But what was the point of this social imaginary encapsulated by the *buyruk*? As the previous chapter showed, ‘Abbās’ recalibration of his relationship with his disciples had a larger message: the disciples were expected to choose sacred kinship, embodied in Ḥaydar’s Crown, over tribal kinship. In his place as the guide-king (*pīr-shāh*), ‘Abbās relied on his persona and his sacred deputies (*halīfe*) to filter the beliefs outlined in the *buyruk* texts to achieve this goal. ‘Abbās’

¹⁵⁵ Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 116.

¹⁵⁶ In Turkish *yol* also means road, waterway, method, and other meanings that are similar to *ṭarīqa*.

overall success, along with the promise of future triumphs, demonstrates a concerted effort to perfect the disciples' faith. This does not imply a separation or marginalization from being a crucial element within the Safavid realm. Rather, the Kızılbaş were more important than ever, as only a unified community of perfect disciples – as the *buyruk* suggest – could realize the final revelation. In this perspective, loyal deputies of 'Abbās were responsible for curating the faith of each of 'Abbās' followers to become the *Perfect Disciple*. The concept of a *Perfect Disciple* would not be found in any particular section of the *buyruk*. Rather, the concept represents the collective knowledge of faith espoused throughout. Despite differences in terminologies, a comparison between each version (1601, 1608, and 1612) suggests comparable lines of thought.¹⁵⁷ This collective knowledge of the path (*ṭarīqa*), if perfected through practice of faith (*yoI*), would result in greater spiritual attainment.

“The Crown is Light”: Toward a Social Imaginary of the Buyruk

In the 1612 *buyruk*, Sadr al-Din Musa (d.1391) asks Sheikh Şafī (d.1338), the founder of the Safavid mystical order: “what is the Crown?” Sheikh Şafī answers: “the Crown is light.”¹⁵⁸ The crown they referred to was Ḥaydar's Crown. In the previous chapter, Ḥaydar's Crown was depicted with a social perspective in mind that focused on the disciple's relationship with 'Abbās as guide-king (*pīr-shāh*). This chapter, by contrast, elaborates on details from the *buyruk* that impart a mystical path epitomized by the crown worn by all disciples, and 'Abbās himself.¹⁵⁹ The primary

¹⁵⁷ As the previous chapter suggested, Tahmāsp I codified the beliefs shared amongst the disciples. Through time, the *buyruk* altered to match shifting dynamics within the Safavid realm. Doğan Kaplan's dissertation demonstrates some differences between the 1601, 1608 and 1612 copies via a cross-examination of these and other *buyruks* up to the modern era. For a brief comparison of certain aspects of faith such as the *Üç Sünnet* (Three Traditions), *Yedi Farz* (Seven Obligations), and the 'penalties' (*cezalar*) associated with both, see Kaplan, “Buyruklara Göre Kızılbaşlık,” 207-18.

¹⁵⁸ Bisâtî, 71-2.

¹⁵⁹ It is worth noting that although every disciple – regardless of their station within the community – wore Ḥaydar's Crown, these were decorated according to their place in the Safavid realm's hierarchies. For further detail, see Schmitz, “On a Special Hat,” 103-112.

goal of the *buyruk* was to lay out a path that turned the disciples away from worldly ambitions.¹⁶⁰ Service (*hizmet*) to the Perfect Guide and the community's shared path took precedent above all else. Ṭahmāsp's codification, represented in the *buyruk*, constitutes an idealized mystical path (*tarīqa*).

For some Ottoman writers of the early Safavid revolutionary movement under Ismā'īl I, the unmistakable red Crown of Ḥaydar represented a bright fire of chaos that tormented Ottoman authority from Anatolia to the Balkans and beyond.¹⁶¹ For the Safavid disciples, the fire was a beacon of light that raged in their hearts to avenge the memory of 'Alī's sons, Hasan and Husayn, who were martyred at the Battle of Karbala (680 CE). Although the early Safavid revolutionary moment was in part based on the desire to avenge Hasan and Husayn, it was moreover focused on destiny of the Safavids to carry on a final revelation.¹⁶² This destiny is conveyed in the *buyruks* and originates from the *Nūr-i Muḥammedī* (the Muḥammedan Light) or the *Muḥammed- 'Alī Nūru* (the Light of Muḥammed- 'Alī). For the Safavids and their disciples, the Prophet and 'Alī's connection – often written as *Muḥammed- 'Alī* – stemmed from two stories in which Muḥammed declared 'Alī his successor to a final revelation.

Throughout the texts sacred to the Safavid disciples, Muḥammed and 'Alī are intimately tied to one another as master and disciple (*murshid/murīd*) and companions (*muṣāhib*). On the occasion that Muḥammed took 'Alī as his companion, Muḥammed is asked to relay a revelation to prove his status as God's emissary. The Prophet goes to the pulpit (*minbar*), take's 'Alī's hand

¹⁶⁰ This becomes especially evident in the last wave of quelling disciples' rebellious, worldly ambitions to distinguish "Sufis from non-Sufis" in Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 1093-1100. This incident is explored further in the next chapter.

¹⁶¹ İdris-i Bitlīsî, *Selim Şah-name*. (Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları 2001), 177.

¹⁶² Yıldırım discusses the early Safavids' revolutionary movement in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries as drawing the inspiration, at least partially, from the martyrdoms of Hasan and Huseyn. Yıldırım, "Hoseyn's Blood," 127-54.

and says, “whomever I am master of, ‘Alī is his master.” Muḥammed describes ‘Alī as the gateway to the knowledge he possesses, then asks ‘Alī to display a shirt. This was not just any shirt: it belonged to the Archangel Gabriel (*Cebra’il*) and was brought from Paradise (*cennet*). They then began to put on Gabriel’s shirt. As they put it on, the Prophet says that his and ‘Alī’s flesh, body, blood and soul became one.¹⁶³ Despite some disbelief from some of the congregants, Muḥammed and ‘Alī take the shirt off and show their unification through the magic of the shirt.¹⁶⁴ They alchemically melded into a single sacred entity whose example shined above others, referred to earlier as *Nūr-i Muḥammedī* (the Muḥammedan Light), *Muḥammed-‘Alī Nūru* (the Light of Muḥammed-‘Alī), or simply Muhammad-‘Alī. In short, the two performed a miracle that fused their persons together. The story also sowed the seeds of ‘Alī’s succession.

Muḥammed and ‘Alī enjoyed substantial spiritual rewards from one another. They are said to have shared such a relationship that one could be a guide (*rehber*) to the other – acting in harmonious balance.¹⁶⁵ Their connection was both temporal and spiritual, this- and other-worldly. The climax of Muḥammed and ‘Alī’s unification in the *buyruk* comes from their last interaction. On his deathbed, the Prophet called his champion, ‘Alī, to his side. The Prophet tells ‘Alī the full contents of a path to be compiled for those of utmost faith. In effect, the revelation was that ‘Alī would guide the believers, succeeding Muḥammed. The contents, it is said, were those found in the *buyruk*. In effect, this scene depicts ‘Alī as Muḥammed’s successor to the final revelation –

¹⁶³ The full translation is as follows: “Your skin is my skin, your body is my body, your blood is my blood, your soul is my soul / Your flesh is my flesh, your blood is my blood, your soul is my soul.” The phrase is well known among many Shi’ite Muslims, but in the *buyruk* it is presented in Arabic and Turkish. *Risāle-i Seyh Safi*, fol. 32r-32v; Gölpınarlı 198, fol.47v; Kaplan, 183-4; Bisâtî, 42. Kaplan adds that in the 1612 *buyruk* another section tells a slightly different story, but nevertheless in at least one section mimics the story found in the 1608 version. See Kaplan, 86. Babayan reports a similar story was also recorded in Shah Ṭahmāsp’s *tezkire* (biographical dictionary), see *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 68-9.

¹⁶⁴ Kaplan, 185 n.190.

¹⁶⁵ *Risāle-i Seyh Safi*, fol.32r-32v; Gölpınarlı 198, fol.45r-49r; Kaplan, 86; Bisâtî, 41-3.

imparted to him by Angel Gabriel. This path (*tarīqa*) that the Prophet passed on to ‘Alī and his sons, Hasan and Husayn, eventually passed to Sheikh Ṣafī ad-Dīn, the founder of the Safavid mystical network.¹⁶⁶ The *buyruk* separates the Safavid disciples from other Muslims as a chosen people.

The Safavid millenarian movement under Ismā‘īl I in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries based itself partly on avenging the martyrdom of ‘Alī’s sons who carried this secret.¹⁶⁷ For Ismā‘īl, who had survived the deaths of his father, Ḥaydar (d.1488), and brother ‘Alī Sulṭān (d.1491), at the hands of their rivals, the Akkoyunlu, the fight was personal and spiritual. He ascended his rightful place as the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*) at age fourteen, when his dying brother took the crown named after their father and put it on Ismā‘īl’s head.¹⁶⁸ As part of his image as the long-awaited messiah carefully crafted by his more experienced disciples, Ismā‘īl’s poetry collection (*dīvān*) frequently merges his father with ‘Alī.¹⁶⁹ Some of Ismā‘īl’s poems that link Ḥaydar and ‘Alī are also found in the *buyruk* compiled during ‘Abbās’ reign.¹⁷⁰ Processes that guided ‘Abbās’ reign found in the *buyruk* are based in sacred kinship. Ismā‘īl’s poetic marriage of Ḥaydar and ‘Alī reflected a unification akin to that of Muḥammed and ‘Alī. The burning fire that

¹⁶⁶ Gölpınarlı 181, fols.7r-7v; Gölpınarlı 198, fols.12v-15r; Kaplan, 101. This scene is transliterated and summarized by Kaplan, 56-7. It is worth noting that no such scene is depicted in the 1612 compilation. Rıza Yıldırım also tells this story in an article soon to be published. See Yıldırım, “The Commandment (Buyruk): An Introduction to the Sacred Texts of the Kızılbaş-Alevi Community,” in *Ottoman Communities in the Age of Confessional Polarization, 1450s-1750s: Dialogues and Entanglements*, edited by Tijana Krstić and Derin Terzioğlu (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2020). Forthcoming. I am grateful to Rıza Yıldırım and Tijana Krstić for sharing this paper with me.

¹⁶⁷ Shah Ismā‘īl I’s poetry is rife with examples of Ali’s status as Muḥammed’s successor and their merging in the form of Muḥammed-Ali. However, close study of these reveals that over time Ismā‘īl’s poems were fabricated and/or misattributed to him. For an excellent study of Ismā‘īl’s poetry, see Şâh İsmail, *Hatâyî Dîvânî*, edited by Muhsin Macit (İstanbul: Türkiye Yazma Eserler Kurumu Bakanlığı Yayınları, 2017).

¹⁶⁸ Saïd Amir Arjomand, “The Rise of Shah Esmā‘il as a Mahdist Revolution,” in *Sociology of Shi‘ite Islam: Collected Essays*, ed. Saïd Amir Arjomand (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 303.

¹⁶⁹ Haydar’s image as Ali in Ismā‘īl’s poetry is covered more fully in the next chapter as a ritual practice. Ali Anooshahr’s article discusses how tight a leash the young Perfect Guide Ismā‘īl was kept by his older disciples, who coordinated his image. See Anooshahr, “The Rise of the Safavids.”

¹⁷⁰ This is especially true of the 1608 *buyruk*. See Gölpınarlı 181, fol.51r; Kaplan, 81.

symbolized the final revelation being passed from Muḥammed to ‘Alī, and the light that Ḥaydar’s Crown symbolized became one. In the model of sacred kinship, temporal relationships mirrored otherworldly ones. This marriage was not the only representation of sacred kinship between Muḥammed-‘Alī’s light and the Safavid mystical network. Indeed, the Safavid dynasty married into the Light’s sacred line several times.

Sheikh Ṣaḥī’s Light: Safavid Authority in the Buyruḡs

There is a logic to the light’s passing between Muḥammed, the Twelve Imams (including ‘Alī), and the Safavid’s right to rule. The division between sacred and temporal, divine and earthly, this- and other-worldly is a reflection of modern sensibilities. Yet, in this period and among mystical groups in particular, ideas and people could be transported by every-day experiences, endowed with visions. As Sholeh Quinn has shown, during the reign of Shah ‘Abbās, the namesake of the Safavid mystical order, Sheikh Ṣaḥī-ad-Dīn Ardabīlī (d.1334), gained a substantial place in official Safavid chronicles.¹⁷¹ They describe two dreams of Sheikh Ṣaḥī wherein he is given divine inspiration. Dreams in Islamic mysticism are considered miracles and prophecies, making the dreamer spiritually enlightened for their ability to see the spiritual world.¹⁷² Sheikh Ṣaḥī dreams he saw the Sun’s light shining across the entire earth while standing on top of the Friday mosque in Ardabil. In the other, Ṣaḥī is warned not to remove a sword and hat attached to his body by the light of the Sun, which shines across the world again when he tries to remove it. Both dreams, his master interprets, represent his and his successor’s destiny to rule the world with the “mandate of sovereignty” (*ḥūkūm-i vilāyāt*) and carrying the “light of sainthood” (*nūr-i vilāyāt*).¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 68.

¹⁷² This is reflected in the Safavid mystical community’s main ritual, the *cem*, which is intended to symbolize Muḥammed’s dream of ascending to heaven to meet the forty saints (*kırklar*). See Kaplan, 163-4. For examples of dreams in other Islamic contexts, see Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 54, 62, 75, 83-7.

¹⁷³ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 69.

Although in his own lifetime Sheikh Şafî was noticeably more inclined to a brand of Sunnism, the Safavid ascension to worldly power as a state necessitated shifting his image towards Shi'ism.¹⁷⁴ 'Abbās' patronage of his ancestor's image as a dreamer fed into the rhetoric of the Safavid family representing budding connections to sacred kinship based on receiving the final revelation of Muḥammed. Scholars who have discussed various meanings that mystical light (*nūr*) carries have suggested that one of them is prophecy.¹⁷⁵ It might be suggested that the light that shone on Sheikh Şafî allowed him to receive the message of Muḥammed's last revelation, as one chronicle from 'Abbās' period refers to Şafî as the renewer of the faith (*mujadid*).¹⁷⁶ Aside from this, the merging of the Safavid lineage with the Twelve Imams since the fifteenth century suggests Muḥammed's final revelation transferred to Şafî. For, although none of the Twelve Imams were successful in establishing world power, they preserved the final revelation and imparted it to Şafî.¹⁷⁷

Reminded that Ḥaydar's Crown represented the ultimate form of mysticism in the conception of official Safavid chronicles during 'Abbās' reign, it makes sense that Şafî's image was promoted as a unifying figure to bring the community of disciples together. The Prophet's deathbed revelation to 'Alî, who carried this revelation to his sons and they to their sons, eventually reached Sheikh Şafî. Şafî was passed a metaphorical torch – a bright shining light, from which emanated the divine word. For the disciples, Ḥaydar's Crown embodied that light, making the crown a living symbol of the revelation. A disciple donning the crown was a transformative

¹⁷⁴ Mazzoui explains Sheikh Şafî's religious beliefs as Sunni (Shafi) in *The Origins of the Safawids*, 41-52.

¹⁷⁵ Quinn discusses Henry Corbin's exploration to the various forms of mystical light in *Historical Writing*, 70.

¹⁷⁶ Quinn, *Historical Writing*, 86.

¹⁷⁷ There is the possibility that this transfer from a Sunni to Shi'ite version of Şafî began during the Sheikhdome of Junaïd (d.1460). The father of Ḥaydar, we find Cüneyd mentioning Şafî in a mystical chain of authority or sacred family tree (*silsila*) to show a direct line between of descent from Angel Gabriel, the Twelve Imams, to Sheikh Şafî. See Kaplan, 32-3.

experience.¹⁷⁸ Not dissimilar from Muḥammed and ‘Alī merging by wearing Archangel Gabriel’s shirt, the disciples became a single entity by merging with the light. These stories and symbols – oral and material – informed disciples’ perception of being on a divine mission to protect the revelation through sacred kinship. The light symbolized sacred and temporal authority and the *buyruk* detailed the path of obeying and protecting it.

As the *buyruk* demonstrate, Şafī is at once a prophet and a faith curator. In the *buyruk* from ‘Abbās’ reign, Sheikh Şafī is depicted as sharing a conversation with his successor, Şadr al-Dīn Mūsā, about the fundamentals of belief in the Safavid mystical network. Şafī’s authority in the *buyruk* derives from his mission to preserve the final revelation. Throughout Islamic history, ‘Alī and his successors were denied temporal rule. As custodians of the Prophet’s final revelation, the Safavid disciples had to aspire to perfected beliefs. A unified light – the community of disciples and the Perfect Guide ‘Abbās – that did not believe in the revelation risked destroying the memory of ‘Alī’s rightful place as a successor to the Prophet. When the Safavid mystical family met with prophetic light, they were given divine authority to carry the final revelation and wield earthly power. It was only through the guiding hands of Şafī and his successors – including ‘Abbās – that the final revelation would rectify the tide of history. It was Şafī’s place as a custodian of Muḥammed’s revelation to guide the family’s disciples through the path (*tarīqa*).¹⁷⁹

While relaying the revelation and perfected belief throughout the text, Sheikh Şafī also integrates the sixth Imam, Ja‘far al-Şādiq (d.765). Privileging Ja‘far al-Şādiq presents interesting insight into the Safavids’ prophetic role. It was al-Şādiq who, centuries prior, suggested that the

¹⁷⁸ Rituals of initiation are discussed in chapter four.

¹⁷⁹ Mark Soileau’s approach of discussing the founder of the Bektāṣi mystical path, Hacı Bektaş Veli, and his memory’s evolution long after his death inspires this line of thought. See Soileau, "Conforming Haji Bektash: A Saint and His Followers between Orthopraxy and Heteropraxy." *Die Welt des Islams* 54.3-4 (2014): 423-459.

only way to salvation was to follow him and his acolytes while showing enmity towards their enemies. For Ja‘far al-Şādiq, the enemies were those who did not believe in the House of ‘Alī. For ‘Abbās and his disciples, however, it was the Ottomans and the Uzbeks. This closely reflects ‘Abbās’ concerns for maintaining loyalty as the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmīl*), urging his disciples to be staunch enemies to those who would prevent realizing the final revelation. During Ṭahmāsp’s reign, al-Şādiq made frequent appearances in polemical texts aimed at disassociating from the enemies of Shi’ism as well as demonstrating allegiance to the House of ‘Alī. This is particularly the case in converting inhabitants in Qazvin, the former capital of the empire – a city with an overwhelmingly Sunni population.¹⁸⁰ In light of the struggles between ‘Abbās and disloyal disciples, the *buyruk* implicitly focuses on historical enemies of the Muḥammed-‘Alī’s light, the Umayyads, who murdered ‘Alī’s sons at the Battle of Karbala. Further, ‘Abbās’ diplomatic and military victories over the Ottomans and Uzbeks strengthened the conviction that sacred, not tribal kinship, would realize the final revelation.¹⁸¹

The *buyruk* consistently reinforce the process of sacred kinship. So far, I focused on the *buyruk* showing that a divine revelation passed from Muḥammed to the Twelve Imams (including ‘Alī) and finally to the Safavid mystical network’s founder, Sheikh Şafī. Throughout, these sacred texts – though few in number – relay a story of the revelation’s transfer through different mystical practices such as dreams and magic to reach the Safavid disciples. The *buyruk* were sacred texts that were not intended to be read by disciples but taught to them so that the teachings in the *buyruk*

¹⁸⁰ Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 32-5.

