

**Memory on the Boundaries of Empire:
Narrating Place in the Early Modern Local
Historiography of Yazd**

by

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Dedication

For Mara Bell, Rosangelica, and Vallaria

and for my grandfather,
Joseph Galoardi,
who passed away
while this project was still in its infancy

Acknowledgments

I have put off writing these acknowledgements until the very end, not because I have wished to avoid them, but, on the contrary, because I have felt such an overwhelming sense of gratitude to those people who have made this project possible, that I have not known where to begin. I started this project a few years ago with all the gusto of graduate student, still high on the thrill of passing my Preliminary Exams. After a year of work, though, I grew discouraged because I was completely confounded by the enormity of the task of telling this particular story, and I felt totally unworthy of it. I decided that I did not want to disappoint my colleagues with imperfect work or to tarnish Mufid's memory with my clumsy treatment of his eloquent lines. So, wandering in the dry riverbed of disappointment, as Mufid would say, I set aside my laptop for a time, and seriously considered entering some other line of work. Upon seeing my despondency, my wife, Mara Bell, gently showed me that this perfectionism, which had been holding me back from the task, was not at all the virtue that I was making it out to be. Perfectionism, she taught me, serves only a selfish, prideful purpose. Moreover, she reminded me that the story I had set out to write is important and that there is benefit in telling it, even if my telling isn't perfect. I listened to these words, set my pride aside, and turned toward this work. Were it not for her wisdom, I would never have finished this project.

I am also profoundly grateful to the many other people who helped me along the way. Without their assistance and good guidance, I could not have even begun this dissertation, much less have finished it. First of all, it is with reverence and affection that I say I am forever indebted to each member of my dissertation committee. In extraordinarily different ways, Kathryn Babayan, Paul Losensky, Gottfried Hagen, Michael Bonner, and Paul Johnson each offered their advice and generously shared their great knowledge with me. If this project has any merit, it is certainly due to their expertise and guidance. The many errors and shortcomings the reader will encounter in these pages are due to my own obstinacy in the face of their patient and nurturing counsel.

Even before I first came to University of Michigan, Professor Babayan believed in me, even when I sometimes gave her little good reason to do so. She has always challenged my thinking and guided my work with extraordinary patience, persistence, and warmth. I will never forget the long hours she spent with me discussing my work, and I feel unbelievably blessed to have been in Professor Babayan's circle. Her immense sensitivity for perceiving what was left unsaid in the text and the freshness and imaginativeness of her thinking never ceases to inspire me. Of all that I learned from Professor Babayan, it is these qualities of sensitivity and creativity that I aspire to emulate in my own work. In this regard, admittedly, I fear that this dissertation does not reflect how much I have actually learned from her; nevertheless, I hope my readers who know her work will at least find that the seeds of her particular style of scholarship have taken root, even if they are only just beginning to sprout. No less importantly, I would like to add that, thanks to Professor Babayan, I have finally

learned to make rice in the Persian way. This task demands even more sensitivity and intuition than reading premodern Persian texts requires. If my dissertation falls short of proving that Professor Babayan is indeed a master teacher, then I urge my readers to at least try my rice, which will settle the matter for once and for all.

To Professor Losensky I owe special thanks. As a distinguished member of Indiana University's faculty, Professor Losensky had absolutely no obligation to serve on my committee. Even so, his generosity and dedication to the project has been absolutely extraordinary. When I asked if he would consider joining my committee one chilly November evening, as we were strolling down the street in Washington D.C. during the MESA conference—bellies full of Ethiopian food— he told me in his characteristically direct way that if was going to do this, he was going to do it all the way. And he looked at me with a very meaningful look, which I took to mean that he was going to read every word, but that I had better make every word worth his reading. There is no question that he did do it “all the way” and then some. I cannot imagine how many hours Professor Losensky put in to my project. Not only did he read every word, he read my translations with all the original Persian texts beside him and critiqued them with almost inhuman precision. Professor Losensky's mastery of Persian literature in the Şafavid period is unmatched. This expertise, paired with his deep knowledge of literary theory has been invaluable to me.

From the start, Professor Hagen was modest about his contribution to this project, and he has continued to maintain the position that his counsel has been minimal. In reality, Professor Hagen has returned incredibly insightful and penetrating pieces of guidance throughout, which reflect his awesome breadth of knowledge and

also his very particular and imaginative approach to reading the literature of this period, Ottoman as well as Safavid. This dissertation has benefitted tremendously from his sharp eye, thoughtful reading, and generous comments. On a number of occasions, he saved me from my own blunders; at other times, he gently directed me toward new ways of looking at my materials that fundamentally changed my treatment of them. Although he has remained characteristically and genuinely humble, Professor Hagen has left a major imprint on this work and on my thinking in general.

Despite the fact that he was burdened with the purgatorial chores of the departmental chairmanship, Professor Bonner somehow found time to slog through the tangled thickets of this dissertation, and he did so with his hallmark enthusiasm. Indeed, he presented precise and insightful comments with the kind of energy and intensity that is familiar to any of his students who have read Arabic texts with him. Similarly, I am enormously grateful to Professor Johnson, who signed on to a rather different project than the one I actually wrote. Moreover, although his field of expertise lies outside of Islamicate history, Professor Johnson patiently worked to disentangle my argument from the knotted web of technical terminology and complicated historiography that characterizes this field and turned his keen analytical mind toward the functioning of my argument itself. As always, he offered invaluable commentary on the structure and theoretical underpinnings of the argument. Despite the fact the project has changed much since the early days, when Professor Johnson was first advising me, it was he who helped me construct the analytical tools that have been central to this dissertation. For example, it was he who suggested I bring Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope to bear upon my work. Without this and countless other of

his suggestions, this would have turned out a very different—and much weaker piece of writing.

I would like to thank the Mellon Foundation for the generous funding it provided for the Summer Dissertation fellowship and seminar, which helped me raise this project off the ground in 2008. Although the chapter I wrote during the period of that fellowship ultimately did not make it into the dissertation, it did set the stage for the chapters that followed. I would also like to thank Professor Linda Gregerson, who directed the seminar, and the other fellows, for their invaluable comments and suggestions on that chapter. I hope to publish that work as a stand-alone article soon; it will benefit greatly from their keen and insightful critiques and suggestions.

I have also benefitted from the incredible expertise of many friends and colleagues, who generously shared their thoughts with me throughout my years as a graduate student at University of Michigan. I remain in awe of their knowledge and skill and continue to be inspired by their exciting work. I am especially grateful for the ongoing exchanges of ideas I have enjoyed with Noah Gardiner, Yoni Brack, Azfar Moin, Maxim Romanov, and Mana Kia. I reserve special thanks for my friend David Hughes, with whom I worked very closely during the first years of the program. There is no question that the student of Islamicate history that I have become was partly formed during those years of friendship and collaboration. I would also like to add a word of thanks to Ed Rennolet and his Cafe Ambrosia. I composed the majority of this dissertation in his café, where I benefitted greatly from Ed's friendship and knowledge and from the companionship of the other regulars. If ink could be made from coffee, I could have penned this dissertation with his espresso.

Most of all, I would like to thank my family for their unwavering support during this long and sometimes painful process. I am ever grateful to my parents and my brother and his family for their unconditional love. I wish to offer warm thanks, too, to my mother-in-law and father-in-law who have treated me like a son and have supported me without hesitation. Mara Bell, Rosangelica, and Vallaria have lighted every step of my way with their patience, love, and encouragement. I could never have done this without them.

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Introduction

The masters of good deeds and charitable benevolences have constructed and completed high madrasahs of limitless number in the Dār al-'Ibādah-i Yazd, and they made many endowments for these . . . They have emigrated and all [their buildings] have become ruined and desolate; because of the absence of the seekers of knowledge, they sprinkle the sands of regret on their heads.¹

- Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī

Spirit of place rise from these ashes²

- William Carlos Williams

In the year 1081/1670, on his way to the Ṣafavid imperial capital in Iṣfahān, a man by the name of Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī was setting out from the city of Yazd, his hometown and a medium-sized desert city in the central Iran. Mufīd had served in the relatively high local office of Superintendent (*nāẓir*) of the pious endowments of Yazd and before that, the Comptroller (*mustawfī*).³ As a former high minister of the local

¹ Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, ed. Iraj Afshār, 3 vols. (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 2007), 3: 659. Mufīd composed this work in three volumes. The published editions of JM have been printed in three volumes, but the printed volumes don't perfectly correspond with Mufīd's divisions. I have decided to refer to Mufīd's own divisions, rather than those of the editor, which I find confusing. In the 2007 edition, the first volume of the printed edition does correspond to Mufīd's volume 1. I refer to this as volume 1. However, an abridged version of Mufīd's second volume has been appended to this volume. This appendix had been originally published in the journal *Farhang-i Iran-zamīn*; this segment of Volume 2 that is appended to JM, volume 1 is a facsimile of that original publication and retains its original page numbers. Despite the fact that it appears as an appendix to volume 1, I refer to it as volume 2, in accordance with Mufīd's original division. The 2007 edition splits Mufīd's volume three into two volumes, called "volume 3, part 1" and "volume 3, part 2," respectively. I have decided to refer only to the volume and page number, without making reference to part 1 or part 2 because the page numbering in part 2 continues from part 1.

² From "Morning" in William Carlos Williams, *The Complete Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams, 1906-1938* (Norfolk: New Directions, 1938), 271.

³ Mufīd received the title of *nāẓir* in 1079/1668-1669. That post had previously been held Allāh Qulī Bayk, who rose to the local vizier-ship of Yazd in the following year. Allāh Qulī Bayk would serve as vizier from 1078-1089/1668-1678. It was he who must have seen to it that Mufīd received the appointment of *nāẓir*; it

administration, he was travelling in comfort and distinction. Plodding northward, toward the town of Maybud, before the caravan would veer to the northwest, Mufīd paused, let some of his companions pass him by, and gazed backward. He had an eye for elegant composition, both prose and poetry, and he now trained his writer's gaze on the principality of Yazd, taking a long, hard look before turning his back on the place that had nourished him since childhood and had taught him all he knew. Though his fate still remained unclear to him at this moment, he had some inkling that this would be the very last time he would set eyes upon his home city, and so he made sure to commit it all to memory. Indeed, he never did return. Later, while in India, Mufīd would write an encyclopedic history of his hometown, the greatest and longest history of Yazd ever written. He would call it *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* (*JM*), “The Compendium of Mufīd,” or alternatively “A Useful Compendium” —playing on the meaning of his name, Mufīd, which means “useful” or “beneficial.” In it, he would translate the panorama of the city, which he was now taking in for one last time, into the eloquent language of history.

But now, gazing homeward in the dusty wind and white-hot sun, Mufīd's eyes took refreshment from the tight clusters of rich verdure that interrupted an otherwise bleak and thirsty landscape of sand and rock. These were the orchards and gardens that sipped steadily from canals hurrying icy water from the mountains toward the city, ancient miracles of engineering that had brought God's water of life to the plain and enabled the growth of a city there. He watched as the brilliant, green-blue dome of the sky appeared to descend, cloudless, toward the high cupolas of region's mosques,

appears that while Mufīd served as the *mustawfī*, he worked under Allāh Qulī Bayk's supervision. See Mufīd's praiseful biographical notice on his former patron: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 206-10.

madrasahs, cisterns, and tombs, which blossomed above the enclosure of the city. As he would be so fond of saying later, the tile that glazed those vaulted roofs matched the sky's hue so perfectly that the firmament felt deep shame and looked in vain for somewhere below to bury its face. From the place where Mufīd stood, the picture of Yazd might have seemed idyllic. But his gaze penetrated those leafy screens of greenery and saw what lay in their shade; he knew something too about the foundations that held those glorious domes aloft. With his home spread before him and the long parched road to his back, the traveler indulged his eye a tear for what it knew: The miracle of Yazd was fast becoming a waste.

What he saw were great numbers of the city's oldest buildings falling into ruin. These were the centers of the city, about which the life of Yazd and its territories had revolved for centuries. The great majority of the most important educational institutions, the madrasah complexes, had vanished, or else stood crumbling, their libraries empty of books and their courtyards deserted of students. He saw Sufi hospices vacant and left to decay, tombs overgrown and unswept. An open space marred the square where Yazd's once famous astronomical observatory and marvelous clock had once stood. He saw the homes of Yazd's most honorable men standing empty.

Mufīd had done nicely for himself in Yazd and was on his way to Iṣfahān to try his luck at something bigger, as many Yazdīs had done before. What he didn't know, but surely suspected as he rode away from home, was that his efforts at court would be in vain. In fact, soon after arriving there, he would discover that there was no room for his talents in Iṣfahān. Mufīd, the "useful one," would be made to feel useless. After a few months, he would give up on Iṣfahān, too, and, after visiting the Shī'ī shrine cities of

Mesopotamia, he would pass a year at the port city of al-Baṣrah. Then, when the winds were right, he would catch a boat headed across the Indian Ocean to India. On his way there, he would begin his nostalgic compendium of Yazd's history.

Whether he was nostalgic for the Yazd he had left or the Yazd of a bygone age is not always clear in his *Jāmi'*. Mirroring the illusory beauty of Yazd's panoramic view, Mufīd offers his readers mixed messages about the current state of his hometown's health. On the one hand, he speaks ruin and desolation, and on the other hand, he describes its great beauty and teeming prosperity. In fact, the author deliberately places that contradiction at the center of the work. It is there, in that ambiguousness, that he can express what he believes happened to his city. Was the place really on its way to ruins? Was it really becoming abandoned? What was the nature of this decline that Mufīd observed? These are questions that guide this study.

Unquestionably, neither drought nor disease caused the exodus of honorable men from Yazd that Mufīd observes. Indeed, the lushness of the region's orchards, visible from Mufīd's vantage point outside the city indicated the plentiful flow of water. And even though many important buildings did stand in ruin or disrepair, in truth, the city Mufīd left behind remained very much intact; indeed some new buildings had even gone up recently. Neither the bazaars nor the caravanserais were hurting for business; the stalls of the former remained filled with fruits and nuts, and the storerooms of the latter remained piled to the vaulting with bolts of local silk brocade, ready for transport. Certainly people were leaving, but the city was far from becoming a ghost town. The beauty and vitality of the city visible from a distance was no trick of light; the greenery and architecture was real. But Mufīd perceived underlying problems that

had already caused changes to Yazd's landscape and way of life, changes that threatened to undermine the age-old system that had brought the city into flower and had formerly allowed the elite men of Yazd to prosper. Most importantly, these shifts that Mufīd observed had already robbed Yazdīs of the opportunities and the means to participate in the construction and maintenance of the imperial realm. Without these opportunities at court, Yazdīs found their capacity to improve their hometown was limited.

As a *nāzīr* and a *mustawfī* of the principality's pious endowments,⁴ Mufīd possessed a thorough knowledge of the economic health of the region's institutions of learning and devotional life, about which the city's economy and society turned. He knew, by heart, the history of each and every madrasah, mosque, hospice, and hospital, and he had committed to memory the deeds that stipulated which fields, which mills, and which markets had been endowed to fund which institutions. He knew which shares of which canal went to fund soup kitchens and which shares went to fund the salaries of Qur'ān reciters. He knew the responsibilities of the custodians of each endowment and how their authority and stipends were to be transferred from generation to generation.

The trouble in Yazd did not lie in poor harvests or lack of rain, and despite Mufīd's constant reference to buildings standing in ruin, the city was not becoming a literal wasteland. Indeed, to a certain extent Mufīd was employing the image of the ruined building as a trope in order to reference changes occurring in Yazd that were subtle, but, from Mufīd's perspective, disastrous all the same. Mufīd would regularly

⁴ The term for "pious endowment" in Persian is *vaqf* (from Arabic, *waqf*) in the singular, *awqāf* in the plural.

remind his readers that the problems were to be found in financial malfeasance, embezzlement, negligence on the part of the supervisors (*mutavallīyān*) of the endowments or in the greed and tyranny of corrupt officials of the court. Still, Yazd's problems were not limited to local corruption. Mufīd would also demonstrate, although somewhat more quietly, that few associates of the royal family were making new endowments for the traditional centers of the city. New endowments for the old centers were small and rare. Those who did build new structures, repair old ones, or make endowments were rarely men or women from the imperial court, who had the capacity to make massive endowments for great complexes. Most new endowments for the old centers of the city were modest, local enterprises.

What's more, Yazdī talent, such as Mufīd, could not find employment in the Şafavid administration. The impression Mufīd gives is that Şafavid royal house and its elite servants had turned their back on Yazd and her most talented people. For four centuries, Yazdīs had been famous for their poetry and wit. They had been champions of epistolary composition and accountancy. The region's savants had knowledge of medicine, mathematics, and astronomy that had been in high demand at court for centuries; once such men had proved their mettle in the principalities (*mamālik*) of Yazd, they went on to serve the royal court in higher office and, occasionally, to forge marriage alliances with the royal household. From those lofty posts they returned home to invest the fruits of their success back into their city, where they repaired waterworks, built new structures, and made endowments to benefit students, worshippers, and the indigent. Gazing across Yazd's plain, Mufīd saw no sign of such people. Finding no employment in the Şafavid administration and no patronage for

their skills, many of the region's men of erudition and luster were abandoning their homeland and the imperial realm for greener pastures in other corners of the world. They left Yazd and made new homes in the wealthy and promised land of India, in the Deccan and Hindustani kingdoms. As Mufīd would complain in his work, "The masters of good deeds and charitable benevolences . . . have emigrated and all [their buildings] have become ruined and desolate . . . They sprinkle the sands of regret on their heads."⁵ Even though the city had not become totally abandoned, in Mufīd's opinion, its most talented and respected men had left.

What Mufīd saw during his last moments on the boundaries of Yazd's *mamālik* was that even though the fields and waterworks that produced revenue for the city's vital institutions remained intact and even flourishing, the endowments, the infrastructure that linked this wealth to the most important sites around the region, had been broken. While the city still stood firmly on the ground, the soil beneath it was eroding; in fact the better part of the most fertile soil had already been washed out to sea and had made its way on to the shores of Gujarat. Unless something was done, Yazd would soon collapse in earnest.

⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 659. There has been a good deal of scholarship on Iranian immigrant communities in India from Iran. See Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian travels in the age of discoveries, 1400-1800* (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), A. Dadvar, *Iranians in Mughal Politics and Society 1606 – 1658* (Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 1999), Masashi Haneda, "Emigration of Iranian Elites to India during the 16th-18th centuries," in *L'Heritage timouride : Iran, Asie centrale, Inde XVe-XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Maria Szuppe, *Cahiers d'Asie centrale*, n. 3-4 (Tachkent: L'Institut français d'Etudes sur l'Asie centrale, 1997), Stephen Frederic Dale, "A Safavid poet in the heart of darkness: the Indian poems of Ashraf Mazandarani," in *Safavid Iran and her Neighbors*, ed. Michel Mazzaoui (Salt Lake City: 2003), Jean Calmard, "The Iranian Merchants: Formation and Rise of a Pressure Group between the Sixteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," in *Asian merchants and businessmen in the Indian Ocean and the China Sea*, ed. Denys Lombard and Jean Aubin (Delhi: 2000). The prosopographical sections of Mufīd's *JM* corroborate these findings; they are filled with notices on Yazdīs who left for India.

Not all of Mufid's fellow travelers would necessarily have seen the portents of doom that Mufid read in Yazd's fortune. Even some of Yazd's elite men of the pen who shared Mufid's knowledge of the city's endowments might not have concurred with his dismal assessment. Certainly Yazd was experiencing decay and a slowing of external investment, but what Mufid presented as an armageddon, others might have simply characterized as change, and perhaps, change for the better. One thing that was undeniable in the eleventh/seventeenth century was that Yazd had entered a period of great transformation. As the oldest institutions began to weaken, the networks of powerful men, whose authority over the city had been grounded in these sites, watched as the foundations of their authority started to list and become uprooted. As I will argue throughout this dissertation, age old flows of patronage and prestige and traditional currents of devotional activity that had circled the traditional centers of the city had been disrupted and were diverted to new centers.

Of course, such comprehensive transformations in the morphology and social hierarchy of the city had occurred previously in the city's history. The old institutions had not always stood at the center of life in Yazd. Mufid, an expert on Yazd's history, knew the story of their rise quite well. The difference, which Mufid demonstrates in his historical compendium, lay in the fact that Yazd had lost its status as a key center of the empire. As the old centers of Yazd were slipping into the periphery of the city, the principality of Yazd was slipping to the margins of the empire. The previous set of upheavals, which had occurred during the Mongol period, had made the city into a center of empire, even if not the political center of empire. These transformations had empowered certain Yazdī families to greatness, and had determined the rhythm of life

in the city. In the eleventh/seventeenth century, the tectonic shifts that shook the skyline of Yazd reoriented the city's position vis-à-vis the imperial court and the other regions of the realm and reconfigured the ways in which Yazdīs could participate in the project of imperial rule.

By the time Mufīd finished his historical compendium, in 1090/1679, in the Punjabi city of Multān, he had finally found successful employment as the *khān-sāmān* (House Steward) of the Mughal prince, Sulṭān Muḥammad Akbar.⁶ But prior to that appointment, from the moment he rode away from Yazd, he was doomed to wander for nine years, bouncing between cities, unable to find employment worthy of his station. Even though he would eventually find (modest) success, if, while gazing across the panorama of his homeland that one last time, he had foreseen the disappointment that awaited him in the so-called promised lands of India, he might have turned back right then and there. But without that foreknowledge, he did go, and it was during that period of homelessness and misery, which he would regularly refer to as “the valley of disappointment (*vādī-i nākāmī*),” that he composed most of his *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*.⁷ Without a doubt, Mufīd's dystopic memory of his last view of Yazd was colored by those frustrating and humiliating experiences in India.

In the end, despite the fact that he had been living in India for nearly a decade, Mufīd dedicated this compendium of ruination to the reigning Ṣafavid emperor, Shāh Sulaymān. The present study sets out to discover why he would have made this choice.

⁶ This appointment occurred on the 6th of Shavvāl, 1089/ November 21, 1678. He was assigned the rank of 200 *zāt*. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 814-15. It should be noted that at this time, this rank was not very high in the Mughal court, but neither was it terribly low; however, nobles received assignments in increments of 1000 *zāt*. (Most of the *mansabdārs* over 500 *zāt* were Iranians. Mufīd was not one of these.) See John F. Richards, "The Mughal Empire," in *The New Cambridge History of India* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 143-5.

⁷ We know when he composed many of the various sections because throughout the text Mufīd often gave the date on which he was writing.

More broadly, though, this project is fundamentally concerned with the relationship between narrative, space, and memory in Mufīd's text. I seek to understand exactly how Mufīd assembled his commemorations of Yazd, and to what end. However, my interest extends beyond Mufīd's work. I start with this compendium of memories that Mufīd assembles about his hometown, but my chief purpose is to examine the larger local historiographic tradition of this one city on the margins of the Ṣafavid empire. I use Mufīd's work as a point of entry into a consideration of the strategies by which historians, like Mufīd and other Yazdīs, who were writing from the margins, commemorated their city's histories and key sites. More importantly, I study these works in order to understand the ways in which these authors used their commemorations of local sites as a means of articulating a local perspective and, at the same time, a sense of belonging in the world outside Yazd. In what ways did authors use the history of their city to negotiate status vis-à-vis the imperial center? In what ways did they use commemorations of local places to take part—albeit from the periphery—in the project of crafting empire?

