Three Safavid Documents in the Record Office of Denmark

Faridun Vahman

THERE ARE THREE SAFAVID DOCUMENTS IN THE Record Office of Denmark (Rigsarkiv), two belonging to Shah Safi I (r. 1038–52/1629–42), and one to Shah Sulaymán I (r. 1077–1105/1666–94). The two from Shah Safi are addressed to Duke Frederick III (1609–70) of Holsten Gottorp (now a part of Germany). Although they are identical in their contents, they are different in their style of handwriting and composition.

On 22 October 1635 the Duke of Holsten sent a large delegation consisting of 100 men to Iran, hoping to sign a trade treaty with Shah Safi. In August 1637/Rabi’ I–II 1047, after suffering great hardship, the delegation headed by Otto Brüggermann (1600–40) and Philip Cruse (1597–1676) arrived in Isfahan by way of Russia and the Caspian Sea. During five months of sojourn in Isfahan, they were received on several occasions by the Shah and accompanied him in hunting. Eventually, they left Iran with precious presents from Shah Safi to the Duke of Holsten and arrived back to Gottorp in April 1639.

The two documents of the Danish Record Office describe this visit and indicate that Shah Safi sent his ambassador, Imām Quli Beg Āqā (Ishak Āqā), to Denmark with the Danish delegation. Using the traditional diplomatic language of time, Shah Safi expressed the hope that the relations between the two Royal Houses would continue as before and that other ambassadors would be exchanged in the future. It is not clear why there are two versions of the same letter. It may be surmised that one of the letters was used as a copy of the original in case of loss (Figs. 1–2; for a translation of document no. 1, see Appendix A).

No trade treaty was concluded and Otto Brüggermann was soon executed because of his failure in this mission and because of promising military help to Iran. But the secretary of the Danish delegation, Adam Olearius (1603–71), recorded the events of the journey in detail, leaving for posterity his unique description of this undertaking. His book Offt begehrte Beschreibung der neuen orientalischen Reise, has since been translated into many languages.1

On 6 December 1691/15 Rabi’ I 1103 an official delegation from Iran arrived to the court of the Danish king Christian V (1670–99). The objective of the mission was to demand compensation for the confiscated merchandise belonging to Iranian merchants which was seized by a Danish ship in the Indian Ocean. Four years earlier in 1687, the Danish ship “Antonietta” had captured the vessel “Walendis” and had taken it to the Danish colony of Trankebar on the southeastern coast of India. At that time the Danish East Asiatic Company (Østasiatisk kompagni) was active in India and used Trankebar as a base for its activities. These activities often involved military clashes between well-armed Danish ships and the Bengali navy. It was in such clashes that the “Walendis” had been captured and its merchandise, partly belonging to Indians and partly to Armenian Indians of Jūfā, had been seized.

The Iranian ambassador and his company were received by the king on 11 December 1691/20 Rabi’ I 1103, at which time they presented their credentials and a letter from Shah Sulaymān addressed to the former king Christian IV, who had died forty-three years earlier in 1648. Despite this diplomatic blunder, and despite the fact that the Iranians refused to take off their turbans, even at the audience ceremony, the meeting ended pleasantly. The king promised to see to the matter and to inform the ambassador of the result.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the investigations was not favorable for the Iranians. In a letter dated 30 December 1691 and addressed to the Danish king, the East Asiatic Company argued that since the Bengalis had been in war with the Danish merchant vessels and had inflicted great losses against them, it was best for the Iranians to seek compensation from the Bengali court.2

Despite this outcome, the exquisitely embroidered purse in which the Iranian ambassador had carried his credentials was kept and is now at the

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Danish Museum of Decorative Art (Danske kunstindustrimuseum), while the letter of Shâh Sulaymân with the comprehensive inventory of the disputed merchandise and the names of the Armenian merchants is kept at the Record Office of Denmark.