¹⁸¹ Abisaab provides the essential details about Abbas’ practice of politics and war with the Ottomans in *Converting Persia*, 56-61.

could be lived and acted out. It was up to a vast network of living sacred deputies to lead the Safavid flock and guide the faith of ‘Abbās’ followers on the path.

The Perfect Disciple: An Idealized Portrait of a Believer in the Buyruk

There was a chain of authority that transferred sacred knowledge from the divine through temporal lineages embodied in the Safavid family and its sacred deputies (*halīfe*). *Halīfe* reinforced the notion of sacred kinship by being at the center of this transference between the Perfect Guide and his disciples throughout the network. They are discussed in the next chapter. In donning the Crown, disciples enacted Muḥammed and ‘Alī’s bodily unification, symbolizing the disciples’ joining the Light of Muḥammed-‘Alī. True unification could only be achieved through perfected belief. In order to wear Ḥaydar’s Crown, the *buyruk* dictates an intricate process of spiritual stations (*makam*). Given that the ultimate goal of the *halīfe* was to perfect the Safavid Guide-king’s flock, the conception of a *Perfect Disciple* takes shape and is the most prominent feature within the *buyruk*.

Training (*mürebbilik*) takes center stage because it is inherently inseparable from authority. The path could only be taught by a select few: the patron-saint of the path (*pīr*), the spiritual guide (*murshid*), educators/trainers (*mürebbi*), and guides (*rehber*).¹⁸² In an early section of the 1612 *buyruk*, Sheikh Şafī says that those without a trainer (*mürebbi*) will not find the righteous and correct path.¹⁸³ He describes Archangel Gabriel as Muḥammed’s teacher (*mürebbi*) for the final revelation.¹⁸⁴ Addressing another layer of authority in learning the path (*tarīqa*), Sheikh Şafī also suggests that a spiritual guide (*murshid*) is required, and the person who is not the head of the

¹⁸² Kaplan, 119.

¹⁸³ *Risāle-i Seyh Safī*, fol.10r; Kaplan, 120; Bîsâtî, 26.

¹⁸⁴ *Risāle-i Seyh Safī*, fol.17v-18r; Kaplan, 120; Bîsâtî, 31-2.

mystical order (*şeyh*) is the devil (*şeytan*).¹⁸⁵ In this sense, the *buyruk* reminds the *halīfe*, and, by extension, the disciples who favored the influence of tribal kinship, that Ismā‘īl II and Khudābandeh’s rule was nullified in the perspective of the Safavid mystical community. Their names are not found in any of the traditional chains of genealogy (*silsila*).¹⁸⁶ The 1612 *buyruk* goes so far as to remove them – the latter being ‘Abbās’ father – and add that ‘Abbās was the son of Ṭahmāsp.¹⁸⁷ Removing imperfect guides not only purified the community of traumatic memory, but also reinforced the authority of the current Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*), ‘Abbās.¹⁸⁸

These passages convey a complex system of sacred relationships. Gabriel initiated the final revelation on earth by training the Prophet Muḥammed. Muḥammed eventually taught ‘Alī the final revelation. The revelation was transferred until, through the Twelve Imams, it reached Sheikh Ṣafī. In the sacred texts, Ṣafī relays this structure of authority, which was taught to the spiritual guide (*murshid*) of the Safavid mystical order. With the *buyruk* texts having been first compiled during the reign of Ṭahmāsp, it is likely ‘Abbās was well aware of and trained by the knowledge within the *buyruk* by his *lālā* (tutor coming from a particular Kızılbaş tribe), and eventually expanded on these concepts during his reign. While there are no explicit references to tribal kinship, the *buyruks* convey a hierarchy of authority that adds a sacred hierarchy. The disciples shared a sacred relationship with Sheikh Ṣafī as the founder of the order (*pīr*), ‘Abbās as the Perfect Guide, and the *halīfe* with their local networks as trainers and guides (*mürebbiler* and *rehberler*). In short, only through this chain of authority could the revelation be learned and belief perfected.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Gölpınarlı 198, fol.57r; Gölpınarlı 181, fol.21r-21v; *Risāle-i Seyh Safī*, fol.14r; Bîsâtî, 29.

¹⁸⁷ Bîsâtî, 29; Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevi in Ottoman Anatolia*, 243.

¹⁸⁸ While needing further analysis, we might say the 1612 *buyruk* represents the refinement of Ṭahmāsp’s codification. There are numerous differences in the phrasing of various aspects of belief that suggest we might call it Abbas’ *buyruk*.

Sheikh Şafî begins with the most important set of beliefs within Islamic mysticism, the Four Gateways (*Dört Kapı*). These gateways are an intertwined set of standards that set a path toward perfection before a disciple. Enumerated as the exoteric path (*sharī'a*), esoteric path (*tarīqa*), mystical truth (*ḥaḳīqa*), and the ultimate esoteric attainment (*ma'rifa*), they are not only stages on the path of spiritual perfection.¹⁸⁹ The 1608 *buyruḳ* relays the Four Gateways as follows:

*Now, sharī'a is of the prophets, tarīqa is of the saints, ma'rifa is the path that leads one along their way, and ḥaḳīqa is the point of arrival/meeting with the divine. So let me bequeath these gems as a memento to you, to the believers of pure faith and the brothers of the special community, these testaments that are the pearls of the coral, each of them the essence of life, to preserve them well by listening to them carefully, to know the secrets of the prophets, and respect the pillars of the saints, so that the beloveds who are the believers of pure faith find themselves under our banner on the day of Last Judgment, and are not deprived of our intercession.*¹⁹⁰

The three traditions and seven obligations (*Üç Sünnet ve Yedi Farz*) form a central point of comparative analysis of beliefs. As the *buyruḳ*s reveal, there are certain beliefs found in all three copies that were compiled during Shah 'Abbās' reign. While there are inconsistencies to the way they are written, their intended meanings have substantial similarity. If differences of phrasing and particularities – most evidently in the 1612 text – are seen from a larger picture, they reveal a structurally universal mystical path. The first tradition (*sünnet*) is that “the Sufis must not drop the Word of God's Oneness or remembrance of Muḥammed-‘Alī and their valiant offspring from their tongues.”¹⁹¹ The second is to remove the hatred from one's heart by not holding a grudge, promoting

¹⁸⁹ Bisâtî, 17. The “Four Gateways” is also a common belief among Alevi communities today, see Giesela Procházka-Eisl, “The Alevi,” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8.

¹⁹⁰ I modified Kaplan's transliteration here as elsewhere in this chapter to conform with the IJMES format: “İmdî şerī'at enbiyanın, tarīkat evliyânındır, ma'rifet sülûkdur onların yoluna sâlik olub gitmekdir, ḥaḳīkat vuşlat maḳamıdır, Ḥaḳḳ'la ḥaḳ olmakdır. Pes bu cevherleri bu sana yâdigâr vîreyim, mü'mîn-i pāk 'itîkâd ve ümmet-i ḥâş olân karındaşlara bu vaşiyetler ki lû'lû-i mercândır, her biri bir cândır, muḥkem sâḳlayıb bu söz-i dürrîni cân kulâḳlarına koyalar, enbiyânın sırrını bîlûb duyâlar, evliyânın erkânına uyâlar, mü'mîn-i pāk 'itîkâd olân muḥibler rûz-ı maḥşerde kıyamet ḳopacak bizim 'alem-i sancâḡımız dibinde bûlunûb maḥrum ḳâlmayalar İnşâllâhu Te'âlâ,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol.7v-8r; Kaplan 135.

¹⁹¹ “Şûfî olân kimesne dilini kelime-i tevḥîdden ḥâlî itmeye,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol. 29v; 198, fol. 67v-69v. This also appears in *Risâle-i Seyh Safî* fol. 60v-61r as “Şûfî dilin kelime-i tevḥîdden ayırmaya. Muḥammed-‘Alî'yi ve değerli

enmity or jealousy, or pursuing worldly ambitions.¹⁹² Thirdly, one must not antagonize or dispute with anyone; another text, however, gives as the third tradition the obligation to know and practice one's religious duties (*farzları*).¹⁹³

The seven obligations (*Yedi Farz*) are in many ways more precise than the three traditions (*üç sünnet*), despite their inconsistent placements between the 1601, 1608, and 1612 texts:

- *First*: In Sufism, as the disciple proceeds in the spiritual way, God reveals some secret meanings for him. The disciple should not share this information revealed to him by God and he should keep it as secret.¹⁹⁴
- *Second*: the 1601 and 1608 *buyruk* suggest that even if there were a thousand aspirants (*tālib*), they should speak with one voice.¹⁹⁵ The 1612 *buyruk* requires that disciples must “say a *nefes* (sung poem), know the righteousness of the truth, and not become the people of argument [against exoteric/text minded peoples]”¹⁹⁶ and “Hide their methods from the

evlatlarını zikrede”. In another section of the *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, Kaplan notes a variation “Şüfî dilin kelime-i tevhiidden ırmeye.” See Kaplan, 207; Bisâtî, 68. The English translations are mine.

¹⁹² Gölpınarlı 181, fol.15v-16r; 198, fol.42r-43r; Kaplan, 85-6. Kaplan's transliteration provides some differences between Gölpınarlı 198 (“Kalbinden ‘adâveti götüre kimseye kin giz tûtmaya bugz ve hased itmeye hırşa uyûb şeytâna gönül kâtmaya”) and Gölpınarlı 181 (“Kalbinden adâveti götüre kimseye kin kibir tutmaya, bugz ve hased itmeye, hırşa uyup şeytana gönül katmaya”). The *Risâle-i Seyh Safî buyruk* again shows two different examples: “Şüfî kalbinden kibri ve uçup-ı tekekkbüri gidere”, fol. 40r-42v; “Gönlünden öfkeyi gidere ve derûnunu/içini pāk ide”, fol. 60v-61r. See Kaplan, 207; Bisâtî, 48, 68. The English translations are mine.

¹⁹³ Gölpınarlı 181, fol.15v-16r; 198, fol.42r-43r; Kaplan, 85-6. Gölpınarlı 181 and 198 are nearly identical as “Nutq-ı kûdret hâk ola kimesne ile cenk ve cidâl itmeye ve kimseye dÛsmānlık itmeye.” The *Risâle-i Seyh Safî buyruk* writes the third tradition as “Farzları bile ve eda eyleye. Öykeyi kenduden gedere” or “Know and practice the obligations. Remove angst from yourself.” in fol. 40r-42v; “Buyurulân farzları bile ve ol hÛkÛm üzerîne ola” or “Know the obligations and submit to them” in fol. 60v-61r. See Kaplan, 207; Bisâtî, 48, 68. The English translations are mine.

¹⁹⁴ Gölpınarlı 181, fol.29r-30r: (tr.) “Şüfî olân kimse gayetde sırdâr ola, zâhid imanın şeytandan nice sakınursa, sufi dahi sırrını halkdan öyle sakına.” (eng.) “The Sufi will be extremely secretive. Just as an ascetic avoids the devil, so does a Sufi withhold the secret from the commoners.”; Gölpınarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v: phrasing is nearly identical; *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v: (tr.) “Sır saklayıcı ola ve erkânın zâhiden saklaya.” (eng.) “Become a secret keeper and conceal your principles from the ascetics.”; the second entry to the *Risâle-i Seyh Safî* only to (tr.) “Sırdâr ola.” (eng.) “Become a secret-keeper”. See Kaplan, 207; Bisâtî, 48, 68

¹⁹⁵ “Tālib bin bir ise bir otura ve bir dilden söyleye,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol.29r-30r; “Tālib bin bir ise bir otura ve birden söyleye,” Gölpınarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v; Kaplan, 209.

¹⁹⁶ “Bir nefes ki söylene, haklayub hak bile, hüccet ehli olmaya,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v. Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 48.

scholars who give importance to the external meaning. If someone recites a *nefes* (sung poem), know it from righteous memory.”¹⁹⁷

- *Third*: in the 1601 and 1608 *buyruk* suggests that one should “be silent to the order of God, supplicate and apologize one-thousand times for their every sin.”¹⁹⁸ The 1612 *buyruk* requires that a disciple “be a person of supplication”¹⁹⁹ and “surrender to every trouble or trial.”²⁰⁰
- *Fourth*: in the 1601 *buyruk* demands that a disciple “submits to God who conducts all and to His orders”²⁰¹ while the 1608 commands to “be patient and persistent and be on the Path of God.”²⁰² The 1612 *buyruk* follows the 1608 version, adding in a later section that they should not become the people of argument (see the second 1612 obligation).²⁰³
- *Fifth*: the 1601 *buyruk* says to “gird your belt, repent by accepting the hand of the *halîfe*.”²⁰⁴ The 1608 *buyruk*: “Submit to your Lord, submit to His orders.”²⁰⁵ The 1612 *buyruk*: “Satisfy the community of the gathering (*cemi cem'iyet*) by knowing the truth of your companion”²⁰⁶ and “be with a companion and know the right of the companion (*muşâhib*).”²⁰⁷

¹⁹⁷ “Zahidden erkânını saklaya. Bir kimse bir nefes eylese anı hak bile,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r. Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

¹⁹⁸ “Mizân-I Hakka mutî ola, bir günahına bin özür ve niyaz eyleye. Kimsenin gıybetin itmeye ve yalan söylemeye ve hem yalan yire and içmeye,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol. 29r-30r; 198, fol. 67v-69v. Kaplan, 209.

¹⁹⁹ “Özrüne niyaz ehli ola,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v. Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

²⁰⁰ The first part of this is a repetition of the previous footnote in addition to “her belâya teslim-i rızâda ola,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 48.

²⁰¹ “Mürebbi hakkına mutî ola, emrine fermân ola,” Gölpınarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v; Kaplan, 209.

²⁰² “Gayret kuşağın kuşanup hak menzilin de ola,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol. 29r-30r; Kaplan, 209.

²⁰³ For the repetition, see *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v; Bisâtî, 48. For the additional section that adds “hüccet ehli olmaya,” see *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

²⁰⁴ “Kuşak kuşana, halîfeden el alup tövbe eyleye,” Gölpınarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v; Kaplan, 209.

²⁰⁵ “Rabbisine mutî ola, emrine fermanbor ola,” Gölpınarlı 181, fol. 29r-30r; Kaplan, 209.

²⁰⁶ “Musâhib hakkını hak bilub cemi’ cem’iyyete yeture,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 48.

²⁰⁷ “Musâhipli ola ve musâhip hakkını hak bile,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

- *Sixth*: the 1601 and 1608 *buyruk* requires that a disciple should “lose his *muşāhib* (companion) to the community of truth of God.”²⁰⁸ The 1612 *buyruk* requires that disciples should be “the people of repentance and loyal to the guiding of the true path”²⁰⁹ and “always repentant of [their] sins.”²¹⁰
- *Seventh*: the 1601 *buyruk* requires that “[One] shall accept the crown and *dress* from a *halīfe*. One of the requirements of being earthly saints is that [they] must lose their essence [for] their spiritual guides, and you shall not believe the one who was not a man of the *tarīqa*, because he is an earthly being.”²¹¹ The *buyruk* from 1608 states, “[One] must accept the Crown and dress (*kisvet*) from a *halīfe*,”²¹² while the *buyruk* from 1612, by contrast, adds: “submit to the masters (*ustadlar*), look to the truth of your ritual (*cem*) brothers, find they are the truth”²¹³ and “To know the mentioned rules, do righteous acts, be flawless, and do not defy these provisions, and be Loyal to the guiding of the true path, and be modest. This is the character of Muḥammad-‘Alī.”²¹⁴

Reflecting on the differences within the Seven Obligations (*yedi farz*) in each *buyruk*, one should not so readily dismiss their similarities. Despite a given obligation differing from one manuscript to the next, these are usually reflected in another obligation. In other words, their respective organization does not take away from overall similarities of content. Until further sources are

²⁰⁸ “Musāhibini hakikat-ı hak cem’iyete yiture,” Gölpinarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v; “Musāhibini hakikat cem’iyete yiture,” Gölpinarlı 181, fol. 29r-30r; Kaplan, 209.

²⁰⁹ “Tevbe ehli ve sâhib-i irşâd ola,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 48.

²¹⁰ “Daima günahına tövbe edici ola,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

²¹¹ “Halîfeden tâc ve kisvet kabul eyleye. Süfliliğin bir şartı dahi budur ki özünü mesâyîha yitüre ve tarikat üzerine olmayana süflidir deyu inanmayasız,” Gölpinarlı 198, fol. 67v-69v; Kaplan, 209.

²¹² “Halîfelerden tâc ve kisvet kabul eyleye,” Gölpinarlı 181, fol. 29r-30r; Kaplan, 209.

²¹³ “Tâc uruna ve üstadlara mutî ola ve ‘ayn-i cem’ kardaşları hak baka, haklı bile bula,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 40r-42v; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 48.

²¹⁴ “Tâc uruna ve bu zikir olunan erkânları bile ve ecir eyleye ve her kemâlinde noksânı olmaya ve bu hükümlere muhalefet eylemeye ve niyâz ehli ola ve sâhib-i irşâd ola ve halim ve mazlum ola. Muhammed Ali sıfatı budur,” *Risâle-i Seyh Safî*, fol. 60v-61r; Kaplan, 209; Bisâtî, 68.

found, little can be said about the relationship between a given obligation's priority in comparison to another and how these conflicted with different groups in the Safavid mystical community. Rather, given the current state of scholarship, conceptualizing the Safavid mystical path holistically will lead to a better conception of the community as a whole. In a larger picture, the Seven Obligations detail a disciple's duty to practice perfecting their belief and submission to the chain of authority as well as the spirit of the community.

The Strings of Faith: A Conclusion

The conception of Kızılbaş faith, embodied in the *buyruk* texts, refocuses the narrative of Safavid piety. Rather than drawing from heresiographies, whose own purpose obscures the tenets of the Safavid's mystical path, the *buyruk* of 'Abbās' period provide insight into the collective spiritual knowledge of the disciples' community. The principles within these texts bring a conception of sacred kinship into sharp focus. The hierarchies of sacred authority and interrelationships therein delineate a schematic of faith that 'Abbās and his loyal sacred deputies used to realign the community of disciples under the Safavid's saintly authority – reasserting sacred kinship.