1. Going Local

The bulk of scholarship on the Ṣafavid realm either focuses on affairs at the court or else tries to assemble a history of the realm as a whole. Recent work on the Ṣafavid era has reconfigured the narrative of the empire by concentrating on the process of Shiification of the realm and on the complex, long *durée* transformations that characterized the Ṣafavid period and facilitated a redefinition and redistribution of

power and authority in the imperial realm.⁸ This important body of work has formed a solid foundation for new kinds of scholarship dealing with the Ṣafavid Period and has paved the way for new projects that set out to explore the history of the realm through the venue of culture and society rather than politics. Even so, many of these projects either focus on affairs at the center or on sources generated at the center.⁹ Until now, the heavy focus on Iṣfahān or the empire as a whole has perhaps distorted our view of the periphery. We have been speaking a bit too readily of the changes that occurred in the periphery as “responses” to the center, but not all change was necessarily imposed upon these cities from the capital or from the royal court. As it turns out, locally produced sources were often inclined to discuss changes at home in the context of local

⁸ The most important reformulations of Ṣafavid history are: Kathryn Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs: Cultural Landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004), Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006). Notable, too, is the attention to court historiography during the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās in Sholeh Alysia Quinn, *Historical writing during the reign of Shah ‘Abbas : ideology, imitation, and legitimacy in Safavid chronicles* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2000). The best new work concerning architecture in Iṣfahān during the Ṣafavid period is: Sussan Babaie, *Isfahan and its palaces : statecraft, Shi'ism and the architecture of conviviality in early modern Iran* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008). One of the most important studies on the role of women in imperial affairs is Maria Szuppe, "La participation des femmes de la famille royale à l'exercice du pouvoir en Iran Safavide au XVIe siècle," *Studia Iranica* 24, no. 1 (1995). All of the current work on the Ṣafavids is indebted to the countless works of Jean Aubin. Perhaps the most important of which is: Jean Aubin, "Chiffres de Population Urbaine en Iran Occidental Autour de 1500," *Moyen Orient & Ocean Indien* 3 (1986), Jean Aubin, "L'avenement des Safavides reconsideré (Etudes Safavides III)," *Moyen Orient & Ocean Indien* 5 (1988), Jean Aubin, "Shah Isma'il et les notables de l'Iraq Persan (Etudes Safavides I)," *JESHO* 2 (1959). There are also some notable thematically centered studies dealing with cultural history. For example, see: Rudolph P. Matthee, *The pursuit of pleasure : drugs and stimulants in Iranian history, 1500-1900* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁹ An exception is the body scholarship produced by Japanese social and economic historians dealing with documentary sources. Some key articles include: Akio Iwatake, "The waqf of a Timurid amir- the example of Chaqmaq Shami in Yazd," in *Persian Documents: Social History of Iran and Turan in the Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Nobuaki Kondo (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003). Also: Robert McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia: Four Hundred Years in the History of a Muslim Shrine, 1480-1889* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). Mansur Sefatgol, "Majmu'ah'ha: Important and Unknown Sources of Historiography of Iran During the Last Safavids: The Case of Majmu'ah-i Mirza Mu'ina," in *Persian Documents: Social History of Iran and Turan in the Fifteenth-Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Nobuaki Kondo (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003). Fariba Zarinebaf-Shahr, "Economic Activities of Safavid Women in the Shrine City of Ardabil," *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998). Also: Nobuaki Kondo, "The Socioeconomic Background of the Khans of Yazd: an Analysis of Their Public Buildings and Waqf Endowments," in *Matériaux pour l'histoire économique du monde Iranien*, ed. Rika Gyselen and Maria Szuppe (Paris: Association Pour L'Avancement des Études Irlandaises, 1999).

events. Nonetheless, although it is not always obvious, local writers were obliged to frame their narratives about their home cities in terms of a highly contested discourse on empire, precisely because this discourse was always articulated through shared, hybridized, and adaptable symbols of Islamo-Persianate messianic kingship, which had been evolving since Ilkhanid rule. While empire was not the primary rationale around which these local historians organized their world, the discourse on imperial, sacred kingship offered them the most effective means of articulating a local sensibility in their histories and, simultaneously, of negotiating the place of their home city relative to other centers around the Islamo-Persianate world—shrines, centers of learning, and economic hubs.

This project aims to contribute to an emerging new picture of the Şafavid period by exploring a view of the realm and of the world outside of it from the periphery of empire. In this way, I aim to complement the picture of Persianate societies under Şafavī rule by making the construction of a local sensibility the object of study. Using Yazd as case study, I aim to show how residents of these cities acted in accordance with particular, local ideals that were linked to a real sense of belonging to particular places, what some have called the local sensibility or the *genius loci*, that is, the spirit of the place.¹⁰ Exactly how people conceived of cities and the spaces of which they were comprised must thus be integral to any narration of the history of this realm and cannot be extrapolated from studies of culture at the capital city. In this sense, this project strives to tease out local epistemologies as a means toward understanding how communities living in the so-called peripheral spaces conceptualized the relationship

¹⁰ See, for example, page 108 in Mike Crang, *Cultural Geography* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

between their own spaces and those of the outside world. This task, which involves unearthing local networks of embedded knowledge, is essentially a project of cultural geography. Tracing these networks will form a major component of this study.

My aim in taking the view from the edge¹¹ is not to tweak the grand narrative of imperial history by simply adding local data mined from Yazd's locally produced sources to aggregated data culled from other sources. Instead, my objective is to isolate distinct local sensibilities in the historiographical tradition of one peripheral town and observe the ways in which those traditions of narration engage with those composed at the center under the direction of the court and, where possible, in other peripheral cities. Yazdī historians always placed the affairs of the empire in the background of even the most local affairs. By focusing on the production of narrative, this project uncovers the evolving literary strategies by which authors attempted to position their hometown vis-à-vis the imperial center. At the crux of this project is the fact that local historians effected this “centering” of their home city in the larger realm by narrating the history of local places and personages. The chief goal of this project is to understand how writers accomplished this and what was at stake in doing so.

2. Why Yazd?

In 1905, Napier Malcolm, the British missionary who spent five years in Yazd, published a description of the city and an account of his interaction with the inhabitants. The first chapter begins:

¹¹ I am borrowing the expression from Richard Bulliet's foundational work, *Islam: The View from the Edge*, in which Bulliet explored a similar process of centering and re-centering in the early Saljūq period. However, my methodology and approach could not be more different from Bulliet's. Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: the view from the edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).

In the very centre of central Persia there is a town called Yezd [sic], which in some ways may be uninteresting, but ought for a student of Persia to have the greatest interest, for it possesses all the regular attributes of a Persian town to an exaggerated degree.¹²

I agree with Malcolm that of the important Iranian cities, Yazd presents itself as one of the best candidates for study; however, I agree for very different reasons: not because Yazd epitomizes some notion of a standard Persian town, as Malcolm contends, but rather, precisely because it doesn't. Yazd makes an excellent case study because of its many particularities. Throughout the first decades of the Šafavids' rule, it was an important spiritual center for the powerful Ni'matullāhī Sufi *tarīqah*, whose leaders had married into the royal family. It also boasted numerous well-known institutions of learning. Moreover, it was long an important economic center, evidenced by its many caravansaries, and famous for its textile production, mostly in silk brocades, which were famously traded across the Persianate world and beyond. Further, Yazd housed the largest Zoroastrian community on the plateau and had continuously been a center of Zoroastrian spirituality since Islamic times. Consequently, it boasted a number of important Zoroastrian shrines in the mountains and suburban towns that surrounded the city itself. Yazd, though located in a rugged desert, was also famous for its fruits and gardens. The fecundity of these was made possible only by the ingeniously designed system of *qanāts* (subterranean canals) and water works that crisscrossed the city and environs. These were, and still are, a great source of pride for Yazdīs. In spite of all this, Yazd was only briefly the seat of an imperial capital— under the Muẓaffarids (713-795/1314-1393)— though it remained strategically important and, beginning with

¹² Napier Malcolm, *Five Years in a Persian Town* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, W., 1905), 1. In the Preface, the author claims that his work is not a true travelogue, since the author visited only one town and since he does not provide any account of his travel from Great Britain to Yazd. (p. i.)

the Saljūqs, was often given to powerful families to administer. Yazd was its own city, self-contained, isolated by mountains and desert, yet it always maintained important links with the imperial center and other key places around the Persianate world and beyond. Over the centuries Yazdīs had built a strong sense of local pride in their city and consequently developed their own tradition of local historiography. It is that historiography that constitutes our main site of investigation. Yazd is not only a unique place, but the corpus of works on the local history and topography of Yazd constitute a unique tradition that provides a valuable perspective on the realm that is available nowhere else. Not only is the story that Yazdīs tell about their city remarkable, but also the particular forms in which Yazd’s historians present that story are remarkable. These local forms of narrative emplotment made Yazd’s history speak beyond the frontiers of the city. Moreover, despite the uniqueness of Yazd’s historiography, it is clear that Yazd’s historians were consciously engaging with other historiographical traditions. When juxtaposed to these other traditions, the Yazdī works tell us much about local sensibilities and about what local historians understood to be the function of history. Furthermore, by comparing Mufīd’s eleventh-/seventeenth-century account with those of his predecessors, we have the opportunity to observe the transformation of this local perspective and the corresponding literary strategies of engagement with the imperial center.

3. The Yazdī Corpus and its Historiographic Context

The work of history that Mufīd began in Baṣrah in 1082/1671 comprises more than a simple chronicle of the history of his home city. His *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī* is an

exhaustive mix of history, prosopography, geography, local mythology, autobiography and travelogue. The first volume presents the history of Yazd from Alexander the Great until Tīmūr's successors; the second covers the Ṣafavid dispensation. The third, and largest volume, presents a prosopographical and topographical perspective on the city's history. In that volume the author resifts all of the history he has just provided in the first two volumes and repackages the city's history, pivoting the stories around descriptions of its local districts, architectural monuments, waterways, and distinguished personages from all classes of the notable population. The volume is divided into five articles (*maqālāt*) and a conclusion (*khātimāt*). The first three articles contain biographical notices of the different classes of men.¹³ The fourth article offers descriptions of the different localities and monuments throughout the city.¹⁴ In the fifth *maqālah*, Mufīd provides a third picture of the city, this time presented through an account of his own life and travel from Yazd to India.¹⁵ The first portion of the conclusion contains a collection of anecdotes and wonders of the world, including some

¹³ The first of these articles is further divided into five "sessions" (*majālis*). These sessions concern: 1. sayyids (*sādāt-i 'azām*); 2. governors (*ḥukkām*) and viziers (*vazā'ir*); 3. magistrate/mayors (*kalāntarān*); 4. accountants (*mustawfiyān*), and the masters of the pen (*arbāb-i qalam*); 5. the military officers, both the *mīr-bāshiyān* and *yūz-bāshiyān*. The second article presents biographical notices of various classes of "men of the pen", divided into 10 "sections" (*faṣl*). These are: 1. 'ulamā', and sages (*fuṣalā'*); 2. judges (*quṣāt*); 3. superintendents of police who enforce rules of commerce in the bazaar (*muḥtasibān*) 4. preachers (*vā'izān*); 5. sermon givers (*khutabā'*); 6. astrologers (*munajjimān*); 7. calligraphers (*khattātān*); 8. physicians (*aṭibbā'* and *ḥukumā'*); 9. poets (*shu'arā'*); 10. notables (*ashrāf* and *a'yār*). Many of these are subdivided further. The third article pertains to the deeds of the *imāmzādigān* and the *mushā'ikh*.

¹⁴ The fourth article is divided into three "discourses" (*guftār*): 1. mosques (*masājid*); 2. Islamic colleges (*madāris*), tombs (*buqā'āt*), Sufi lodges (*khavāniq*), hospices (*rabāṭāt*), and cistern-houses (*maṣāni'*); 3. villages and farms (*qarī va mazāri'*).

¹⁵ In one manuscript this section appears as a self-contained codex, without the remaining chapters of *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, under the title, "Risālah." This manuscript is essentially the same work with a few additional anecdotes. See: Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, "Risālah-i Mufīd," in *Bodleian Library* (Oxford). The stand-alone "Risālah" and version contained in *JM* are treated extensively (and largely translated) in Muzaffar and Subrahmanyam Alam, Sanjay, "When Hell is Other People: A Safavid View of Seventeenth-Century Mughal India," in *History and Historiography of Post-Mongol Central Asia: Studies in Honor of John E. Woods*, ed. Judith Pfeiffer and Sholeh A. Quinn in collaboration with Ernest Tucker (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2006). The authors also included that article in their book: Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*.

the author has observed with his own eyes. Largely, however, this section includes information about other cities, which he copied from other works. He frames these miscellaneous anecdotes with a discussion of world geography. The second part of the conclusion contains standard concluding formulas, which bring the work to a close.

In his attempt to assemble an encyclopedic work on his hometown, Mufīd's compendium pulls together the disparate forms and styles that previous authors had employed for their own works of local history. While indeed previous writers had sometimes combined chronology with prosopography or hagiography, I can think of none who combined those three genres with geography and autobiographical travelogue to boot. Clearly, Mufīd wished to provide as full a picture of his hometown as was possible.

Of course, Mufīd did not compose his history of Yazd and its hinterland *ex nihilo*. While *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* does feature several innovations in form, Mufīd was essentially contributing to a long list of works in Arabic and Persian concerned with the affairs of individual cities or regions that dated back to the earliest years of the Islamic dispensation.¹⁶ There is no formal genre called "local history" in premodern Persian or Arabic historiography, and there was really no operative term in either language to

¹⁶ A large number works from each of these categories will enter into the discussion in the course of this dissertation. Rather than list their names here, I will reference them as they come. Most of them will appear in Chapter 2. There are a number of excellent articles written to address the broad range of works written on local history. For example, see each of the articles in the volume of *Iranian Studies* devoted to local history writing in the Persianate world. Charles and Paul Melville, Jürgen, ed. *Persian Local Histories*, vol. 33, *Iranian Studies* (Routledge, Taylor & Francis, Ltd., 2000). Rosenthal's still authoritative *History of Muslim Historiography* contains an exhaustive section on local history that places the histories of Iranian cities in context with those of other territories: Franz Rosenthal, *A history of Muslim historiography*, 2d rev. ed. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1952), 130-49. See also Ann K. Lambton, "Persian local histories," in *Yâdnâma in memoria di Alessandro Bausani*, ed. B.S. Amoretti and Lucia Rostagno (Rome: 1991). Finally, there is Meisami's survey on Persian Historiography: Julie Scott Meisami, *Persian historiography to the end of the Twelfth century*, *Islamic surveys* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), 9-10. On those pages, she includes a brief section on local history writing in the introduction, but then considers a number of such works in detail in the course of the book.

denote such a thing. Modern terms for local history, *tārīkh-i maḥallī* or *tārīkh-i shahrī*, i.e., local history or urban history, simply did not exist. Moreover, works that dealt with individual cities or regions were composed in a great variety of forms. Similarly, the audiences and purposes for these works were equally multifarious.

Indeed, rather than using this invented term, “local history,” we can just as easily classify these works dealing with individual regions into a host of other categories, derived from emic notions of genre. A great many of these so-called local histories can be categorized as biographical dictionaries. Many of the earliest works constitute *rijāl* works of known ḥadīth transmitters in a particular town. Others catalogue the lives of important personages within a particular profession or some other social sector. Some works are hagiographies of a particular holy person who was active in a given locality. Another genre of locally oriented works consists of tours of local shrines. These are essentially guidebooks for people who wish to make *ziyārat* (ritual visitation). These are usually referred to as “shrine-books”; we might call them sacred geographies. Related to these works, we find a number of travelogues, often in verse, that contain the accounts of a single person’s pilgrimage to a holy shrine, especially the holy shrine-center of the Ḥijāz at Mecca and Medina. Of course there are also plenty of works that present chronological narrative histories, generally known under the rubric of *tārīkh*. Here we find many chronologies that treat the histories of particular cities from their origins until author’s own era. We also find works devoted to the history of a single local dynasty. Lastly we find a fair number of hybrids that combine one or two of these genres. In any case, despite these great variations in genre, our manuscript collections are filled with works devoted to individual cities or

regions. Even though we cannot legitimately speak of a local history genre, we can productively use the term “local history” as shorthand for works that share a common orientation toward the affairs of a single locality.

In any case, Mufīd was undoubtedly familiar with a great many of these works on the cities of Iṣfahān, Shīrāz, Tabrīz, Hirāt, Bukhārā, Bayhaq, Qumm, Sīstān, and others. Not only does he imitate and reinvent these works, in places he even references them by name. What is extraordinary is that Mufīd’s compendium contains elements of essentially every single variety local historiography. But Mufīd turned those elements of genre to his own purpose.

When he set out to compose his *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī*, Mufīd also benefitted from model works that were closer to home. When he began his project, there were two works on Yazd that had already been written, and he knew these intimately. In fact we can also count a third and much older work among the list of sources for Yazd’s local history, *Jāmi‘ al-Khayrāt* (JK), “The Compendium of Charitable Works.”¹⁷ I exclude it from a list of Mufīd’s models, not because he didn’t use it—in fact he knew it by heart and used it extensively—but because it is not a narrative work, but rather an extremely long *vaqf-nāmah* or deed of pious endowments, which lists the countless properties that two local sayyids of titanic importance in the city had endowed in mortmain for the benefit of their massive madrasah complexes and other institutions in the Yazd area. These were Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 732/1331-2) and his son Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 733/1332-3). In fact, Mufīd knew countless other local *vaqf-nāmahs* intimately as well. Leaving the *vaqf-nāmahs* aside, the first work of narrative history composed about Yazd

¹⁷ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *Jāmi‘ al-Khayrāt*, ed. Muḥammad Taqī Dānish-pazhūh and Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Farhang-i Īrān Zamīn, 1341/1962).

is Sayyid Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Ja‘farī’s *Tārīkh-i Yazd*, “The History of Yazd” (TY),¹⁸ which was completed sometime in the mid-ninth/fifteenth century, during the tumultuous period following the death of the Tīmūrid sovereign, Shāh Rūkh (d. 850/1447). Ja‘farī dedicated TY to the Timurid Vizier, Z̧iyā’ al-Dīn Mas‘ūd.¹⁹ Shortly afterward, another Yazdī by the name of Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ‘Alī Kātib, declaring Ja‘farī’s book unsatisfactory,²⁰ corrected and expanded that work in a book called *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd*, “The New History of Yazd” (TJY).²¹ Aḥmad Kātib was writing shortly after the rise of the Qarā Qūyūnlūs had come to power, and he speaks with the highest praise of Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū (r. 843-872/1439-1467), the reigning sovereign of that dynasty.

Both of these eight-/fifteenth-century authors arranged their works chronologically, for the most part. At the same time, both also supplemented the chronological narrative with a great deal of information about the monumental buildings and complexes around the city, in particular, the *masājīd* (mosques), *madāris* (schools for religious sciences), and *mazārāt* (tombs). Rather than offering brick by brick descriptions of the buildings themselves, these authors focused on the biographies of the people who built and endowed these sites. In the case of tomb complexes (*mazārs*), the authors provide the biographies of the people who were buried there. In the end, although both writers provide a fair bit of political history about the region, their main purpose was to celebrate the benefactors of the city who had brought the city to

¹⁸ Ja‘far ibn Muḥammad Ja‘farī, *Tārīkh-i Yazd* (Tehran: B.T.N.K., 1960).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 6. I should also add that Ja‘farī produced a separate prosopographical work, called *Tārīkh-i Kabīr* or *Tārīkh-i Ja‘farī*, which dealt with the elites of his day. The biographical notices were not limited to residents of Yazd. This work only exists in a single manuscript in Saint Petersburg and was not available to me at the time of writing. See discussion in editorial notes in Ja‘farī, TY, 163.

²⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd* (Tehran: Intisharat-i Iran Zamin, 1978), 6.

²¹ *Ibid.*

prosperity and peace and had promoted the piety of its inhabitants.²² Both of these works appeared at the height of the city's glory, while Yazd was expanding and her notable families enjoyed the attention and patronage of high-ranking figures at the imperial court. It is worth noting that there is a third narrative history composed by a Yazdī author in mid-fifteenth century. This is Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan Ibn Shihāb Munajjim's *Jāmi' al-Tavārīkh-i Ḥasanī*.²³ Indeed, the work is valuable for historians of the period; however, the work does not comprise a history of Yazd, per se, or of any one city, but rather the political history of the southern regions of the Iranian plateau under Tīmūrid rule. In fact, the author devotes most of his attention to Kirmān, where he was stationed until Shāh Rūkh's death.²⁴ Mufīd used this work, too, but was certainly not responding to it in the same way that he was responding to the works written specifically on Yazd.

Mufīd compiled *JM* in direct response to the works of Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib. As I will establish, he considered his project to be not only a continuation of his predecessors' projects, but as an expansion and an improvement of their work. Indeed, the first chapter of this dissertation will demonstrate that the author of *JM* found the earlier works to be lacking in good style, and he was determined to take the language in which history was written to the pinnacle of good Persian prose. The issue of style was not a minor one in Mufīd's day; changes in style were considered to be changes in

²² An excellent and important article on the eight-/fifteenth-century histories of Yazd is Isabel Miller, "Local History in Ninth/Fifteenth Century Yazd: the Tarikh-i Jadid-i Yazd," *Iran: Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* 27 (1989). Miller also wrote her dissertation on a closely related topic: Isabel Ann Meliha Miller, "The social and economic history of Yazd c.A.H. 736/A.D. 1335 to c.A.H. 900/A.D. 1500" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of London, 1990).

²³ Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan Ibn Shihāb Yazdī, *Jāmi' al-tavārīkh-i Ḥasanī*, ed. Ḥusayn Mudarrisī Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Īraj Afshār (Karāchī: Mu'assasah-'i Taḥqīqāt-i 'Ulūm-i Āsiyā-yi Miyānah va Gharbī-i Dānishgāh-i Karāchī, 1987).

²⁴ See discussion of this work in Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 53.

substance and meaning. Indeed, the question of the function of style and its capacity to have an effect on the content of the text and the world outside of it will be an important one for our project. For now, however, it suffices to say that Mufīd ornamented the prose with far more rhetorical figuration than the previous Yazdī historians had done and added many more interjections of poetry. In places Mufīd was obviously working with copies of *TJ* and *TJY* in front of him; he reproduces certain passages almost word for word, adding only a few new turns of phrase where he finds his predecessor's prose too spare. Other sections differ substantially in both form and content.

Moreover, Mufīd expanded the scope of the material covered in his work. The earlier two works had been topographically centered chronologies of the city's history and had focused on the deeds and building projects of the military elite and the local notable sayyids (descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad). Mufīd adds huge biographical sections dealing with men from all walks of life, not just sayyids or princes, but also poets, local headmen, mayors, administrators, accountants, scholars, preachers, calligraphers, astrologers, military officers, and the like. He includes hagiographies of sufis and saintly men and countless anecdotes and wondrous tales from local oral lore concerning mysterious places in the *mamālik* of Yazd. These were places that were associated with lesser-known figures from the city's history, which are not available in any other source. Lastly, of course, he also adds his autobiographical narrative to the mix.

Even though Mufīd's project constitutes much more than a simple continuation of his predecessors' works, the one element of those earlier projects that he did

continue was the centrality of spaces and places around the city. Like his predecessors, but even more so, Mufīd uses the physical spaces of the city as the primary vehicle for presenting the historical narrative. This common feature of all three works provides us with an opportunity to compare all three authors' presentations on the same set of sites. Yazd's local historiographic tradition is dialogic in nature; as I have already explained, each of the successive Yazdī historians explicitly responds to his predecessor's accounts of these sites and their history. For this reason, one of my main tactics in this study is to capitalize on these instances of dialogue in order to unearth strategic changes in the form and content of the authors' commemorations of key sites around the city. In other words, I employ an intertextual methodology throughout. Moreover, because these commemorations almost always invoked the links between local affairs and those of the imperial court, this method has the advantage of helping to expose the polemical subtext that is largely implicit in each of these works. These polemics ultimately concern the health of the city's relationship with the imperial center. Moreover, these dialogues give us a chance to track changes in the nature and quality of that relationship. Such a tactic is necessary because each of the authors—especially Mufīd—refrains from making any explicitly critical statements about the court's involvement in local affairs. In fact, in the preface to *JM*, Mufīd states openly that subtlety and innuendo are the hallmarks of good Persian prose and that he will express his purpose under “the clothes of figuration and the cloak of metaphor.”²⁵ Again, we will discuss this issue of style and metaphorical implication at length in the first two chapters of this dissertation. For now, we must simply point out that it is often

²⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 5.

by studying this intertextuality that we are able to tease out the meanings that the authors wish to convey. In other words, because the anecdotes that the authors narrate often serve merely as a vehicle for some hidden meaning, we can sometimes best comprehend that meaning by reading the implicit commentary that is located in the dialogue between texts.

4. An Ecology of Benefit

All three Yazdī authors tell Yazd's story through its key places, but the earlier two authors generally limit their narratives to those that surround the places constructed and patronized by the highest of the elite, i.e., princes, sayyids, and saintly figures. These places often take center stage in Mufīd's work, too, but he opens his narrative to a much wider array of spaces and tells a much more inclusive story about the city than do his predecessors. In addition to miracle stories about saints and tales about the munificence of kings, he fills the nearly one thousand pages of the work with the history of Yazd's governors and mayors; stories of villainous thugs and helpless shepherds; accounts of the construction of pleasure gardens, the digging of canals, and the tiling of pools. He includes odes to mountains and orchards, lore about local medicinal flora and fauna, folk tales about lovers, and strange occurrences at mountain springs. He treats every element of the city, every class of society, every occupation, every neighborhood, every major building, every outstanding feature of the landscape. He designed his *Jāmi'*, his compendium, to capture a complete and total picture of the city, in all its variety.