In his letter Sulaymân ensures the ruler of his respect and informs him of the total value of the merchandise, in all 9,000 tāmāns, partly in cash and the remainder in merchandise. After listing the names of the Armenian merchants (12 in total) who had suffered the loss, he argues that the merchants are usually not involved in disputes between states, particularly when the Danish Royal House, like all other European kings had an amicable relation with the Safavid dynasty. He also reminds the king of Denmark that in a similar incident a few year back, the Danes had returned the properties of the Iranians amounting to 1000 tāmāns, and that certainly this confiscation of merchandise had been done without the king’s knowledge. At the end he also expresses the hope that in the future the Danes would not attack the Armenian merchants who profess the same Christian religion.

The list of the merchandise is a scroll of 20 cm. width and 80 cm. length. On the top, the total value of the merchandise (9,000 tāmāns) and its equivalent in Indian rupees (192,140 rupees) are given. This is followed by the detailed list of the merchandise and the names of the owners. The list containing sugar, fabric, jam, and lac provides a useful picture of the kind of goods imported from India at the time of the Safavids (Figs. 3–4; for a translation, see Appendices B and C).

APPENDIX A

FIRĀḌĪK BEG [FREDERICK], VAJĪ [KING] OF QULISTĀN [HOLSTEN], THE GLORIOUS, THE POWERFUL, THE GREAT

To Your Excellency, the ruler of glory, the greatness of dignity, the bravery of justice. Reputable for fairness and bravery, dignity and glory, with lion-like heroism, the select among the just kings of Christianity, the chief of all the glorious monarchs of the faith of Jesus, the great and elevated king [Firāḍīk Beg, Vājī of Qulistan, the glorious, the powerful, the great]: may your destiny be happy and heavenly; all friendly, best regards and glorious, affectionate admirations are [herewith] offered, due to the ultimate friendship which has continuously existed between this sublime dynasty and the exalted kings of Farang [Europe]. All [our] efforts and concerns are to help the prosperity and to safeguard the grandeur and to enhance the glory of that sublime and khorshid kalâk king [i.e., a king who is so elevated that the sun becomes his hat]. May the affairs of the two worlds be as such to satisfy you.

Now, I bring to Your good attention that the desire for friendship requires that at this moment the honorable Plusūs Kūrgūs [Philip Cruse] and Ütti Burūkhmán [Otto Brüggermann], whom you had sent to this deserved direction with kind letters, have presented themselves to [this] glorious audience, and what was required of these intelligent ambassadors in this mission they have performed in the best manner possible, which increased affection and friendship; they [also] related the oral messages confided to them, which were welcomed and strengthened the foundation of kindness and friendship. In return, our glorious Majesty is dispatching towards that [i.e., your] direction, and along with the aforementioned ambassadors, Imám Quli Bayk Qâjah, Ishak Aqâ, in order to [further] establish the foundation of friendship and unity, and delegated to him certain matters that at the time of his audience [with Your Excellency] he would present and mention them.

It is the manner of friendship to always conduct this good method of relationship, and to continuously exchange friendly-titled letters and intelligent ambassadors, which contributes to the cause of unity and friendship. [It is hoped that His Excellency would] permit the said ambassador to return soon and inform our (in-taraq) officials of whatever important affairs that you may have here without any hesitation, so that royal attention be devoted to their accomplishment.

No more verbosity. In the long run, may all affairs end in happiness.

* I am very grateful to Fâhrud Esfami for translating the documents in this article, and also to Professor Hossein Modarres for clarifying some problems in the text of the documents. Ed.
APPENDIX B

KIRISTʻ ARN [CHRISTIAN], THE FOURTH

Greetings, respects, glorification, and honors are presented at the opening of the gate of friendship and founding the construction of recognition to the great and dignified King of Zhīniyī [Jutland, a peninsula west of Denmark], Iskāniyī [Scandinavia, the Northern Kingdom], Fīniyī [Finlandia], Islāndiyī [Island], Nurvīzhiyī [Norway], and other States of Dimirgh [Denmark], Keristiʻarn the Fourth. All of [our] exalted resolutions and the utmost of [our] shining intentions are devoted to their highest degree to [wish] that the affairs of grandeur and dignity of that occupant of the throne of kingdom and glory are in order and the matters of [his] glory and fortune are stable.