Chapter Three

Beacons of Light: Spiritual Deputies, Guides, and the Curation of Kızılbaş Faith

... the person who instructs [the disciples] is called *halīfe*. Thirdly, those who are converted to the path of depravity and deviance due to this deviant man [the *halīfe*] and the one who leads the heretics of his own is called *rehber*.²¹⁵

-Çeşmi Efendi, Ottoman Judge
September 1619

Stepping away from texts, the process of the realm's transition toward institutionalizing sacred kinship during 'Abbās I's reign relied on a vast network of consecrated Deputies (*halīfe*). 'Abbās secured his place as the Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmīl*) through the reforms, intimate rhetoric and mystical path of sacred kinship, renewing Safavid charismatic kingship. 'Abbās I's success in this regard was not entirely his own. The Deputies and their local Guides (*rehber* and *delīl*) were seminal in guiding their flocks along the Safavid mystical path, moulding the vision of sacred kinship at the same time. With the *buyruk* texts being for the *halīfe*'s eyes only, guiding the disciples in both realms relied on an intimate interaction with 'Abbās' flock. *Halīfes* and their local guides were the closest physical representations of perfect belief aside from 'Abbās himself whose spiritual station as guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) could not be surpassed. The *halīfe*'s example and guidance consistently reinforced the beliefs of sacred kinship in their communities in both the Ottoman and Safavid realms via direct contact with countless disciples and the internalized structures of the Safavid mystical network. Without the network of the *halīfes* stretching across and beyond the boundaries of the Safavid realm, 'Abbās' institutionalization of sacred kinship would have been nearly impossible.

²¹⁵ *tefhīm iden şahsa halīfe dirler. Sâlis en bu şahs-ı dâlden terâyık-i fisk u dalâlete mühtedi olub meredesine delâlet ve pişrevlük iden şahsa rehber dirler*. See Danon, 290; BULAC MS.TURC.103, f.14v.

Faith Curators and Guiding the Faithful to Sacred Kinship: An Introduction

Sacred kinship has multiple layers that reinforced the Safavid mystical path for the disciples. As Chapter One demonstrated, there was certainly a concerted effort on ‘Abbās’ part to unify the disciples after a decade of de-facto Kızılbaş rule that was dominated by weak tribal alliances. Rather than marginalizing his followers from decision-making institutions in the realm, ‘Abbās drew them closer – reasserting his dynastic lineage and showing favor to ‘good’ Sufis. Those ‘good’ Sufis, as Chapter Two suggests, were those who did not deviate from the Safavid mystical path, as elaborated in the *buyruk*. A ‘good’ Sufi and an idealized *Perfect Disciple*, as suggested in Chapter 2, were the same. These terms ultimately meant that a given disciple was on the right path – following the Light of Muḥammed-‘Alī through ‘Abbās’ example as the Perfect Guide.

This chapter, by contrast, focuses on the agents and intermediaries of the Safavids’ mystical community, in particular the *halīfes*, to whom I collectively refer as *faith curators*. As intermediaries, they traversed sacred and social topographies between the heart of the Safavid mystical network in Ardabil and localities in the Safavid or Ottoman realms. As agents, it was their place as revered charismatic authorities of faith to prepare their flock for this life and the next.²¹⁶ Ultimately, with the tension between sacred and tribal kinship coming to a head during ‘Abbās’ reign, this chapter underlines the process of sacred kinship’s emergence from the ‘middle’. Looking at ‘Abbās’ ‘reformation’ from this perspective effectively shifts towards a conception of *yol* (path) mentioned in the previous chapter. While also meaning ‘path,’ *yol* distinguishes the

²¹⁶ These deputies existed in mystical networks throughout Islamicate realms well before the Safavids. Ahmet Karamustafa suggests that hierarchies familiar to our Safavid disciples crystalized for most Sufi orders in the mid-twelfth century, whereby *Khalīfes* (in Arabic and Persian) were central structures in the scaffolding of mystical authority. See Karamustafa, *Sufism*, 152

collective knowledge that presented an idealized vision of the path (*tarīqa*) laid out in the *buyruk* from the lived practice of the path, what I call *yol*. Lived experience and an individual's negotiation with different realities – using the knowledge gained from ‘good’ Sufis – was a substantial part of faith curators’ calling. This was especially true of Kızılbaş with any kind of power: tribal leaders were frequently important members of both governance and the Safavid mystical network of authority. The greater their temporal power, perhaps some thought, the greater their spiritual status. This chapter constructs a composite image of faith curators’ activities and social networks to demonstrate how the *halīfes* negotiated ‘good’ and ‘bad’ Sufism in both realms.

By virtue of their training in the home of the Safavids’ dynastic shrine in Ardabil, the *halīfes* from the Ottoman realm focused on the intimate process of the *re-sacralization* of the Kızılbaş in both realms. Using the *buyruk* and an Ottoman interrogation report from 1619, the chapter reconstructs an *halīfe*’s experience of being a *deputy* in the Ottoman and Safavid realms. While ‘Abbās’ reformation was institutionally enforced, it could not have been done without the ‘good’ *halīfes*’ influential belief in the Perfect Guide’s unitary authority. As faith curators, ‘good’ *halīfes* guided ‘Abbās’ flock along the path to unify the realm. In other words, they believed in the message of sacred kinship *more* than their tribal affiliation. The *halīfes* being both agents and intermediaries, they negotiated the changing relationships between tribal affiliation and sacred obligations to their Perfect Guide, with ‘good’ *halīfe* prioritizing the latter. As Chapter One described, this process began in ‘Abbās’ early years as king.

Reformation of the Sacred Guides: ‘Abbās’ Early Reign and Sacred Authority

The intimacy between ‘Abbās and his disciples in his early reign and especially his expansive tour, as I argued in Chapter One, could not be underestimated. Part of the rhetoric of sacred kinship used on this tour was to shore up the *halīfe* allegiance. This process began with the head of the

Safavids' mystical network, the Chief Spiritual Deputy (Pers. *khalifa al-kholafa*/Tur. *halīfetü'l-hulefā*). Although technically only one among many *halīfes*, the Chief Spiritual Deputy had a dynamic role. He was essentially the deputy of the Spiritual Guide, 'Abbās. He fulfilled his ceremonial roles such as distributing items worn by 'Abbās as sacred gifts, funneling money from other *halīfes*' communities to fund 'Abbās' cause, and performing rituals.²¹⁷ He was, moreover, responsible for directly contacting *halīfes* throughout the network, ensuring the unity of the Safavids' mystical community as a whole. Based largely in Ardabil, their primary tasks included training *halīfes*.²¹⁸

The Chief Spiritual Deputy was not a position taken lightly by 'Abbās, his Chief Spiritual Deputy, nor the wider community of disciples. In fact, 'Abbās' first Chief Spiritual Deputy, Kūr ẖūr Hams Khan of the Šāmlū, appointed in 1587-8, was executed shortly after his appointment along with several conspirators who wanted to remove 'Abbās' guardian/abductor, Murşid ẖulī Khan.²¹⁹ Leading the conspirators, he confronted Murşid ẖulī Khan and appealed to their Perfect Guide, 'Abbās, to remove Murşid ẖulī Khan from his position as *vakīl* (regent).²²⁰ Kūr ẖūr Hams suggested that Murşid ẖulī Khan had corralled all power to himself – a fact 'Abbās was perhaps all too aware of at the time.²²¹ Nevertheless, due to the boundaries of sacred kinship that 'Abbās began to assert, he sided with Murşid ẖulī Khan, having Kūr ẖūr Hams and the other conspirators removed from their posts and executed.²²² It was one of many turning points for 'Abbās. Although he likely had Murşid ẖulī Khan assassinated for the same reasons, 'Abbās signaled that future

²¹⁷ Floor, "*Khalifeh al-kholafa*," 55-60.

²¹⁸ Floor discusses the authorization of both the Deputy and the Chief Spiritual Deputy through official royal seal in, "*Khalifeh al-kholafa*," 60.

²¹⁹ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 549.

²²⁰ More about this position can be found in Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 6-17.

²²¹ While relaying the events of this exchange, Iskandar Beg notes Abbas' 'foresight' to Murşid ẖulī Khan's demise. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 576-7.

²²² Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 551-4.

Chief Spiritual Deputies would not publicly or implicitly challenge his place as the Perfect Guide, unlike what happened to Muḥammed Khudābandeh, his father and failed predecessor.²²³

Kūr Kūr Hams Khan was replaced by Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān of the Rūmlū tribe in 1588. ‘Abbās took a liking to Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān, who refused to dissuade his brother, Dervīṣ Muḥammed Khan, from leading a royal army to hold Nishapur – in Iraq – in front of the invading Uzbeks. Reportedly, ‘Abbās smiled at Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān’s belief that:

*We deem it our duty as loyal Sufis [...] to lay down our lives for our benefactor and our [Perfect Guide], and we do so with pride in the knowledge that we shall thereby gain renown. My brother will defend that castle as long as there is breath in his body, and, when he is no longer able to continue the defense and is killed, he will win glorious renown down the ages.*²²⁴

Although ultimately another courier was sent and Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān’s brother escaped with other disciples, records do not mention him after this point. It is possible Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān held this position until sometime before 1614, before the second and final purge of *halīfes* took place. This purge will be addressed later in this chapter but suffice it to say, there is insufficient evidence to determine when Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān died.²²⁵ In his position as the Chief Spiritual Deputy, Ṣāh Kūlī Sulṭān was a first-hand witness and helper in ‘Abbās’ subsequent realm-wide tour, during which ‘Abbās disciplined *halīfes* himself.

Returning to the event that shocked many disciples during this tour, we are reminded of Ya’qūb Khan’s execution on account of his corruption. One of the events that inspired ‘Abbās’ wrath was Ya’qūb Khan’s dismissal and subsequent murder of an illustrious *halīfe* governor,

²²³ For Muṣṣid Kūlī Khan’s assassination, see Ibid, II: 6-8. For Abbas’ sentiments that he would not rule like his ‘fallible’ father, Muḥammed Khudābandeh, see ibid, II: 553-4.

²²⁴ Ibid, II: 638-9.

²²⁵ Scholarship has not fully addressed how or when a Chief Spiritual Deputy was chosen aside from Abbas’ appointment. It is evident, however, after Ṣāh Kūlī’s death that subsequent Chief Spiritual Deputies in Abbas’ reign were from the Rūmlū and Ṭāleṣ tribes, including Muḥammed Kūlī Halīfe-i Rūmlū, Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān Ṭāleṣ (d.1626), and Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s son Badr Khan Sulṭān. Muḥammed Kūlī Halīfe-i Rūmlū and Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s careers are explored later in this chapter.

Şāhverdī Halīfe of the Şāmlū. He was governor of Ij and Neyrez in Fars and the son of the highly regarded Velī Halīfe. Upon Şāhverdī Halīfe refusing dismissal, Ya'qūb apparently camouflaged Şāhverdī Halīfe's assassination under the guise of a hunting trip.²²⁶ The murder of Şāhverdī Halīfe was a personal attack on 'Abbās due the two men's connection through their mutual *sayyidhood*. Ya'qūb committed an unforgivable sin by killing a *sayyid* without 'Abbās' order. Among many messages that arose through Ya'qūb Khan's execution, one was that the sacred bonds between 'Abbās and his sacred guides – who were family – could only be dissolved by the shah himself.

In one case where 'Abbās dissolved *sayyid/halīfe* ties, from 1592-3, Sulṭān 'Alī Halīfe of the Şāmlū Tribe had usurped the governorship of Qayen in Khorasan after fighting against the Ūstāclū at the Battle of Ozgand.²²⁷ Sulṭān 'Alī Halīfe's story is one of a 'bad' Sufi/*halīfe* – worse still, it exhibited a violation of shared sacred bondage. He reportedly sided with Murşid Kūlī Khan.²²⁸ Following the latter's death and expungement from both sacred and tribal kinship, Sulṭān 'Alī Halīfe, along with Süleyman Halīfe of the Turkmān tribe, tried to ally themselves and their followers with a Georgian Prince, Rustam Mīrzā.²²⁹ They believed that by installing him as the king of Kandahar, in what is now Afghanistan, they would win favor and protection.²³⁰ Their efforts were ultimately futile: when the Uzbeks invaded Khorasan, they killed many Kızılbaş along the way – including Sulṭān 'Alī Halīfe.²³¹ Iskandar Beg suggests that they had failed to live up to their *sayyid* lineage which had served Ṭahmāsp I so well:

As is well known, the [Kızılbaş] tribes are the servants of the Safavid house, and if they fall from the favor of their benefactor and incur the wrath of their supreme

²²⁶ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 596-7.

²²⁷ Ibid, II: 663-5.

²²⁸ Iskandar Beg suggests Sulṭān 'Alī Halīfe joined Murşid Kūlī Khan's efforts to indulge in tribal affairs above Abbas' decision to unify them in ibid, II: 578.

²²⁹ Rustam Mīrzā would later serve as the first *darugeh* (military governor) in 1620. See Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, 115-8.

²³⁰ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 650-1.

²³¹ Ibid: II, 665.

spiritual director [‘Abbās, the Perfect Guide], *they are expected to regard this loss of favor as due to their own shortcomings and to consider it as purifying their souls. They are expected to endure patiently a thousand physical and spiritual hurts and to remain loyal to their* [Perfect Guide] *until they have cleansed the stain of their sins with the sweat of remorse and humility and rendered themselves worthy of again being received into favor.*²³²

Iskandar Beg’s insight represented a seismic shift from the reigns of Ismā‘īl II and Muḥammed Khudābandeh, the ‘fallible guides,’ whose own usage of tribal conflict for almost ten years allowed the community’s faith to focus on worldly claims to get closer to the Spiritual Deputy. They were blamed for failure to live up to the perfection of their status as perfect Deputies. The events of ‘Abbās’ reformation began early in his reign, including a surge in *gholām* soldiers’ numbers in the military, the growth of the *kūrçī*, and appointments of ‘good’ disciples to high-status positions. The *halīfes* in this period were previously uncontextualized agents in the drama of ‘marginalization’. However, as Iskandar Beg shows, the reformation called upon the disciples to join in a renewal of the Safavids’ charismatic claims. At the core of ‘Abbās’ reformation were the *halīfes*.

Much of ‘Abbās’ subsequent success relied on *halīfes*’ belief that he was the Perfect Guide. The first purge of ‘Abbās’ reign, as it might be called, extended through all levels of the Safavid mystical network. His appointment of Şāh Kūlī Sulṭān as the Chief Spiritual Deputy (*halīfetü’l-hulefā*) in tandem with ‘Abbās’ trans-realm tour eliminated or reconciled with wayward disciples. Finding a deputy who would act in true spirit of the Perfect Guide’s vision was of paramount importance for ‘Abbās. Through much of ‘Abbās’ early reign, the Chief Spiritual Deputies took part in ‘Abbās’ vision of sacred kinship by perfecting the faith of their sacred kin by ensuring that future *halīfe* would not go astray from their Perfect Guide.

²³² Ibid, II: 650-1. 114

Destiny of Lineage: The Pilgrimage to Ardabil and Becoming a Sacred Guide

Halīfe living in the Ottoman and Safavid realms were embedded in substantially different social dynamics by virtue of their location. What brought them together, however, was their sacred lineage. The *halīfe* were a spiritual class directly descended from the Prophet Muḥammed and the Twelve Imams, called *sayyids*. In other words, they embodied Muḥammed's final revelation through their lineage. The *halīfes* were not, however, related to the immediate Safavid family line. Instead, they bound themselves to the Safavid family's lineage by wearing Ḥaydar's ('Alī's) Crown. In the logic of sacred kinship in the Safavid mystical path, upon becoming *halīfe* these *sayyids* withdrew any claims to worldly ambition not bestowed by their Perfect Guide, 'Abbās. Their role in the Safavid mystical community, rather, was service and to act as the embodiment of 'Abbās in his physical absence. This was an ideal that was fulfilled by many *halīfes*, given 'Abbās' success to unify his realm. In a sense, they joined a family effort to realize the final revelation. This is especially true of those *halīfes* who prioritized their Safavid *sayyidhood*'s destiny to face off against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, collectively referred to as *Yezīd* – meaning Sunni.²³³ Though tribal social structures permeated the Safavid mystical network, their spirit of resistance, and, at the command of the Perfect Guide, beliefs set against Sunnis was a central part of their commitment to unify the community.

This might be said of the compiler of the 1601 *buyruk*, Ahmed Muhtar, and his father, Sayyid Abdülkadir-i Belhi.²³⁴ Like his father, Ahmed Muhtar was a *sayyid* by birth. When either Abdülkadir-i Belhi's father or Belhi himself had died, it is likely that their son went to Ardabil to

²³³²³³ This perspective does not discount the Ottomans' own process of recognizing their *sayyids*. For an example of Ottoman *sayyids* more broadly, see Hülya Canbakal, "The Ottoman State and Descendants of the Prophet in Anatolia and the Balkans (c.1500-1700)," *Journal of Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52 (2009): 542-78.

²³⁴ Abdülbaki Gölpınarlı first mentions the compiler of the 1601 *buyruk* in *Mevlânâ Müzesi Abdülbâkî Gölpınarlı Kütüphanesi Yazma Kitaplar Kataloğu*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2003), 242. Kaplan, 19.

receive training. In many ways, this was a pilgrimage. The Safavids' dynastic shrine in Ardabil was by all means the hearth of the *halīfe* network – so much so that those who could had their bodies buried there, until 'Abbās ordered a change of policy so that their remains are interred in Mashhad – near the eighth Imam Riza's mausoleum.²³⁵ The journey, however, served multiple purposes. While training and authorization form the primary basis of continuing their father's work, *halīfes* also experienced close proximity to the divine and, for some, experienced the reinvigorating feeling of their celebrated status in the Safavid realm. In effect, the pilgrimage was a spiritual transformation for *sayyids* who were to become *halīfe*.

For the prospective *halīfe* coming from other regions of the Safavid realm and even more so for those from Ottoman territory, the pilgrimage was a heady experience. Ottoman pilgrims to Ardabil had to pass by the Ottoman authorities and they often travelled clandestinely to reach Ardabil and back – largely because Ottoman authorities had a policy to execute *halīfe*.²³⁶ In the Safavid realm, pilgrimage likely gave the disciples—who were not persecuted unless they were disloyal—a sense of empowerment and caution. Caution, we might say, as they would have learned of 'Abbās' efforts to enforce sacred over tribal kinship explained in Chapter One. They would have seen Sheikh Ṣaḡī's shrine under renovation and expansion at 'Abbās' expense.²³⁷ When a disciple visited the shrine early after the purge, it is said he “[rubbed] his sins in the dust of the sacred land [Ardabil].”²³⁸ In other words, visiting the shrine was an act of *absolution* of one's own misdeeds. 'Abbās was the first Perfect Guide since Ṭahmāsp to renovate his ancestor's shrine, rebuilding the kitchen and donating money to the hospital in 1605. In 1611, he added a royal

²³⁵ Rizvi discusses the *halīfes*' burials near Ṣaḡī's shrine in Ardabil and this practice's change to Mashhad, 23 n.58.

²³⁶ Hanna Sohrweide, “Der Sieg der Ṣafaviden in Persien und seine Rückwirkungen auf die Schiiten Anatoliens im 16. Jahrhundert”, *Der Islam* 41 (1965): 192. Derin Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-building and Confessionalization,” in Christine Woodhead (ed.) *The Ottoman World*. (New York: Routledge, 2012): 94.