This total picture was designed in order demonstrates the ways in which the region's disparate parts interact with one another, sometimes harmoniously, sometimes discordantly. Mufīd uses the countless anecdotes and narratives from the city's history in order to demonstrate that periods of alternating harmony and discord result from changes in an underlying urban ecology. In this regard, Mufīd's portrayal of the city is largely in keeping with the traditional Persianate theory of the "circle of justice," commonly evident in Persian mirrors for princes and ethical manuals. The circle of justice envisions the ideal city as a garden, in which all the various peoples in the kingdom can flourish in peace as long as the king rules with wisdom and justice. However, for Mufīd, the harmony in the city depends on the regular exchange of what he refers to as "benefit" between the various actors in every corner of the city. Benefit is a key term in Mufīd's history and is a concept he most often expresses with the Persian words (from Arabic) *fā'idah/favā'id* or frequently *fayz/fuyūz*. In fact, Mufīd's name, which means useful or beneficial, derives from same Arabic root as *fā'idah*, F-Y-D.

Benefit is an integral concept in much of Persianate writing, but Mufīd makes it the cornerstone his depiction of Yazd's ecology and its history. For this reason, it is worth taking a few moments to elaborate on it here. In short, Mufīd takes benefit to mean any deed, or more accurately, the traces or effects of any deed (*āṣār*), that contributed to the flourishing of the region of Yazd and its communities of Muslims. In *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, benefits comprise a balanced and interconnected hierarchy of meritorious deeds and artifacts, each of which depends on other, similar deeds. Mufīd paints a picture of a sophisticated exchange of benefits, in which each member of the community produces works commensurate with his or her place in society. These

artifacts pass up the social hierarchy: The canal-digger brings water to the field, so that the farmer can produce fruit. The landowner who owns the field sells the fruit and invests the profits into a madrasah. The student at the madrasah uses the expertise he learns there to become a judge, and so forth. The benefits also pass between human actors and non-human actors, i.e., between features of the physical landscape and built structures, between trees and animals, between human beings and otherworldly beings. While not all works benefit the city equally, all play a role in maintaining the order of the mamālik and its communities.

What is key is that Mufīd's system of exchange maps on to the complicated hierarchy that he uses to structure the book. Individual works of benefit take the form of works of infrastructure, architecture, or agriculture, such as the construction of cisterns, canals, roads, ramparts, fortresses, or religious complexes and the planting of orchards and farms, the maintenance of flocks, or the provisioning of fighting men. Other forms of benefit promote healthy commerce, such as the patronage or construction of bazaars, the digging of mines, or investment in craft workshops. Each of these sustains the basic needs of the city in its own way: food, drink, livelihood, security, and knowledge. The fruits of the fields and the products of the workshops constitute the benefits of the common folk; no matter how meager, these enable the grander, more monumental benefits of the wealthier classes. These types of tangible benefits make space for more abstract ones, including acts of good governance, justice, and piety. Accordingly, the production and circulation of knowledge—books and the teachings of knowledgeable folk at mosques, madrasahs, and sufi lodges-- ensure that acts of piety and justice and wise rule can be sustained and provide the knowhow

requisite to the maintenance of religious law, the construction of infrastructure, and the upkeep of military security. Naturally, the institutions necessary for the transmission of knowledge depend on patronage on the one hand and, on the other hand, flourishing agriculture and trade. Divisions in the community appear when this exchange of benefit breaks down. These lead to strife and disorder (*fitnah*).

Mufīd distinguishes between the ordinary material benefits, which he refers to as *manāfi‘-i mādi* and special, immaterial ones, which he calls *manāfi‘-i mā‘navī*. At the top of this cycle of benefit exchange are the benefits of the holy folk, i.e., the saints and saintly sayyids, whose miracles and charismatic blessings (*barakah*) have an unparalleled beneficial effect on the physical spaces and communities of the region. Even though their blessing, their charisma, is patently immaterial, it manifests in a particularly physical way; it remains in the soil where saints have stood, and it inhabits their corporeal remains after death. Moreover, saints’ charisma can be transferred by physical contact and has manifestly physical effects.²⁶

The social function of saints’ benefits in Mufīd’s work stands somewhere outside of the regular system of exchange and occupies a special place in Mufīd’s work. As agents of God’s grace, saints manifest benefits that transcend the ordinary currencies

²⁶ *Barakah* has been the subject of a host of studies (most of them pertaining to Morocco), starting with the landmark work: E. Westermack, *Ritual and Belief in Morocco* (New York: University Books, 1968). Other notable treatments can be found in: Vincent J. Cornell, *Realm of the saint : power and authority in Moroccan Sufism*, 1st ed. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), Abdellah Hammoudi, "The Path of Sainthood: Structure and Danger," in *Princeton Papers in Near Eastern Studies* (Princeton: The Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, 1994), Abdellah Hammoudi, *Master and Disciple: The Cultural Foundations of Moroccan Authoritarianism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). Geertz’s work is also relevant: Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968). There are countless relevant anthropological studies on charisma in general, which are too numerous to list here. However, the genealogy of thought on charisma goes back to Weber: Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963). Probably, the seeds of his theory can be found in the writings of James Frazer and Arnold van Gennep. Frazer was rather interested in contagious magic, which he called the Law of Contact. Sir James Frazer, *The Golden Bough: A study in magic and religion* (Ware, GB: Wordsworth Editions Ltd., 1996), 11. See also: Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960).

of benefit, such as royal patronage, intellectual knowledge, or alimentary sustenance. In fact, in times of chaos and disaster, when there are no benefits to be found, the saints are the only agents who can reinitiate the circulation of mundane benefits and restore the order of the realm. Generally, they accomplish this through the performance of miracles, for example, by miraculously producing food at times of famine, by magically diverting flood waters, or by turning back invading armies. However, at other times—particularly after the saint's death²⁷—the perpetuation of the saintly benefits depends on the robust circulation of other, earthly benefits, such as the flow of material funds; the charisma of the saint can only persist after death when the ordinary network of benefit exchange is in good repair.

As I will argue, Mufid's ecology of benefit is not a closed system that operates only within the boundaries of Yazd. Integral to Mufid's representation of the city is that benefits pass back and forth between other parts of the realm. As one might expect, Mufid is particularly interested in the corridor of exchange between imperial courts and the city. One of my primary tasks of this study is to observe the ways in which the author represents the linkages between the micro-ecology of Yazd and the macro-ecology of the world at large.

An essential feature of Mufid's history is that the benefits associated with each of these different classes of benefactors were always connected with particular categories of sites around the city. Saints' blessings were obtainable at tombs; prince's justice was found at the palace; scholars' teachings were available at mosques and madrasahs; the gardener's fruit could be found at the garden, and so on. But while

²⁷ Weber refers to this process as the routinization of charismatic authority. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich, 2 vols. (Berkeley 1978), 1:241–45, 2:1111–19.

these physical spaces transmit the artifacts and beneficial effects of their benefactors' deeds, they also constituted the repositories for stories about their benefactors and the events surrounding those deeds. In this way, the entire history of the city was contained in its physical spaces; as these sites continued to provide benefits, they also commemorated constitutive events of the past and the history of their illustrious predecessors who had frequented or founded these places. The monuments of Mufid's Yazd were inherently indexical.

Ultimately, it was the historian's role to keep these stories that inhabited these places invigorated and to arrange them into narratives. It was up to him to make sure that these sites did not become alienated from their past. The point was not simply to give meaning to extant monuments (although he did this, too); the stories actually perpetuated the flow of benefit to them. Without these stories, the places themselves, along with the endowments that maintain them, would simply have dried up and become empty ruins. The historian's narration of the past constitutes his benefit to the city. His work is his patrimony.

5. Chronotopes and Memory Spaces

This patrimony that Mufid transmitted, this compendium of commemorations about his home city, constitutes more than a collection of isolated stories and descriptions of spaces, strung together randomly. He composed his history of Yazd with a purpose and with a particular benefit in mind. As I have said, Mufid made clear that he intended for his *Jāmi'-i Mufidī* to reverse the ruination that he believed was eroding the solidarity of his city. What he left implicit, though, was how he imagined

that his commemoration of the city's past could possibly reverse this degradation. How was it that he understood that his book could effect change in the world outside it? In fact, Mufid embedded the answer to that question in the very structure of the work. It is only by becoming intimately acquainted with that structure that we can observe his thinking and comprehend his method. Indeed, the mechanism that allowed the work to have an effect can be found in the form through which Mufid emplotted the narrative of Yazd's past. At the heart of this emplotment, Mufid engendered a special relationship between his commemoration of Yazd's history and the uncanny ability of city's topography to speak of the past and make it present. It was by exploiting the relationships between space and memory and between time and narrative that Mufid enabled his work to act in the world. Before I elaborate further on Mufid's use of space and time, it is necessary that I first devise a language for speaking about this complex of spatial, temporal, and discursive phenomena that occupies the center of *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*. Toward this end, I enlist the help of others—literary theorist, anthropologists, philosophers, and historians— who have thought about these phenomena.

In his study of literary narratives and linguistic acts, Bakhtin introduced the term “chronotope” to describe the ways in which language represents points in space that have a decidedly temporal valence and vice versa. Chronotopes are places (and moments) in which the existence of a spatio-temporal matrix becomes immanently apparent. He argues that in literature, chronotopes are the moorings upon which the reader can perceive the logic behind a work's narrative and thus orient herself, organize the elements of the story, and ultimately come to imagine the world of the narrative, that is, to come to understand the relationship between the time of the story,

the time of writing it, and time of reading it.²⁸ Bakhtin had developed the concept in order to address a class of existential problems concerning the relationship between author, narrative, and audience; clearly his theory bears only tangential relevance to Mufid's project. Nevertheless, his concept of the chronotope, which refers to a collapse in the distinction between time and space, provides us with a useful term for describing Mufid's use of space in his narrative.

The linguistic anthropologist, Keith Basso, further developed this concept of the chronotope in his ethnographic work with Apache communities. Basso adapted the concept of the chronotope in order to understand the relationship between places, Apache toponyms, and the commemorative narratives that made those sites constitutive for particular communities.²⁹ Basso borrowed the term in order to describe the function of sites in the real world, which he observes were endowed with a chronotopic effect by particular communities. The value of Basso's work for the present project is that he describes a relationship between physical sites and historical narratives that closely resembles the relationship between place and narrative in Yazd.

More recently, Nile Green, a historian of Persianate South Asia, has worked with a related, but slightly different concept in order to describe the constitutive properties of shrine centers in the Deccan. Although he does not employ the term chronotope, Green centers his most recent work on shrines as constitutive communal sites for Iranian immigrants in South Asia on the concept of "memory space," or "*gedächtnisraum*." He borrows this term from the German sociologist of modern urban

²⁸ M.M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 84-258.

²⁹ See Keith Basso's adaptation of the chronotope in his study of Apache places and narratives. Keith H. Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

spaces, Wolfgang Kaschuba. For Green, in the premodern Deccan, memory spaces served as primary sites of community building because of their tendency to serve as conduits for the flow of people, the circulation of books, oral stories, and ideas, all of which constituted a set of collective memories.³⁰

Without question, the sites around Yazd, which Mufīd considers constitutive of the city and its community, actually functioned in Yazdī society in ways that paralleled Basso's chronotopes and Green's memory spaces; the narratives that impregnated these sites with meaning and the lore that inhabited them maintained the vitality of the place, at least as long as these stories continued to circulate. When the sites could speak, they themselves were constitutive of communal life. They constituted important actors in the emergent networks of interaction that characterized life in Yazd.

Chronotopes acted upon the observers, channeled the memory of important people and

³⁰ Green describes memory spaces as those places that were "connected by long but effective culture routes that tied the peoples and places of Muslim India into patterns of long-term interaction, imaginary as well as actual, with a *Gedächtnisraum* or 'memory space' composed of texts as much as territories." Nile Green, *Making Space: Sufis and Settlers in Early Modern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012), xi. The entire Preface and Introduction, titled "Between Texts and Territories," pages xi-xvii and 1-32 are of interest. Also, on page xi of the preface, Green makes reference to Kaschuba's explanation of the term *gedächtnisraum*. Upon close examination of the passage in Kaschuba's work, it appears that Kaschuba was getting at something quite different; Green's has adapted and, in my opinion, improved upon the author's original sense in order to suit his project. The following is a translation of Kaschuba's definition: "However, both time and space must work together closely in order to facilitate recollection and memory for us. Maurice Halbwachs has outlined the general idea of "collective memory," as a prerequisite for history, built on a time-marked "Memory-Space" (*Gedächtnisraum*), in which memory-information embodies images and the images embody places at the same time. It is the ancient principle of mnemonics by which the objects of speech were given a spatial position and thus could be better memorized. Moreover, this rhetorical principle also refers to an anthropological principle of perception and memory; the application [of this principle] engenders—especially in European history—horizons that are fixed in time and space: upon their memory-space, groups, societies, and nations are perpetually remade into a community and re-connected." Wolfgang Kaschuba, *Die Überwindung der Distanz: Zeit und Raum in der Europäischen Moderne*, Europäische Geschichte (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2004), 18-19. Green jettisons a good deal of Kaschuba's explanation, especially the notion that memory engenders "fixed horizons." For Green and for the present writer, orienting points of time and space are perpetually shifting and are never fixed.

events, and conjured the image of distant spaces.³¹ Yazd's chronotopes influenced both the ways in which the physical spaces of the city were defined through social practice and the process through which the city's history unfolded.³² The chronotopes around Yazd were not simply inert places that the inhabitants of the city acted upon; these sites actually acted and engaged with people. Indeed, this study begins with Bruno Latour's premise that social phenomena must be described in terms of networks of interaction comprised of both human and non-human actors; in any given interaction, objects, such as physical spaces, evidence full agency, equivalent to that of human beings.³³ It is precisely the inherent, chronotopic facility of the sites around the city that empowers them to act. On this point, I am putting Latour's work into dialogue with these other scholars whose works on chronotopes and memory tend to view chronotopic places as the objects of social forces, rather than agentive subjects in their own right. With this synthesis, I suggest that even though places may only become chronotopes through the agency of other actors, once animated (i.e., once networked), they continue to act, to network, on their own, without being directed by any human actor.

Having said this about the agency of buildings, my primary interest here centers on Mufid's narrative strategy and only secondarily on the actual sociology of the city.

³¹ J.Z. Smith has written one of the most insightful and influential works on the relationship between narrative, place, and time. He theorizes that place-making revolves around connecting the practices of travel (most particularly pilgrimage) to story-telling practices (myth): Jonathan Z. Smith, *To take place: Essays toward theory in ritual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

³² On the interplay between environment and human perception in the making of places, see Yi-Fu Tuan's classic theoretical work: Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.; Prentice-Hall, 1974). See also: Henri Lefebvre, *The production of space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991).

³³ The agency of non-human actors is a key component of Bruno Latour's description of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT), which he articulated in Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

In other words, I am less concerned with interactions that occurred between places and the people who frequented them than I am concerned with the effect of Mufīd's representation of such interactions. Indeed, Mufīd's work deliberately imitates the indexical and interactive processes that he observed chronotopic sites engendering in the everyday life of the city. The structure of the work is thoroughly alinear, and his narrative is ubiquitously indexical and referential. The descriptions of sites prompt the narration of a set of anecdotes, which in turn contain explicit references to other "narrative sites" in other sections of the work. As such, the author shapes the reader's experience of the text in such a way that it approximates the experience of travelling through the spaces of the city and beyond.

Moreover, the indexical mode in which Mufīd articulates his commemorations engenders a particular effect that goes beyond aesthetics. Using this tactic of mimesis, Mufīd summons the magnetic power of chronotopes, that is, the agency with which sites shape activity around them, in order to empower his narrative commemorations to actually act, too. Like the object of the commemorations themselves, i.e., the physical sites, Mufīd's narrative sites warp the space of the real world and affect the community around them. Apart from his interest in affecting local affairs in the city, Mufīd is equally concerned with affecting the relationship between Yazd and the imperial center of the Şafavid realm. For this reason, he always enables the sites around the city to reference these connections. Precisely because Mufīd organized his compendium around Yazd's most "chronogenic" places, *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* wrinkles and stretches the fabric of space in which the city sits in relation to other places. This spatial effect that Mufīd engenders in his work resembles Martin Heidegger's notion of

“de-distancing,” in which certain orientations in space extinguish the phenomenon of spatial and temporal distance.³⁴ The composite effect of all the chronotopic incidents that structure Mufid’s work is the creation of a Yazd that interacts, not as a multitude of disparate sites, but as an emergent whole, with a chronotopic character and an agency of its own. Moreover, while the city constitutes an entity that is distinct from other places (by means of its remoteness, in Heidegger’s phenomenology), Mufid endows it with a particular brand of agency that renders its boundaries porous and elastic. In his descriptions of these sites, the author harnesses their stickiness—that is, this propensity of chronotopic sites to connect people, events, and places—and thereby warps the map of the world in such a way that it places Yazd at the center of it.

This de-distancing, this muddling of local and remote spaces, functions in a range of ways in Mufid’s text. On one hand, faraway places and apparently unrelated anecdotes become caught in the pull of Yazd’s gravity and thus become appropriated and absorbed into the memories and spaces of the city. I refer to this effect as “absorption” or “localization” throughout this study. On the other hand, by means of its most massive chronotopes, the city also projects itself into the centers of other cities far outside of central Iran. I call this process “projection,” or “universalization.” It is with narrative devices such as these, which enable Yazd’s ability to “scale-up,” that Mufid gives his work the agency to act in the real world outside the text. The author’s

³⁴ Heidegger discusses de-distancing (*ent-fernung*) in Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Stambaugh (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), 97-102. In the course of his explanation of being-in-the-world, Heidegger demonstrates that de-distancing constitutes a kind of da-sein (being there/existence), which makes distances disappear and, thus, erases the distinction between beings. In a recent work, Ali Anooshahr references Heidegger’s concept of de-distancing in order to describe the way in which the Mogul emperor, Babur, used quotations from old heroic texts, such as *Shāh-nāmāh*, to effect an affinity between himself and the heroes of the distant past. Ali Anooshahr, *The Ghazi Sultans and the Frontiers of Islam: a comparative study of the late medieval and early modern periods* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 27.

literary mimesis of chronotopic phenomena enable his whole representation of the city to behave like the works (*āṣār*) of other benefactors and to join the networks of interaction that constitute the city's ecology.

The point is that Mufīd capitalizes on the ability of chronotopes to warp the map of the world and reorient its chronology. In other words, by tinkering with chronotopes' scaling effect, he can place Yazd at the center of that map and at the heart of the world's history. This spatial and historical negotiation has polemical effects as well, and it is these effects, in their particulars, that comprise the chief object of this study. However, the overall agenda of his work is rather plain; he intended the *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* to serve as a model, a series of lessons that can reverse the wave of change that has been eroding the greatness of the city and its people. If this is the case, then we must understand precisely what Mufīd believes has gone wrong and who is responsible for those problems. Secondly, we must decipher his plan for repairing the damage. Lastly, we must observe the particular ways in which he articulates the role of the historical narrative itself in effecting these repairs in the real world. Mufīd has left the instructions for each of elements of this agenda implicit; they are coded in his discursive engagement with scale, space and time, and place and narrative. It is the purpose of this study to figure out what these instructions were.

6. Outline of Chapters

The work of each of these four chapters regularly cycles between historiography and history. In alternating steps, I switch between tracing the evolution of narrative emplotment and historical representation and piecing together the actual

changes on the ground that Mufīd and his predecessors were trying to grapple with in their works. My ultimate purpose is to understand the utility of the representation of Yazd (and of the Ṣafavid realm through Yazd) that Mufīd composes and, simultaneously, to account for the shifts during his lifetime that affected his perspective on Yazd and its history and influenced his purpose.

Chapter 1 takes a bird's-eye view of Mufīd's work and lays the groundwork for the later chapters by working out the poetics and internal structure of the work in comparison with those of his predecessors. In order to develop a feel for Yazd's local tradition of history writing and spatial representation and to understand Mufīd's particular engagement with that tradition, I trace Mufīd's dialogue with his predecessors' works and chart the evolution of Yazdī historians' distinctive pragmatics of space as well as their strategies for representing the history of the city's places and personages. Here, I look more closely at the use of the chronotope, which enables spaces and places to "speak" of history in these narratives and, consequently, allows their representations to have an effect outside the confines of the text. I do this work by identifying the important conceits that the authors contrive in order to switch-on their chronotopes and empower them to act outside the boundaries of the text. Ultimately, I argue that Mufīd positions his history work within the Persianate tradition of ethical advice literature for princes (mirrors for princes). The overall effect of that positioning is to render the local history of Yazd immediately pertinent to and inseparable from the affairs of empire.

Each of the three remaining chapters zooms in on a different site featured in Yazd's historiography. Each begins with Mufīd's depiction of the site and then follows

the maze of interrelated anecdotes that the author narrates by means of that site's description. Just as Mufīd's presentation is always dialogic and intertextual, each of the chapters compares the construction of Mufīd's narrative with that of his predecessors, to whom his work was responding. I have chosen these three sites from among the many different principal categories of buildings featured in the city. The first of these is a dungeon. The second is a *madrāsah*, or school of religious sciences, and the third is a *khānqāh*, or Sufi hospice. Each category indexes a different itinerary of travel through the spaces of the city and to places outside of it, and each transports the reader by means of a different class of narratives that are each linked to a different network of actors.

I have selected these three sites as starting points not only because each of them served as an important hub in the life of the city and its environs, but also because Yazd's historians endowed these three with an especially chronotopic charge. In other words, more than any other sites, the authors heavily burdened these sites with layers of stories and references to other places and times. Thus, these chronotopic complexes serve as key switching-stations in the overall structure of the works; as such, they afford us access to very high densities of narrative threads and provide us with the best view of the inner workings of the texts. By comparing Mufīd's narratives to those of his predecessors, in each of these chapters, I look at the different ways in the author enabled these places to speak. In so doing, the three chapters engage with different aspects of Mufīd's polemics.

Chapter 2 is concerned with the discourse on imperial kingship and the role of king-making in Yazd's local historiographic tradition. This chapter centers on one of

Yazd's key sites, called "Alexander's Prison," actually a deep pit in the city center, which the Yazdi historians claim was the remnant of the first structure in Yazd built by Alexander the Great, who founded the city after his conquest of Persia. Tracing the vast history of the Alexander story throughout Persianate historiography, I argue that the Yazdī authors tie this myth of Yazd's origins to a web of myths concerning messianic kingship. In different ways, each author employs this intersection of local and universal mythologies to frame contemporary history in such a way that it demonstrates Yazdīs' unique role in crafting the imperial symbology of empire. The Yazdī authors each mobilized this link between Yazd's origins and the legendary world-emperor in order to insert Yazd into contemporary controversies regarding the nature of kings' power and authority. Linking the Alexander story to Yazd gave the historians the rhetorical means to shape both the discourse on empire and the history of the kingdom's affairs from the periphery of the realm. This chapter tracks the transformations and adaptations of such rhetorical strategies over time.

Chapter 3 moves away from Yazdīs' engagement with the discourse on messianic kingship and sets about the task of mapping the actual networks of notable local figures who used that myth so effectively in making Yazd a center of the empire. By focusing on one of the most important madrasah complexes in the city, the Ruknīyah complex, this chapter centers on the technical and intellectual fields of expertise that were required for the making of empires and for the fashioning of the discourse on kingship discussed in the chapter 1. The Ruknīyah complex consisted of a madrasah proper, a hospital, a monumental astronomical observatory, and an assortment of other buildings. I use the study of these and other built structures linked

to it as a way of tracing the consolidation and rise to power of the most important network of intellectuals and powerbrokers in Yazd during the Mongol period; it was this group of men who built structures such as the Ruknīyah complex. These were the local Ḥusaynī sayyids (descendents of the Prophet Muḥammad through his grandson, Imām Ḥusayn), who eventually became the architects of the discourse on millenarian, universal kingship that I sketch in chapter 2. Furthermore, as the sayyids were building on a large scale at home, they were also establishing ties with important political and religious figures all across the empire. Comparing the Yazdi histories with Mongol-era sources, I demonstrate that as these families rose to positions of influence at court, they also became the founders of Yazd’s central institutions of learning, where local inhabitants mastered the skills, arts, and sciences necessary for positions of influence at the imperial court. Of these sciences, astrology and the literary arts were particularly in demand at court.

At the same time, this chapter traces a progressive transformation in the portrayal of the sayyids in the local historiography: In the Mongol era, the sayyids appeared as pious, wealthy intellectuals and astute politicians; over time however, local historians refashioned these figures in the guise of Sufi saints. By the Timurid period, authors were centering local sayyids’ lives around their miraculous deeds rather than on their piety, wealth, and generous patronage. This sanctification of the local sayyids in the historiography served as a further means of legitimizing their collective role as architects of a sacred and universal empire. The chapter concludes by charting the declining role of Yazdi astrologers and intellectuals in positions of influence at the Ṣafavid court during the seventeenth century.