Now, [herewith] it will be brought to Your friendly attention that at this time it was presented to this throne of kingdom that some 9,000 timāns which were partly in cash and mostly in merchandise [of] Chān [Johannes], Yaʻqūbshān [Jacob], Grītār [Gregor] son of Mārkūs [Marcus], Āvid, Khānjī, Zakaryā, Ārābīd, Āghā Pīrī, Ūvānās [Ovanes], Grītār [Gregor] son of Khāchidūz, Sarkiz [Sarkis], and Sīnān [Simon], some their own belongings and some belonging to the Armenians of the district of Jūfū in the capital of Isfahān, who were their clients, were put in a vessel which had the mark of the Farangān [European] Valindis [Waldemar], and were navigating the sea in way of trade. Around the Kālī Qalʻah on the border of Sīlān [Ceylon], some of Your Excellency’s subjects confronted them and captured them, along with the belongings of some Indians, because a dispute between them [i.e., your subjects] and the Indian Ruler, and confiscated and held the property in the Qalʻah of Tirankībār [Trankebar], which belongs to Your Excellency.

Since the merchants are not involved in disputes between kings and states, and that this glorious dynasty [i.e., the Safavids] has never had a dispute with the occupants of the throne of that [i.e., your] side, and that all justice-loving kings of Europe has endless friendship with this just, benevolent dynasty, and as a result, two or three years ago, when 1,000 timāns of properties belonging to the same Christians which were fallen into the hands of Your Excellency’s subjects in the same manner, were returned to them, therefore, the current confiscation of the aforementioned merchandise must have been without Your Excellency’s knowledge.

It is worthy of [your] rule of justice that Your Excellency’s subjects be ordered to return the said cash and merchandise to the said Christians, and that they no longer violate the rights of these individuals, with whom Your Excellency shares a common religious faith. This way [Your Excellency] continues to adhere to the policies of friendship and cordiality, and always add clarity and purity to the pleasant spring of mutual friendship and sincerity by informing [us] of your desires, wants, and wishes.
APPENDIX C
KIRISTI’ ARN [CHRISTIAN], THE FOURTH

As mentioned in His Majesty’s auspicious letter, what the Armenians of [the district of] Jufa in the capital of Isfahan had put from among their own and their clients’ merchandise in a vessel which had the mark of Valindis [Waldens], and which was captured by the subjects of the great and dignified King of Zhayiyah, Iskaniyah, Finiyah, Islandiyah, Naurzhiyah and other states of Dimrigh, Kiristi’arn, The Fourth [is the following]: The total cash and merchandise amounts to 192,140 rupees, in the currency of India, and 9,000 tumans, in the Iranian currency:

[Total] Cash: 1,500 rupees (in the chest)
Sugar: 625 qj’ahs (piece)
Jam: 112 dabbahs (jars)
Lac: 25 boxes bastahs (package)
Chest full of clothes and merchandise
(in addition to the cash rupees mentioned before): 14 ‘adl (bolt)
Miscellaneous items: 16 bâqchahs (packs)

Úhân son of Biqûs had brought to the aforementioned ship 66,000 rupees (which equals 3,150 tumans) of the assets of his client Ùvânis:

Cash: 773 rupees (in the chest)
Merchandise: Fabric: 203 bastahs
Sugar: 6 qj’ahs
Jam: 50 dabbahs
Miscellaneous items: 4 bâqchahs
Chest full of clothes and merchandise
(in addition to the cash rupees mentioned before): 1 ‘adl

Grigûr son of Márikûs had brought to the aforementioned ship 11,000 rupees (which equals 525 tumans) of the assets of his client Kasbir [Casper]:

MERCHANDISE:

Khâjîk son of Ùvânis had brought to the aforementioned ship 8,650 rupees (which equals 413 tumans) of the assets of his client Vîsil son of Mânsâs:

[Merchandise]: Fabric: 30 bastahs
Jam: 2 dabbahs
Miscellaneous items: 1 bâqchah

Árabîd son of Ya’qûb had brought to the aforementioned ship 9,980 rupees (which equals 476 tumans) of the assets of his clients Fûkâr son of Bîdrûs and Makirdî [?]:

[Merchandise]: Fabric: 47 bastahs
Jam: 8 dabbahs
Miscellaneous items: 2 bâqchahs

Ùvânis son of Mûsis had brought to the aforementioned ship 7,330 rupees (which equals 350 tumans) of his own assets:

[Merchandise]: Fabric: 27 bastahs

Sîqûnûs had brought to the aforementioned ship 321,500 rupees (which equals 1,356 tumans) of his own assets as well as those entrusted to him by some group [of individuals]:

Cash: 527 rupees (in the chest)
Merchandise: Fabric: 5 bastahs
Sugar: 275 qj’ahs
Miscellaneous items: 1 bâqchah
Chest full of clothes and merchandise
([this is] other than the [chest of] rupees mentioned before): 13 ‘adl

Ya’qûbhân son of Zadûr had brought to the aforementioned ship 39,320 rupees (which equals 1,786 tumans) of the assets of his client Zadûr son of Biqûs:
Cash: 200 rupees
Merchandise:
Fabric: 113 bastahs
Sugar: 4 qit'ahs
Jam: 36 dabbahs
Miscellaneous items: 5 biqchahs

Āvid son of Zādūr had brought to the aforementioned ship 2,490 rupees (which equals 119 tāläns) of the assets of his client Zakaryā:

Merchandise:
Fabric: 10 bastahs

Zakaryā son of Rāpūl (?) had brought to the aforementioned ship 7,040 rupees (which equals 336 tāläns) of the assets of his clients Uvānis Kallāh Gīsh and Sulṭān Kal:

[Merchandise]:
Fabric: 28 bastahs
Jam: 8 dabbahs
Miscellaneous items: 1 biqchah

Āghā Piri son of Uvādīk (?) had brought to the aforementioned ship 4,400 rupees (which equals 210 tāläns) of the assets of Grigūr son of Mīrākīz [i.e., Mīrkūs]:

[Merchandise]:
Fabric: 20 bastahs
Lac: 12 1/2 bastahs

Sarkiz had brought to the aforementioned ship 980 rupees (which equals 49 tāläns) of his own assets:

[Merchandise]:
Sugar: 125 qit'ahs

Grigūr son of Khāchidīr [i.e., Khāchidūz] had brought to the aforementioned ship 2,800 rupees (which equals 140 tāläns) of his own assets:

[Merchandise]:
Sugar: 213 qit'ahs
Lac: 12 1/2 bastahs
Fig. 2. Shāh Saʿīd’s letter to Duke Frederick III, King of Holsten (Version B). 1637? Record Office of Denmark (Rigsarkiv)

Fig. 3. Shāh Sulaymān’s letter to King Christian V. 1691? Record Office of Denmark (Rigsarkiv)
According to Iranian legend, cooking is an art imparted by Ahriman (the Zoroastrian spirit of evil) to a mythological king, Ažhidahāk, or Zāhikāk. At a time when people were eating only vegetables, Ahriman appears in the guise of a cook to the king, preparing the flesh of animals to give the king the strength to shed blood. Eventually, through the machination of Ahriman, two snakes grow from Zāhikāk’s shoulders. Ahriman again appears, this time in the guise of a physician, who prescribes as the only remedy to calm the snakes daily feedings of a dish prepared of the brains of two young men. In time, two cooks evolve a plan to save one of the men each day by substituting the brain of a sheep and mixing it with the brain of the other sacrificed young man. Hence, the art of cooking developed from this time, in particular to make the flesh of slaughtered animals more palatable for human consumption.¹