²³⁷ Rizvi discusses these renovations and additions in 124-185.

²³⁸ Rizvi, 129.

Sharbatkhāna (a room for making sweets/*lokma* for rituals), repaired the mosque, and renovated the library (the Hall of Readers, or *dār al-ḥuffāz*) and the room for ritual practice (the Hall of Unity, or *chīnīkhāna*).²³⁹ The richly decorated shrine, which included silver doors to the library donated by a favored disciple in 1602, imparted the awesome imagery of a shared lineage.²⁴⁰ The shrine's renewal under 'Abbās added a physically imposing sight for *sayyids* who would become *halīfe*. The pilgrimage to Ardabil was not only a spiritual ascent for the pilgrims but moreover represented a reaffirmed belief in the process of *re-sacralization* of the realm in general and the individual believer in particular. Additionally, *halīfe* may have seen the street plays that honored the Safavid disciples.²⁴¹ These scenes no doubt invigorated the *halīfe* coming from the Ottoman realm. Witnessing the celebrated status the Kızılbaş enjoyed in the Safavid realm – something few disciples in the Ottoman realm experienced – strengthened their resolve to guide 'Abbās' flock.

The Perfect Halīfe: Spiritual Deputies According to the Buyruk

Upon a local *halīfe*'s death, his son would make pilgrimage to Sheikh Ṣafī's shrine. Once there, the *sayyid* would undergo a period of training under the guidance of the Chief Spiritual Deputy.²⁴² The authorization of *halīfe* was an intimate process deeply integrated in the Safavid spiritual home in Ardabil. The details of this training are as yet unknown. Part of this training was to perfect the

²³⁹ Kitchens are discussed in *ibid*, 129-30. Rizvi defines the purpose of the *Sharbatkhāna* in *ibid*, 101. For details about the Hall of Readers and Hall of Unity respectively, see *ibid*, 52-55, 143-55.

²⁴⁰ This disciple was Zu'l-fiḳār Khan of the Qarāmānlū. For information about the silver doors, see Rizvi, 133. Zu'l-fiḳār Khan served as ambassador to the Ottoman realm between 1595-6. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 688. He was eventually executed in 1610, followed by his brother, Farhad Khan (d.1610), who served for some time as governor of Azerbaijan and the warden of Sheikh Ṣafī's shrine. For Farhad Khan's appointment, see, *ibid*, 628. Farhad Khan was executed for killing people who were under Abbas' expressed protection. See *ibid*, 944-5. For Zu'l-fiḳār Khan's execution, see 1009-10.

²⁴¹ See Wood, *Adventures of Shāh Esmā'il*.

²⁴² Faruk Sümer, *Safevî Devletinin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü*. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1992), 82; Kaplan, 43. The details of this training are not yet known in the Safavid case, but the act of going to particular centers and the forms of instruction are found in other scholarly works. Strikingly, the Naqshbandi mystical network's emphasis of non-related *halīfe* and their authorization had different implications from the 'typical' forms of Shi'ite sainthood. See Dina Le Gall, *A Culture of Sufism: Naqshbandīs in the Ottoman World, 1450-1700*. (New York: State University of New York Press, 2005), 43-4, 52, 82-3, 165-75.

belief of the *halīfe* by internalizing the words of the sacred texts elaborated in Chapter Two, possibly recording them once they returned home. It is also possible that some of the *buyruks* managed to reach *halīfes* but these texts were too dangerous to be copied widely.²⁴³ In the 1601 *buyruk* that was possibly copied in Iraq, there are similar sections that cover the standards for the *halīfe* set by Ardabil in the 1608 and 1612 compilations.²⁴⁴ Thus, *buyruks* compiled in different regions, even if they were not copied from a text, suggest similar beliefs transmitted. The *halīfes*' perfection was not limited to their local disciples. Rather, as the *buyruks* themselves suggest, their *sayyidhood* made their pilgrimage from all sides of the Safavid mystical network a destiny, tying them to a sacred mission that required they embody certain characteristics and responsibilities.

The *buyruk* from 1601 details the history of a *halīfe* from the line of the Prophet Adam.²⁴⁵ His symbolism as an originator of this sacred lineage was reinforced by the *halīfes*' *sayyidhood*. Their lineage was, above all, both this- and other-worldly. Furthermore, the *buyruk* breaks down the meaning of *halīfe* letter by letter, into an esoteric etymology of symbols – lettrism. Several copies suggest that *Hâ* means son or male descendant, *Lâm* the favor of grace, *Ye* the silence or

²⁴³ This line of thought derives from the 1612 *buyruk*, compiled by Mehemmed b. Habib in Manisa, some three-hundred kilometers from the Ottoman capital, Constantinople. Although his *sayyid* status is not clear and it may be a copy of a copy, it seems reasonable to believe that training in Ardabil would be oral and performative. On the one hand, crossing back into the Ottoman realm with these texts and/or a letter of authorization meant execution – if found. For an example, see Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, “Those Heretics Gathering Secretly: Qizilbash Rituals and Practices in the Ottoman Empire according to Early Modern Sources,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 6.1 (2019): 56. On the other hand, an oral memory meant that they had perfected themselves by internalizing the tenets of the faith, having been trained by the Perfect Guide's chief sacred deputy, the *khalīfeh al-kholafa*. Kaplan and Karakaya-Stump provide the details of the 1612's compilation. See Kaplan, 20; Karakaya-Stump, *Kizilbash/Alevi of Ottoman Anatolia*, 243. Another possibility is that the *buyruk* were also copied from others that were known in local *halīfe* networks in the Ottoman realm.

²⁴⁴ Ahmet Taşgın suggests this copy resembles a *buyruk* translated to Arabic and printed in Iraq in the mid-twentieth century in, *Irak'ta Mezhep Çatışmaları Arasında Aleviler ve Bektaşiler*. (İstanbul: Önsöz Yayıncılık, 2012), 71-87. The relationship between the Safavids and their Iraqi disciples, as elsewhere, is a severely understudied topic. However, a few works offer initial insights into these groups. See Taşgın, *Irak'ta Mezhep Çatışmaları*; Rudi Matthee suggests there was a substantial group of disciples to the Safavids in Iraq in “The Ottoman-Safavid Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids”, 163. Most recently, Ayfer Karakaya-Stump has discussed the relationship between the Safavids and their disciples in Iraq in *Vefailik, Bektaşilik, Kızılbaşlık Alevi Kaynaklarını, Tarihini ve Tarihyazımını Yeniden Düşünmek*. 2nd printing. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016).

²⁴⁵ Gölpınarlı 181, fol.15r; 198, fol.39r-40r; Taşgın, *Irak'ta Mezhep Çatışmaları*, 135-6; Kaplan, 84.

passiveness characteristic of a *pir* (sacred guide), *Fe* meaning away from worldly affairs, *He* is the name of the saintly helmet of the battle cry reserved for *halīfe*.²⁴⁶

Esoteric interpretations of titles are not the only way in which the *buyruks* describe the *halīfe*. They also characterize them with “seven faces.” The first face, *vahdet*, meaning “unity,” relates to his responsibility to bring disciples together through revelation. Then there is *hizmet*, meaning “service” to all things with humility and poverty in one’s heart. With *irādet* (will-power), the *halīfe* was to bring those who would become disciples to the Perfect Guide (either in person or metaphorically) while observing the community with love. Fourthly, *halīfes* possess *īmāmet*, which meant that for the love of religion a *halīfe* had the duty to protect the faith and follow the path of the Prophet and the Imams. With *selāmet*, the fifth, *halīfe* were to keep their beliefs open and religion and not talk to anyone about it other than the pure. With *melāmet*, a *halīfe* was to be the object of universal scorn while being a saint who received the power to perform miracles or, more generally, to be careless of their appearance. *Melāmet* is also a requirement to learn esoteric knowledge in the assembly of love. Finally, there is *Devlet*, which dictates the *halīfe* not to deviate from the line of the final revelation; that whatever the *halīfe* had to eat and drink was willingly shared with their religious brothers. His work is to see it through, to take the willingness from the Saints (*evliyā*), to commemorate the beauty (*cemāl*) of the friend, and to give the path to those who desire it.²⁴⁷

On another level, the *halīfe* was given twelve responsibilities. *Sehāvet* (generosity), *sa’ādet* (happiness), *gayret* (enthusiasm or effort), *ibret* (example), *hürmet* (dignity and respect), *sohbet*

²⁴⁶ Gölpınarlı 181, fol.15r-15v; 198, fol.40v-41v; Taşgın, *Irak’ta Mezhep Çatışmaları*, 137. He may also refer to the saintly hat or responsibility of the call to prayer reserved for *halīfe*. The Turkish translation from Ottoman by Taşgın is “ismi Hud’tur gülbangı evliyadır, halifelere mahsustur.”

²⁴⁷ Gölpınarlı 181, fol. 15r-15v; 198, fol. 40r-40v. Kaplan translates these in Turkish in 85-6. Taşgın mentions this same section in a *buyruk* of later published in nineteenth-century Iraq, see *Irak’ta Mezhep Çatışmaları*, 138.

(communication or companionship), *mürüvvet* (courage), *şefkat* (compassion), *ikrār* (confession), *īsār* (bondage), kinship with the friends of God (*tevellā*), and *teberrā* (aloofness). Generosity (*sehāvet*) is the feature of someone who feeds and eats. The knowers of God's truth (*‘arīfler*) eat, they feed, and they say he is a companion (*şahbāz*). His work is to eat and eat for *Haḳḳ*, not to be grateful to anyone. Happiness (*sa‘ādet*) means to do his best as much as he can, to aim for forgiveness, to make a house of the soul prosperous. Example (*‘ibret*), his eyes are open and whatever he looks for is to take a lesson from him and make all the wisdom of the truth (*Haḳḳ*) permissible; his work is to set foot on a limited station (*maḳām-ı müntehā*). Dignity or respect (*hürmet*) is to work on the path of religion, to struggle by calculating with exquisite; his work is to strive and prevail over Iblis and not to be defeated as much as possible. *Sohbet* is to maintain the quality of talking thoughtfully in spiritual gatherings; his work is ingenuity. Kinship (*tevellā*) is to respect those who are under their own hands and speak with sweet language (meaning saints or *evliyā*); his work is love. The conversation is to be valuable and not to speak immediately (to keep calm) in a gathering; his work is ingenuity. Courage (*mürüvvet*) is to be able to show and forgive him when he defeats and destroys the enemy; his work is intervention (to preserve the religion). Compassion (*şefkat*) is to protect the weak, to grant mercy and forgive, to satisfy the needs of the brother of the confession; his work is to end need. The confession (*ikrār*) is not to betray his Lord, to fulfil what he breathes; his work is to sacrifice himself like his friends (boundless kindness) in the path (*tarīqa*). Bondage (*īsār*) is whatever it takes to be a friend, and those who have their own soul, flood their way, push and pass; his work is to be the owner of the secret, to find what he wants on his own station. *Tevellā* is to be subject to the Twelve Imams, who have affection to the *Ahl al-Bayt* (People of the Prophet's House), and who are the sons of the heart and the language;

his work is the abandoned world. *Teberrā* is to hate the enemies of Muhammad-‘Alī’s Holiness.²⁴⁸ His work is to curse the enemies of the *Ahl al-Bayt*; the *halīfe*’s work is to find the willing by not wanting to pressure the children of Muḥammed-‘Alī.²⁴⁹

Once their training completed, *halīfe* would receive a letter of authorization (*shajara*, *ijāzetnāme* or *hilāfetnāme*) from the Perfect Guide, ‘Abbās.²⁵⁰ Thereafter, they carried their late father’s legacy and spent the remainder of their lives in service (*hizmet*) of curating faith of ‘Abbās’ flocks in different parts of the Safavids’ extensive mystical network. These duties and characteristics, though idealized, were nevertheless important facets of faith within the Safavids’ mystical path. The *halīfe* – as both related and subordinate to ‘Abbās – had to embody these characteristics and practices in order to successfully complete their spiritual elevation. In addition to broader contents of the *buyruk*, as illustrated in Chapter Two, these facets guided the *halīfe* who in turn guided their local followers. In comparison to their ‘bad’ *halīfe* elsewhere, they would have to join their Perfect Guide’s call for unity over tribalism. The events of the purge in ‘Abbās’ early years no doubt informed incoming *sayyids* from all parts of the Safavids’ mystical network that their main duties underlined the importance of the Perfect Guide. His wisdom was beyond doubt. The guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) chose particularly loyal disciples as his Chief Spiritual Deputy. Their belief reflected ‘Abbās’ trust that they would spread the idea that ‘good’ Sufis would follow him on his path to realize the final revelation. Further, only with the *halīfes*’ perfection could the final

²⁴⁸ The concept of *teberrā* was an important concept in early Safavid history, so much so that some of Ismā‘īl I’s disciples – called *tabarra’iyan* (“disavowers”) – demanded people perform a ritual cursing of Abu Bakr (d.634), ‘Umar (d.644), and ‘Uthmān (d.656). For more details, see Rosemary Stanfield-Johnson, “The Tabarra’iyan and the Early Safavids,” *Iranian Studies* 37.1 (2004): 47-71.

²⁴⁹ The entire paragraph derives from Gölpınarlı 181, fol.15v-16r; 198, fol.42r-43r; Kaplan, 85-6. The 1612 *buyruk* does not have either the sections on the letters of the *halīfe* nor their characteristics. Rather, it focuses on the stories relayed above between Muḥammed and ‘Alī as master-disciple, and companions.

²⁵⁰ Karakaya-Stump has discussed these letters of authorization in considerable detail. See Karakaya-Stump, *Kizilbash-Alevi of Ottoman Anatolia*, 231-8. See also Floor, “*Khalifeh al-kholafa*,” 60.

revelation be achieved. In this way, there was a living line of spiritual bondage that made sacred kinship more valuable than any worldly kinship.

Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān of the Ṭāleṣ tribe held the post of Chief Spiritual Deputy (*halīfetü’l-hulefā*) until his death in Ardabil in 1628. ‘Abbās apparently held him in such esteem that he appointed his son, Badr Khan Sulṭān his father’s replacement.²⁵¹ Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s life expands on the possible roles of the Chief Spiritual Deputy. His proven track record was partially indebted to his “eloquent and persuasive tongue.”²⁵² But, it was also important for Shah ‘Abbās that his grandfather served in the same position and as governor of Baghdad during the reign of Ismā‘īl I.²⁵³ He previously served as ambassador to the Mughal court between 1608-9, and had a secondary posting there in 1621-2.²⁵⁴ Sometime in 1617-8, he was appointed ambassador to Constantinople at the request of the Ottomans and upon approval of Shah ‘Abbās.²⁵⁵ Memorializing his death, Iskandar Beg says he was “a benevolent and God-fearing man who performed many good works in the course of his life, including the construction of mosques, theological seminaries, and other buildings.”²⁵⁶ Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s reputation as a Sufi of “pure faith and smooth tongue” were strong characteristics of curating the faith of incoming *halīfe*.²⁵⁷

²⁵¹ Reid, *Tribalism and Society*, 158. Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s successor is something of a mystery. Savory’s translation of Iskandar Beg’s chronicle suggests in different places that Ṣāh Ḳūlī Sulṭān and Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s son were appointed after his death. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1295, 1312. Reid and Floor suggest it was the former. See Reid, *Tribalism and Society*, 158; Floor, “*Khalifeh al-kholafa*,” 56.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid, II: 979.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, II: 1156. For Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s missions to the Mughal realm, see *ibid*, II: 979, 1193. Iskandar Beg mentions that Yādegār ‘Alī Sulṭān’s first mission had a duration of seven years beginning in 1590-1. See *ibid*, II: 606.

²⁵⁵ Ibid, II: 1166.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, II: 1295.

²⁵⁷ Iskandar Beg relays the quote above in *ibid*, II: 606.

Paths Together, Realms Apart: Sacred Deputies in the Ottoman & Safavid Empires

While grappling with consistent similarities between the *halīfe* in the Ottoman and Safavid realms, it is important to stress their differences as well. While these similarities of faith and vision of unity were a central aspect of curating the faith of their local disciples, their respective realities informed how these Sacred Deputies carried out these feats. These differences also highlight reflections of ‘Abbās’ reformation toward sacred kinship – which, rather than marginalization, suggest intimate and sustained belief in the Kızılbaş as an integral part of the Safavid mystical destiny.

In the Safavid realm, *halīfes* often held positions in the military and state.²⁵⁸ Yet, *halīfe* social mobility in the hierarchies of state does not tell us much about their religious duties and social obligations to the Shah’s disciples. The best accounts we find about their activities in Safavid Iran comes from Michele Membré’s account of his visit to Shah Ṭahmāsp I’s court between 1539 and 1542. Membré recalls that as the Shah passed through a village, the villagers gathered and chanted “Shah, Shah!” Their collective praise accompanied singing with instruments led by their *halīfe*, who Membré refers to as the village head and priest.²⁵⁹ Even during ‘Abbās’ reign, however, we find further references in Safavid chronicles underlining the *halīfe*’s sacred duty. In Mīrzā Beg Junābadī’s *Rawzat al-Ṣafavīyyah*, compiled in 1626, he relates their extraordinary virtue and importance, and exaggerates the number of disciples under each *halīfe* during Sheikh Ṣafī’s time.²⁶⁰ Ṣafī’s image as the grand teacher of the order and source of imperial mythmaking

²⁵⁸ For instance, Dervīṣ ‘Alī Halīfe was made the chief of the Gerāylī tribe, and almost immediately after, the governor of the region controlled by the Gerāylī tribe. Abbas promoted Dervīṣ ‘Alī Halīfe partly based on his illustrious lineage—his father, Mīrzā ‘Alī Halīfe, had served the tribe well before. See Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 712-3.

²⁵⁹ Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia (1539-1542)*, trans. A.H. Morton (London: Trustees of the E.J.W. Gibb Memorial, 1999), 25.

²⁶⁰ Mīrzā Beg Junābadī, *Rawzat al-Ṣafavīyyah*. Mahmūd Āfshār Yazdī, ed. (Tehran: Gulām Rezā Ṭabāṭabā’ī Mejd, 1378[2000]), 78-9.

developed considerably during this period. Rather than suggesting, like some historians, that the Safavid Shah wanted to distance himself from his disciples, numerous chronicles underscore the disciples' importance – and the importance of the *halīfe* in particular – thus telling an altogether different story.

Looking at Shah 'Abbās' reign – almost a century after Ismā'īl I – it is clear that Ottoman authorities were aware of the roles *halīfe* played in faith curation. In the preceding century, the Ottomans' engagement with the “Ardabili sect of Sufis”, as the Safavid network was often referred to, the Ottomans formed a basis for understanding their functions and operation. With thousands of disciples scattered throughout Anatolia and other regions of the Ottoman realm, the Ottomans also had precedent for such scrutiny. Early in the sixteenth century, *halīfes* under the command of the Safavid Empire's founder, Shah Ismā'īl I, sowed the seeds of insurrection which stretched throughout Anatolia. One such deputy, referred to as Nūr 'Alī Halīfe (d. 1515), instigated a wide-reaching revolt authorized by Ismā'īl I. After another unsanctioned revolt led by a descendant of another *halīfe*, the Ottomans led harsh campaigns of persecution against all Safavid disciples before going to war with the Safavids, which the latter lost.²⁶¹ While in later decades the Safavid disciples in Anatolia were met with more leniency – such as being offered payment to put Ḥaydar's Crown aside,²⁶² *halīfes*, by contrast, were executed without exception.²⁶³ This testifies to the Ottomans' perception of these deputies as a serious threat to the integrity of their realm.