While chapter 3 is concerned with the sites where Yazdī architects of the discourse on empire learned their trade, chapter 4 focuses on the places around the city where the fortunes of royal houses were made and unmade, according to Mufīd. These are the Sufi shrine complexes, sources of prophetic knowledge and authority, which saintly men channeled in order to bring wise kings to power and, thus, steer the realm toward peace, balance, and order. In *JM*, these were the seats of divinely sanctioned empire. Continuing with the history of Yazd’s sayyid families and their monuments, in this final chapter, I turn to the web of stories connected with the important khānqāh and shrine on the outskirts of the city, the Khānqāh-i Ni‘matullāh Valī, which served as the center of the powerful Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order in Iran since the late Tīmūrid period. In the Yazdī narratives, the Ni‘matullāhīs had been respected as divinely appointed kingmakers, whose authority and influence at court was directly linked to their otherworldly gift of divine insight; in fact they had miraculously predicted and facilitated the rise of the Ṣafavid and Quṭb Shāhī dynasties. This chapter relates the rise and fall of the family and its shrine in the seventeenth century to the similar decline among the madrasah complexes of sayyid families examined in the previous chapter. Mufīd presents a narrative of decline centered on the disenfranchisement of traditionally influential local Yazdī families and the ruin of their institutions and directs his critique at the Shāh himself. I read Mufīd’s emplotment of these narratives alongside epigraphic and documentary evidence in order to argue that the decline in these traditional complexes actually coincided with renewed investment in and refurbishment of much older sites around the city. The chapter concludes by

contextualizing Mufid's narrative of decline within these broader shifts in urban topography and society.

Chapter I

Between Site and Hindsight: The Flow of Benefit and the Poetics of Space

The purpose of the cistern is a reservoir of water: because water is placed in it during the winter, the servants of God can drink during the summer. There are cisterns in the central city and many of its districts as well as in a number of areas on the outskirts. With the assistance of the reed-pen from the town of Vāsiṭ,³⁵ this thirsty one at the lip of the dry riverbed of astonishment will elucidate the memory of some of these.³⁶

Drink, O heart; it's the water of life!³⁷

- Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī

Mufīd's window overlooking Yazd's landscape offers his reader a sweeping view of the terrain. Gazing through a spyglass that the author has installed there, the reader surveys the city to its furthest reaches and inspects its history back into the deepest recesses of its past. But the author has fitted the lens with glass cut in the eleventh Hijrī century, which bears a tint and a ripple peculiar to that era. The particularities of this

³⁵ The phrase translated as "reed-pen from the town of Vāsiṭ" is "*qalam-i vāsiṭī-nizhād*," which literally means reed-pen of Vāsiṭī stock. Vāsiṭ (or Wāsiṭ in Arabic pronunciation) is a city in Iraq, which was famous for its reed-pens. The city boasted numerous reed-beds, which flourished due to the regular flooding of the Tigris. Mondher Sakly, "Wāsiṭ," in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*. In addition to this sense, Mufīd may intend a play on words: the word *vāsiṭ*, means "mediator" or "intermediate"; the pen assists the writer in mediation between thought or memory and the written word. One might read the phrase, "the pen of intermediary nature."

³⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 665-6.

³⁷ "*bi-nūsh ay dil kih āb-i zindagānī-st*." This is the last hemistich of a *qit'ah* composed in *baḥr-i hazaj*, with the *radīf* of "*-st [ast]*" following a *qāfiyah* of "*-ānī*." The meter precludes the alternative reading in which the *izāfah* connecting *āb* and *zindagānī* is omitted: "Drink, O heart! Water is life! (*bi-nūsh ay dil kih āb zindagānī-st*). *Ibid.*, 3: 666.

transitive medium, which stands between the eye and the world on the other side of the glass, determine the contours of the city's simulacrum that we see hovering upon its surface. Still, it is possible to mitigate this refractive distortion and synthesize an image somewhat truer to the reality on the other side of the glass. In order to accomplish this, we must, of course, survey the terrain from other vantage points, peering through optical devices that other folk have contrived at other points in time. Before doing so, however, we must take the time to scrutinize the nature of the medium through which we are peering, study its shape, consider the idiosyncrasies of its fashioning, and contextualize those techniques of manufacture in the larger history of their craft tradition. Such an enterprise constitutes a challenge: The panoramic image of the city's past dominates our field of view. It proves difficult to relax the gaze in such a way that the eyes can focus on the lens itself, and it proves challenging to bring our attention to the window frame in the periphery of our view, which Mufid has set up to organize the entire scene, like a stage's proscenium.³⁸ Nevertheless, if we wish to construct a clearer view of Yazd's history, particularly its history in the eleventh century A.H., our first task must be to disavow temporarily the illusion of the city that the author causes to appear in the lens of his work, no matter how perfect and alluring it may seem. We must begin by focusing on the craftsmanship and inner workings of

³⁸ Although it may seem anachronistic at first, the proscenium metaphor is not an inappropriate one. The concept of a proscenium was not alien to premodern Persianate culture, despite the fact that the theater in the European sense of the term did not exist in the Islamicate East. Puppetry had long been a celebrated and widespread form of performance, and as a result, a technical vocabulary was in circulation to describe the parts of the puppet stage. The proscenium was termed "*pīsh-band*" and appears to have been most especially operative in the context of shadow puppetry, referring to the screen upon which the shadow play was projected. It also refers to the fore portion of the "stage" upon which hand-puppets performed, which doubled as the trunk upon which the puppeteers transported their equipment. In his fifteenth-century *Futuvvat-Nāmah-i Sulṭānī*, Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī includes a fascinating discussion of the craft of puppetry. The discussion of the proscenium appears in: Ḥusayn Vā'iz Kāshifī, *Futuvvat-Nāmah-i Sulṭānī*, ed. Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb (Tehran 1971), 342.

the medium itself, that is, the text of the *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*. Indeed, this device for viewing the city's past was not fashioned of plain glass, but of a trickier stuff.

Consequently, this opening chapter of the dissertation is chiefly historiographical in character and focuses on the work of history as a transitive medium. It studies the mechanisms by which the author emplots historical narrative and the effects of that emplotment on the realities he represents there. This chapter lays the groundwork for the succeeding ones by working out the poetics and internal structure of Mufīd's work, i.e., his instrument for viewing and presenting history, and pays close attention to his particular response to and manipulation of Yazd's local tradition of historical writing and spatial representation, which he inherited from his predecessors. Although Mufīd's work serves as a point of entry, this chapter sketches the evolution of Yazdis' distinctive theories of space and particular strategies for representing the history of the city's places and personages. With this in mind, the main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the ways in which Mufīd constructs his instrument for viewing Yazd in such a way that the work itself empowers spaces to speak of the past. This chapter will ask: what is the effect of this empowerment? What is at stake for the author once a space has been given voice? What kind of agency do spaces have beyond speech? By learning how Mufīd's mechanisms of representation work, we can understand how it interacts with the city and affects its history. Ultimately, by observing these representational mechanisms and by tracking interactions between text and the superorganism of the city itself, we will begin to comprehend the emergent qualities of the city's ecology of benefit, which we discussed

in the introduction. Furthermore, we will begin to understand the role of historical writing—its benefit— in Yazd’s cultural ecology.

1. Contriving an apparatus for viewing the viewing apparatus, or an Introduction

We begin with the two quotations, which appear at the head of this chapter.

These I have selected from among the opening lines of Mufīd’s chapter on Yazd’s cisterns (*maṣna‘ah / maṣāni‘*),³⁹ one of a number chapters in the fourth article (*maqālah*) of *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī*’s third volume. The fourth article concerns important monuments and notable sites both within the walls of Yazd proper and outside them, in the territories of Yazd province. The first of the two quotations comprise the inaugural lines of the chapter on cisterns and explain their function and importance to his readers. Because Yazd receives essentially no rain in the summertime and possesses no ground water for sunken wells, in order to survive, the inhabitants of the city must store large quantities of water, which they have conveyed to the city via subterranean canals, termed (*qanāt/qanavāt*), from thaws of the surrounding snow-capped mountains, which collect

³⁹ The word derives from the Arabic root ṣ-n-‘, whose derivatives concern the process of construction or fabrication; the word itself literally translates as “something assembled,” but is generally used to refer to something constructed for the purpose of holding water. The word *maṣna‘ah* (plural, *maṣāni‘*) was not universally used to denote a cistern across the Persian-speaking world; other words are more common words derived from Persian, such as *āb-anbār*, which literally means water-storer, *ābdān*, or *zhī*. For this reason, in the very first sentence, Mufīd feels obliged to clarify what the word means and defines the term, using the more descriptive and universal term *āb-anbār* (*ābanbār*): “*murād az maṣna‘ah ābanbār ast* (what is intended by [the term] cistern is a reservoir of water).” The term *maṣna‘ah* probably referred to a monumental and elaborate built structure as opposed to a simple storage tank. These *maṣāni‘* were generally ornately decorated domed structures housing a subterranean reservoir that was accessible via stairways, which descended from the street level. The domed covering obviously served to shade the water from the blazing sunshine, which otherwise would quickly have heated it up and cause it to evaporate. One can find excellent photographs and drawings of a large cistern of this type in the Khurāsānī city of Herat in: Abdul Wassay Najimi, “The Cistern of Char-Suq (A Safavid Building in Herat, built after 1634 AD),” *Afghanistan Journal*. In that city, the term for a cistern is “*hauz*,” a generic word for pool or reservoir.

in the alluvial soil at the mountains' feet. The second quotation—"Drink O heart; it's the water of life"—follows shortly upon the first passage in Mufīd's text and appears in his notice on the first cistern in the chapter, called Maṣna'ah-i Chahār-Sūq (Cistern of the Four Markets).⁴⁰ The Chahār-Sūq cistern was the most important cistern in Yazd's city center; as its name implies, it stood at the center of the bazaar, at the intersection of the four main market streets. The quotation itself comes from the concluding hemistich of a poem that Mufīd inserted into his description of the edifice. As both quotations plainly state, in the eyes of the author and the rest of the city's inhabitants, the water conveyed to the cisterns through the qanāts was quite literally the water of life. Without it, the city and all its residents would simply wither and die. Water was the primary and most fundamental element of life in the city, from which all other components of life derive.

Although I have chosen these passages to frame this chapter, they do not actually appear in Mufīd's own introduction to the work; in fact, Mufīd only situated his systematic treatment of cisterns and qanāts after the chapters on mosques, madrasahs, and hospices, relatively late in the topographical section of the text, which itself comprises the very last major article of the final volume. Nevertheless, my choice of these passages as an epigraph for this opening chapter is justified: Despite the fact that the author gives the cisterns a subordinate position in his text, he deliberately pumps water into nearly every other page of his work. Throughout his long narrative he constantly refers to particular water works around Yazd or else invokes water in figurative language. With regard to this obsession with water, Mufīd imitates the city's

⁴⁰ The *chahār-sūq* is a standard feature in the bazaars of Persianate cities. Frequently the term is abbreviated as *chār-sūq* or *chār-sū*.

most illustrious builders and their patrons, whom he profiles throughout his text; their construction projects always revolved around the digging of canals, pools, cisterns, and the like. Precisely because the life of the city depended so desperately on the flow of water throughout the city, Mufīd chose water as an obvious figure for the thriving city. This was not an innovation; the motif of the paradisiacal, walled garden teeming with blossoms and fruit trees watered by flowing streams, had long stood as a symbol of the perfect city or well-ordered realm in Persianate literature.⁴¹ Although this water metaphor might seem hackneyed at first, Mufīd was working from within this literary tradition to construct an ingenious and elaborate conceit out of water that was appropriate to the particularities of his city and its history. This conceit extends in a ubiquitous network of metaphors throughout nearly every section of the work.

At this point I must pause and comment on the structure of this dissertation chapter. Now that I have established the importance of the water motif in the *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* and explained the utility of the two quotations I have chosen as an epigraph for understanding this central figure in the work, it will be useful to introduce this first chapter of this dissertation by carefully working out how these passages actually work and what they accomplish in relation to the other parts of Mufīd's project. Because these quotations offer a perfect frame or guide for my reading of the text, it is necessary that I let an analysis of those passages dictate the structure of this chapter. For this reason, I must beg the reader's patience; I shall derive an outline for the plan and purpose of this chapter as it unfolds in the course of this introductory section, in which I will unpack the water motif that dominates the quotations I have chosen. Using

⁴¹ See discussion below (page 156).

these passages as a prompt, we will work to establish exactly what it is that water does in Mufid's representation of Yazd. In this way, we will construct a provisional analytic for understanding the architecture of Mufid's project and its purpose.

In the Introduction to this dissertation, I discussed the concept of benefit in Mufid's work and showed that it functions as a key device that the author employs to represent the divisions of Yazd's social hierarchy. Each social group produces a particular kind of benefit (*fā'idah*) in service of the greater good of the community of Yazd. We must remember that in *Jāmi'-i Mufidī*, the author limits neither this hierarchy of social actors nor the facility for producing benefits to human agents. Included beside humans in his ecology of benefit we find otherworldly beings, animals, objects, features of the natural landscape, and buildings. On the most basic level, water serves as a metaphor for the sum of the great variety of benefits that sustain the flourishing life of the city as a whole and that circulate throughout the urban superorganism. Unquestionably, because of Yazd's desert climate, water was the fundamental benefit in the city, whose origins lie with the creator, unmediated by any secondary causes. Nevertheless, despite its central importance, because water was just one of many essential benefits that kept the city flourishing, we should read Mufid's exploitation of water as a generic figure for benefits as a whole as an example of synecdoche: In *Jāmi'-i Mufidī*, water is both an example of benefit and a figure for the whole nexus of various types of benefits circulating throughout the city.

Nonetheless, the author does not limit his use of the water metaphor to representing this totalizing characterization of benefit; he brings the water metaphor to bear on a wide variety of particular episodes throughout the text, each dealing with

particular classes of actors in the city, human, or otherwise. Each time he applies the water metaphor to new material in a new context, he makes specific and subtle manipulations. Because the water metaphor is a constant in the work, the subtle manipulations constitute an internal dialogue running throughout the entire text, which we can track. We discover that the metaphor does not simply adorn the content of the text; it affects the meaning of the text, and it does so differently in different contexts. Attention to the situational adaptations of the metaphor provides the reader with a hermeneutic for understanding the author's tacitly presented commentary on the relationship between the specific benefits that water represents so broadly and the city's ecology of benefit as whole. In other words, the reader can infer the author's instructions for how to keep the city flourishing by reading the specific ways in which he adapts the water metaphor to characterize the particular benefits or traces of benefit produced by different agents around the city. Chief among these benefits are the sites that make up the *mamālik* of Yazd, the monumental pieces of architecture and significant elements of the topography, each of which trace the beneficial works of distinct classes of men, women, and other varieties of beings who populate Yazd's landscape.

At the same time, Mufīd capitalizes on certain characteristic properties of water, namely, its fluidity (i.e., its tendency to move through space and convey materials) and its connectivity (i.e., its ability, when flowing, to unite disparate points in space). Exploiting these characteristics, Mufīd makes his water-conceit perform other discursive operations on multiple levels of text. Most significantly, he emphasizes the fluid and connective properties of water in order to make his conceit elucidate the

nature of the text's structure. The reader does not proceed through the text in a linear way, but instead jumps around through the text, following a complex system of narrative cues, conduits, that shuttle him or her across the city's space and time. The water-conceit actually provides a blueprint for how the text should be read because it calls attention to the text's own nonlinear and networked form. This manner of reading, that is, the particular experience of reading the text, affects the meaning of the text as a whole. This rather theoretical explanation will be clarified as we examine the text below. For now we simply wish to say that tracing and navigating the many channels the author creates for this sophisticated conceit will be key to understanding the author's vision and project, and these tasks will be foremost on the agenda for this chapter.

At the same time, my selection of these passages on the cisterns bears significance beyond simply calling attention to the importance of Mufid's water conceit in the text. The passages also help introduce what the author can compel that conceit to do in his writing. Let us return to the first of the two passages, where we find these lines: "With the assistance of the reed-pen from the town of Vāsiṭ, this thirsty one at the lip of the dry riverbed of astonishment will elucidate the memory of some of these." In this passage, the author uses the motif of water to neatly bind together two pairs of rhetorical figures: On one side of the junction of metaphors, he likens "thirst for water" to "thirst for memory"; on the other side, he likens water to ink. Using the figure of water as a link, he is able to engender an explicit connection between the flow of water (i.e., the flow of benefit) and the flow of writing, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, between the flow of benefits in general and the flow of a more specific category

of benefits, namely, memories of the past. Like the monuments and tombs around the city and its environs, which comprise the physical effects or traces (*āṣār*) of past benefactors' works, the author's written work—his *aṣar*—remains as his own bequest, which he left for the benefit of the communities of Yazd. While builders' works commemorate events with brick and mortar, the historian fashions his commemoration of these places and people with pen and paper. Mufīd's point is that the written commemoration of the past perpetuates the flow of benefits necessary for the preservation of life. The work of history serves as a reservoir of revitalizing memories in lean times when nothing grows. Although this passage is buried deep in Mufīd's massive text, it articulates the author's impetus for writing his work—or more accurately, the impetus that he wishes his persona in the text to present. We will return to the subject of the author's purpose again in the last section of this chapter, which focuses on *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī's* preface.

Like the first of the two epigraphic quotations at the head of this chapter, the second one, the final hemistich of the poem honoring the Chahār Sūq Cistern, also provides important instructions for how to read Mufīd's text, beyond simply introducing the “water of life” motif, which we discussed above. Mufīd's declamation of the poem draws the reader's attention to the processes by which he succeeds in impregnating his representations of physical spaces in his text with a diachronic dimension. The full poem is as follows:

In the age of Shāh 'Abbās, the chivalrous,
the dust of whose feet is the water of life—

on account of his justice, the lion drinks water
together with the gazelle;
there is kindness between water and fire.

He authorized 'Atā' Allāh with the opportunity,

bi-dawr-i Shāh 'Abbās javān-bakht
kih khāk-i pā'sh āb-i zindagānī-st

zi-'adlash shīr bā āhū khurad āb
miyān-i āb u ātish mihribānī-st

'Atā' Allāh rā ḥaqq dād furṣat

because in providing aid is a heavenly deed. ⁴²	<i>kih ta'yīd kār-i ān jahānī-st</i>
Through divine grace he erected a mountain in whose waters, is life everlasting.	<i>bi-tawfiq-i ilāhī bar kuhī sākht kih dar ābash ḥayāt-i jāvidānī-st</i>
His [Shāh 'Abbās'] little lion ['Aṭā Allāh] took his place in that spot because he and the Bull-of-the-Earth speak the same tongue. ⁴³	<i>bih jā'ī jā giriftah shīrak-i ū kih bā gāv-i zamīn dar ham zabānī-st</i>
On the date of the completion of its foundation, Ḥasan ⁴⁴ said: "Drink O heart; it's the water of life!	<i>pay-i tāriḵh-i itmāsh Ḥasan guft binūsh ay dil āb-i zindaḡānī-st</i>

Mufīd credits the verses for the Maṣna'ah-i Chahār-Sūq to a contemporary Yazdī notable, Mavlānā Ḥasan 'Alī Yazdī.⁴⁵ The poem represents a standard form of versification that commemorates the completion of a work monumental architecture.⁴⁶ The poet praises Khvājah 'Aṭā' Allāh Naqshband,⁴⁷ the builder of the monument along

⁴² The phrase literally says "because in providing aid is the work of that world [i.e., the other world]."

⁴³ According to Dekhoda, in Persian mythology, the Bull-of-the-Earth (*gāv-i zamīn*) is a kind of an Atlas-type figure. The Earth rests upon the back of this primordial bovine, who, in turn, stands upon the back of a primordial fish. In an alternative version, the Earth rests between the horns of the bull. Regardless of which image Mufīd had in mind, in this poem, the Bull of the Earth stands as a figure for Shāh 'Abbās. Although 'Aṭā' Allāh is but a minion of the Shāh, he speaks the same language; i.e., he sits in the Shāh's inner circle.

⁴⁴ Ḥasan is the name of the poet himself, Mavlānā Ḥasan 'Alī. In the Persian *ghazal* and *qit'ah* forms, a poet generally inserts his or her name or pen-name in the last distich of the poem. The term used for "pen-name" is *takhalluṣ*, an Arabic word, which, in this context, loosely translates as "signing-off" or more literally, being rid or free of something, i.e., being finished with the poem's composition.

⁴⁵ Mufīd gives Mavlānā Ḥasan 'Alī Yazdī a notice in his chapter on poets. There, he says that Mavlānā Ḥasan was constantly perfecting his knowledge and circulated among the most meritorious and wise folk. He wrote poetry only occasionally. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 435-6.

⁴⁶ See Paul Losensky's article on architectural chronograms: Paul Losensky, "Coordinates in time and space : architectural chronograms in Safavid Iran," in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*, ed. Colin P. Mitchell (New York: Routledge, 2011). Also see Losensky's article on commemorative writing of urban monuments in Ṣafavid Iṣfahān, which focuses on the Ḥasanābād Bridge. Losensky emphasizes the importance of the chronogram (*tāriḵh*) in this type of writing: Paul Losensky, "The Equal of Heaven's Vault: The Design, Ceremony, and Poetry of the Ḥasanābād Bridge," in *Writers and Rulers: Perspective on Their Relationship from Abbasid to Safavid Times*, ed. Beatrice Grundler and Louise Marlow (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 2004).

⁴⁷ Mufīd fails to mention this Khvājah anywhere else in the text. Irāj Afshār provides a fragment of text from the *vaqf*, which is inscribed on a plaque affixed to the building. The text of that document says that Khvājah 'Aṭā' Allāh Naqshband also endowed properties in Maryābād for structures in the Ya'qūbī neighborhood. Irāj Afshār, *Yādḡār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2 vols. (Tehran: Chāp-khānah-i Dānishḡāh, 1970, 1975). 2: 76 Moreover, the *vaqf* stipulates that anyone who fills a container with water at the cistern must pay a duty to the *kadkhudās* (syndics) of the drapers' and resellers' guilds (*bazzāz va simsār*). The *vaqf* further

with the reigning Shāh, who authorized construction and whose just and munificent rule enabled the flow of life-giving water and a perfect state peace. Prior to the verses, Mufīd explains that Mavlānā Ḥasan ‘Alī composed his poem in commemoration of the cistern’s completion, which Khvājah ‘Aṭā’ Allāh accomplished during the reign of Shāh Ṣafī Ṣafavī (r. 1038-1052/1629-1642). However, as the last verse poem itself demonstrates, Khvājah ‘Aṭā’ Allāh commenced the digging of the foundations for the cistern some years earlier, during Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign (r. 995-1038 / 1587-1629). In fact, Mufīd signals that the last hemistich, quoted above, contains a chronogram (*tārīkh*): In accordance with the *abjad* numeral system, the numbers that correspond to the letters of the phrase “Drink, O heart; it’s the water of life (*binūsh ay dil kih āb-i zindagānī-st*)” tally the number 1,033 when summed ($358+11+34+25+3+602 = 1,033$).⁴⁸ Hence, this simple chronogram thereby dates the actual groundbreaking of the building to the year 1033 A.H. / 1623-4 C.E., one of the final years of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s long reign.⁴⁹

Mavlānā Ḥasan ‘Alī’s very invocation of the site facilitates a teleportive operation, which continues to transport readers or auditors between the space of the text and physical space of the site whenever they read or hear his verses. This teleportation, of course, characterizes all writing. Yet, the chronogram that the poet slipped into his poem has the effect of filling the cistern itself with a benefit other than plain water. By dosing the water supply with the chronogram, the poet succeeds in

explains that the *kadkhudās* of these respective guilds would be seated on platforms in two corners of the structure, where they would collect their payment. Afshār, *Yādgar’hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 656-7.

⁴⁸ The *abjad* numeral system assigns a specific numeric value to each letter of the Arabic alphabet. The arithmetic expression given here presents the totaled numeric value for each word in the phrase. In other words, I have already calculated the sum of all the letters in each word.

⁴⁹ On chronograms in general, see two Encyclopaedia Iranica articles: Paul Losensky, "Mādda Tārīk," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition*(2006), J.T.P. De Bruijn, "Chronograms," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition*(1991). Also see Losensky’s articles cited above in footnote 46.

transforming the site into a chronotope: If an observer who is actually standing at the cistern knows the verses, they color his or her experience of the place by triggering a memory or an imaginal sense of the past. The site transports an observer to the year 1033 A.H., when the structure was first rising from the ground. For his part, Mufīd drops the chronogram into his account of the site in order to transfer into his own work this chronotopic effect that Mavlānā Ḥasan ‘Alī had first engendered.