Despite this gruesome beginning, however, much attention has been paid to this human activity of the preparation and cooking of food; some have even elevated it to the level of an art or science. Whether or not the inauspicious legend of Ahriman and Zāhikāk has any bearing on the art of cooking, there seems to be a “curse” of sorts, accompanying it in that, unlike other arts in which the artist finds a window to immortality, as it were, through the aesthetic appeal of such arts to the higher senses of sight and sound, cooking is essentially a mundane art form, primarily serving the physical survival of human beings and appealing to the “base” senses of taste and smell. Unlike a poet or a painter, whose work may survive to immortalize him, the culinary artist’s creation, when at its best, is certain to be consumed and to vanish. In one sense, the work of a culinary artist may belong to the category of what has been called the “self-consuming” artifact,” such as dominoes arranged in intricate patterns to be set in motion, the climax to which is the ultimate collapse of the arrangement.² But even the general non-utilitarian nature of such arts excludes cooking, placing it in a lower aesthetic category. For an imaginative cook who has mastered his craft and approaches the status of a creative artist,

² See a very interesting study by Stanley Fish, 1972.
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EDITOR’S NOTE

For over fifty years, Iraj Afshar has been writing and publishing on Iran. The sheer volume of his output (more than 130 books, 500 articles, and growing) is prodigious and its impact on current and future studies on Iran is indisputable. Sometimes as a bibliographer, sometimes as an editor or a publisher, but always as a resourceful scholar, he has made tremendous contributions in such fields as Persian manuscripts and bibliographies, Timurid, Safavid, and Qajar history, as well as local histories of Iran. He has been the editor of several important periodicals, one of which, Farhang-i Iran zamin, is still active.¹

Most students of Iranian studies are indebted to his informative and illuminating work in one way or another.

The twenty-two essays gathered in this volume represent a sincere acknowledgment of the importance of Iraj Afshar’s body of work, and a mark of respect for a truly remarkable scholar of Iranian studies. As some of the contributions are actually based on, or closely related to, specific projects carried out by Iraj Afshar,² they also attest to the wide-ranging and significant effect of his work. The scope of the essays reflects as diverse a scope as Ustād’s own interests and achievements, and ranges over such general rubrics as Iranian historiography (Melville), local history (de Blois), foreign relations (Piemontese, Matthee, Vahnam, Floor, Savory), fine arts and cultural studies (Soucek, de Foucauld, Estami, Haarmann, Soudavar, Blair, Ghanoonparvar, Robinson, Witkam, Roper), as well as political, literary, and linguistic studies (Afary, Clinton, Lazard, Perry, Sprachman). Mainly because of this varied makeup, I found another form of presentation (one based on a more-or-less chronological order of the subject matters covered) to be more appropriate.

¹ Periodically, he was the editor, co-editor, or managing editor of Mihv (1331–2 Sh./1942–4), Sahbān (1332–6 Sh./1953–7), Kitābā-yi māh (1334–40 Sh./1955–61), Rāhmānā-yi-kitāb (1337–57 Sh./1958–78), Nūdḥavā-yi-khāṭ (1339–62 Sh./1960–83), Irānshināz (1349–50 Sh./1970–1), and Āyandah (1358–72 Sh./1979–94).
The transliteration system used here for Persian and Arabic words is that of the Library of Congress. Non-Roman place and proper names have in general been transliterated, with very few exceptions (e.g., Tehran for Tibrán; or Iraj Afshar for Iraj Afshār). Vernacular terms and honorific titles have also been transliterated according to the specific context in which they appear, so the reader will find vezār, wazir, and vezir appearing where the text refers to Persian, Arabic, and Turkish chief ministers, respectively. Throughout the book, an oblique stroke is used to separate the Hijrī date from its Christian equivalent. Where only a Christian date was available or known, corresponding Hijrī date(s) was/were supplied following the stroke.

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Kambiz Eslami
Princeton
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3 For a full description of those schemes, see ALA-LC romanization tables: transliteration schemes for non-Roman scripts, Washington, 1997, pp. 10–6, 171–7. One minor deviation from the LC scheme for Persian transliteration is the interchangeable usage of w and v in certain titles and poetic citations.

4 Considerations of space and balance forced me to limit the bibliography to titles published in book format and in monographic collections of articles, as well as those published in the journal Farhang-i Iran zamin.