²⁶¹ Rıza Yıldırım summarizes these in “The Safavid-Qizilbash Ecumene and the Formation of the Qizilbash-Alevi Community in the Ottoman Empire, c. 1500–c.1700,” *Iranian Studies* 52.3 (2019): 457-8. Colin Imber offers a perspective on the mid- to late-sixteenth-century persecutions in “The Persecution of the Ottoman Shī'ites According to the Mühimme Defterleri, 1565 – 1585,” *Der Islam* 56.2 (1979): 245-273.

²⁶² There are numerous other approaches provincial rulers used to reduce the Kızılbaş 'threat' through financial and political means – provided these disciples forsake their *tāj*. See Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, “Qizilbash 'Heresy' and Rebellion in Ottoman Anatolia During the Sixteenth Century,” *Anadolu Moderna* 7 (1997): 9-13.

²⁶³ Sohrweide, “Der Sieg der Şafaviden,” 192. Terzioğlu, “Sufis in the Age of State-building,” 94.

So far, we only know of two incidents in Ottoman lands mentioning the *halīfes* during ‘Abbās’ time, one being a report from 1619 which will be explored at length in the next chapter. In the *mühimme defterleri* (the Ottoman’s Registry of Important Matters), we find only one reference to *halīfes* in particular during ‘Abbās’ reign. Dating from 7 November 1593, an entry reports on three *halīfes* going to Çorum, Kastamonu and Sivas, respectively, from the Safavid Empire with *ijāzetnāme/halīfenāme* (letters of authorization) recognizing them as newly minted spiritual guides.²⁶⁴ Despite a heavy blow to the community of disciples in each region, these three *halīfes* demonstrate a continuation of *halīfe* training in Ardabil at the peak of ‘Abbās enforcing his conception of sacred kinship in Iran.²⁶⁵ That is, at the peak of the first purge, Şāh Kūlī Sultān – the Chief Sacred Deputy – trained these *halīfes* in the principles of the Safavids’ mystical path, while also likely informing them of events in Iran. That they did not complete their journey – they were likely executed, as was Ottoman custom – damaged the unity of the community. Without a trusted *halīfe* in the land of *Yezīd* - the Ottoman realm – there was no one who could prepare the disciples for his promised future arrival – which, based on his success against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, appeared imminent.

Forgotten Links: Faith Curators and Local Networks of Sacred Authority

As the tide of war turned to the Safavids’ favor in 1605, there were likely replacement *halīfes* – sourced locally or elsewhere – to fulfill their sacred duty.²⁶⁶ In the meantime, however, *halīfes* also relied on locally intimate networks of non-*sayyid* guides who helped guide the flock in case of a *halīfe*’s absence. As an Ottoman interrogation report from 1619 explains:

²⁶⁴ BOA, MD, Vol. 71, No. 239

²⁶⁵ The details of Abbas disciplining rebellious disciples in the early part of his reign is covered in Chapter One.

²⁶⁶ For further detail about the Safavids’ growing military and diplomatic success, see Colin Imber, “The Battle of Sufiyan, 1605: A Symptom of Ottoman Military Decline?”, in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, eds., (London: I.B. Tauris, 2012); For details about the 1612 treaty, see Börekçi, “Ahmed I,” 23.

the one who is converted to the path of depravity and deviance due to this deviant man [halīfe] and the one who leads the heretics of his own is called rehber. The rehber is the leader of [these] corrupted people who obey him and the one who obey him is called tālib as well as murīd [disciple]. The one who lead him [the disciple] to the attainment [i.e. meeting with the rehber] is called delīl. At first, this delīl shows the path and takes the beginner to the rehber and says “this man wants to become a disciple” asking the rehber “what is your order?” The rehber asks about the man’s overall situation and then incorporates him in the gatherings of the men who married before submission [to the rehber]. Then, when the rehber understood the situation of the disciple completely, he takes him [the tālib] into the meclis.²⁶⁷

As the above text highlights, the hierarchies of the Safavid network were sophisticated. Locally, the *halīfe* was the highest form of sacred authority one could reach without going to the Safavid realm or Iraq. Subordinate to him, however, were the *rehber* and *delīl*. Both meaning “guide,” the *rehber* was superior in the hierarchy to the *delīl* and, as one can tell by the text, each had their own role to play. The *delīl* would be the first point of contact for a prospective *tālib* (aspiring disciple) or *murīd* (disciple). Thereafter, at some point the *delīl* would take the prospective *tālib* to the *rehber*, who would interview the candidate about his personal life. If tentatively accepted, the convert would be told to follow whatever the *delīl* orders him to do. Although we cannot be sure what tasks this convert was given, we can be sure some training was required.²⁶⁸

According to Doğan Kaplan, aside from the *rehber* and *delīl*, there was also a tradition of companionship (*musāhiblik*).²⁶⁹ For the purposes of faith curation, creating a brotherhood of the faithful aimed for the community’s disciples to help guide each other in addition to sacred guidance from the *halīfe*, *rehber*, and *delīl*. For those joining or being within the Safavid disciple network,

²⁶⁷ “bu şahs-ı dâllden terâyık-i fisk u dalâlete mühtedi olub meredesine delâlet ve pişrevlük iden şahsa rehber dirlər. Rehber kendüye irâdet getüren fesedenün re’isidür ve rehberre irâdet getüren şahsa tālib itlāk iderler. Mürid dahi dirlər ve ana vüsûle vesîle olan şahsa delīl dirlər ki evvelâ mübtediye ol delīl delâlet idüp rehberre götürür ve bu âdem mürid olmak murad ider emriniz nedir der rehber dahi ol âdemin keyfiyyet-i hâlin tamâm kendüden su’âl idüp müte’ehhil-i kable’l-bey’a olân kimesne meclislerine dâhil ider andansonra keyfiyyet-i hâline tamâm mertebe vâkıf oldukda vâir imdi delīlin sükkana...”. See Danon, 290-1; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.14v.

²⁶⁸ “dirse ta’bi ol dîr ba’dehu delīl ânı niçe müddet istihdâm tâ hevâ-yı nefslere tâbi’ ve mu’tekid ve meclis-i habîselerine duhûle müste’idd olunca ba’dehu tekrar rehberre alup gider...” See Danon, 291; BULAC MS.TURC.103, f. 14v.

²⁶⁹ Kaplan, 125.

companionship was a stipulation for remaining within the community of the faithful just as much as having a teacher.²⁷⁰ Muḥammed and ‘Alī’s connection in the *buyruk* served many purposes, including providing an example of ideal companionship, so much so that they were able to transform into Muḥammed-‘Alī’s Light. In real terms, a later *buyruk* from the seventeenth century advises a period of mutual observation after two disciples are introduced to one another, before both agree to being linked as companions. If their relationship sours to the point of irreconciliation, it was necessary to find another companion. Should there be some manner of violation against one or another, Sheikh Şafī commanded that they resolve it within the community.²⁷¹

Altogether, the combination of the Safavid chronicles, the *buyruk*, an Ottoman interrogation report and even the Records of Important Matters give insight into the Safavids’ faith curators in general, and during ‘Abbās’ reign in particular. They demonstrate a line of descending authority starting with the guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) ‘Abbās and going through the Chief Sacred Guide to the Sacred Guide and his network (the *rehber* and *delīl*), and finally to the disciples and aspiring disciples (*tālib*). This system was the means of transmitting the final revelation and, in turn, ‘Abbās’ vision of sacred kinship that guided them in preserving this revelation.

Revisiting a ‘Perfect’ Reformation: A Conclusion

‘Abbās’ institutionalization of sacred kinship did not mean the Safavids’ reformation and *re-sacralization* was by any means perfect. Nor did it permanently stamp out worldly ambitions and seditious ideas. In one such case, between 1614-6, ‘Abbās ordered the Chief Spiritual Deputy, then Muḥammed Kūlī Halīfe of the Rūmlū tribe, to carry out an investigation of the Safavids’ mystical network. The investigation, in other words, was an internal affair for the Safavid mystical

²⁷⁰ Gölpınarlı 198, fol.74r-74v; Kaplan, 131.

²⁷¹ Gölpınarlı 199, fol.94r-97v; Kaplan, 127-8.

community alone. Its purpose was to find any disciples who joined Shāhverdi Khan – a *halīfe* – in a plot to exchange their ‘Kızılbaş crown for an Ottoman turban.’²⁷² The ringleader of this plot, Şāhverdī Khan, a descendant of the revered “Lahijani Sufis” who had protected Ismā‘īl I in his youth, disgraced the entire lineage by courting local disciples and some other *halīfes* to join his rebellious act. He was the governor of Qaraja-dag until he defected to the Ottomans with many *halīfes* and disciples.²⁷³ The plot was considered so heinous that not only were Şāhverdī Khan and his band of traitors considered ‘bad’ Sufis, but furthermore they were henceforth *na Sufi* (not Sufis).²⁷⁴ A plot to assassinate the guide-king was an assault against the Perfect Guide and the community as a whole. Rather than being an affair for the ‘loyal’ *gholām* to settle, ‘Abbās relied on the loyalty of the community to resolve this betrayal. Muḥammed Kūlī Halīfe, with the authority of ‘Abbās, executed a number of disciples and – more importantly – *halīfes*, who had failed to remember their place under ‘Abbās, the Perfect Guide. That ‘Abbās only ordered this purge meant that the Safavids’ mystical network was strong enough to conduct its own affairs.²⁷⁵

Halīfes were the cornerstone of the Safavid network. They traversed political boundaries and played a vital, charismatic role in teaching ‘Abbās’ disciples about Muḥammed’s last revelation. Though they were at times military leaders, their conception as curators of faith complicates our understanding of both their own roles in Safavid society and of Safavid society as a whole. In the Ottoman realm during this period, given the wave of persecutions, which would be fresh in the mind of disciples, and the efforts to execute *halīfes* in particular, the latter largely sought to stay incognito. In order to grow the network, these men often travelled throughout and

²⁷² Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1097.

²⁷³ Ibid, II: 621, 630.

²⁷⁴ “The Shah, by ordering this purge, wished to indicate that this group from now on was no longer to be included within the circle of Sufis, and to make a clear distinction between Sufis and non-Sufis.” See *ibid*, II: 1097.

²⁷⁵ These events are relayed by *Ibid*, II: 1096-7.

between realms to spread the word of the Path. It was through them that one could eventually become a *Perfect Disciple* of Shah ‘Abbās, the Perfect Guide who carried the final revelation. Their primary practice, rather than reading books, was an embodied practice of *yol* (path) with the aim of spiritual transformation.

Chapter Four

Manifestations of *Yol*: Ritual and the Practice of Perfect Belief

In this respect, this is their prayer (gülbank): For the acceptance of our supplication let us say Allah, for the annihilation of Yezīd, let us say Allah, for Shah ‘Abbās’ success let us say Hû...²⁷⁶

Shah ‘Abbās I’s assumption of his role as guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) inaugurated a new charismatic age for the Safavid Empire on a scale that not even his great-grandfather, Ismā‘īl I, had achieved. While the first years of his reign led to defeat from external enemies, ‘Abbās’ vision for sacred kinship and his intimate interactions with the highest echelons of the Safavids’ mystical network unified his realm. Through both institutional reforms and a spiritual reformation, ‘Abbās intensified the bonds of sacred kinship between himself and his disciples. Whether connected by a sacred lineage like the *halīfe* or endowing trusted disciples with governing power, the reformation toward sacred kinship from above and the middle relied on the belief of the broader disciples’ community. In other words, the representatives had to be efficacious in their roles. This chapter, by contrast, shifts our attention toward a vision of sacred kinship from ‘below’ – that is, from the perspective of disciples themselves. Elucidating ritual in the broad sense of the word – entailing formalistic and ‘embodied’ practice – suggests the performative means by which the spiritual reformation of the wider disciples’ community diffused. Like in the previous chapter, where I argued that ‘Abbās and his *halīfes* relied on one another, here I maintain that the same is true of ‘Abbās and his disciples across the Safavid mystical network.

²⁷⁶ “Bu maḥalde gulbānklerī būdur “niyāz kebulleğine Allah diyelim, yezīd fināsına ‘Allah’ diyelim! Allah! Şāh ‘Abbās devletine ‘Hû’ diyelim! Hû!” See Danon, 293; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.15v.

Ritual and the Embodiment of Belief: An Introduction

The rituals of the Safavids' mystical path are well recorded by historians. The purpose of these rituals, however, is often taken for granted. In the historiography of the Kızılbaş' marginalization, rituals are relayed through accounts – but rarely analyzed for their intention. As Alan Strathern shows, there is a balance between *illocutionary* (verbal communication and or repetition) and *perlocutionary* (attempts to persuade the others) efforts at play in ritual performance.²⁷⁷ Ritual in this chapter is not only a performance of certain actions in a controlled time and place (*illocutionary*), but also intended to instill the embodiment of belief in all facets of everyday life through habit formation (*perlocutionary*). From performing the 'ayn-i cem' ceremony (a regular Thursday night congregation) to associating with people from outside the Safavid mystical path, ritual was an all-consuming experience.

Ritual of the Safavid mystical path reflected how a *Perfect Disciple* and a 'good' Sufi was conceptualized. Those who went astray from the path (*tarīqa*) elaborated in Chapter Two, or who did not follow the example of their Sacred Guides, suggested in Chapter Three, were at risk of being corrupted. As Strathern suggests, the efficacy of rituals lies in the perceived success of a given metaperson (charismatic other-worldly figure), priest (or sacred guides).²⁷⁸ Thus, each layer of the ritual needed to be in sync to suggest the efficacy of 'Abbās' reformation from below. To show how this worked, this chapter relies primarily on documents originating from the Ottoman realm concerning ritual in practice both as regular gatherings and embodied practice.

Using two Ottoman interrogation reports from 1619 and entries from the Ottomans' *Mühimme Defterleri* (Register of Important Affairs, hereafter *MD*), offers unique insight into the

²⁷⁷ Alan Strathern, *Unearthly Powers: Religious and Political Change in World History*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 222-3.

²⁷⁸ Strathern, 225.

practices of Safavid disciples in the Ottoman realm during this period. Despite being persecuted in the Ottoman realm, it appears that many remained on the Safavid mystical path, performing rituals and living amongst *Yezīd*, meaning the Sunni Ottomans. In conceptualizing the Safavid mystical ritual as a whole, the Ottoman sources are interwoven with references to the Safavid realm to suggest the intimate relationship with or belonging to the Safavid family in the bonds of sacred kinship.

The Efficacy of the Safavids' Mystical Path in Yezīd's Land: Disciples in the Ottoman Realm

Much of scholarship focuses on the history of persecuting the Safavid disciples in Anatolia. Yet, during this period we know little about the Safavid network in the Ottoman realm functioned. If the disciples below had not believed in their Perfect Guide – given his military success from 1605 onwards – there would not be as wide a record as there is. In other words, ‘Abbās’ image ‘from the outside’ would have little *efficacy*, as Strathern terms it, for the wider disciples’ network if he were not successful. Equally, it shows the efficacy of sacred kinship. Without the belief of ‘Abbās’ disciples in the Safavid realm, there might not have been so much evidence of Ottoman persecution: the *Kızılbaş* in the *MD* suggest belief as much as they highlight the Ottomans’ increased persecution of the disciples during heightened Ottoman-Safavid tensions. As Nüket Varlık argues, the *MD* are a way to interpret rulership during this period. They detail local events throughout the provinces of the Ottoman realm. They also imply that the Ottoman sultan ordered provinces to act in a certain way. They do not, however, reveal whether these orders were followed through. In this sense, they are a dialectic of rulership.²⁷⁹ On another level, they are a way to see

²⁷⁹ Nüket Varlık, *Plague and Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean World: The Ottoman Experience, 1347-1600*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 250-1.

distinct actions in particular locations that caused concern to the Ottomans. In this case, they help us reconstruct a partial social history of Kızılbaş activities.

The *MD* have been a staple for historians to trace the Safavids' Anatolian disciples.²⁸⁰ Yet, the period of Shah 'Abbās I's reign and thereafter is largely ignored and scantily mentioned in scholarship. Remarkably, we find some thirty-four entries between 1588 and 1624 that tell us a great deal about 'Abbās' Ottoman-based disciples. These dates were chosen for their connection to particular milestones of 'Abbās' reign, his coronation and the capture of Baghdad. Ottoman records about Kızılbaş activities within this period allow us to ask more specific questions about curating faith among the Shah's disciples outside the borders of his realm.

The start of 'Abbās I's reign was marked by defeat. In 1590, the Ottomans and the Safavids signed a treaty ending a war that began two years after the death of Shah Tahmāsp I (d.1576). This long struggle resulted in the harshest diplomatic humiliations noted by European, Ottoman, and Safavid accounts alike. The Safavids relinquished parts of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Qarabagh, Khuzistan and Shirvan and parts of Luristan and Kurdistan and Tabriz itself, and included a clause requiring the Safavids to cease cursing the first three Rightly Guided caliphs.²⁸¹ The Treaty of Constantinople stipulated that 'Abbās send his six-year old nephew, Ḥaydar Mīrzā, to the Ottoman sultan's palace in Constantinople, where until his suspicious death in 1595 he was paraded as a living expression of Ottoman power.²⁸² Sayyid Lokman, an Ottoman writer and *şehnāme*ci (official biographer at the court), composed a poem emphasizing the defeat: "Persians opened their

²⁸⁰ The most prominent examples of using MD as a source base for researching the Qizilbash are Imber, "The Persecution of the Ottoman Shī'ites," 245-273; Baltacıoğlu-Brammer, "Safavid Conversion Propaganda in Ottoman Anatolia," (Unpublished Ph.D Dissertation, Ohio State University, 2016).

²⁸¹ Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 52.