By Mufīd’s standards, this particular chronotope, i.e., the cistern featured in Mavlānā Ḥasan’s chronogram, represents a rather weak specimen in the pool of chronotopes among Mufīd’s samples. Because the poet had charged the site with nothing more than a date and a few bare-boned details about the circumstances of the building’s construction, the cistern can conjure only a vague sense of the past in the reader’s imagination or in the witness’s experience of the place. In contrast, the vast majority of chronotopes Mufīd treats in his work open onto long flows of narrative about the peoples who frequented these places and the events that occurred inside them. As I will demonstrate, most chronotopic sites in *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī* propel the reader through a network of interrelated story-streams that prompt jumps across the city’s space and time as well as across pages of text. Taken as a whole, this complex circuit of narratives that inhabit Yazd’s sites comprise the master narrative of the city. Nevertheless, despite the fact that this cistern possesses a relatively faint chronotopic charge, it serves as a useful introductory example because, in an elementary way, it models the modality in which the mechanism of the chronotope functions inside Mufīd’s text. Simultaneously, this simple example demonstrates the operations by which the text accomplishes a blur in the distinction between the space of the text and

the space of the world outside of it, that is, between the realms of rhetoric and reality. In Mufīd's eyes, the text, or the narratives therein, not only represent the sites and history of Yazd, but they actually become agents that act upon the spaces of the city and the people who inhabit them.

We have established that the water conceit represents the flow of benefits, which is at the core of Mufīd's work. For this reason this flow stands as the object of our study. Using these cisterns as a test case, we have established that Mufīd uses water as a conceit for representing the totality of the city's ecology of networked benefits and, simultaneously, for conveying the total structure and even the purpose of his book. We can now assert that our task in this chapter will be to examine precisely how these benefits flow through the city and how these flows link up the sites around the city with other places and other times. We will begin in the next section by examining the real and material flow of water in the city. Water, of course, constitutes the most fundamental and primary benefit of divine origins, whose bestowal originally allowed the city to come into being and continues to sustain it. Our focus will be on the sites from which these primal blessings bubble up and on the streams of narrative that flow out along with them. In each of the remaining sections in this chapter, we will study the particular benefits associated with individual classes of actors in Yazd, and we will focus on the particular sites in which those groups concentrate their benefits. The first of these sections will study the role of saintly figures in the city's history and the flow of benefits particular to that class of people, namely the production of miracles (*karāmāt*) and circulation of charismatic blessing (*barakah*) at saints' shrines. The next section deals with the benefits particular to the ruling classes. These include just rule,

maintaining peace, and bestowing the kind of material patronage that allows for the erecting of public works and monumental architecture and promotes the transmission of knowledge. The section that follows considers the benefits associated with “men of the pen” in general, bureaucratic officials, and men of knowledge. The penultimate section looks specifically at the flow of benefits administered by the category of scribes to which Mufīd himself belongs, the *mustawfīs* or comptrollers. The final section concludes the chapter by examining the flow of benefits unleashed by the historian, the craftsman whose product is the very work itself.

2. Water and Mountain: The Original Benefit

Shīr Kūh: Mountain of Mother’s Milk

The source of water in Yazd originates in the mountains that surround the region, and consequently mountain sites assume a benevolent, parental character in Mufīd’s work. Mountains are the progenitors of the land. Like the water that flows out from them, the mountains are timeless and constant benefactors, whose blessings are simple, pure, natural, and prior to human beings’ involvement. As men channel these primary benefits of the land, they multiply and transform them into more sophisticated, human permutations of manifested divine benefit—harvest fruits, money, art, architecture, hospitality, justice. Even when the author does not invoke them explicitly, the mountains silently watch over every scene in the work throughout the ages; the events that unfold are their offspring. When Mufīd speaks of water and of mountains, he is speaking of the city’s origins.

This is particularly true for Shīr Kūh, the highest peak in the area and the wellhead of the most important and very ancient qanāt system, which conveyed water into the city center. There those waters it collected in pools inside grand mosques and madrasah complexes and neighborhood cisterns. In fact, in the ninth/fifteenth century, the robustness of the qanāt system emanating from the vicinity of Shīr Kūh would eventually enable the rise of the most sacred and powerful shrine complex of the region, the Ni‘matullāhī shrine, which grew up in Taft, near the mountain’s approach. The mountain’s name, Shīr Kūh, is significant. It literally means “Milk Mountain,”⁵⁰ an appellation that likens the peak to a mother’s breast, whose waters flow like milk and provide Yazd with its first nourishment.⁵¹

We begin our tour with Mufīd’s tribute to this great teat of a mountain, which appears in his chapter on Yazd’s orchards and agricultural villages, which were situated along the canals that flowed outward from that mountain’s alluvial plane. Mufīd’s descriptions of these pastoral places abound with praises of their trees and flowers, fruits and pleasant fragrances. Their value, for Mufīd, extended beyond the fact that they produced food for the region; these places of tranquility offered the benefits of beauty and repose too, qualities that Mufīd mirrors in his ornate prose. It is among these pearl-like descriptions of orchards and bucolic towns that Mufīd centers the crown jewel of this section of his work, his *tarjamah* for Shīr Kūh, whose snow-capped

⁵⁰ The word *shīr* also means lion. In other words, the name might have meant “Lion Mountain,” i.e., the king of mountains. Mufīd is most likely playing on both senses.

⁵¹ The various canals from this region came together in a place called Cham-i Taft, two leagues from Taft. All along the waterway were double rows of willow trees, mulberry, and serviceberry trees (*sinjid*). If we believe Aḥmad Kātīb, nearly five hundred cisterns inside the city and outside of it were filled from this watercourse. Furthermore, there was enough water to turn twelve mills (*āsiyā*), each of which the author names. All in all, he explains that nearly a thousand neighborhoods or more benefitted from Taft’s water. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 218-19.

peak overlooks the entire area. The author composes his praise for the mountain almost entirely in verse and thereby sets its lofty peak apart from the rest of the sites, which he commemorates largely in prose:

To the south of the village of Taft, there is a mountain known as Shīr Kūh, which is so tall that the line of sight can never reach the summit, due to its sheer slopes. Sunbeams and moonbeams can never fall upon the ground of that mountain, due to the prevalence of trees there.

Maṣnavī:

God created the wondrous form of a mountain whose equal no one has seen in the world.	<i>‘ajab-gūnah kūhī khudāy āfarīd kih mānand-i ān kas bih gītī nadīd</i>
From bottom to peak, its path is steep and slippery; like a beautiful lock of hair, plaited, and long.	<i>rahash tund u laghzān zi-tak tā farāz chu zulf-i butān pīch pīch u darāz</i>
Upon the summit, moistened by high clouds, is a wide, flat plateau.	<i>bar ān sar kih az abr-i bālā tar ast yakī dasht-i hamvār u pahnāvar ast</i>
More than a league in width and length— imagine another earth upon the firmament.	<i>zi-yak farsakh afzūn bih tūl u bih ‘arz zamīnī digār bih falak kun tu farz</i>
In every direction, the flowing of delicious springs, trees laden with fruits and sown fields.	<i>bih har sū ravān chasham-i khush- guvār darakhtān-i pur mīvah u kisht-zār</i>
Endless hunting on that wide plain; it has become the companion of Capricorn and the seat of Ares,	<i>shikārī-i bī-ḥadd dar ān pahn-dasht shudah yār-i Jady u Ḥamal-gāh gasht⁵²</i>
The cloud wets its lips from the waters of its plentiful springs; the point of its peak drowned in color from hyacinth.	<i>zi-āb-i chashmah-sārash abr lab tar zi-sunbul tīgh-i kūhash gharq-i jawhar</i>
A path, just like the ringlet of a lover, bound its slope to the waist, its zenith in a rose garden.	<i>rahī payvastah hamchūn zulf-i dildār nashībash tā kamar awjash bih gulzār</i>
A path—on account of the variety of beautiful roses— like the inclining of elegant peacocks’ wings.	<i>rahī az mukhtalif gul’hā-yi zībā chu mayl-i bāl-i ṭāvūsān-i ra’nā</i>
Appearing through the tulips, that hilly skirt is like the lines on a hennaed palm.	<i>‘ayān dar lālah ān dāmān-i kuhsār chu khaṭṭ’hā az kaf-i dast-i hannā-dār</i>
The mountainous wonder draws its head to the	<i>‘ajab kūhī bih gardūn sar kishīdah</i>

⁵² At this point the meter changes from the classic meter of the maṣnavī form, *mutaqārib*, to *hazaj*. This is a very peculiar occurrence.

celestial sphere; its sword-peak cleaves the citron-sun.	<i>turanj-i mihr rā tīghash burīdah</i>
The firmament got lost among its trees, due to their abundance; the stars are like the partridge's eggs of that mountain.	<i>falak gum dar dirakhtānash zi anbūh kavākib bayḡah'hā-yi kabk-i ān kūh</i>
So much has it drawn its sword against the heavens that the breast of the stars has been sundered like wheat.	<i>zi bas-i tīghash kashīdah sar bar aflāk chu gandum sīnah-i anjum shudah chāk</i>
Upon its zenith are the nine heavenly spheres revolving like a necklace around the neck of the ringdove.	<i>buvad bar qullahash nuh charkh- dawwār⁵³ chu ṭawq az gardan-i qumrī namūdār</i>
From the rainbow, that pure-hearted [mountain] made a sword-belt from the lasso of unity.	<i>kih az qaws-i quzah ān bā-safā dil kamand-i vaḡdatī kardah ḡamā'il</i>
For the lamp of the tulips, its cloud pressed all the oil from the almond of the stars.	<i>kishad bahr-i chirāgh-i lālah yaksar saḡābash rawghan az bādām-i ikhtar</i>
Beneath its shadow the earth becomes a fortress; upon it sits the heavens like a litter on an elephant.	<i>zamīn dar sāyahash gashtah ḡiṣārī bar ū gardūn chu bar fīlī 'imārī⁵⁴</i>

The mountain stands both as an intermediary between earth and heaven and simultaneously as a personification of the primeval creation of the One deity. While Shīr Kūh, which serves as the source of blessed life and protection for the city, rises over the landscape, immovable and timeless, Mufīd presents the coursing emanations of its frosty mountain torrents as changeable and manipulated by human kind; once humans channel the mountain's waters down toward the city, they enter the dimension of history. When Mufīd writes of the city's watercourses, he is concerned with chronology. Despite the fact that the region of Yazd itself is blessed and abounds with water, it is only by the intercession of human beings that such natural benefits can be harnessed, conveyed to habitations, and put to use in accordance with proper

⁵³ The text reads “*charḡ*,” which is certainly a printing error for “*charkh*” (heavenly sphere or firmament.) I.e., the text prints ح [ḡā] where it should print خ [khā].

⁵⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 693-4.

knowledge and technical expertise. Knowledge is benefit in its most rarified form and, as will become clear throughout this dissertation, functions as a key local commodity, which Yazdīs mobilized in service of their efforts to center their city in the larger world around them. But, as he is careful to develop here, Mufīd deliberately constructs his chronicle of the city’s growth and his account of its inhabitants’ peerless knowledge and expertise on top of this substrate of natural bounties, endlessly flowing from the bedrock of the region. This history of Yazd is not the story of these blessings per se, but rather the history of men’s manipulation and transformation of those blessings.

The Legend of the Green Spring and the Origins of Yazd’s Narrative Time

The first episode in the Yazd’s history recorded in Mufīd’s work concerns the story of the city’s founding at the hands of Iskandar (Alexander the Great) and Aristotle. The birth of Yazd, whose name was originally “Kaṣah” according to Yazdī sources, comprises an enormously significant and complicated set of stories; we will postpone a detailed treatment of those intriguing events until the next chapter, which is dedicated entirely to them. What is salient here is that in order to ensure the survival of the first settlement, Iskandar supposedly constructed the region’s first qanāt, known as Dihābād, which channeled water from the direction of Maybud on the northern side of the city.⁵⁵ Every major contributor to Yazd’s urban landscape who followed in Iskandar’s wake followed the conqueror’s example and dug a qanāt from the mountains’ alluvial plains.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1: 12.

In his second chapter, which concerns the Sasanian kings, Mufīd presents the story of the second phase in the city's history. Central to this stage is the story of Yazdigard I (r. 399-420 C.E.), son of Shāpūr III and father of Bahrām Gūr (Bahrām V). In fact, it is this story that provides an etymology of Yazd's name and gives the history of the first real urban structures in the city.⁵⁶ More importantly, while this chapter on the Sasanians explains how the first waterworks and urban structures came to be built, it also offers, simultaneously, an explanation for the tyranny and discord that would disrupt the flow of benefit throughout the city's history. As we will discover, while Mufīd and his predecessors characterize benefit and harmony as the natural, timeless state of affairs in Yazd, they present discord, strife, and tyranny as the engines of historical change. The entire story of Yazd unfolds as a perpetual battle between agents of benevolence and agents of tyranny; Mufīd structures the city's history around a cycling between the predominance of benevolent and selfish men who lead the city to one or the other extreme. This story begins with Yazdigard, who plants the seeds of both justice and tyranny in Yazd's soil. As it turns out, the flow of water plays a key narrative role in the entire network of stories, beginning with Yazdigard and spanning the entire Sasanian era, up until the advent of the Islamic age.

To begin with, Mufīd relates that Yazdigard I, who, according to this telling, was originally named Shāpūr, had descended into wickedness over the course of his reign, until astrologers (*sitārah-shināsān*) predicted that he would die within a year, in

⁵⁶ For a some general background on the political history of Yazdigard I's reign and the reigns of his immediate successors, see Frye's discussion of Yazdigard I and his immediate descendents in Richard N. Frye, "The Political History of Iran Under the Sasanians," in *The Cambridge History of Iran Vol 3 (1): The Seleucid, Parthian, and Sasanian Periods*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 143-52.

Khurāsān,⁵⁷ beside a green spring (*chashmah-i sabz*). The king, of course, vows never to go there. But after six months the king's nose begins to bleed (*dimāghash bi-gushūd va khūn ravān gasht*), and nothing can staunch the flow.⁵⁸ His physicians (*aṭibbā'*) advise that he can only recover by turning to God, repenting (*tawbah*), and pouring water from Ṭūs (in Khurāsān) on his head. The bleeding is bad enough that the king decides to risk the journey in spite of the earlier prediction that he would die there. On his way to Khurāsān, he arrives at Kaṣah, i.e., the city that would later become Yazd. The temperateness of the air has an immediate effect on him (*i'tidāl-i havā-yi ān sar-zamīn dar ū aṣar kardah*)⁵⁹ and significantly allays the flow of blood. The monarch declares, "This land is blessed! I shall build a city here (*īn zamīn mubārak ast. Īnjā shahrī sāzam*)."

He makes his *tawbah* to God, orders the building of the city in the vicinity of Iskandar's original settlement, called Kaṣah, and renames the place Yazdān-gard, which the author explains means "Turned toward God"⁶⁰ in honor of his recovery and repentance. Later, we are told that the name of the city was shortened to "Yazd." In addition, Mufīd explains that the king changes his own name from Shāpūr to Yazdigard at this point.⁶¹

In the end, it is Yazd's blessed climate that heals the wicked king's soul of its ill-temper

⁵⁷ JM specifies that this would occur in the area of Ṭūs; TJY says Ṭabas.

⁵⁸ Mufīd chooses the word "*dimāgh*" for nose, a word that more commonly refers to "brain." In fact, some sources say that Shāpūr III, Yazdigard's father was killed accidentally by a tent pole which fell and struck him in the head, causing a head wound that eventually brought his rule to an end. It is possible that stories about the father may have been confused with those of the son. This might also explain the strange assertion that Yazdigard was really named Shāpūr. On Shāpūr III's death, see: Frye, "The Political History of Iran Under the Sasanians," 141.

⁵⁹ Mufīd's use of the term *havā* (literally "air") is an abbreviation of the more common term, *āb va havā*, which literally means "water and air," but is actually an idiom for "climate." The authors of TY and TJY each use the full expression *āb va havā*. Regardless of the term, when speaking of the climate of Yazd, all three historians mean to call attention to the relationship between the air, precipitation, and the water that flows down from the mountains.

⁶⁰ This is a spurious etymology. The name actually derives from Yazad + kartah, meaning "God-made." See A. Shapur Shahbazi, "Yazdegerd I," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition* (2003).

⁶¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 1: 14-15. The same narrative is given in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, TJY, 29-30. Ja'farī credits Yazdigard I with building Yazd, but does not include this story about his initial oppression and subsequent repentance. Ja'farī, TY, 13.

and even initiates the cure of this wounded body. The king does not experience a complete physical recovery, however.

After this affair, the king orders the digging of a *qanāt*—just as Iskandar had done—and then orders the planning of gardens (*busātīn*) and the construction of buildings. Leaving Yazd to be built according to his instruction, Shāpūr/Yazdigard continues his journey to Khurāsān, finds the prophesied green spring, and pours the water upon his head, which cures him completely. He remains on that site for some months and establishes a garrison there. One day the most beautiful horse the king has ever seen emerges from the green spring and begins galloping around the royal pavilion. Taken with desire (*marghūb*) for this horse, the king’s erstwhile greedy temperament overcomes him again. He orders his troops to catch him, but the horse will not allow himself to be ensnared. Finally, Yazdigard himself tames the beast with a plaintive voice (*āvāz-i ḥazīn bikhvānd va asb rām-i ū shud*). The king tosses the saddle upon the animal’s back, but when he attempts to buckle the crupper (*pārdim*), the horse bucks, kicking the hapless king square in the chest and killing him instantly.⁶² Thereupon, the horse shakes off the saddle, casts himself into the spring, and vanishes. The outcry, Mufīd reports, is so great that the builders in Yazd hold back from their work.⁶³

The story of Yazdigard I’s death at the hooves of a fanciful horse is not unique to the Yazdī corpus and can be found in many accounts, including al-Ṭabarī, Firdawsī, Jāhiz, and Ibn al-Balkhī, among others, where some authors characterize this horse as

⁶² Mufīd puts it more eloquently: “On the spot, the bird of his spirit took flight from the cage of his body (*dar ḥāl ṭā’ir-i rūḥash az qafas-i badan dar parvāz āmadah.*)” Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 15. Mufīd maintained a seemingly endless supply of euphemistic metaphors for death. In the thousands of opportunities to speak of someone’s death, he almost never repeats himself.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

an angel (*malak* in Arabic sources and *firishtah* in Persian ones),⁶⁴ who has brought God's retribution for the King's tyranny.⁶⁵ Shapur Shahbazi has shown that these accounts of the story are actually descended from a syncretized, pre-Islamic tradition. In this tradition, the sun-deity, Mithra, who often bears the epithet "Giver of Kingship" (*khshathrō-dā*), judges the moral conduct of kings and punishes their moral lapses. At the same time, he is called "Possessor of Good Horses" (*hvaspō*) and is closely associated with horses. Moreover, Mithra's close ally, the water-deity, Apam Napāt (the Grandson of the Waters), aids him in this task of policing the moral character of kings. In fact, the Avestan hymn to Mithra commemorates Apam Napāt for having carried the kingly nimbus (*farr*) to the bottom of the sea to protect it from tyrannous kings. At the moment at which Apam Napāt disappears into the sea, the hymn describes him as

⁶⁴ For example, Ibn al-Balkhī reports: "They say that horse was an angel whom God—may he be glorious and dignified—had entrusted in the form of a horse in order to remove tyranny from upon the heads of the world's inhabitants. (*guftand īn asp firishtah būd kī khudā-yi 'azza wa jalla bi-ṣurat-i asp gumāshht kī zulm-i ū rā az sar-i jahāniyān bar dāshht.*)" Ibn al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmāh*, ed. G. Le Strange and R.A. Nicholson, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series (London: Messrs Luzac & Co./Cambridge University Press, 1921), 74. al-Ṭabarī does not call the horse an angel, but states that "this was of God's favor and mercy for us." Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 10 vols. (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif bi-Miṣr, 1960), 2: 65.

⁶⁵ In most accounts, the incident occurs in Hyrcania (Gurgān, in the Caspian region). However, in Firdawsī's *Shāh-Nāmāh*, the story takes place in Ṭūs. In fact, in Firdawsī the event progresses very much as in the Yazdī accounts with some minor differences: For example, the horse (*asp-i khunuk*) appears only after the king credits himself for his own healing and fails to pay homage to God for it. The spring is named *Chashmah-i Sū*; when the horse emerges from it, Firdawsī calls it a sea (*daryā*), by which he probably means lake. When he disappears into the water, Firdawsī calls it "*chashmah-i lāzhūrd*" (azure-colored spring). Here we have the connection with the Yazdī stories' green spring (*chashmah-i sabz*). Blue and green are interchangeable in Persianate literature. Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāh-Nāmāh-i Firdawsī* (Tehran: Mī'ād, 1380/2001), 933-4. Ibn al-Balkhī leaves the geography ambiguous, but explains that the horse emerges from the desert (*az ṣaḥrā dar āmad*) while Yazdigard is sitting in his palace (*kushk*). Ibn al-Balkhī also omits the motif of the bleeding wound and healing spring. al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmāh*, 74. Al-Ṭabarī, who credits the story to "knowledgeable people of Persian lineage," omits the entire bloody nose/magic spring scenario and has the horse approach the gate of the king's fortress in Gurgān. The king comes out to subdue him and receives the deadly boot in the chest: "The horse turned his back to him and struck him a blow in his chest, which he died from (*istadbara-hu al-farasu fa-ramaḥa-hu 'alā fu'ādi-hi ramaḥat^{am} halaka min-hā makāni-hi.*)" al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 2: 63-5. Also see discussions in Shahbazi, "Yazdegerd I.", A. Shapur Shahbazi, "The Horse that Killed Yazdegerd "the Sinner", " in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hanns-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003), 356-7.

“possessor of swift horses.”⁶⁶ While it is clear that the Yazdī authors wished to use this old story to reiterate the ancient warning against royal abuses and injustices as al-Ṭabarī and Firdawsī had done, the key point is that they picked up on the motif of water to redirect the flow of that tale into the watercourses of their own city’s history. The earlier renditions of Yazdigard I’s history never mentioned Yazd; by introducing this innovation into the story, the Yazdī historians were able to center Yazd in the moral cycle of royal history. The wicked king’s healing begins at Yazd, where the region’s climate triggers his repentance. For the Yazdī storytellers, the magical green spring and its nymphic (or angelic) quadruped clearly comprise an extension of the good climate (*āb va havā*, literally “water and air”) of Yazd, which spreads through a network of subterranean (magical) channels that radiate outward from Yazd into distant territories, where it has the power to test the true depth of the king’s repentance. This *āb va havā* possesses the power to heal as well as the power to exact retribution for moral recidivism. Ultimately, we learn, the waters do not heal the body of the king, but rather the body of the land, from which they have purged the epidemic of tyranny and greed. This power to heal the realm’s injustices, which resides in Yazd’s blessed waters, projects far into the other provinces of the realm. Here we find an example of the “universalizing” mode of narration, which I termed “projection” in the Introduction;⁶⁷ Yazd extends its boundaries far beyond its walls and makes itself a central actor in the realm. As I will highlight in the next chapter, Yazd’s *āb va havā* functions as a key agent in Alexander the Great’s story of empire building as well. In

⁶⁶ Shahbazi, "The Horse That Killed Yazdagerd," 358-60.

⁶⁷ This concept was introduced on page 35.

that case, however, *āb va havā* serves as a centering agent for the city by means of an “absorptive,” localizing mode of narrative emplotment.

Meanwhile, the text goes on to tell of the king’s son, Bahrām Gūr, who takes over the project of beautifying Yazd, but not before inserting a pithy interpretation of Yazdigard’s story, which is preceded by the rubric “*nuktah*” (point):

They have related that since the founder of this realm was Yazdigard at first — due to the extent of his tyranny, they called him Yazdigard “the Sinner” (*bazah-kār*)⁶⁸—the people of this *vilāyat* always have a share of tyranny. However, any person in this city who approves of tyranny will not see happiness in his life and fortune; if he does not turn away from tyranny, in a short while his life and fortune will expire. This truth has been witnessed repeatedly.⁶⁹

Following his predecessors, Mufīd, explicitly intends for this anecdote to serve as a model for the rest of the work. Despite the healing waters’ power to wash away Yazdigard’s oppression, the residue of his tyranny poisons the land. As such, this episode initiates the rhythm of historical time in which men’s greed introduces strife into the city’s community and interrupts Yazd’s natural flow of benefits, a state of affairs that only pure-hearted folk can reverse, often with the intercession of otherworldly beings. Water serves not simply as a literary metaphor for benefit/blessing, but also, concretely, as an actual vehicle for benefits’ manifestation in the land. Even so, in the Yazdī historian’s mythology, the episode of Yazdigard’s primordial poisoning of the land begets historical time, the medium in which narrative can take shape. Moreover, it introduces the form that the work will take, i.e., a mirror for princes, which presents ethical advice for rulers and notables through examples of just and unjust behavior. (We will return to this point later in this chapter [page 156])

⁶⁸ This title was common in early Islamic sources that borrowed from Sasanid-era sources, such as al-Ṭabarī, who called him “al-Athīm.” See: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 2: 63-8. Also see discussion in Shahbazi, “Yazdegerd I.”

⁶⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 1: 15.

and then in more detail in chapter 2.) Thus, the history of Yazd is the history of the cycling between periods of justice and injustice, which Mufīd presents as being mirrored in the flowing and obstruction of benefits, the natural resources of the land.

The Sāvah Sea: Water in Mythic Geography

Under the oversight of Yazdigard's just and heroic son, Bahrām Gūr, Yazd's potential comes to be realized. Bahrām Gūr and his own son, Yazdigard II (r. 438-57 C.E.), supervise the construction of key canals, and urban and agricultural infrastructure, such as fortifications, bazaars, a *ḥammām*, fire-temples, and farming villages. Mufīd provides a brisk abbreviation of his predecessors' full account:

[Yazdigard II] stayed in Yazd and had two generals accompanying him. One was named Baydār and the other, 'Aqdā. They founded the two villages, Baydah and 'Aqdah, respectively. They say that another of Yazdigard's generals founded Maybud. These three aforementioned villages were built on the shores of the Sāvah Sea (*Daryā-yi Sāvah*), which was outside of Yazd. The Sāvah Sea extended from Sāvah to Hamadan and to Yazd. The village of Bārjīn [near Maybud] was a port on this sea. One of the signs (*'alāmāt*) of the manifest-birth of the Prophecy-sheltering Eminence Muḥammad (blessings of God upon him), was that on the night of his birth, the water of that sea dried up. [Ja'farī adds that the water sank into the ground.]⁷⁰ The second [sign] was that the [fires of the] fire-temples were completely snuffed out (*khamūsh shudan*), especially the fire-temple of Fārs.⁷¹ Third, several battlements (*kunḡarah*) [Ja'farī numbers them twelve] tumbled down from the top of the fractured archway, such that they say *bayt*:

That night when he was separated from his *ān shab kih zi-mādar ū judā shud*

⁷⁰ Ja'farī, *TY*, 13. Ibn al-Balkhī also describes this the wonder of the Daryā-yi Sāvah drying up on the Prophet's birth. al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmāh*, 97. I have not found this event mentioned elsewhere. In his definition of "daryā/daryāchah-i sāvah," Dekhoda only cites Ibn Balkhī's account.

⁷¹ Ironically, although not mentioned in the Yazdī sources, when the sacred fires of Fārs (Ādur Farnbāg and Ātish Bahrām [probably the Iṣṭakhar fire]) came under threat in the early Islamic period, the chief priest (*dastūr dastūrān*) moved them to a remote village of Sharīfābād and Turkābād to the North of Yazd for safe keeping sometime before the eleventh century. See: Mary Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 3-5, Nile Green, "The Survival of Zoroastrianism in Yazd," *Iran* 38 (2000): 115. See also: Mary Boyce, *Zoroastrians: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices* (London: Routledge & Kegan, 1979), 163-5. Not even a hint of this event is mentioned anywhere in the Yazdī histories. In fact, both Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātīb fail to even mention the towns of Sharīfābād and Turkābād. Ja'farī merely mentions Turkābād in passing, but with no reference to the Zoroastrian community or sacred fires there. (Ja'farī, *TY*, 35.)

mother,
the whole world was freed from calamity. *'ālam hamah az balā rahā shud*

The keen fire of Fārs died *ham ātish-i tīz-i Fārs murdah*
and the dark waters of Sāvah were carried off. *ham āb-i siyah-i Sāvah burdah*⁷²

Afterward, Mufīd backtracks to fill in the rest of the story of the Sasanian dynasty, all the way up to Yazdigard III's undignified death. This event brought four centuries of Sasanian rule to a close and made way for the new Muslim dispensation to take root in the lands of Iran.⁷³ Before he finishes this history, however, with the passage quoted above, Mufīd provides a quick preview of the beginning of the Islamic age. The effect is that Islam appears as the inevitable solution to the Sasanian problem. Here, Mufīd puts these early Yazdī villages to work; he uses them to jump directly to the birth of the Prophet, drawing a clear line from the affairs of the Sasanian monarchs, who first built the Yazd territory, to the new Islamic era. The Prophet's birth extinguishes the ritual fires of the old religious order and topples the emblems of the imperial order at the same time that it transforms the geography of the realm. Here again, the role of water in the narrative is significant; the transformation of the moral, religious, and political order, which the Prophet's birth had triggered were mirrored in a transformation in the hydro-geography of the region. The same interconnected bodies of water, which had previously enforced the ethical conduct of Yazdigard I and ensured the flow of benefit to the land were reconfigured at the moment of the

⁷² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 16-17. Mufīd's account here is compressed collation of TY and TJY and does not significantly differ from the earlier versions. See: Ja'farī, *TY*, 13-14, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 31-2.

⁷³ Curiously, when Mufīd later recounts the end of the Sasanian dynasty, he quickly summarizes the famous story of Yazdigard III's murder in Khurāsān at the hands of a rebellious miller and leaves out the familiar detail in which the miller hurls the emperor's lifeless corpse into a mill's canal, a motif that is ubiquitous in all other accounts. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 34-5. Ja'farī also fails to mention this detail (Ja'farī, *TY*, 15.) Aḥmad Kātīb is the only one of the three Yazdī authors who reports that the miller stripped Yazdigard naked and hurled him into the canal (*khazīnah-i āb*): Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 52.

Prophet's birth. Water would continue to shuttle blessings from the mountains to the city and its people, but the conveyances would be re-consecrated—or more accurately—properly consecrated in the name of Islam, in the service of the city's pious, Muslim architects. They would be no less magical.

When Mufīd finally reaches the Arab invasions and the fall of the last Sasanian monarch, he relates that:

the people of the city and the *vilāyat* were brought to honor by the nobility of Islām and became believers and monotheists. They placed mosques and places of worship in the city and surrounding neighborhoods and villages.⁷⁴

He then adds:

and there were only a very few of the Zoroastrians (*majūs*) who did not abandon the confessional community (*millat*) of their fathers and ancestors; not being honored by the nobility of Islām, they remained in the old way of perdition (*ḡalālat*) and accepted the *jizyah*. To this day, Zoroastrians remain in Yazd and the *vilāyat*.⁷⁵

In fact this last passage marks one of the few occasions when Mufīd references the Zoroastrian community in region. Thereafter, aside from their strategically placed appearances in a small handful of anecdotes (see pages 79-86), the *majūs* remain conspicuously absent from the text.

Mount Midvār: Connecting the waters of life

Next, Mufīd rushes through Umayyad history and the Abbasid Revolution in order to get to the next major event in the city's development, which occurs during the aftermath of the revolution. The author explains that after defeating the Umayyad loyalist, Abu al-ʿAlā, a lieutenant of Abū Muslim, named Aḥmad bin Muḥammad

⁷⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 36.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Zamchī, is given the governorship of Yazd. Once ensconced in that office, he constructs orchards within the city, a new fortress, called Kushk-i Naw, and new neighborhoods—all on the south and east side of the city. In order to sustain these new projects, Mufīd explains that Zamchī taps the waters of a high mountain to the south of the city, called Mount Midvār, and builds a canal:

Midvār, which is a mountain, is in the direction of Mihrījard, to the south. He collected the water that came from that mountain in the spring and he made it flow [in a canal], and he divided it into several branches and brought each to a village. He named that water “Muḥammad Āvard [which literally means Muḥammad Zamchī brought it],” and now they call it Midvār Canal (*Āb-i Midvār*). On the outskirts of Mihrījard, it was divided into fourteen earthen channels (*ṭughār*)⁷⁶ in order to water ten villages: Mihrījard [modern Mihrīz], Mankābād, Sarīzad, Fahraj, Khavīdak, Fataḥābād, Na’īmābād, Maryābād, Pa-yi Kūshk, Khurmīz.⁷⁷ In some years— when it is a wet year— nearly five hundred units (*raqam*)⁷⁸ of water flow from that mountain.⁷⁹

After listing Zamchī’s feats of engineering and urban planning, whose benefits would persist for centuries, Mufīd breaks from the plodding toil of writing history and strolls for some moments among the meadows beneath the mountain, pausing to describe the wondrous source of the benefits that Zamchī had first made available to Yazdīs. Explaining that the water pours down the mountain and bubbles up from cavities located near the bottom, Mufīd reports:

Mount Midvār is an extraordinarily high mountain, at the foot of which, are cavities (*sūrākh’hā*) which contain an orange inside them;⁸⁰ also fish come out with the water from those cavities. The coming of that water begins at Nawrūz and cuts off in the middle of summer. They say that the source of the Āb-i

⁷⁶ Dekhoda defines *ṭughār* (or *tughār*) as a “clay basin (*tasht-i gīlīm*),” but clearly Mufīd does not intend some sort of tub or pot, but rather a watercourse, lined with packed earth, clay pipe, or possibly clay brick.

⁷⁷ There is a problem with chronology here. Elsewhere, Mufīd indicates that Mihrījard, Na’īmābād, Maryābād, and Khurmīz where all established at later dates.

⁷⁸ *Raqam* literally means “mark.” It is possible, that this term was used as a unit of volume measured by the depth of water against a series of vertical marks.

⁷⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 38.

⁸⁰ This sentence is rather puzzling. Perhaps he means “an orange tree”? The editor has printed “*sūrākh’hā* [*kih*] *nāranjī dar ān miyān mīgunjad*,” adding the particle “*kih*” in brackets.

Midvār is from Kāvkhānī-i Iṣfahān. The surplus of the Āb-i Zāyandah-Rūd descends into that desert of Kāvkhānī.⁸¹

These last two intriguing sentences about Iṣfahān’s Zāyandah-Rūd (literally, the “Life-giving River”) beg special attention: The Zāyandah-Rūd waters drain into the Gavkhūnī (Kāvkhānī) salt-swamp, where they languish on the southeast side of Iṣfahān, nearly three hundred and fifty kilometers to the northeast of Yazd, a very great distance away. Furthermore, Mount Midvār stands to the south of Yazd; thus the claim that the waters of Mount Midvār had somehow traveled underground from Gavkhūnī to Yazd, passing beneath the city center before emerging under the mountain, seems a stretch. Clearly, Mufīd is not concerned with geographical accuracy here, but with local lore, which—as is his custom— he introduces with the phrase “they say that (*guyand kih*).” In fact, by doing so he excuses himself of any accountability for the statement’s truth.

Nonetheless, Mufīd recognizes the value of oral lore, and he mobilizes such stories strategically; the inclusion of this kind of information helps to map the mythical geography of the region, which the author employs to rhetorical effect, and not without a bit of irony. As a consequence, Mufīd has turned this mountain in Yazd into an outlet for the blessed waters of the imperial capital’s great river, which non-Yazdīs (and sensible people) had thought simply came to a ignoble and fruitless end in a salt marsh. With this “discovery” or “recovery” of Iṣfahān’s life-giving river in Yazd, we find a return to the motif evident in the course of the Yazdigard I narrative, namely, that Yazd’s water—i.e., its benefit and its jurisdiction—extended, via subterranean, imaginal channels, into and out from other regions of the realm. In this particular case, Mufīd invokes a relationship between Yazd and the imperial capital of his day.

⁸¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 38-9.

Throughout the course of this dissertation, it will become clear that Mufīd and his predecessors were constantly attempting to make Yazd into a political, moral, liturgical, or academic center of the realm. Time and time again, Yazd becomes the origin of essential resources and benefits or, as in the case of the Zāyandah-Rūd, becomes the primary recipient or (inheritor) of benefits originating in other significant centers of the world. This is a schema that appears time and time again throughout Mufīd’s work, here beautifully introduced through the conceit of water.

Culverts and Wormholes: *Jāmi’-i Mufīdī*’s Infrastructure

These episodes in which bodies of water transcend the natural intervals of space and time by magically linking two sites, also serve a narratological function in Mufīd’s work. These “jumps” that water makes mirror the inherently referential logic of the work and provides the reader with a window onto its nonlinear superstructure; in a metapragmatic way, they offer a template for how the work should be read. On almost every page, Mufīd has diligently left explicit and implicit references to other bits of narrative, biographical notices, or topographical descriptions scattered about the text. Every story can be connected to every other within just a few degrees of separation. These are wormholes through which the reader can traverse expanses of space, time, and text in a flash. I will assert that this particular aesthetic that Mufīd has designed to represent his city, which requires this indexical experience of reading, has an effect on the reader’s assimilation of Yazd’s history as a whole. The nonlinear experience of reading creates a sense of the city’s topography and history that transcends the sum total of the anecdotes and descriptions included in the text. Although the reader can only encounter the episodes that comprise the work one at a time, this alinear

experience of reading an interconnected network of episodes engenders a cognitive emergence, in which the reader can *sense* the whole phenomenon of the city's history and space in its entirety, beyond any of particulars presented at any one moment or place in the text. Here we are witnessing the chronotopic experience of the city that Mufīd represents in the structure of his text. Each of the sites and people featured in the work constitute junctions in a complex network of places and people across time and space, which open on to all the others; each episode in the narrative connects to every other. The reader unwittingly consents to Yazd's centrality in this complex of relationships. The constant compulsion to jump through these textual hyperlinks, which simulate the experience of jumping through space and time, habituates the reader to experiencing the city of Yazd as a network of relationships between peoples and places across time and space, relationships that span far beyond the confines of the city or region.

Returning to Mufīd's musings on Mount Midvār, the author winds down his ramble in the hills, whimsically noting that: "Midvār is an area filled with many trees. In springtime, much greenery, flowers, sweet basil, anemones (*shaqā'iq*) are in its plane and mountain. It is one of the famous places to visit for leisure (*sayr-gāh*) in Yazd."⁸² Beyond relishing the beauty and bounty this mountain brings forth for the benefit of the region's inhabitants, Mufīd makes one last and extremely significant observation, citing local lore about another "resource" found in the fertile soil particular to this mountain. This natural benefit of the land is used for medical remedies:

...and on that mountain are many vipers (*mār-i afī*), which have numerous benefits (*manāfi*). Pharmacists and physicians (*khavvāṣ-khvānān va aṭibbā'*)

⁸² Ibid., 1: 39.

choose it in order to make compounds (*tarkīb*); in all the of the *vilāyats* of Īrān they find many benefits from this viper and some even eat it since there is no better medicine to strengthen male sexual potency (*quvvat-i bāh*)⁸³ than the meat of the viper, which they make into a pill (*ḥabb*). And to that particular kind of viper, which is on that mountain, is attributed several virtuous properties (*khavvāṣ*), which don't exist in other kinds of vipers in other places. One of its properties is this: If one strangles one of these vipers around the neck with a cord and then wraps that cord around the neck of a person who has taken ill with diphtheria (*khināq*), in an hour that person will be delivered of the disease, by God's license, may He be exalted. This has been tested (*tajribah shudah*) repeatedly and [its efficacy] has never been infringed upon (*takhalluf na-namūdah*). His Honor, Ḥikmat-panāh, Mavlānā Sālik al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥamavī, who was ingenious among physicians and was the Galen of his age, said that any time anyone who has been given poison (*zahr*) or else eaten [too much] opium (*taryāk*) and the physicians are out of remedies, if they bring a viper to bite (*zahr zanad*) that person, in time he will find deliverance.⁸⁴

So, in addition to natural resources, such as water, fruits, fish, and refreshing beauty, the well-watered mountain provides these extraordinary creatures, which are unique to this place. More important is that Mufīd considers this local lore important to include in his work. Like the beneficial properties of the very bodies of the snakes, the knowledge of their medical utility is uniquely local, too. By presenting such information, Mufīd maps both the zoological and medical resources abundant in the

⁸³ The word *bāh* can mean lust or the act of sex as well as the material manifestation of those qualities, the semen. It also means "soup." Perhaps there is an etymological relationship between these latter two definitions.

⁸⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 39. Given their deadliness and peculiar shape, the elevated place afforded snakes in medical and magical lore (both positive and negative) is nearly universally around the world. Snakes' prevalence in Persianate medical ideology and practice is no exception. Although I have not discovered anything quite like Mufīd's description of sympathetic magic and medicine here, one can find comparable lore in Henri Massé, *Persian Beliefs and Customs*, trans. Charles A. Messner, Behavior Science Translations (New Haven: Human Relations Area Files, 1954), 200-10, 336-7. For example, on page 208, Massé mentions that "... the head and tail of a snake are cut off and the rest of the body is cooked and eaten. In addition to being an aphrodisiac, this preparation confers immunity against the venom of the snake." On page 333, he describes the preparation of pills made from a particular lizard, which was supposed to restore strength, a remedy that recalls Mufīd's Viagra-snake-pill. Despite their potential benefits, in Persianate epistemology, snakes are usually classified along with other "creeping animals (*junbandigān*)."—venomous or non—such as lizards, amphibians, worms, insects, and arachnids. These are all impure creators created by Ahrīman, the evil deity of Zoroastrian dualist cosmology. Snakes are often considered to be the chosen vessel for a *jinn* and, accordingly, must not be harmed if discovered inside the house. (see especially p. 55). Elsewhere in Mufīd's work, snakes sometimes play a sinister role. In one such story, Sayyid Ḥājī Ḥusayn prevents some women from eating a bowl of yogurt in which a snake had been hidden. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 631.

region, but also the local knowledge that can channel and amplify the advantage of those benefits. As we will explore in chapter 3, squaring the history and prosopography of local knowledge and expertise—in particular, medical and astrological knowledge—with the topography of the region is of particular importance to Muḥīd and his predecessors. For the time being, it is noteworthy that Muḥīd has referenced one of the city’s contemporary physicians, Mavlānā Sālik al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥamavī. Certainly, this illustrious physician’s approval of the remedy lends credibility to the claims he is making. Recalling the above discussion (page 73), the reader should note that this reference also serves a structural function in the work; it serves as a portal to the chapter on Yazd’s physicians, where Mavlānā Sālik al-Dīn Muḥammad is given a full biographical notice, along with his colleagues and predecessors.⁸⁵ This section works to present Yazd as a center of medical expertise and, through countless references and embedded stories, succeeds in rooting that expertise both in the deep history of the region and in its geography itself. Such cross-references running between topographically centered sections of the work and historical/biographical sections are pivotal elements of the book’s foundational infrastructure. By prompting the reader to physically flip across pages of text, these cross-references affect the experience of reading. In so doing, by reading the text in this way, the author forces the reader to reenact, by mimesis, the process of traversing the spaces of the province and the periods of its history.

To be sure, Muḥīd did not derive the structure for his history of Yazd *ex nihilo*.

Almost two centuries before, both Ja‘farī and Aḥmad Kātib also presented the history of

⁸⁵ For a fuller discussion of the physicians in Muḥīd’s work refer to chapter 3, page 422. Also see Section 4 in that same chapter, which deals with the networks of affiliation surrounding the practice of medicine and related arts.

the city as a network of chronotopes. However, neither of the earlier writers does so as reflexively and explicitly as Mufīd does in his work. Mufīd takes great care to leave references and passageways to other sections of his work. Mufīd’s work is more linked up, more networked than those of his predecessors. Moreover, as this last digression on the medical lore of Mount Midvār demonstrates, *Jāmi’-i Mufīdī* constitutes a far more encyclopedic effort. So, not only does Mufīd fit his work with more connections, he provides far more content to connect. Neither of the earlier writers include notices about features of Yazd’s landscape, such as mountains or springs, or local lore about them. Their works focus exclusively on important monuments: mosques, madrasahs, tomb complexes, and the like. By including lore about mountains and trees along with local legends, wonders, and mirabilia about Yazd’s hinterland and by hooking these up with Yazd’s major architectural monuments, Mufīd gives his work a strikingly different character and a different experience of reading. As will become evident as we encounter more of these kinds of material in the course of this chapter, the formal experience of reading Mufīd’s text predisposes the reader to particular hermeneutic postures and perspectives. In other words, Mufīd has embedded the polemical elements of his text in the form of its presentation.

Qanāts: Conveying Names and Narratives

Considering the indispensability of qanāts and cisterns for the life of the city and the primacy they were given in the historians’ account of the city’s fortunes, stories of particular qanāts’ coming into being and naming abound throughout the text. For the Yazdī historians, these “naming” stories become key vehicles through which the authors can siphon narratives of the past from the reservoirs of memory into the

foreground of city's spaces. A pair of notices in the section on qanāts, which is located in the chapter on farming villages surrounding the city, illustrate the point. The first is titled "Qanāt-i Suvá":

Among the articles of this book, it has been written that in the year 504/1110-11, when Sulṭān 'Alā' al-Dawlah Kālinjār established his throne in the region of Yazd, Arslān Khātūn, honorable wife of that *pādishāh* of high rank had a eunuch of the palace (*khvājah-i sara'i*), named Ṣuvāb. This *khvājah* constructed a flowing qanāt named Qanāt-i Ṣuvāb, and to this day it is famous by the name of Qanāt-i Ṣuvá. The inhabitants of the village of Maḥmūdābād drink of its waters.

The second is titled "Abr va Mubārahah":

And also, this Queen Mother (*mahd-i 'ulyā*) had two bondswomen (*kinīz*). One was named Abr, the other, Mubārahah. These two servants (*jārīyah*) built a flowing qanāt, which they named Abr and Mubārahah. Until this day, it is still flowing, and the inhabitants of the Quarter of Khalaf Khān'alī and Mīr Chaqmāq drink their waters.⁸⁶

Both notices relate that these qanāts were constructed by the servants of the powerful Arslān Khātūn, the Saljūq princess who married the Kākūyid sulṭān, who had been given Yazd in exchange for his support of the Saljūqs and his decision to relinquish Iṣfahān. That story appears elsewhere in the text, but it is with these (possibly apocryphal) explanations of the etymology of these qanāt's names that Mufīd is able to pump those longer narratives on Arslān Khātūn into these sites. As the water flows through these canals to nourish the inhabitants, so too does the history surrounding their creation. Qanāts carry water through the ground across the region; the author uses them to conduct the reader across pages of text.

A third example is even more illustrative. This one appears shortly after these entries and concerns a canal called Qanāt-i Shīrīn, toward the city's northwest. The

⁸⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 712.

author presents the story of the qanāt's name through a love story, adorned with verses appropriate to the subject of love's trials.

There is a village on the outskirts of the Qaṣbah-i Ṭayibah Ardakān. In days prior, a drop of water used to issue forth from this spring as from the eye of orphans, with a hundred sighs. The deed of ownership belonged to a Zoroastrian woman named Shīrīn. She was so charming that the full moon was jealous of the glow of her cheek and the burning sun broke into the sweat of bashfulness by the image of her charming face.

Sweet speech that bears off the intellect bears the luster from the sugar-seller	<i>shīrīn-sukhanī kih hūsh mi'barad rawnaq az shakar-furūsh mi'barad</i>
---	--

One coquettish glance—a thousand fights in the era	<i>nāzī u hazār fitnah dar dahr</i>
One look— a thousand killed in the city	<i>chashmī u hazār kushtah dar shahr⁸⁷</i>

By chance, one of her coreligionists (*ham-kīshān*) who had mastered the skill of canal-digging (*muqannī-garī*), stepped into the valley of alienation, setting out from Kirmān, which was the place of his residence, and arrived at this place. When his eye fell upon her moon-figured cheek, the portrait of the sun, the light of whose countenance would illuminate the face of sunshine, and whose musky lock of hair perfumed the fragrance of the seasons—

Her ruby-lips are the signet of the seal of Jamshīd—	<i>lab-i la'lash nagīn-i khātim-i jam</i>
her mouth smaller than the circlet of a ring.	<i>dahān az ḥalqah-i angushtarī kam</i>

On account of her cheek's color, the face of the sky blushes a ruby-color;	<i>az rang-i 'ārīzash ru-yi havā la'l</i>
the curve of her curly locks made him hot to trot. ⁸⁸	<i>kham-i zulfash dar ātish kardah ṣad na'l</i>

Her cheek, the <i>qiblah</i> of the fire-worshippers.	<i>'izārash qiblah-i ātish-parastān.</i>
Her mouth, the desire of the poor.	<i>dahānash ārzū-yi tank-dastān--</i>

His heart became desirous of that Zoroastrian girl (*dut*),⁸⁹ and he rent the garments of patience and fortitude, and he uttered a discouraged sigh saying:

⁸⁷ These verses are playing on the *Shahr-Āshūb* (City-Tumult) genre of versification, in which the poet praises the beautiful features and masterful work of each of the craftsmen of the bazaar. In that variety of poetry, the beauty of each craftsmen is so great that it causes a tumult in the city. Here, the object of beauty is not the sugar-seller as it would be in a *Shahr-Āshūb* verse, but Shīrīn (whose name means “sweet”). The author is comparing her beauty to the sweetness of the sugar-seller's goods. Shīrīn's beauty is so sweet that it disrupts the peace in the city.

⁸⁸ A more literal translation is: “the curve of her curly locks set a hundred horse-shoes aflame.” This is a fairly standard idiom for impatience.