²⁸² Sinem Arcak, "A Peace for a Prince: The Reception of a Safavid Child Hostage at the Ottoman Court," *Journal of Early Modern History* 20 (2016): 59.

country from one end to the other / the Redhead saved his head thanks to the [arrival of the] hostage.”²⁸³ Sometime in October of 1590, Mehdī Kūlī Khan of the Şāmlū tribe – and by this time the *eşik ağasibāşı*, a hereditary position and one of the six principle officers of the Safavid state – went to Tabriz to inform the newly appointed Ottoman governor, Vizier Cafer Pasha, of Cafer’s responsibilities to the treaty.²⁸⁴ In Iskandar Beg’s chronicle, Mehdī Kūlī Khan was a survivor: he had been a prisoner to the Ottomans prior to the 1591 treaty,²⁸⁵ appointed and later dismissed as governor of Gilan.²⁸⁶ Mehdī Kūlī Khan also fought against a member of the Safavids’ orthodox ‘*ulamā*’ class who supported a rebellious tribe, Sayyid Mobarak, in open-warfare with the support of ‘Abbās until the latter decided not to make an enemy of the *sayyid*.²⁸⁷ In short, Mehdī Kūlī Khan was a highly regarded figure in the Safavids’ mystical community. Mehdī Kūlī Khan’s responsibilities not only required him to transfer records to the Vizier but also to remind Cafer Pasha of his obligations to treat local Kızılbaş in accordance with the peace agreement, contemporary Ottoman accounts referring to Mehdī Kūlī as “*rafizi*” and “Satan-like.”²⁸⁸

The peace was not necessarily stable. Between 1595 and the Safavid invasion to recapture these regions in the first decade of the seventeenth century, Ottomans recorded multiple issues in these provinces. In June of 1595, an order to the lords and vassals of Shirvan, a province in modern-day eastern Azerbaijan, commanded defense preparations for the region. In the following month,

²⁸³ *açdī ‘acem memleketinī serbeser / rehin ile kurtardī başın sürhşer*. BL Add 7931, 132a. Transliterated and translated by Arcak in “Peace for a Prince,” 54.

²⁸⁴ Iskandar Beg tells briefly about this office in the *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 1388. Willem Floor discusses this title and its holders in relation to other *āghā* in *Safavid Government Institutions*, 106-7.

²⁸⁵ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 614.

²⁸⁶ For these respective events, see *ibid*, II: 624, 633.

²⁸⁷ Iskandar Beg mentions these events in *ibid*, II: 699-701.

²⁸⁸ BOA, MD, Vol. 73, No. 717 (14 Z 998/14 October 1590). For reference to negative epithet attributed to Mehdī Kūlī Khan, see Ece Tuna, “Depiction of the Enemy in the Eyes of an Ottoman Bureaucrat-Soldier: Âsafi’s *Şecâ’atnâme* (The Book of Valor) in the Context of the Ottoman-Safavid Rivalry.” (Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Central European University, 2017), 28-9.

an order to Vizier Hızır Pasha – the governor of Baghdad at the time – states that he should cut the travel routes between Baghdad and Nihavend (modern-day Nahavand) some 430 kilometers from Isfahan, the Safavid capital. The purpose, the order suggests, was to prevent people going from the Safavid realm into Iraq, a hotbed of Shi'ite activity. Secondly, it was to guard against others going into Iran to “become Kızılbaş.”²⁸⁹ Aside from orders intending to limit border crossings and changing pilgrimage routes,²⁹⁰ what is key is the Ottomans’ effort to prevent the growth of the Safavid network throughout the region – even during peacetime.

Until the Safavids’ efforts to retake territory lost to the Ottomans commenced in 1603, Ottoman records are silent.²⁹¹ In April of that year, Kızılbaş forces broke Ottoman lines in Çıldır, a province some 100 kilometers north of Kars – sparking a response from the state to nearby provinces to act immediately in order to retake and reconnect the region.²⁹² Çıldır, Dagestan, and Shirvan, became crucial transitory points for the Kızılbaş as they had been for the Ottomans some twenty years earlier. Cornell Fleischer’s work on the historian Mustafa ‘Alî details the Ottoman campaign of 1578 to control the region – often at great cost to the Ottomans at the hands of local Kızılbaş. It also resulted in local hostilities. During this campaign, the Ottomans rallied Shirvani Sunnis to fight Kızılbaş groups in the region, leaving memories not easily forgotten at the outbreak of war in the early seventeenth century.²⁹³ Six years after the Safavids invaded, other reports suggest Kızılbaş activities in the region intensified. On March 29th, a certain Zaim Mustafa took refuge in the Azgur fortress in Çıldır to escape Kızılbaş. The report relating to this event highlights

²⁸⁹ BOA, MD, Vol. 73, No. 895 (1003 L 23 / 1 July 1595).

²⁹⁰ This was not an unprecedented move by Ottoman authorities. Dina Le Gall talks about alternative routes for Hajj as they often related to changing temperatures between the Ottomans and Safavids in *A Culture of Sufism*, 28-31.

²⁹¹ Newman discusses the outbreak of the Ottoman-Safavid hostilities following the Safavids’ success against their eastern rivals, the Uzbeks in *Safavid Iran*, 52.

²⁹² BOA, MD, Vol. 75, No. 413 (1013 Za 11/31 March 1603).

²⁹³ Cornell Fleischer, *Bureaucrat and Intellectual in the Ottoman Empire: The Historian Mustafa Âli (1541-1600)*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 80-2.

Zaim Mustafa's fraudulence that allowed Kızılbaş success.²⁹⁴ The region was filled with discontent, as in May Kızılbaş devastated local livestock, resulting in local authorities' stockpiling and even hording food for themselves,²⁹⁵ while in June a report details Celalis ransacked houses.²⁹⁶ Meanwhile, the Safavids reestablished the borders they previously lost. Most famous of these campaigns was arguably the Battle of Sufiyan in 1605, in which the Safavids completely routed Ottoman forces.²⁹⁷ Consequently, the Safavids took firm hold of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus.

Elsewhere during 1609, the Kızılbaş appear quite active – especially in southeastern Anatolia, where Kurdish tribes buffered the two empires. As such, Diyarbakir may have been one of the many gathering points for Kızılbaş who were captured. In May, several disciples were delivered to the future Grand Vizier Nasuh Pasha, the namesake of the 1612 Peace Treaty which agreed to give all territories the Ottomans gained in 1590 back to the Safavids.²⁹⁸ During September, a Kızılbaş by the name of Mehmed is reported to have been captured in Karacaviran, a village south of Kayseri.²⁹⁹ These reports do not reveal the cause of their capture, nor do we know what became of them. Yet, the surge in capturing Kızılbaş certainly reflects the perceived danger they posed to the state – militarily and confessionally. Ottoman reaction was not unprecedented. In earlier periods, particularly in the 1570s, only ten percent were executed whereas others were detained, interrogated, and forced to convert.³⁰⁰ Other punishments included expulsion to the Balkans and Cyprus or forced labor.³⁰¹

²⁹⁴ BOA, MD, Vol. 78, No. 828 (1017 Z 22/29 March 1609).

²⁹⁵ BOA, MD, Vol. 78, No. 2092 (1018 S 28/2 June 1609).

²⁹⁶ BOA, MD, Vol. 78, No. 2153 (1018 S 11/16 May 1609).

²⁹⁷ Imber, "The Battle of Sufiyan," 98.

²⁹⁸ BOA, MD, Vol. 78, No. 1247 (1018 S 26/31 May 1609).

²⁹⁹ BOA, MD, Vol. 78, No. 1705 (1018 C 06/7 September 1609).

³⁰⁰ Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Qizilbash 'Heresy' and Rebellion in Ottoman Anatolia," *Anatolia Moderna* 7 (1997): 12.

³⁰¹ Saim Savaş, *XVI. Asırda Anadolu'da Alevilik* (Istanbul: Vadi Yayınları, 2002), 105-9.

There is another lull in Ottoman state records between 1610 and 1613. Part of this may be the peace treaty of 1612, which secured the borders set by Amasya in 1555 and reopened the route for pilgrims from Iran through Syria – which boasted a substantial Shi’ite community – rather than Iraq, to get to Mecca.³⁰² Following the short-lived peace, the pretext of Shah ‘Abbās not delivering promised bales of raw silk triggered another series of battles.³⁰³ With resumed hostilities, there were also new incidents recorded in the Ottomans’ annual registry of important matters. In April 1613, the regional governors and Kurdish judge were warned about local Kızılbaş who rebelled and refused to give their crops to the local fief holder.³⁰⁴ Nine days later, another report sent word to Van in eastern Anatolia to prepare defenses. Seven months later, a certain disciple in Arguvan, Malatya, was apprehended and punished. Curiously, this report offers his name: Uğurluoğlu Hüseyin of the Haydar ‘Abdāl “tribe.”³⁰⁵

The Ottoman Grand Vizier Halil Pasha appointed Çeşmi Efendi, formerly a military judge of Anatolia (*kazasker*), to head a special court to find and interrogate heretics within Constantinople.³⁰⁶ Suffering from over a decade of devastating revolts led by over-taxed, mainly rural-dwelling subjects, as well as military defeats at the hands of the Habsburgs to the west and

³⁰² For details about the 1612 treaty, see Börekçi, “Ahmed I,” 23. Regarding the altered route of pilgrimage, see Rudi Matthee, “The Ottoman-Safavid Frontier,” 170. See also Letter Ahmed Shah to Shah ‘Abbas I, in *Shah ‘Abbas: Majmua’ah-i asnad va makatabat-i tarikhi hamrah bi yaddashtha-yi tafsilî*. 3 vols. ‘Abd al-Husayn Nava’i, ed. (Tehran: 1366/1987), 3:105, 109. For a general history of Shi’ism in Ottoman Syria, see Winter, *The Shiites of Lebanon under Ottoman Rule*, 12-58.

³⁰³ Özer Küpeli, *Osmanlı-Safevi Münasebetleri (1612-1639)*. (İstanbul: Yeditepe Yayınevi, 2014), 79-81.

³⁰⁴ BOA, MD, Vol. 80, No. 251 (1022 Za 04/16 April 1613).

³⁰⁵ BOA, MD, Vol. 80, No. 2 (1022 L 04/17 November 1613). There is little evidence about such a tribe. Ayfer Karakaya-Stump makes reference to Haydar Abdal when discussing his fealty to the Wafa’i and the subsequent relationship with the Ağuiçen ‘ocak’. There is little evidence elsewhere about this particular group, and therefore might be a misnomer of some kind. See Karakaya-Stump, *The Kizilbash/Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia*, 173.

³⁰⁶ Kâtip Çelebi lists Çeşmi Efendi’s career in different parts of his comprehensive history. See *Fezleke [Osmanlı Tarihi (1000-1065/1591-1655)]*. 2 vols. Zeynep Acibin, ed. (İstanbul: Çamlıca Yayınları, 2016), I: 388, II:564, 751, 828. Andreas Tietze talks about the special court in “A Document on the Persecution of Sectarians in Early Seventeenth-Century Istanbul,” *Revue des études islamiques* 60.1 (1992): 162.

the Safavids to the east, the realm appeared to be on the verge of collapse from within.³⁰⁷ The Islamic millennium passed in 1591, yet external losses and internal carnage suggested the long-anticipated day of reckoning would in fact be a slow, agonizing death for the empire hailed as the protector of the two holy cities, Mecca and Medina. Of the many threats to the Ottomans, the Kızılbaş and their Perfect Guide – Shah ‘Abbās I, the Safavid ruler – were resurrected from their defeats and gained the upper-hand, retaking territories lost over a century prior. As a period of crisis, partly from the Celali revolts and losses at the hands of the Safavids, the Ottomans’ ‘Red Scare’ – the Kızılbaş – resulted in a renewed effort to surveil and persecute Shi’is of different varieties.

What is more, toward the end of the conflict in 1620, the Ottomans apparently conducted a sweep of their capital for Shi’ite sympathizers. As the selection from the report heading this chapter suggests, the Ottomans were keenly interested in the workings of the Safavid mystical network in the Ottoman realm and Constantinople in particular. Çeşmi Efendi was appointed to a special court to investigate heretics in the capital and to report to the Grand Vizier.³⁰⁸ Possibly a result of the Ottoman administration’s registry of Kızılbaş, in 1619, there were at least two reports written about interrogations of Safavid disciples and Shi’ites in Constantinople. One of these reports, which is discussed throughout this chapter, details the conversion process, hierarchies and ritual practices of Shah ‘Abbās’ disciples in the city – but with indications that these were shared elsewhere in the Ottoman and Safavid realms. The other report details persons living in the city,

³⁰⁷ On a detailed account of rural devastation in Anatolia during this period, see Oktay Özel, *The Collapse of Rural Order in Ottoman Anatolia: Amasya 1576-1643*. (Leiden: Brill, 2016). Christoph K. Neumann gives a general outlook on extra-Anatolian losses in “Political and diplomatic developments,” in *The Cambridge History of Turkey*, vol. III: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603-1839*, 4 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 44-8. Related to this point for both the eastern and western fronts, with emphasis on the former, see Imber, “The Battle of Sufiyan, 1605,” 91-3.

³⁰⁸ Tietze, “A Document on the Persecution of Sectarians,” 162.

their activities and whereabouts. The center of this particular report is a certain Sheikh Davud, who lived in the city for around thirty-five years and never went to the proscribed calls to prayer. Rather, likely under the strain of interrogation, he admitted he belonged to the “heretical” group and praised the writings of those deemed sacrilegious by authorities.³⁰⁹ What is more interesting, however, is an accompanying document marking the execution of fourteen people who had been declared heretics, including Sheikh Davud. Of these people, one included the son of a footman to the Ottoman palace, four from the Malatya province, and another from Kastamonu. All of these men had names which indicated Alid or Shi’ite sympathy, such as Husayn, Ja’afer, ‘Alī (and several sons whose fathers were named ‘Alī).³¹⁰ It is possible that the men from this report also gave information for the first report, but this cannot be determined as yet.³¹¹ Whatever the case, this is among the last Ottoman administrative documents detailing Kızılbaş activities in the Ottoman realm during ‘Abbās’ reign.

The above is at best glimpses into a wider movement. These incidents were only those known to local populations or state officials that led to orders from the sultanate. What the *MD* entries and interrogation reports underline are activities of perhaps the most zealous of the Shah’s disciples – or, alternatively, those in the wrong place at the wrong time. What is not accounted for, however, are those disciples who were less perceptible to state surveillance and persecution. Constructing such an image of a religious group entails a wider spatial and temporal scope employing an emic approach.

³⁰⁹ Tietze, “Persecution”, 163.

³¹⁰ Ibid, 164.

³¹¹ Tietze mentioned the latter report, held at the University of California at Los Angeles’ Special Collections department, but it has since been renumbered and the new reference is not known to this author. Upon contacting the said library, it is possible there are further entries which may tell us more about this particular incident and whether the persons in each report are the same or not. See *ibid*.

In conceptualizing a historical anthropology of the disciples in ‘Abbās’ reign, an emic approach centers on reconstructing both communally observed rituals and ascertaining the habits these rituals intended to instill in the disciples. In short, the remainder of this chapter tries to look at *yol*. *Yol* was not only the spiritual exploration of the self but also the lived experience of being on the path (*ṭarīqa*) that was diffused to the wide community of the disciplines through daily, though at times, imperceptible practices. This “social imaginary” is a crucial aspect of *yol* often neglected or marginalized in conceptions of faith, and the social history of mystical groups more generally. It engages with a worldview imparted by the cultural understandings of groups in relationship to their environments. To get closer to this imaginary, we must first look at the sources of this worldview for disciples in the Ottoman realm. A path is not self-taught; one had to have a guide and practice its precepts in daily life. In the Safavid extensive network, accessibility to the *murshid-i kāmīl* (the “Perfect Guide”) and the higher echelons of sacred authority were limited. Instead, this porous territory was covered by numerous *halīfe* who were tasked with guiding ‘Abbās’ flock on the path of righteousness.

The Efficacy of Reformation: Ritual in the Safavid Realm During ‘Abbās’ Reign

The rituals of a group integrated into society, like the Qizilbash were in the Safavid realm, are often taken for granted and not discussed in the chronicles. It typically takes an outsider – be they part of the same society or a foreign visitor – to bring the rituals of a particular group into a sharper focus. The same can be said of rituals in the Safavid mystical network. In the Safavid realm, chronicles would occasionally mention the ‘customs’ of the local Safavid disciples. For example, Iskandar Beg mentions several occasions in his chronicle in which disciples interacted with

different Perfect Guides, including ‘Abbās, prostrating for forgiveness, being fined, and following his example.³¹²

As Chapter One suggested, ‘Abbās integrated his disciples into his imperial vision. This included renewing and expanding the hallowed grounds of Sheikh Ṣafī’s shrine in Ardabil, which added a room for ritual practice, the Hall of Unity (*Chīnīkhāna*).³¹³ However, ‘Abbās could not simply leave his ancestor’s path behind. Rather, in his new imperial vision, which re-centered the guide-king’s (*pīr-shāh*) perfect embodiment in Isfahan, the new capital ‘Abbās ordered the construction of an identical room referred to as the *tevḥīdhāne*, also meaning Hall of Unity.³¹⁴ A contemporary chronicle reports that within these spiritually charged spaces, and the Hall of Unity in particular, ‘Abbās institutionalized cannibalistic rituals that reenacted earlier stories of Ismā‘īl ordering his disciples to eat the flesh of their enemies.³¹⁵

In such a dramatic transformation from ‘above,’ ‘Abbās’ belief in himself as the Perfect Guide – the head of the Safavids’ mystical network – becomes clear. What is still unclear, however, is how the reformation toward sacred kinship worked from ‘below.’ To this end, the remainder of this chapter focuses on ritual and its place outside the bounds of Safavid sources in ‘Abbās’ reign. Instead, the chapter uses the 1619 interrogation report to unveil the habit-forming purpose of the Safavid mystical path’s rituals. Using the document as a window to faith curation, I demonstrate how the reformation under sacred kinship took shape – suggesting these methods were not only found in the Ottoman realm, but equally in the Safavid realm as well – and strengthened ‘Abbās’ position.

³¹² Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, I: 188; II: 554, 577, 585

³¹³ Kitchens are discussed in *ibid*, 129-30. Rizvi defines the purpose of the *Sharbatkhāna* in *ibid*, 101. For details about the Hall of Readers and Hall of Unity respectively, see *ibid*, 52-55, 143-55.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 129.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, Bashir, “Shah Isma‘il and the Qizilbash,” 248-51.

Donning Ḥaydar's Crown: The Ritual of Initiation and Becoming a Disciple

Although the Kızılbaş in Iran have been depicted as a closed community under the *oymak* system, it seems it was not impossible to become a disciple.³¹⁶ The 1619 interrogation report relays how one initiates joining the Safavid mystical path:

the one who is converted to the path of depravity and deviance due to this deviant man [halīfe] and the one who leads the heretics of his own is called rehber. The rehber is the leader of [these] corrupted people who obey him and the one who obey him is called tālib as well as murīd [disciple]. The one who lead him [the disciple] to the attainment [i.e. meeting with the rehber] is called delīl. At first, this delīl shows the path and takes the novice to the rehber and says “this man wants to become a disciple” asking the rehber “what is your order?” The rehber asks about the man’s overall situation and then incorporates him in the gatherings of the men who married before submission [to the rehber]. Then, when the rehber understood the situation of the disciple completely, he takes him [the tālib] into the meclis.³¹⁷

The excerpt suggests an intimate process. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the process of becoming a disciple began with local leadership networks under the Spiritual Guides (*halīfe*): the *rehber* and *delīl* – with the *delīl* being hierarchically under the *rehber*. The *delīl* would be the first point of contact for an aspiring disciple. Thereafter, at some point the *delīl* would take the prospective disciple to the *rehber*, who would interview the candidate about his personal life. If tentatively accepted, the aspirant (*tālib*) would be told to follow whatever the *delīl* orders him to do. In effect, there is an early form of companionship (*muṣāhiblik*), whereby the *delīl* guides his aspiring brother through the path. These included internalizing the Three Traditions and Seven Obligations (*Üç Sünnet Yedi Farz*) elaborated in Chapter Two. As the 1619 interrogation report suggests, a *tālib* would become a disciple in part because he had learned to perform a *nefes* (sung

³¹⁶ This point will be taken up in chapter one.

³¹⁷ “Rehber kendüye irâdet getüren fesadenün re’îsîdür ve rehberine irâdet getüren şaksa tālib-i itlāk eydürler. Mürīd dahi dirler ve ana vuşûle vesîle olan şahsa delīl dirler ki. Evvelâ muhtedîye ol delīl delâlet idüp rehberine götürür ve bu adam mürīd olmak murâd ider emriniz nedir dîr rehber dahî ol âdamın keyfiyyet hâlin tamâm kendüden su’âl idüp müt’ehl kebe’l-beiy’e olân kimsine meclislerine dâhil ider andan sonra kîfiyyet hâline tamâm murettıba vâkıf oldukta vār imdî delîlin sekene...” See Danon, 290-1; MS.TURC.103, fol.14v.

poem) with his brothers.³¹⁸ More about *nefes* will be said later in this chapter. In the meantime, at some point during a regular ritual gathering, the *ṭālib* offered some record of an oath they were required to take:

*“In the name of God, the most compassionate, the most merciful, they will pay you a great reward” They read this Holy Verse, “Indeed, those who pledge allegiance to you,” until, “He will give him a great reward” [Sura al-Fath/10]. In the presence of the community they swear “if I turn away from my loyalty and solemn oath, may the Zūlfikâr of Allah’s beloved ‘Alī strike my belt.” And, definitely, they call woman as müslim and man as a believer [mümin]. And when the two want to be companion, they sacrifice an animal to God and call each other true brothers (Haḳ Ḳarındāş).*³¹⁹

The first part of the oath is common among all Muslims. However, what stands out to the interrogator is the second, which includes the symbols of Imam ‘Alī’s famous sword, the *Zūlfikâr*. It is the sword, acting as a reminder of both suffering and victory, that was sustained in the imagination of disciples throughout the Safavid mystical communities in both the Ottoman and Safavid realms. The symbol of both previously fallen path brothers (*yoldaş*) who might follow the *yol* (path), as well as their victories, it is represented by an icon which is in modern times a staple of Shi’ites and Alevi. The sword also features in ritual practice, which will be discussed more below.

The process of becoming a disciple pervades one’s personal life through his relations, and family in particular. For, it is said that although he can marry a woman from “outside” the order, they do not give their own woman for marriage.³²⁰ There is no other source from this period or

³¹⁸ “ḍirse t’abi’ ol ḍir ba’dehü delîl ânî niçe müddet istiḥdâm tā havā-yî nefslerine tā’be ve mu’takîd ve meclis-i ḥabîselerine dühüle musta’ıd olunca ba’dehü tekrâr rehber alûp gider,” See Danon, 291; BULAC MS.TURC.103, f. 14v.

³¹⁹ “Bism’allah a-rahman e-rahîm an a-lezin yubā’iyunek fasi’yutiyye icran ‘azîmāya varınca bu ayet-i kerimeyi kîr’at iderler ve hâzır cemā’atın t̃anıklığıyla eğer ‘ahd ve irâdetimden dñüp recu’a idersem ‘Alî ul-murtezânın Zūlfikârı kemerime uğrasın deyü yemîn verirler ve muṭlaḳā ‘avrata müslim vâra mu’min ta’bîr iderler ve ikisi bir bir ile ḳarındāş olmak murâd eylediklerinde bir kurbân kesüp ḳarındāş olurlar ve birbirine ḥaḳḳ ḳarındāş dîrler.” See Danon, 291; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.14r.

³²⁰ “te’ehhühul murâd iderse kendülerden ya hariḍden te’ehhüle izin vererler amma harıca kenülerden ne kızı ve ne ‘avret vermezler ve rehberden bey’at bu vecihledir.” Ibid.

before that confirms this aspect of the order. We do not know if those women who were married into the group had to convert, or when these practices became important. Nevertheless, this reveals that while a male disciple of the *Ḳızılbāş yol* had a greater degree of choice, women, by contrast, were forbidden from choosing anyone from outside the Safavid mystical path. With marriage regulations being an important facet of being a part of the *Ḳızılbāş* community in Constantinople, there is a clear differentiation between *endogamous* (marriage within a specific group) and *exogamous* (marriage outside a group) relationship structures. A male could marry a woman from outside the Safavids' mystical network, while a woman could not. The *buyruks* of this period seemingly do not make any such distinctions. To get a partial answer to this conundrum, we need only remind ourselves of tribal kinship.

The Limits of Sacred Bondage in Yeẓīd's Land: Tribal Kinship in the Ottoman Realm

At first, looking at Ottoman sources suggests the disciples in the Ottoman realm were already inclined to embrace sacred kinship. The object of a systematized efforts to persecute the *Ḳızılbāş* by means of surveillance, bribery to leave the Safavid path, or outright execution almost naturally focuses the narrative of disciples in the Ottoman realm on confessional rather than social persecution. In other words, the main issue for Ottoman authorities was sacred kinship represented by Ḥaydar's Crown. There are almost no references to the known tribal clan names that are ubiquitous in Safavid sources. Rather, those who either became or already were disciples in the Ottoman realm during 'Abbās' reign were labeled collectively as "Ḳızılbāş." While Ottoman administrative sources had by this time developed more nuanced labels for the *Ḳızılbāş* – including

“peaceful” and “heretical” – leading to variations in their treatment, tribal kinship was nevertheless a reality in both realms.³²¹

What sets Ottoman sources apart from Safavid chronicles in this period is the near total lack of reference to tribal structures in the former and ubiquity in the latter. During Ṭahmāsp I’s reign, a foreign ambassador mentions the arrival of some eight hundred “Turcomans of ‘Alī,” a tribal group from modern-day Erzincan who migrated to the Safavid realm to join their Perfect Guide. They gave gifts of cattle and more precious materials, while Ṭahmāsp bestowed each with Ḥaydar’s Crown.³²² During ‘Abbās’ reign, even larger groups flocked to their charismatic Perfect Guide. In 1602-4, some two-thousand tribesmen who lived in the Ottoman realm made their way to their Perfect Guide in what is now Yerevan, Armenia, leaving a trail of carnage befitting their tribal name of “clean sweepers” (*sil-süpür*).³²³ Proud of his courageously loyal disciples, ‘Abbās gave them winter camps in Ray, Kar, Sava, and Firuzkuh (all near what is now Tehran) before eventually sending them on campaign to recover Shi’ite holy lands in Iraq.³²⁴ In this same period, other tribes, which included a certain disciple named Şamsī Kāzāklar, returned to serve their Perfect Guide after nearly twenty years under Ottoman occupation.³²⁵ Şamsī Kāzāklar had been so successful in the Ottoman realm that he was appointed an *Emir* and a *Pasha*, but upon returning to the Safavid realm was promoted *Khan*. These ranks being of respectively equal standing in the Ottoman and Safavid realms, i.e. military-governor, Şamsī, was entrusted with a powerful position

³²¹ Baltacioğlu-Brammer’s study of Ottoman nomenclatures for the Kızılbaş up to and immediately following Abbas’ reign appreciates a differentiated approach by many local governors in Ottoman Anatolia in particular. See Baltacioğlu-Brammer, “One Word, Many Implications,” 54-64.

³²² Membré, *Mission*, 18. Yıldırım mentions this in “Safavid-Qizilbaş Ecumene,” 460-1.

³²³ McChesney suggests that this group was not part of the *oymaq* ‘system’ but provides no evidence nor explanation in “The Qajar Uymaq in the Safavid Period, 1500-1722,” *Iranian Studies* 14.1-2 (1981): 102. However, given their previous attachment to the Safavid state and their inclusion in the Safavids’ mystical network, it seems unlikely they were somehow cleaved from the wider social background of tribal social organizations.

³²⁴ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah ‘Abbas the Great*, II: 839. Yıldırım mentions this in “Safavid-Qizilbaş Ecumene,” 460-1.

³²⁵ The Ottomans occupied Armenia during the reign of the fallible guide Ismā‘īl II in 1579.

in the Safavid realm once again. His and his kinsmen's practice of sacred kinship entitled them to re-ascend the power structures of the Safavid realm.³²⁶

The Safavids' rising fortunes against the Ottomans led a great many back to their Perfect Guide. As 'Abbās' armies marched through Armenia, many disciples under Ottoman rule took their chances and fought to rejoin the Safavid cause. In contrast, those who were still living under the Ottoman yoke, while not considered 'bad' Sufis by any means, nevertheless had to undergo the reformation of sacred kinship from afar. Thus far, the 1619 report gives a detailed idea of how one joined the Safavid mystical path, starting a given disciple's *yol*. Meanwhile, Iskandar Beg's chronicle underscores the loyalty of certain disciples outside the Safavid realm to the extent they migrated *en masse* to their Perfect Guide. The former's practice of sacred kinship is nevertheless countered with the prevalent tribal kinship structures that had nearly brought the Safavid realm to its end at the beginning of 'Abbās' reign. That there were many more disciples scattered deeper in the Ottoman realm meant that as 'Abbās' success grew, he would need to rely on his Spiritual Deputies (*halīfes*) to ensure they would join him upon his arrival. In comparison to his predecessors, Ismā'īl II and Muḥammed Khudābandeh, 'Abbās used the lessons learned in his early years to assert sacred kinship. Diffusing the idea of sacred kinship in the Ottoman realm, where the Kızılbaş *ocak* system – meaning 'hearth' which fuses social (tribal) and religious structures – 'Abbās used his image as a charismatic Perfect Guide to prepare his followers for his arrival.³²⁷ In this milieu, it is apparent that the *halīfes* carried this message forward after their pilgrimage to Ardabil. We have some elementary signs of the path's articulation in everyday life, such as learning to recite a *nefes*, a hierarchy, and rules for marriage within the community. Now

³²⁶ Iskandar Beg, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, II: 839.

³²⁷ Karakaya-Stump defines the *ocak* system in *Kizilbash/Alevis of Ottoman Anatolia*, 3.

it is important to move away from the initiation stages of being the *ṭālib* (student) toward a fuller image of what was entailed for a *murīd* (disciple).

Guiding Yol: Habit Formation through the “Gathering” Ritual

Initiation was an introduction to the Safavid mystical order, but it does not tell us enough about regular practice of faith after a disciple’s embarking on the *ṭarīqa*. The regular Thursday night ritual referred to in the 1612 *buyruk* as ‘*ayn-ı cem*’,³²⁸ *cem’iyyet*,³²⁹ or ‘*ayn-ı cem* ‘*cem’iyyeti* opens a metaphorical window into the formation of habits in the disciples’ path.³³⁰ Generally translated as the “gathering” ritual, it was the weekly ritual of disciples. While understanding hierarchies where faith curators interacted suggests a systematic framework which the *buyruks* informed, we must also illustrate the ritual practices in the ‘*ayn-i cem*’ ritual to understand possible methods by which they could be taught. Continuing traditions and rituals within Anatolian and Persian Kızılbaş circles help illuminate the means by which the *buyruk* were taught through a set of embodied practices of the community. Numerous Kızılbaş practices known in the Safavid realm were also performed in Anatolia. By looking at these rituals, we can illustrate how knowledge of and within them was disseminated to ‘Abbās’ disciples, forming an embodied practice of sacred kinship.

To get a partial answer to this, we need to return to our unfortunate Kızılbaş from 1619, who was interrogated to give information on contemporary rituals. Fortunately, the same report allows us to analyze what disciples practiced on a weekly basis. The regular meeting of these disciples began something like this:

On Thursday night men and women gather to be forgiven for their sinful ways and depravities. The rehbers make the ṭālibs of this community prostrate, and they strike them twelve times with a long, polished stick on their buttocks. And they call this

³²⁸ *Risāle-i Seyh Saḫī*, fol. .24r, 41r; Bisâtî, 36, 49; Kaplan, 162.

³²⁹ *Risāle-i Seyh Saḫī*, fol. .49v; Kaplan, 162.

³³⁰ *Risāle-i Seyh Saḫī*, fol. .29r; Bisâtî, 40; Kaplan, 162.

*stick the Zūlfikâr of ‘Alī. They take one akçe for each strike as a fine. It is the atonement for the wicked deed that occurred from that night to Friday night.*³³¹ [...] *While beating, they customarily say “there is no hero like ‘Alī, no sword like the Zūlfikâr. They say the sword and axe should not be missing from Yezīd.”*³³²

The first stages of the ritual quoted above have some precedent. The Kızılbaş in the Safavid realm had several rituals, including the *chūb-i tarīq*. The aforementioned account by Michele Membré, a Venetian ambassador to Shah Tahmāsp I between 1539 and 1542 details a Kızılbaş ritual similar to that of the beating mentioned here. These rituals often have shared characteristics, leaving some speculation to the stricture of their format. Of the aforementioned rituals, the *chūb-i tarīq* has received the most attention and has significant influence on our understanding of faith curation among the Anatolian disciples of ‘Abbās. It is often shortly referred to as a “ritual beating.” The performance of the *chūb-i tarīq*, however, suggests more than submission to the mores of a hierarchy and community.³³³

While the entire ceremony suggests aspects of education which was sometimes part of the initiation ritual, the beating is of particular interest. As it is described by a contemporary, it is during this time when the Spiritual Deputy (*halīfe*) or the *rehber* waits for a *ṭālib* or disciple to prostrate so that he might strike him with a wooden stick. After this, the *halīfe* kisses the head and feet of the disciple, as well as the stick, which the disciple then mimics.³³⁴ The stick, resembling the letter *alef*, is accompanied with the phrase “alif Allāh, mīm Muhammad, ‘ain ‘Alī” as the *halīfe*

³³¹ “Ve cum‘aye gecesi recāl ve nisā cem‘a olub fışk ve fisādlardın icrī edecek gıceleredir, ol cem‘iyete rehberleri ṭāliblerin yüzü üzerine yāturup on iki kabzayı dirāz-ı perdāhte bir serdeste ile otūrāk yerine birer serdeste urup ve ol serdesteye Zūlfikār-ı ‘Alī dīrlir. Ve her bir serdeste birer ākçe cerimesin alırlar. Y‘anī mūrūr iden Cum‘a gecesinden ol geceye gelince vāk‘i olān dalaletin kefaretidir.” See Danon, 291; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.14r.

³³² “Ve ta‘zīr idürken ‘adetleri böyle dīmekdir: “Lā fetā illā ‘Alī la sayf illā Zūlfikār. Yezīdın boyununden eksik olmasūn tīg ve teber” dīrlir ...” See Danon, 292; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.14r..

³³³ A.H. Morton, “The *Chūb-i Tarīq* and *Qizilbāsh* Ritual in Safavid Persia,” in *Etudes Safavides*, Jean Calmard, ed. (Paris: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1993), 226.

³³⁴ Morton, 229.

delivers twelve strikes to the disciple.³³⁵ As suggested in Chapter Two, Muḥammed and ‘Alī merged with one another, ultimately unified by a final revelation brought down by Archangel Gabriel, a messenger of God (Allah). While often a ritual to symbolize submission to the *murshid* which endured throughout the Safavid dynasty’s tenure,³³⁶ the *chūb-i ṭarīq* also suggests a form of faith curation. In these ceremonies, the prostrating disciples would ask forgiveness for their sins from the *halīfe* before receiving a number of strikes on their rears. Membré’s account refers to this plea as *i’trāf*, meaning confession. It is likely the *chub-i ṭarīq* was a part of the Gathering ritual as a whole.³³⁷

Comparing two reports thus far, we note that certain symbols change while practices remain. For one, in 1619 Constantinople, the stick used to punish the disciples and the one in Ṭahmāsp’s period are symbolically different; from having a ‘lettrist’ symbolism to representing ‘‘Alī’s sword, the Zūlfikār. In effect, by accepting the beating as absolution, they promise that if they should betray the path, the community would remove or discipline the follower together.

Absolution was a substantial part of both joining and following the Safavid mystical path. A *ṭālib* would receive his ritual beating for his past sins and thus be purified before becoming part of the community. Equally, those disciples who admitted straying from the path underwent the ritual beating to cleanse themselves – and, by extension, the community. In exchange for their purification, the offenders and initiates would pay a fine which in turn went to the *halīfe*, the frontline *ghazi* disciples, and the Perfect Guide.³³⁸ It is not known how regularly a given disciple

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Morton, 231.

³³⁷ The literature surveyed in this paper does not clarify a formula of whether these two rituals were only sub-practices within the *chūb-i ṭarīq* or could be done separately as well, as Floor suggests. See Floor, “*Khalifeh al-kholafa*,” 61-2.

³³⁸ The *buyruks* mention ghazis getting a portion of these atonements which were shared among the Kızılbaş military or greater Safavid cause. These atonements were usually paid for infractions against the practice of the Three Traditions and Seven Obligations. See Kaplan, 215-6. The 1619 interrogation report shows how these funds were

submitted to the ritual beating; that the three aforementioned persons or groups received one-third of these atonement payments each. In cases that disciples who rebelled against ‘Abbās, we know some were shown clemency by paying a fine, as well. In other words, the penitent disciples paid for the path’s unity and its efforts against the Ottomans and Uzbeks. This habit formation was present in correcting infractions committed during the ritual.

The People of Sohbet: Music as Ritual and Perfect Belief

During Ṭahmāsp’s reign, the ‘*ayn-ı cem*’ ceremony was initiated by gathering in a room in which disciples would sit in rows on either side, praising the *murshid* and his predecessors. Following this, the *halīfe* would lead an hour of *zikr* after which the attendees would recite *nefes* (sung poems) of Ismā‘īl I, known by his penname *Khaṭā’ī*, and Ṭahmāsp. A *ṭālib* who formally entered the Safavid mystical path, according to the 1619 interrogation report, would eventually be required to recite a *nefes*.³³⁹ Meaning “breath,” *nefes* were staples of piety for Kızılbaş just as they are for modern-day Alevis. We might say they are a historical constant of faith curation, despite the evolutions of various aspects which need to be addressed. At their core, however, *nefes* are sung poems, generally – though not always – accompanied by a lute (*saz*).

Throughout ceremonies, ritual gatherings, and even daily practice, *nefes* accompanied disciples. These were the words of different figures historically significant to the Kızılbaş, such as

split when saying: “Ve nezūrdan ve cera’yımdan ḥāşıl olan āķçe üç bahş idüp berīn halīfeyye ve berīn rehber virüp berīn mürşid için alīķūrlar. Üç yüz mīktār-i altūn olduķta bir müstaķķil ādem ile Şāh-ı Gümrah’a ersāl iderler...” See Danon, 293; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol.15v.

³³⁹ “ve Şāh Ismā‘īl Haṭā’yī’nın sözleri okunūrken ki ana ma’na dirler.” See Danon, 293; MS.TURC.103, fol. 15v.