⁸⁹ Dekhoda gives the definition of “*dut*” as “*dukhtar dar gūyish-i Kirmānshāh* (girl in the dialect of Kirmānshāh.)” Mufīd's use of the term demonstrates that its currency was not limited to Kirmānshāh in the seventeenth century. The full phrase reads: “*dut-i zardushti-nizhād*” (girl of the Zoroastrian lineage).

She curled the lock of hair and the affairs of my heart were done for *zulf-rā barham zad u kār-i dilam yak-bārah shud*

rational people think that my chains of lovesick-madness were broken. *‘āqilān fikrī kih zanjīr-i junūnam pārah shud*

He made something of his obsession (*dil-bastagī*) known to her. When Shīrīn saw him tangled in the bonds of her locks, she opened the sweet sugar of her lips and said, “You will reach the entrance to the heart when the execution of this qanāt has been attempted and when the mouth of hope of the thirsty lips of this dry riverbed have been sated and this place becomes fit for cultivation.” When the Zoroastrian well-digger from Kirmān heard tidings of union (*viṣāl*) [with the girl], he bound the belt of striving (*kamar-i ijtiḥād*) about the waist of his soul and informed all of his colleagues. They began laboring toward that task. In little time, they brought four units (*raqm*) of water. The hand of desire extended to the embrace of the tender beloved and he embraced her tightly. And this place became known and famous by the name Qanāt-i Shīrīn.

In that village, they built a mosque. In the year 711/1311-12, one of the Muslims spread two gorgeously colored and costly *zīlū* carpets, which remained until 1085/1674-5 in extremely pristine condition. Every day, the believers would stand at the top of that, following the customs of ritual obligations.

And at the time of writing in Hyderabad, Mullā Muḥammad Ardakānī, whose penname (*takhalluṣ*) is Fadāī, was present. He said that at the head of the spring of the same place, is a white poplar tree (*dirakht-i padah*), which God (*Qādar-i Ḥaqīqī*) caused to grow with the hand of power and the gardeners of wisdom cultivated it with kind irrigation. The length of its trunk is twenty *zar*⁹⁰ [roughly 68 feet/ 21 meters].⁹⁰

The primary lesson Mufīd expects his readers to draw from the story is that this qanāt, which came to be dug because of the “love story” between Shīrīn and the well-digger, allowed the village to thrive and, consequently, enabled the construction of a mosque. The lasting benefit of water is evidenced by the presence of the ancient tree—a ubiquitous symbol of manifest blessings in the land, inherited from pre-Islamic

⁹⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 724-26.

religion⁹¹ — which still stands on the site, and the prayer carpets, which had not worn thin despite (or perhaps because of) three centuries of pious prostrations.

The tale is tinged with irony and not a little parody. This Shīrīn character obviously echoes the figure of the rather clever and spirited Shīrīn from the well-known mystical romance love, *Khusraw and Shīrīn* or *Farhād and Shīrīn*, which the later two Yazdī historians recount in highly condensed form in their chapters on the Sasanian kings.⁹² Clearly, the well-digger is supposed to be recall the character of Farhād, the poor and moral architect (or well-digger) from that romance. The tragic love story between Farhād and Shīrīn stands at the very center of that story. In Mufīd’s telling, the well-digger possesses none of Farhād’s noble characteristics, and there is certainly no element of tragic romance in this story. Here, the well-digger simply lusts after Shīrīn. She capitalizes on his unslakable desire and convinces him to dig a well for her community in return for her affection. Even if this libidinous yokel and his moon-faced beloved⁹³ cannot offer the same kind of moral lessons that the legend of Shīrīn and Farhād could provide, Mufīd still uses their tale to effect. He weaves this story from this alien community into the tapestry of Yazd’s salvation history: Unbeknownst to the Zoroastrians, their affair paves the way for the development of a robust Muslim village,

⁹¹ Zoroastrians revered ancient trees as creations of Amurdad (Ameretat)—protector of plants and health, who was one of the six Amesha Spentas (seven when Ahura Mazda himself is included). Evergreens, such as cypresses, were particularly venerated, but also plane trees and poplars. Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold*, 52. Muslims regularly associated such trees (and the springs nearby) with Muslim saints, and continued their reverence of them.

⁹² None of the Yazdī authors develop Shīrīn’s character at all in their versions of the story of Khusraw Parvīz and Shīrīn; we cannot say that these authors intended the clever characteristics of the Shīrīn from this story about the well-digger to mirror the traits of the more famous Shīrīn. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 29-30, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 42-3. Ja‘farī tells Khusraw’s story without any mention of Shīrīn: Ja‘farī, *TY*, 14.

⁹³ Apparently, Zoroastrian women were considered real beauties among Muslim men; wherever he mentions them, Mufīd describes them with superlative language. It seems unlikely that Mufīd was confessing his own fetish; it’s a trope.

with a mosque. Of course, these infidels could not have known what good they were doing; after all, without Islam, how could they discern right from wrong? Nevertheless, through divine providence, they served as agents of beneficial change in Yazd's landscape, which enabled the pious and moral activity of the Muslim community later on.

Although they were *kāfirs*, ignorant, and sometimes clownish, the Zoroastrians play an important, albeit decidedly understated role, not only in this anecdote, but also in Yazd's history in general. As already mentioned, Mufīd does not systematically discuss the major Zoroastrian shrines around the city or detail the rites that occurred at them. Nonetheless, it was well known that Zoroastrians practiced certain devotional ceremonies near springs and nearby ancient trees among the mountains outside the city; although it is not known when each of these ceremonies took on their present form.⁹⁴ As we will see in a moment, Mufīd knew something of those rites. Relatedly, it was also well known that the Zoroastrians were the best gardeners and growers of fruit.⁹⁵ With this story and a small handful of others, Mufīd was tacitly recognizing that, despite their misguidedness, the Zoroastrians had a special relationship with the sources of water in the mountains and may have had something to do with making sure the qanāts were filled with water every year, even after the miraculous reconfiguring of the region's natural waterways that resulted from the Prophet's birth.

⁹⁴ See Mary Boyce's chapter on twentieth-century pilgrimages to such shrines around Yazd in Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold*, 236-70. Mary Boyce, among others have written on Anāhīd and her role in particular local Zoroastrian devotions at mountain springs: Mary Boyce, "Bibi Shahrbanu and the Lady of Pars," *Bulletin of the school of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 30 (1967), Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 151, 63-4.

⁹⁵ According to the European visitors to the Ṣafavid court, Pietro della Valle and Chardin, Shāh 'Abbās I also brought Yazdī gardeners and farmers to beatify the gardens of Iṣfahān and labor in the surrounding orchards and vineyards. See discussion in: Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 177-8. Also see discussion in footnote 615 in chapter 3.

This point about the Zoroastrians' uniquely beneficial relationship with the region's water becomes more profound once the reader follows the link Mufīd has provided in this anecdote. In the closing sentences, the author recalls his own encounter in Hyderabad with Fadā'ī, a poet from Ardakān, which is a satellite town in the "Majūs-Belt" in the northwest of Yazd province. Mufīd cites this Fadā'ī as an authority on the magnificent old poplar tree that stands as a testament to the inhabitants' horticultural genius and the area's general blessedness. Mention of this poet's *takhalluṣ* sends us immediately to his chapter on contemporary Yazdī poets, where that poet's career is recounted among those of his peers in versification. However, the reference also sends us to the concluding section of the work, on local *mirabila* (*ḥikāyāt-i gharībah va ravāyāt-i 'ajībah*), where the author makes use of Fadā'ī's alleged, eye-witness testimony about the Zoroastrians' rituals at mountain springs and their wondrous gifts with water. Mufīd begins the story, which is about a high mountain called Chakchakū near the village of Kharānaq, by relating exactly when and where he heard it from Fadā'ī. This occurred at the end of the month of Rabī' al-Ākhar, in the year 1085 [July 1674], in the Deccani city of Hyderabad. In fact, this information provides yet another passageway to Mufīd's account of his own travels in India, where the reader can read about his encounters with other Yazdīs in Hyderabad. Fadā'ī's *ḥikāyat* follows, dressed up in Mufīd's own lofty prose and punctuated with his ornamented verses:

Midway up that magnificent mountain a plateau (*suffah*) of extraordinary breadth and height has been built by the power of Divine Perfection. On the roof of that, a single drop of water, like [those which rarely flow from] the eye of heart-hearted beloveds emerges from a hundred narrow crevices and trickles to the foot of the mountain. If a person should reach that place, he obtains as much as he needs for sustenance. If a hundred people should enter—or one can even

imagine five hundred people with livestock and attendants passing through there—by the power of God [the peerless pādishāh] so much water comes that they are utterly drenched. After their going through, just as it was before, occasionally, a single drop trickles in the thirsty mouth of the lip of the valley of disappointment (*gāhī qiṭrah-ī dar kām-i tashnah-i labān-i vādī-i nā-murādī mī'chakad*).

The residents of the pleasant territory of Yazd call that mountain Chakchakū and the Zoroastrians really revere that place; once a year at the appointed time with their wives and gorgeous, sweet-voiced daughters sing, *shī'r*:

All silver-breasted, golden riders, all moon-faced and Pleiades-earringed.	<i>hamah sīmīn-bar u zarrīn-sarvārān hamah mah-rūy u parvīn-gūshvārān</i>
---	---

At the time of pleasure, kissing, and spectacle, like honeycomb, sugar, and smooth wine.	<i>bi-gāh-i 'ishrat u būs u tamāshā chu shahd u shakar u bādah-i guvārān</i>
---	--

The setting sun draws the veil over its face, shy because of their beautiful faces. The moist flower petal hides beneath its emerald green veil out of shame. *shī'r*:

Pursed mouth, round head, and broad eyebrows— a face like a red rose upon a green stem.	<i>dahan tang u sar gird u abrū farākh rukhi chūn gūl-i surkh bar sabz-shākh</i>
--	--

Sugared smile, strait, like sugarcane— delicate, pleasant, elegant, sweet, moist.	<i>shakar-khandah-i rāst chūn nay-shakar laṭīf u khush u naghz u shīrīn u tar</i>
--	---

Each laugh that emerges from her lip pours salt on the heart of the love-weary.	<i>bi-har khandah-ī k-az lab angīkhtī namak bar dil-i khastagān rīkhtī</i>
--	--

They go there and offer a sacrifice (*ghurbānī*). They feast and engage in pleasures. After they finish they return to their homes.⁹⁶

Mufīd never names the shrine on that mountain, but he is no doubt describing the most frequented shrine in Yazd province, which today's Zoroastrians call Pīr-i Sabz (Green Shrine).⁹⁷ Pīr-i Sabz is nestled in a swath of greenery that grows around a pool of water, which drops from out of the barren rock face of Mount Chakchakū, which today's inhabitants of the region simply call "Chakchak."⁹⁸ The account in *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* offers

⁹⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 828-9.

⁹⁷ It is unclear when this latter name became current.

⁹⁸ See Mary Boyce's description of Pīr-i Sabz in Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold*, 255-62. Boyce discusses that shrine's relationship to the not-too-distant shrine of Banu-Pars in Boyce, "Bibi Shahrbanu," 40-42. The two shrines share some legends in common. Both were most likely originally temples to Anāhīd, the water deity. Today, Zoroastrian shrines such as these are called *pīrs*. *Pīr* is a word borrowed from Muslim shrine terminology, to describe a shrine where a saint (*pīr*) is interred; however, Zoroastrian *pīrs* are

little information indicating that Mufīd’s informant had actually witnessed the Zoroastrian’s pilgrimage to Chakchakū. Nevertheless, Zoroastrian pilgrimages to the mountain shrines around Yazd, including Pīr-i Sabz, to this day do involve ritual sacrifices and merry making, just as Mufīd describes.⁹⁹ If the report conveys little concrete information about the Zoroastrians’ practices, Mufīd nonetheless quietly provides his readers with a sly etymology of the mountain’s name, Chakchakū: In describing the paltry drip-drop of water that conceals the mountain’s secret torrent, twice he chooses the verb *chakīdan*, which means to trickle. By providing an explanation for the name of his local landmark, which translates “Drip-drop,” the author draws the Zoroastrian mythology and custom into the moral lessons for his own, Muslim, community.

Once he has connected the Zoroastrian’s ritual sacrifice to the wonder of this magic mountain, Mufīd offers a second marvel from Fadā’ī’s catalog, this one concerning the nearby farming village of Mazra‘ah-i Vāshah, which is currently also a stronghold of Zoroastrianism:¹⁰⁰

Mullā Muḥammad Ardakānī [Fadā’ī] also related that on the outskirts of Kharāniq, among the dependencies (*a‘māl*) of the territory of Yazd there is a farming village, known as Mazra‘ah-i Vāshah¹⁰¹. . . Every week, on Wednesday, when—with the assistance of His Divine Excellency— the disk of the sun rises in the eastern horizon and makes the world luminous until the time when the eyes of the noblemen of the day are deprived of seeing the Lord (*Khusraw*) of the fixed and wandering stars [i.e., the sun], by the perfect divine power, water flows out from the qanāts and springs and gathers in a reservoir (*iṣṭikhar*). And from the reservoir it goes to the orchards and fields and the farms get watered.

never tomb-shrines; the corpses of all persons are considered polluting in Zoroastrian doctrine. Therefore, all human remains are disposed of by exposure rather than burial. Similarly, Zoroastrian ritual visitations to *pīrs* are termed *ḥājj*.

⁹⁹ See, for example, Mary Boyce’s accounts of the pilgrimages (called *Hajj*) to Pīr-i Hrisht, Pīr-i Banū Pars, and Pīr-i Sabz, which she witnessed in the 1960s: Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold*, 243-62.

¹⁰⁰ Today the village is known simply as Mazra‘.

¹⁰¹ Mufīd includes here information about the present holder of the deed for this land, an Ardakānī Muslim, whose name is Mavlānā Shamā son of Ḥājī ‘Alī Rīzā Ardakānī.

During the remainder of the night, it becomes hidden in holes in the ground and qanāts. And not a drop of water reaches the mouths of the young plants.¹⁰²

Naturally, Mufīd does not explicitly credit the Zoroastrian communities' rituals with maintaining the viability of these springs. Nevertheless, his juxtaposition of stories does imply a tenuous correlation between the two. At the same time, whatever the immediate cause of the waters' emergence from the ground, this last passage positions the diurnal flows of water within the cosmic cycling of God's universe. Indeed, the words tacitly echo the sentiments of the opening verses of Sūrah 55 (al-Raḥmān) of the Qur'ān, which characterize God's creation as a perfectly calibrated system, with intricate, interlocking, parts that turn in harmony and balance, producing favors for the benefit of humankind.¹⁰³ With his bundle of anecdotes, Mufīd argues that it is the God of the Qur'ān who causes the waters to emerge in regular cycles, linked to the turning of the heavenly spheres. God is the origin of these benefits, which provide the farms of this region with their daily refreshment from these flows of water. These streams are brought into being neither by the ingenious machines of hydraulic engineering, nor by any ritual observation. Technology or ritual observance might provide a means of accessing and delivering water, but these activities succeed only "with the assistance of His Divine Excellency."

¹⁰² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 830.

¹⁰³ These verses read: "God, The Merciful, has taught the Qur'ān. He created mankind and He has taught him explanation: The sun and the moon by calculation. The stars and the trees bow down. He raised the sky and set the balance lest you transgress the balance so you weigh with justice and not short-change the balance. And the earth, he put it in place for all beings, in it fruits date palms fitted with coverings and grains with stalk and sweet herbs. But which of your lord's benefits do you both deny? (*al-rahmānu 'allama al-Qur'āna / khalaqa al-insāna / 'allama-hu al-bayāna / al-shamsu wa al-qamru bi-ḥusbānⁱⁿ / wa'n-najmu wa'sh-shajaru yasjudāni / wa's-samā' rafa'a-hā wa waḍa'a al-mīzāna / allā taṭghawā fi al-mīzāni / wa-aqīmū al-wazna bi'l-qisṭi wa lā tukhsiru wa al-mīzāna / wa al-arḍa waḍa'a-hā li'n-nāma / fi-hā fākihat^{un} wa'n-nakhl dhātu al-akmāma / wa'l-ḥabbu dhū al-'aṣfi wa'r-rayḥān / fa-bi-ayyi ālā'i rabbi-kumā tukadhhibāni*)"

These examples have demonstrated that, in Mufid’s eyes, water comprises the first physical manifestation of divine blessing in the land; human beings are expected to use their agency to multiply these blessings, disseminate them, and thereby bring their world to prosperity, knowledge, and justice. At the same time, however, the beneficial powers of these waters are not at the mercy of human agency; indeed, they are instruments of heavenly decree. This is a lesson that the erring King Yazdigard I learned the hard way, from the two rear hooves of the horse from the Green Spring. Men, although instrumental in the unfolding of divine benefit, are a good distance downstream from the source of divine emanations, and they suffer the consequences whenever they stop up the flow of benefits with selfish or tyrannical deeds, or—to borrow the phrase from the Qur’ānic Sūrah cited above: “And he set the balance lest you will transgress the balance.”¹⁰⁴ Certainly, God intended the waters of the region to benefit Yazd and her inhabitants, but the benefits Yazdīs enjoyed on their account were meant to serve the greater interests of the world through the organ of the rightly guided sovereign. The consequences of hoarding benefits for mean, local ends were catastrophic, as the next anecdote relates.

Flood and Famine: Aqueous Retribution

If Mufid had deployed Yazdigard’s story in order to recollect Yazd’s original act of aqueous retribution, he chose this next story from the early Šafavid period—Yazd’s more recent history—in order to demonstrate that the dangers of interfering with divine benefits for selfish ends were quite real and imminent. This anecdote constitutes

¹⁰⁴ “*wa waḍa‘a al-mīzān allā taṭghawā fī al-mīzān*” (Q:55:7-8)

the notice about a *ribāt* (frontier hostel),¹⁰⁵ puzzlingly called Ribāt-i Pusht-i Bādām (Ribāt of the Almond Shell), which stands roughly ninety-five kilometers away from the northeastern provincial town of Kharānak. This ribāt is located on the desert road to Ṭabas, toward Khurāsān in the northeast:¹⁰⁶

In this quarter are two springs of water. One is brackish (*shūr*) and the other is sweet (*shūrīn*). The inhabitants had become extremely rich. To nastiness and wicked-heartedness they added rudeness, and they behaved with none of the ins and outs of acceptable behavior. In the year [blank in text]¹⁰⁷ ... when the Successful Emperor of the Firmament, Excellency, *bayt*:

Farīdūn of pomp; Jamshīd of rank
Alexander of glory; Darius of sheltering protection

Farīdūn ḥashmatī Jamshīd jāhī
Sikandar shawkatī Dārā panāhī

the sovereign, son of the sovereign, Shāh ‘Abbās I, Bahādur Khān, in an effort to conquer Dār al-Qarār Qandahār, set off from Iṣfahān, pulled up on the reins of his resolution, and veered off the Yazd Road. The retinue of world splendor, shelter of union, inclined toward Ribāt-i Pusht-i Bādām, and raised the roof of tent and dwelling up to the zenith of the paths of the sun and moon. The foolish inhabitants filled in the sweet qanāt with sand; they sent their flocks and livestock to some far-away place, and they stashed any food and drink they had into holes in the ground and secret hiding places. Thus they concealed all this from any observers. Because of the scarcity of water and because provisions could not be replenished, the most favored ones of the carpet of honor and the exalted members of the sublime *urdū*, hastened before the righteous Shāh and said:

“O Sunshine of the land! O Shadow of God!
[The shade] of your parasol is more auspicious
than that of the Phoenix!”

k-ay āftāb-i kishvār va ay sāyah-i khudāy
maymūntar-ast chart-i tū az sāyah-i humāy

“Our situation is this: because of the scarcity of food necessary for life and because of the saltiness of the water, sweet life has come to the brink.” The Pādishāh of bounteous glory (*vāfir-iḥtishām*), thereupon explained:

“Through wisdom one can resolve any problem.

bih ḥikmat ḥall-i har mushkil tavān kard

¹⁰⁵ On this term “*ribāt*” see footnote 111 in this same chapter.

¹⁰⁶ See Afshār’s discussion of this *ribāt*’s monuments in Afshār, *Yādgar’hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 188.

¹⁰⁷ Although the manuscripts leave a blank where the date should be, a few lines later, Mufid explains that these events occurred while the Shāh was campaigning to retake the city of Qandahar from the Mughals. This victory was achieved in 1031/1622. (Mufid does not actually detail these events in his chronological section of his work; the volume dealing with the history of the Ṣafavid dynasty stops in the middle of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign, at around 1003 A.H.) Mufid only mentions one other time that Shāh ‘Abbās I visited Yazd, in the year 999/1591, quite a few years before. See Mufid Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 2: 225-8.

Through wisdom one can obtain the gratification of the heart.” *bih hikmat kām-i dil hāṣil tavān kard*

He sought the chiefs and headmen of that area and out of his kindness and care, he spoke with flattering blandishments and his words were like scattering gems. He said, “Would that the servant of the carpet of honor and the armies of victory [be] happy, [free] from of the distress of this dearth of provisions and from this extreme thirst, which makes them like fish flopping in the net anguish.¹⁰⁸ If you try, to the extent that you are able, to supply provisions, and to bring water to the burning lips of the parched, each will become the reflection of kind, generous, royal sentiments, and honored, royal favors and prosperity.” But that impudent assembly, in full agreement, upon the sand [under] the blessed, noble, royal foot, swore an oath, saying: (*bayt*)

“O Prosperous one! May the moon of your rank be far from eclipse!
May the house of your life be inhabited until the era of eternity!” *kām-kārā māh-i jāhat az kasāfat dūr bād*
khānah-i ‘umr-i tū tā dawr-i abad ma‘mūr bād

“The hand of our capability cannot supply the helpless ones with a lot or even a little nourishment. The mouth of our hope is not sweetened by anything but bitter and brackish water.” Because of the extent of his army’s suffering, the victorious emperor was full of contemplation, put his happy foot into the dun horse of the stirrup of desire, and took with him a group of his closest confidants from the blessed carpet, in order to walk around and around the area on all sides, [looking for relief]. Suddenly, his blessed retainers happened upon a bunch of flocks and innumerable camels, which were grazing in the desert. His Excellency summoned the shepherds and caretakers and asked, “Whose sheep are these?” They responded humbly, saying, “They belong to the inhabitants of this place; the desert is full of sheep, beasts of burden, and camels.” His Excellency asked, “Is there to be found any sweet water in this country?” They said, “There are numerous pools and cisterns everywhere and the water of those is so fresh and pure, that it is like a second Euphrates.” His Excellency, summoned the people of that place to his court (Honored Refuge of Human beings) and a second time, pressed them on the matter of food and drink. They responded in accordance with their first answer. The Pādishāh, Refuge of Justice, sent a party out to scout and investigate. Every house they entered, they found full of food. Behind every door they opened, they saw all kinds of drink. And after a little bit of searching, they found the way to the source of the spring of sweet water. Thus, the rising flame of anger ignited the royal fire and he decided to issue a ruling for a general massacre. The confidants of the court of glory stood up and opened up with eulogistic language, saying, “May the Shade of the *Dawlah* of the Shadow of God be everlasting above the divisions

¹⁰⁸ This sentence is missing a verb: “*khudam-i bisāt-i ‘izzat va ‘asākīr-i nuṣrat farjām bā sa‘ādat az nā-yāftan-i āzūqah dar iztirār va az ghāyat-i tashangī chūn māhī dar shabakah-i iztirāb.*” I have supplied the optative form of the verb *būdan* (to be)—“*bād*” at the end of the sentence.

(*mafāriq*) of the inhabitants of the world and may the sunshine of kindness shine down from the pinnacle of nobility and the height of anger: (*shī'r*)

Don't hold back the hand of rule from the populace.
Leave the business of the populace to authority.

dast ri'āyat zi-ra'iyat madār
kār-i ra'iyat bih ri'āyat guzār

The hope of that [was] as follows: He [the Shāh] will forgive the fault and crime of those fools through [the intercession of] us bondsmen and that he extend the pen of forgiveness to the registers of their punishments and that he let go of the way of bloodshed (*az sar-i khūn*) of those who, in reality, had been deserving of punishment and chastisement. Through the entreaties of his intimates and boon companions, the merciful Pādishāh turned from the way of the bloodshed (*az sar-i khūn*) and property of that group. And the extent of it was such that he commanded that caravans and transporters from all corners of the world, who had been making their passage by that road, should no longer traverse it. On this subject, decrees and documents came to be issued in the name of the magistrates and agents of the province (*bih ism-i hukkām va 'ummāl-i mamālik*). Of course, the inhabitants of that place, who had become masters of property and possessions on account of the caravan traffic, remained in that desert (*biyābān*), with a hundred regrets. And this ruling was current (*jārī būd*) until the time when the Seat of Commandment and Throne of Kingship of the region of Iran found adornment by the existence of the Khusraw of Kayvān's rank, the Jamshīd of pomp, the Iskandar of power— (*bayt*) Firmament of the splendor of Shāh Jamshīd's fortune / King of the rank of the moon; throne of the sun¹⁰⁹— Shāh Ṣafī Musavī, Bahādūr Khān. An Earthquake befell the foundations of that ruling and the people took a step in the dry riverbed of that road.¹¹⁰

It is important to understand that while in Arabic and Persian the term “*ribāṭ*” can be used to describe a variety of rather different types of structures or institutions,¹¹¹ in the Yazdī historiography, it fairly consistently signifies a walled settlement on the frontiers of the desert, designed to serve as a hostel for travelers to and from the region. The *ribāṭāt* essentially marked the outermost reaches of the

¹⁰⁹ *falak-i kawkabah-i shāh Jamshīd-bakht / malik-i murtabah-i māh khurshīd-takht*

¹¹⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 662-5.