Ismā‘īl I,³⁴⁰ Pīr Sultān ‘Abdāl,³⁴¹ Kul Himmet,³⁴² and Ṭahmāsp.³⁴³ Not surprisingly, *nefes* by Shah *Khaṭā’ī*, known commonly to us as Shah Ismā‘īl I, the founder of the Safavid state, are the most commonly featured *nefes* in the teachings of the Safavid network. More broadly, there are substantial references to music and the words that accompanied them in coloring the beliefs of disciples. These ranged from anti-Ottoman to messianic beliefs in the Safavid bloodline which, as the previous chapter outlined, allowed the Kızılbaş to believe that to some extent they were a part of a movement bigger than themselves and their worldly ambitions. In reciting verses of well-known poetry, such as was the case for Ismā‘īl’s dīvān, it is essential to recognize that instruction in the essential forms of pro-Safavid beliefs may have taken different forms. After calls for individuals to contribute money, there would be the ritual beating followed by songs with anti-Ottoman flavor.³⁴⁴ Joining in song, which was a common feature of confessional practices by Catholics and Protestants in Europe as well, also colored rituals with a militaristic tone which suggests – much like the revolts in the early stages of the rivalry – that the *murshid* could call his disciples to action at any time.³⁴⁵

But what if a disciple violated the Gathering in some way? As our mysterious Kızılbaş relays, should a follower of ‘Abbās not conform, there were consequences:

³⁴⁰ Ismā‘īl’s poems are found in Gölpınarlı 198, fols. 12v, 13r-v, 14r-v, 15r, 16r, 16v, 22v, 27r, 30v, 31r, 31v, 32v, 32v-33r, 33v, 34r-35r, 35r, 35v, 37r, 39r, 41v, 42r, 44r, 43v, 46v, 47r-v, 49v; Gölpınarlı 181, fols. 30v, 32v-33r, 38v-39v, 44r, 66r, 70v-73v, 74r-v, 76v-77r, 77v-78r, 79r-v, 83v, 86v, 88v, 89v-90r, 91r-92r; *Risāle-i Seyh Safi*, fols. 80r-v, 83r; Bisâtî, 97, 104-5.

³⁴¹ Pīr Sultān ‘Abdāl’s poems are found in Gölpınarlı 198, fols. 29v, 32r, 40v-41r; Gölpınarlı 181, fols. 68r, 75v, 84v-85r; *Risāle-i Seyh Safi*, fols. 81r-v; Bisâtî, 98-100.

³⁴² Kul Himmet’s poems are found in Gölpınarlı 198, fols. 24v-25r, 36r-v, 37v, 39v-40r, 43r; Gölpınarlı 181, fols. 43v, 81r-82r.

³⁴³ Ṭahmāsp’s poems are found in Gölpınarlı 198, fols. 48r; Gölpınarlı 181, fols. 58r-v. It is worth noting that the 1612 *buyruk* includes poems by Pīr Nesīmī Šāh Sultān and Kayğusuz ‘Abdāl, whereas the copies from 1601 and 1608 do not. See *Risāle-i Seyh Safi*, fols. 82r-83r; Bisâtî, 101-3.

³⁴⁴ Morton offers a succinct description of the ceremony, “*chūb-i ʿarīq*,” 228-9.

³⁴⁵ For references to Catholic and Protestant music – and hymns in particular – see R. Po-chia Hsia, *Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550-1750*, (London: Routledge, 1992 c1989), 89-121.

During the chanting of the poems of Shah Ismā‘īl, which is called the “meaning [mana],” if someone nods off or talks to another, the appointed guard of the majlis, who is called the watchman [gözcü], informs the people of the gathering about that man. They punish him. This is the situation even if the watchman commits the same offense. The one who does that deserves punishment and reprimand. This person bends down, performs prostration [secde], and confesses his crime.³⁴⁶

After a ritual beating, they sat straight again and prayed for their chief representatives as well as for the destruction of those who persecuted their kind.³⁴⁷ Collectively, then, there were a set of habit-forming rituals such as sung poetry and ritual enactments of historical drama. But, for those in the Ottoman realm, there was an added threat of persecution that routinized communal protection measures.

Cursing Yezîd: Ritual Methods of Mutual-Identity

One particular passage in the 1619 report suggests the Safavid shah’s disciples in Constantinople adapted to their surroundings through self-surveillance and security. These mysterious disciples tell us that if a man comes from outside the gathering, he is asked whether he is a thorn. If he responds that he is not a thorn but a rose, they say Yunus has come. At this point, the newcomer must say he is not Yunus, but a sheep. It is only at this point that the disciple is allowed to join the flock.³⁴⁸

But what if the newcomer did not answer any of these correctly? We learn from the report that if this stranger identifies themselves as a Sunni (*ehl-i sünnet ve’l-cema‘at*), they refer to him as Yezîd, and he is cursed while being removed from the group.³⁴⁹ Following the persecutions of

³⁴⁶ “ve Şâh Ismā‘īl Haṭā’yī’nın sözleri okunūrken ki ana ma‘na dirler. Birīsi uyuḡlasa yāhūd ahir ile muşāhabet eylese, nigahbān-ı meclis deyu gözcü ta’yin iderler, ol ma‘nayı dinlemeyenleri ehl-i meclise i‘lam idüb cerimesin alūrılar. Bu zille gözciden dahī şadır olursa, hāl böyledir ta’zīr ve cerīmeye müsteḥakk olur. Ve meclisde secde idüb izhār-i ‘aciz ve ḡuşūr ider.” See Danon, 293; MS.TURC.103, fol. 15v.

³⁴⁷ This is referenced on the introductory quotation of this chapter.

³⁴⁸ “Ve meclislerīne ṭaşradan bir ādem gelse kendülerden olmāmak ihtimāliyle “diken geldi” dīrler. Ol dahi kendülerden ise “diken deḡilim, gülüm” dīr. Veyāhūd “yunus geldi” dīrler. Ol dahi “yunus deḡilim, ḡoyum ḡuzusuyum” dīrse hoş kendülerden oldūḡun bīlūrılar.” See Danon, 292; MS.TURC.103, fol. 14r.

³⁴⁹ “Ve illā onlardan olmayācak olursa ol ḡice ṭayy bīsāt inbisāt iderler. Ve muṭlaḡā ahl-i sünnet ve-l cümā‘atiyye yezîd diyū sebb ve la‘an iderler. Ve meyyitleri vāḡ‘a olduḡtan namāzīn ahl-i sünnet ve-l cemā‘at kılsa, hāşā īmānsız

the 1570s and 1580s, the Kızılbaş increasingly took measures to insulate their community from Ottoman authorities as well as religious officials. What is interesting here is less that they were a closed group but rather that they identify those who are not members of their path as “Yezīd.” Identifiers like “Yezīd” are also found in the *buyruk* of this period, often deriving from Shah Ismā‘īl’s poetry.³⁵⁰ The term offers a countering stigma similar to that of Kızılbaş, as it was under the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I (r.680-683) that the famed Battle of Karbala (680) took place where Imam ‘Alī’s sons Husayn and Hasan were martyred. Their martyrdom, as Chapter Two suggested, denied ‘Alī’s descendants their rightful succession to the Prophet. Thus, historically significant tropes were deployed by the Safavids’ network to distinguish themselves from Sunnis.

There are clues that support the notion of the Safavid disciples having become a semi-closed community. Firstly, interviewing an aspiring disciple through a multi-tiered hierarchy protects other members of this community prior to the aspirant becoming a *tālīb*. In another respect, our mysterious Kızılbaş relays exchanges – likely rehearsed – which act as a sort of password to the community. If a person comes, they would ask this person if they are a thorn and later if they are Yunus. The only correct answers are that they are not a thorn but a rose and that they are not Yunus but a lamb, respectively.³⁵¹ If these answers are given, the disciple is allowed to join their flock and enjoin in the rituals detailed above.

gitti dīrlər. Ve birbir āherī şer‘i şerīfe da‘avet eylese, sen yezīd şer‘i atīn haḳīkat ūzerīne tercīh itdūn diyū merdūd iderler. Eđer ōnra gelūb ve cūrmūne mu‘terif olūb imān ve mūrūvett dīrse, ta‘zīr idūp cerīmesīn aldıktan ōnra gulbānk çekerler.” See Danon, 292; MS.TURC.103, fol. 14r.

³⁵⁰ We find numerous examples of Ismā‘īl using “Yezid” to refer to Sunnis. Some examples can be found in Şāh İsmail, *Ḥatāyī Dīvānī*, 292, 411, and 505. It should be mentioned that these and other poems should be investigated more thoroughly, as Macit’s critical edition details when and where certain uses of particular phrases and poems have been attributed to Ismā‘īl when they were in fact not written by him. Morton suggests Ismā‘īl’s poetry, as well as the annual celebration of Imam Husain’s passion were the main avenues by which this derogatory term filtered into the imagination of Shi’ites in Ṭahmāsp-era Safavid Iran. See *Mission*, 43 and 99.

³⁵¹ Danon, 287-8.

The 1619 report suggests that if a person comes to their gathering and honestly refers to himself as “Yezīd” (meaning Sunni), he is cursed and rejected.³⁵² As a brief aside, it is noteworthy that words like Yezīd are also found in the surviving *buyruks* of this period, often deriving from Shah Ismā‘īl’s poetry.³⁵³ The term offers a countering stigma similar to that of Kızılbaş, as it was under the Umayyad Caliph Yazid I (r.680-683) that the famed Battle of Karbala (680) took place during which Imam ‘Alī’s sons Hüseyin and Hasan were martyred. Thus, historically significant tropes were deployed by the Safavid network to distinguish themselves from Sunnis. Furthermore, as Rıza Yıldırım recently remarked, earlier versions of the *buyruks*, stemming from Ṭahmāsp’s reign, suggest that after their deaths, the Prophet Muḥammed and Imam ‘Alī became one, often revisiting the world in the form of another person, to ensure the sanctity of their teachings.³⁵⁴

“If Your Righteous Path is Beautiful”: The ‘Perfect Disciples’ of ‘Abbās’ Reign

In the *buyruk* compiled in 1601, one of the questions answered begins “haḳīkat yolun güzelse” – meaning “if your true path is beautiful.”³⁵⁵ Through the various hierarchies which were locally significant – such as the *halīfe*, *rehber*, and *delīl* – this chapter highlighted the rituals and practices through which an idealized practice of faith might have been curated. Meanwhile, in the context of interactions with Ottoman authorities, a secondary purpose of this chapter was to discuss possible nuances of piety to those disciples who escape our records. The words of *Khaṭā‘ī* and others may have colored the beliefs of disciples, which in tandem with regularly attending the Gathering ritual meant a disciple was a ‘good’ Sufi. Apart from these regular rituals, there was a naturally ordered form of correcting wayward practice of the faith – leading to different forms of

³⁵² Danon, 292; BULAC MS.TURC.103, fol. 15 v.

³⁵³ Morton suggests Ismā‘īl’s poetry, as well as the annual celebration of Imam Husain’s passion were the main means by which this derogatory term filtered into the imaginations of Shi’ites in Ṭahmāsp-era Safavid Iran. See *Mission*, 43 and 99.

³⁵⁴ Yıldırım “The Kızılbaş-Alevi Buyruk.”

³⁵⁵ See Gölpınarlı 198, fol. 92v.

absolution and purification. These basic themes can be said for ritual in the Safavid realm. As ‘Abbās shored up the faithful’s allegiance, he could rely on a system that would teach the disciples along their path. As the Kızılbaş unified under ‘Abbās’ vision of sacred kinship, they were part of a series of successful military and diplomatic victories against the Ottomans in particular. As the Safavid realm expanded – reaching Baghdad five years before ‘Abbās’ death – inspired disciples’ faith in him as the guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) who would save them from Sunni persecution. Following the words of their *halīfe* – who in many ways was an embodiment of ‘Abbās – was just as important as listening to a disciple’s companion (*muṣāhib*). Though an idealized system, the trend of Safavid success during this period demonstrates ‘Abbās was, for the most part, successful in guiding his flock along their sacred path – laid out by his family.

CONCLUSION

In what might be called a ‘zero-sum’ game, historians often present the Kızılbaş as obstacles to the ‘Shi’itization’ of the Safavid realm. In this conceptualization, the ‘ulamā’s growth in the Safavid realm led to orthodoxy taking hold and overshadowing the disciples’ influence. The present thesis offered a novel perspective on this question by reconceptualizing ‘Abbās’ complex and changing relationship with his disciples to critique scholarship’s perception of confessional evolution in the Safavid realm. The main contention of this thesis is that marginalization of the Kızılbaş as it has been conceptualized did not take place. Not because the king had ceased to associate with and believe in the Safavid mystical path but that the Kızılbaş hold on power relative to the king were reduced.

I suggest a model through which to view the Kızılbaş with fresh eyes throughout the Safavids’ tenure by exploring the tension between sacred and tribal kinship. Both forms of kinship were culturally represented in Ḥaydar’s Crown. In the absence of a charismatic Perfect Guide (*murshid-i kāmil*), Kızılbaş tribes tended to take hold and rule the state from the end of Ṭahmāsp’s reign to the beginning of ‘Abbās’ rule. Tribalism, as I propose, was a wholly temporal form of kinship that dominated this period up to ‘Abbās’ ascension. When ‘Abbās became king, he instilled both a *reform* and a *reformation* to correct the disciples’ belief in *sacred kinship* by tying his disciples to his person. Donning Ḥaydar’s Crown, in this period, was redefined as having loyalty to the guide on the one hand and, on the other, suppressing the uneasy tribal connections that undermined the unity of the Safavid realm.

The role of guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) was not limited to his mystical disciples. As Barbara Schmitz and Robert McChesney have discussed, many during this period were required to wear a crown and follow ‘Abbās’ example as a descendant of Ismā‘īl I and Tahmasp I. Chronicles, the

buyruk, and even *waqf* documents during ‘Abbās’ reign suggest that Ismā‘īl II and Muḥammed Khudābandeh became figures of fallibility.³⁵⁶ Their examples were a stain on the illustrious history of ‘Abbās’ ancestors in particular and the Safavid realm more generally. Consequently, their reigns were omitted from the sacred lineage of the Safavids’ mystical family. It made little sense to marginalize the disciples for the imperfection of previous kings. Rather, disciples who forgot their place under ‘Abbās’ Perfect Guidance were punished according to the practices of the Safavid mystical path. In doing so, ‘Abbās reinforced and strengthened bonds between himself, his family’s legacy, and the wider community of disciples. Abbās understood his spiritual position was unassailable. Far from embracing a more secularized or orthodox version of kinship, it is clear the messianism of Ismā‘īl I did not disappear from the repertoires of rulership, and was reasserted during ‘Abbās’ reign.³⁵⁷

The reform and the reformation were part of a larger imperial vision of sacred kinship. As Azfar Moin recently noted, successful monarchs had to embody the many constituencies of their realms.³⁵⁸ Such an imperial vision could only manifest through careful and personal interaction with the conflicting power groups within the realm while balancing their influence with others’. In some ways, one might say a lot of lip service was paid – but not without reassurance in real terms with temporal promotion. While the *gholām* soldiers’ numbers rose, so too did the number of *kūrçī* guards. The Kızılbaş army still stood, with mixtures of *gholām*, *kūrçī*, and Kızılbaş commanders at different times in ‘Abbās’ reign. Equally, prominent members of the Safavids’ mystical community served in seminal governmental positions of the realm, directing important

³⁵⁶ Schmitz, “On a Special Hat.”; McChesney, “Waqf and Public Policy: The Waqfs of Shāh ‘Abbās, 1011-1023/1602-1614,” *Asian and African Studies* 15 (1981): 165-90.

³⁵⁷ For an example of messianism’s continued role in Safavid poetry, see Ferenc Csirkés, “A Messiah Untamed: Notes on the Philology of Shah Ismā‘īl’s Dīvān”, *Iranian Studies* 52:3-4 (2019): 339-95.

³⁵⁸ Moin, *Millennial Sovereign*, 54.

matters of state with the Perfect Guide's interests at heart. This was the *reform*: the institutionalization of sacred kinship with both structural and personal changes by the guide-king 'Abbās. The *reform* implies a larger set of standards that, while going beyond the Ẓāhirī to include others in 'Abbās' dynastic vision such as the *gholām*, were elaborated in the daily practice of the Safavids' mystical path (*ṭarīqa*) and recorded in the *buyruk*.

This study brings more questions than answers. The main question, however, is how to reassess Safavid history holistically. There remains a substantial amount of work to be done on conceptions of 'orthodoxy' in the Safavids' multi-faceted realm. Rather than a clear conception of borders, it is more likely that – similar to Ottoman confessional evolution – there was a substantial space for 'unorthodox' groups that deserve further scrutiny. We might ask: how can scholars reimagine the place for the Ẓāhirī among 'orthodox' circles of the Safavid realm? One avenue would be to compare the *halīfes* with the 'ulamā'. As both were ideally *sayyids*, it might prove insightful to study their interactions more closely. If, as Chapter Three suggests, *sayyidhood* bound the *halīfes* to Abbas, they were also related to the 'ulamā' in sacred bondage. While going beyond the scope of this study, such questions are nonetheless seminal to reconceptualizing monolithic conceptions of statecraft and piety.

The idea of sacred kinship elaborated in this thesis focused on one group, the Ẓāhirī, and their social memory. Wiping the slate clean of the fallible guides' reigns came as a surprise to 'bad' Sufis who had grown accustomed to worldly ambition and real power in the realm – to the extent that it superseded the sacred authority of the Perfect Guide. The worldly ambitions of the disciples were not completely stamped out. Rather, tribal kinship was inseparable from the fabric of the disciples' community at-large. Reasons for tribalism's resurgence in later periods of the Safavid history are worth further exploration – especially in understanding the rise of the Āfṣār

and ẖācār (Pers.Qājār) tribes in the eighteenth century, replacing their Safavid guide-kings. In offering a model from which to view the landscape of the Safavids' mystical community it is equally clear this thesis is only an initial foray, with many more borders to cross.

By looking at the Safavids' network holistically a narrative of *unity* rather than marginalization emerges. Given the Safavids' overall success within in the realm and externally against the Ottomans and Uzbeks, the reforms and reformation of sacred kinship were equally successful. But to understand the full process of sacred kinship better, each chapter elaborated further on different layers of relationships that comprised sacred kinship in the Safavids' mystical community. Without the ẖızılbaş, 'Abbās' vision would have been both spiritually and realistically impossible. In short, this thesis aimed to demonstrate a negotiation of boundaries that each side of the guide-king/disciple relationship had to contend with. Abbas' embodiment as the Perfect Guide was only as successful as the weakest belief among his flock. Said differently, only those who believed in his status could lead to Abbas' spiritual mission's success in the real world. This began by disciplining the body of his community within the highest levels of the Safavids' mystical path and going down throughout the strata of the Safavid realm. 'Abbās' close supervision of assignments to local governorships and spiritual deputies in his role as the guide-king (*pīr-shāh*) reflected inclusion in a diverse realm united in the final revelation's cause.

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