¹¹¹ For example, depending on the period or geographical region in question, at times the term signifies a military outpost on the frontier with non-Muslims. At other times, it refers to a Sufi hostel, particularly for ascetics. J. Chabbi, "Ribāt," in *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Also see Chabbi's discussion of *ribāṭs* in J. Chabbi, "La fonction du ribat à Bagdad du V e siècle au début du VII e siècle," *Revue des Études Islamiques* xlii, no. 1 (1974). For discussion of the evolution of the *ribāṭ* in relation to the *khānqāh* and *zavīyah* in pre- and post-Tīmūrīd periods see: Mavluda Yusupova, "L'évolution architecturale des couvents soufis à l'époque timouride et post-timouride," in *L'Héritage timouride : Iran - Asie centrale - Inde XVe-XVIIIe siècles*, ed. Maria Szuppe (Tachkent & Aix-en-Provence: L'Institut français d'Études sur l'Asie centrale, 1997), 231-4.

boundaries of the *mamālik* of Yazd, and, as the very first stopping place inside the territory for every caravan traveling through the city from the northeast, their inhabitants must have earned a comfortable living off the merchants who stopped there. They must have been honored by visits of many an illustrious Sufi or scholar passing through. The only *raison d'être* for ribāṭs like Pusht-i Bādām, which stood in the largely barren wastes of the surrounding desert, was the presence of potable water. Only these fortified oasis-villages could sustain the needs of hundreds of pack animals on their way to and from the city. The prosperity the ribāṭ's inhabitants—indeed, its very existence— was due to the fact that that spot had been blessed with a well of potable water. However, as Mufīd would have it, the inhabitants of the ribāṭ were merely stewards of those wells, whose blessings were meant to benefit all those who need them, most especially the Ṣafavid monarch, who was God's agent on earth and instrument of justice. It is certainly understandable that the residents of Pusht-i Bādām would have dreaded the arrival of the Shāh's *urdū*; the soldiers might have wiped out their stores, likely without offering any compensation. But, in Mufīd's judgment, by stopping up these waters for their own selfish ends and attempting to obstruct the royal mission, the ribāṭīs were shirking their duty to the imperial realm and were temporarily hindering the sovereign's ability to protect his land. Furthermore, because the ribāṭ had previously helped enable Yazd's participation in long-distance trade, these inhabitants endangered the region's commercial viability. In the end, the system corrects itself. This theme, in which greed causes people to deliberately destroy the land by blocking up wells, appears frequently in Persianate literature and has a long

history in pre-Islamic mythology.¹¹² In Mufīd's story, because the ribāṭ's inhabitants plug the well to save their supplies from the soldiers, the shāh ends up drowning the locals in their own abundant water. The royal decree spares the wells, leaving the selfish locals plenty of water, but, by diverting all trade, it stops up the source of the people's prosperity. Shāh 'Abbās may as well have stopped up the wells; in the end, the decree transforms the land into a waste.

Mufīd elaborates on this motif of aqueous retribution in his treatment of the two major floods (*sayl/suyūl*) that wrecked large sections of the city, the first in 673/1275, and the second in 860/1456.¹¹³ Both of Mufīd's predecessors did describe the devastation these floods caused, but only Mufīd thoroughly integrates the flood stories into the larger narrative on Yazd's ecology of benefit. In *JM*, the floods are both a natural manifestation of the chaos and tyranny that has taken over the land and, at the same time, a vehicle of blessed retribution, which surges over the city to wash away the sins and depravity that have corrupted the people and defiled the places of Yazd.

The first flood, which occurred during the reign of local Atābayk ruler, 'Ālā' al-Dawlah inundated the city with five days and nights of continuous rain, which precipitated two days of massive overflows of water from the South. The floodwaters blasting through the qanāt channels, overwhelmed every village and suburb where the Mihrījard canals opened (Mufīd lists them: Maryābād, Sar-i Rīg, Ya'qūbī, and

¹¹² For example, the Middle Persian Manichaean tradition in which the demons, Greed (Āz) [who is associated with hunger, thirst, famine, and drought] and Wrath (*Khishm*), awakens inside the first man and women on earth, Gēhmurd (Gayūmard/Kayūmars) and Murdyāg, causing them to fill in springs, damage trees and vegetation, and become greedy and destructive to the earth. There are similar themes in the Zoroastrian *Dēnkard* and *Zand ī Wahman Yazn*. These motifs are discussed in Werner Sundermann, "The Zoroastrian and the Manichaean Demon Āz," in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hanns-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003), 330.

¹¹³ Ja'farī's work was written before the latter flood occurred. Aḥmad Kātib does describe it at the end of his work.

Salghurābād), wrecked part of the city's ramparts, and then plunged through the southern gate of Kūshk-i Naw, where it washed away shops, gardens, houses, and other edifices. What follows is a description of a new settlement, called Sar-i Cham, built on the high ground where the residents of the flooded neighborhoods fled to wait out the deluge. The author offers a possibly spurious etymology of that toponym, explaining that the place had originally been called Sar-i Jam', which literally means "place of gathering"—referring to the gathering of the survivors; here he implies that the local pronunciation of the Arabic word *jam'*, had obscured the story of the new neighborhood's founding, which had initially been preserved in its name.¹¹⁴ The account concludes with the statement that the Atābayk "was thrown into a terror (*harāsīdah*) on account of this flood, and so an illness overpowered his healthy constitution (*mizāj*); after one month, he passed away."¹¹⁵ What follows is the long account of the disastrous rule of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah's successor, the corrupt and reckless Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, which we will discuss at length in chapter 4. The degree to which 'Ālā' al-Dawlah was himself corrupt is left ambiguous in the text, although there is no question that the Yazdī historians' portrayal of him as weak-kneed was by no means intended to be taken positively. But, as will be argued in chapter 3, all three of Yazd's historians, especially Mufīd, were determined to demonstrate that the once glorious and benevolent Atābayks had fallen into decline by the mid-seventh/thirteenth century. In the Yazdī accounts, the flood of 673/1275 introduces a period of turmoil and house-cleaning, during which the old Saljūqid/Atābaykid order is washed away and replaced by the just rule and effective reforms of the Mongol emperor, Ghāzān Khān,

¹¹⁴ The word *cham* exists in New Persian and Dekhoda provides a range of meanings that are unrelated to the Arabic word *jam'*.

¹¹⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*. The entire episode appears on page 1: 90.

whose authority in Yazd and the realm at large was supported by a newly risen cadre of benevolent local sayyids and then, shortly thereafter, the benevolent Muẓaffarid dynasty. The full implications of this argument will be articulated in chapter 3; for now it is sufficient to recognize that Mufīd, and to a certain degree, both of his predecessors, use the commemoration of this flood to frame the controversy over this period of transition in the city’s political and social history.

The later flood of 860/1456 is more immediately illustrative and warrants a full treatment here. Mufīd’s description of the deluge comes after a tedious account of the rivalries between the successors of the Tīmūrid emperor, Shāh Rūkh, and the perpetual state of conflict that had brought ruin to the entire realm. Following a siege of Yazd, conducted by the Tīmūrid prince, Amīrẓadah Khalīl (Mīrẓā Khalīl Sulṭān b. Muḥammad Jahāngīr),¹¹⁶ and then another directed by Amīr Khvājagī,¹¹⁷ a famine devastated the

¹¹⁶ The Yazdī sources (*JM* and *TJY*) go to great lengths to vilify Khalīl Sulṭān, who was a great-grandson of Tīmūr’s son Jahāngīr. After the death of Sulṭān Muḥammad (Shāh Rūkh’s grandson), another Tīmūrid prince, Abū al-Qāsim Babur (Sulṭān Muḥammad’s brother), rushed in to fill the power vacuum—fearful of the Qarā Qūyūnlū advance in Fārs. Abū Qāsim appointed his cousin, Khalīl Sulṭān, to take over Yazd in 856/1452. But Khalīl Sulṭān had his own ambitions in Fārs. After squeezing the Yazdīs for funds, he captured the leading local notables and advanced on Shīrāz, leaving the Amīrak Aḥmad, a grandson of the illustrious Tīmūrid governor of Yazd, Amīr Chāqmāq, who had built many important complexes in the city during his tenure. Sulṭān Khalīl, loosing Shīrāz to the Qarā Qūyūnlū, made for Kirmān, and then decided to besiege Yazd in advance of the Qarā Qūyūnlū arrival there. Amīrak Aḥmad sided with the local notables (including the Nīmatullāhī Shaykh, Amīr Nūr al-Dīn Nīmatullāh). Khalīl Sulṭān is finally chased back to Khurāsān by the son of Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū, Pīr Būdāq. *Ibid.*, 1: 200-2. (The reader should not confuse this Pīr Būdāq, with Jahānshāh’s brother by the same name, who died in 816/1413. Both were sons of Qarā Yūsuf.

¹¹⁷ Amīr Khvājagī was a former ally of the Tīmūrid prince Babur, who had won for himself a measure of independence in the region of Anān earlier. As soon as Pīr Būdāq returned to Iṣfahān, Amīr Khvājagī led a violent siege against Yazd. Although the siege was unsuccessful ultimately, the Amīr plundered and devastated the outlying neighborhoods of Maḥallah-i Madrasah-i ‘Abd al-Qādirīyyah, the Maḥallah-i Muṣallā-yi [‘Aṭīq], Maḥallah-i Chahār Manār, and Ahrīstān. Worse still, Mufīd adds that certain “great sayyids and prosperous notables” (*sādāt-i ‘aẓām va akābir-i nīk-anjām*), who were living outside the city (Amīr Jalāl al-Dīn and his brother, Vuzārat-i Panāh Khvājah Mu‘īn al-Dīn ‘Alī, Khvājah Quṭb al-Dīn, and Khvājah Jalāl al-Dīn) never made it back to the safety of the city walls. Amīr Khvājagī put those notables in chains and took them along to the frontier of Anān, where they disappear from the narrative. *Ibid.*, 1: 203-4.

region between 857-858/1454-5, killing numerous notables of the city.¹¹⁸ According to the texts, only the benevolence of the newly risen Qarā Qūyūnlū sovereign, Jahānshāh, and his son, Pīr Būdāq, could assuage the hardships that Yazd were suffering. The Qarā Qūyūnlūs restored order to the land and gave tax relief to the Yazdīs. Nevertheless, the effects of the previous years' chaos still persisted in the city, and while the city had previously suffered a serious lack of food and drink, the flood of 860/1454 inundated it with too much of a good thing:

In 860/1456, once again, by the decree of God (Qādir-i Mukhtār) the population and subjects of this region, both great and small, having fallen into the sea of anxious reflection and perplexity, were drowned in the sea of extinction (*dar baḥr-i andīshah va izzīrāb uftādah, gharīq-i baḥr-i fanā gashtand*). The dark red-wine (*kumayt*) of the pen enters, swimming in the sea of thought for the sake of explaining this exposition, and goes running upon the vast page, saying that on the first of the month of Farvardīn of the previously mentioned year, the spring cloud wept upon the residents of this lamentable territory and upon their calamity until Wednesday afternoon. On the third of that month, a flood turned its face in the direction of the city from Mount Dūdūlūh.¹¹⁹(*maṣnavī*):

Not a flood that one can call a river. It was an ocean, which had no bounds.	<i>nah-saylī kih ān-rā tavān guft rūd muḥīṭī kih ān-rā karānah nabūd</i>
Like a deluge but worse in a hundred different ways; to cross it by boat, impossible.	<i>chū ṭūfān u ṣad rah zi-ṭūfān battar bi-kishtī nashāyast kardan guzar</i>
When it charged, it uprooted the mountain. Neither building, nor orchard, nor villa is remaining	<i>chu puyah zadī kūh kundī zi jāy 'amārat namāndī u bāgh u sarāy</i>
Of the earth, nothing was visible on account of this flood. The entire surface of the land was made like the sea.	<i>zi-ṭūfān zamīn hīch paydā nabūd hamah ruy-i kishvār chu daryā namūd</i>
Lofty buildings, which used to stand in place	<i>banā'hā-yi 'ālī kih būdī bi-jāy</i>

¹¹⁸ TJJY says 858 A.H. Among the notables who died was Sayyid 'Imād al-Dīn Mas'ūd, the father of Ja'farī's dedicatee, the local vizier, Khvājah Ziyā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, TJJY, 271-2.

¹¹⁹ The name of this mountain is mysterious; I have not been able to identify it. One of the manuscripts of TJJY reads "Dūdūh" or possibly "Dū-lūh" rather than "Dūdūlūh." Even Afshār is silent about it in his *Yādghār'hā-yi Yazd*. Muḥīd explains that most of the qanāts coming from Mīhrījard (i.e., from the South) were destroyed by the flood (see below), so we must assume that this mountain stood to the South.

fell from their foundations with one blow.

*bi-yak şadmah-i ū fatādī zi-pay*¹²⁰

Mufīd then proceeds to explain that “Most of the *qanavāt* that were flowing from Mihrjard and were in the path of the flood were ruined and the *bāghistān* and sixteen neighborhoods from outside the city were leveled so that other than the high buildings, none of the other buildings remained.” He then lists all sixteen of the areas that were destroyed¹²¹ by the three days of flooding and states that many of the mosques and madrasahs, Sufi retreats, bath houses, and wineries, gardens, and hostels were flattened. These were catastrophes that produced communal lamentation, which Mufīd depicts with the following couplets:

Groans and sighs went up on the left and right.

Lamentations and cries arose from men and women.

bar āmad nālah va āh az chap u rāst

zi-mard u zan fighān u na'rah bar khāst

With all the wails and clamor of the old and youthful

appeared signs of the resurrection.

zi-faryād u gharīv-i pīr u barnā

*amārāt-i qiyāmat gasht paydā*¹²²

Thereupon, Mufīd’s narrative takes an important turn:

One of the miracles (*karāmat*) of the imāmzādah, worthy of honor and respect, Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad, which were manifest in that era, was this: All the buildings of the blessed tomb complex (*mazār*) of the chaste imāmzādah were ruined by the coming of the flood, but when the water reached the vicinity of the grave (*qabr*) itself, it drew far away and it performed the ritual of circumambulation from afar (*az dūr marāsim-i ṭavāf bi-jā āvardah*) and it didn’t come near to the blessed sepulcher (*zarīḥ-i mubāarak*). In such an event, which serves as such edifying moral lesson (*vāq‘ah-i ‘ibrat-bakhsh*), not a single person was injured; still, no one had anything other than the shirts on their back. (*ammā, bi-ghayr az khirqah kih pūshīdah būdand, mālik-i chīzī nabūdand*).¹²³

¹²⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 207. The events are also described in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 265-7.

¹²¹ These are enumerated in the text: “1. Dahūq-i A‘lā (upper), 2. Dahūq-i saflā (lower), 3. Kūchah-i Bāgh-i Ṣufiyān, 4. Iskandarīyah, 5. Bāgh-i Kamāl, 6. Muṣallā-i ‘Atīq, 7. [BLANK]-i ghāzīyān [probably maḥallah-i Ghāzīyān- see 3: 542- “In the same neighborhood outside the city referred to as “Ghāzīyān], [The text omits number 8], 9. In the Madrasah-i ‘Abd al-Qādirīyah, 10. Behind the Bāgh-i ‘Izzābād, 11. Kūchah-i Ḥaẓīrah, 12. Chahār Manār, 13. Sar-i Rīg, 14. Kūchah-i Naw, 15. Kūchah-i Kunj, 16. Sar-i Pulūk.” Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 208.

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ *Ibid.*

The moral that Mufīd wishes to relate is that the imāmzādah’s tomb was the only blameless site in the city, the rest of which had become sullied by years of intrigue, corruption, and impiety. Mufīd’s account is actually quite different than that of Aḥmad Kātib’s account of the miracle, which does not even mention Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s tomb among the spared tombs. There, the other the saints’ tombs are spared, but not Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s tomb.¹²⁴ Moreover, Mufīd upgrades Aḥmad Kātib’s characterization of the story from a *gharībah* (wonder) to a full-blown *karāmah* (miracle). In Mufīd’s redaction, not only do the floodwaters spare the saint’s remains, but, behaving like a disciple of the entombed saint, the water actually makes a *ziyārat* (ritual visitation) to his tomb. As an ‘Alid descendant of the Prophet Muḥammad, Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad is a blessed being, whose purity and proximity to the divine mind parallels that of the water itself; in fact, the imāmzādah’s blessing is of an even higher order. As we will discuss later, Aḥmad Kātib certainly gives Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad a saint’s *tarjamah* later in the work, but with this passage we can catch a glimpse of Mufīd’s attempt to relegate the realm of miraculous deeds to particular lines of ‘Alid descent. For now, it is important that the pairing of saints’ blessings and aqueous ones is a central theme in Mufīd’s work, about which there is much to say. Here the reader must follow Mufīd’s references to this Imāmzādah’s *tarjamah* and his description of the tomb complex, both of which appear hundreds of pages afterward. Before doing so, let us complete Mufīd’s narrative of the story.

¹²⁴ Aḥmad Kātib reports: “One of the wonders (*gharā’ib*) of the imāmzādah, was this: when it reached the blessed tombs, it destroyed the buildings, but it didn’t corrupt the dust of the graves of the upright and dear ones (*gard-i qabr-i ṣūlahā va ‘azīzān nagasht*).” He then lists the tombs that were not corrupted: Imāmzādah-i Ma‘šūm, Sayyid Ḥājī Nizām al-Dīn Ishāq al-Vā‘iz, al-Ḥamavī, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 277-8.

Following this miracle story, Mufīd brings the account back to the mundane world. He explains that the triumphant sovereign, Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū, learns of Yazd’s hardship. As a result, “some of the sayyids and people of merit and notables and nobles of the territory of Yazd came into the shelter of the court of the sulṭān.” A delegation was sent to Jahānshāh’s court, and Jahānshāh exempted the inhabitants of the territory of Yazd from tax obligations.¹²⁵ Upon the delegation’s return to Yazd, however, Yazd’s situation returned to hardship. The revenue collectors (*muḥaṣṣilān*) began exacting oppressive payments again.¹²⁶ The Mufīd reports that:

The state of things was that in that time, because of the destruction and devastation of the flood and the ruin of the districts and settlements, none of the residents there possessed a thing.¹²⁷ Through the procurement of taxes (*bi-ḥuṣūl-i mawṣūl*), in the short span of a single day the revenue collectors (*taḥṣildārān*) obtained the aforementioned funds from the subjects [blank]. Praise God, after a short period, through the grace of justice of the Ṣafavī sulṭāns, the ensign of that territory of heaven’s station...

The end of the last sentence is missing, but the passage that follows (not quoted) consists of effusive and hyperbolic praises of the Ṣafavid shāhs from Ismā’īl to Shāh Sulaymān and suffices to fill in the blanks. In no uncertain terms, Mufīd presents the Ṣafavids here as the saviors of Yazd. In fact, this passage brings the first volume of *JM* to its conclusion and heralds the beginning of Volume II, which deals with the history of the Ṣafavid dynasty. Despite the Qarā Qūyūnlū sulṭāns’ relatively good intentions, they failed to make good on their promises to return the land to justice. Only the Ṣafavids

¹²⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 208-9.

¹²⁶ In her summary of Aḥmad Kātib’s take on this disastrous period in Yazd’s history, Isabel Miller says: “The moral was clear. Good government means cultivation of the land and security for the people; bad government will, if left unchecked, result in disaster, even in so prosperous a place as Yazd.” Miller, “Local History in Yazd,” 78.

¹²⁷ Text reads: “*hīch-yak az sākinān-i ānjā mālik-i [BLANK] nabūdand.*” I am reading *chīzī* (a thing) in the blank space because this is the same phrase Mufīd uses on previous page.

would do so.¹²⁸ In any case, Aḥmad Kātib, who wrote his work in honor of the Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū, makes no mention of the period of renewed duress for Yazdīs.¹²⁹

All of the city's historians organize their narratives of Yazd's history around these catastrophic deluges, momentous occasions upon which the mountains drown the community with the "waters of life," the very benefit that had first made way for life in the region and had sustained them all along. The floods instigate major changes in the city's political history in addition to changes in the urban morphology. Each author takes the opportunity to figure this wiping clean of the city as an episode of direct intervention by the divine benefactor and a moment of renewal. But more importantly, Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd both capitalize on this characterization of floods to make the events engage with a polemic about just rule. Both authors borrow a little of this divine benefit, which descends from the mountains, and distribute it to the monarchs of the current ruling house. Just kings not only wash away injustice and iniquity by means of their wisdom and good governance, they also prevent floods from happening. We will revisit this important notion of good governance as kingly benefit in section 4 of this chapter, and again in section 7. Before doing so, we should note that all the Yazdī historians also take the opportunity to distribute some of the deluges' beneficial power to saintly figures, who also surface in these flood narratives and play an leading role in steering the city's fate, as in the case of Sayyid Abū Ja'far Muḥammad. Here, too, the authors engage in polemics. Space is not available here to explore the

¹²⁸ Curiously, here Mufīd completely ignores the Aq Qūyūnlū dynasty. The Aq Qūyūnlūs vanquished the Qarā Qūyūnlūs and ruled in western Iran for half a century, until Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī, a descendent of the Aq Qūyūnlū family, defeated them in the early sixteenth century and replaced them with his own line.

¹²⁹ See Isabel Miller's interpretation of Aḥmad Kātib's account in Miller, "Local History in Yazd." I agree with her reading, which posits the arrival of the Qarā Qūyūnlūs as the beginning of a new era of prosperity in Yazd.

particulars of that polemic, but we will do so in chapters 3 and 4. For now, our task is to study the benefits particular to saints, namely *karāmāt* (miracles) and *barakah* (charismatic blessing). By studying how Mufīd and the earlier authors work saints' blessings into Yazd's soil and Yazd's history, the next section uncovers what share of Yazd's "water of life" belongs to them.

3. Barakah: Saints and Sayyids

Mufīd and his predecessors each make an explicit connection between the primal waters, which sustain life in Yazd, and the most saintly of Yazd's holy figures, the sayyids, the direct descendants of the Imāms. The story of how these figures actually acquired the status and power of saints must wait until chapter 3; the history is complicated and varies in each of the three histories of Yazd. All of the authors agree, however, on the language and tropes that are appropriate for describing Yazd's saints and for characterizing the nature of their benefits. Each of them gives the local sayyid-saints and their benefits a special relationship with the physical landscape of the region. More than any other figures in the works, the sayyids blend in with the landscape of the city; they stand rooted in the soil and directly connected with the "water of life" that runs through the ground. Mufīd and his predecessors frequently refer to the sayyids as *dūḥah* (massive tree), an honorific designation, which speaks to their rank as mighty guides, towering and enduring landmarks, which mark out the space of the region into a place. The ancient poplar tree in the story of Qanāt-i Shīrīn (page 80) reminds us that trees signal the presence of water beneath the soil. Just like a tree, the saint processes the foundational, divine benefits—the waters of life that flow

beneath the mountains—and transforms them into fruits the community of human beings can use. Moreover, because trees often stand beside natural springs, since ancient times, they marked the site of Zoroastrian shrines to various water deities, especially Anāhīd in Iranian cultures. These features of natural shrine architecture influenced the design of Persianate Islamic shrine design as they were adapted to urban contexts: Muslim saints’ tomb complexes often feature pools, filled by streams of water conveyed from the mountains and ancient trees which stand beside the mausoleums. Saints’ tombs constitute “springs” or sources of benefit. Just as water is the life-blood of the city, the saintly blessings that are obtainable at saints’ tombs (*mazārs*) represent a vital source of refreshment for the populace. For this reason, just as the flow of water is evidenced by the presence of lush trees and vegetation, the bodies of saints (buried in the soil) function as both the conduits for and signs of the flow of saintly benefit in a given locality.

Before we turn to the grandfather tree of all Yazd’s sayyid saints, Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad, whose tomb we briefly visited in the story of the flood waters, we shall stop at the tomb of Sayyid Tāj al-Dīn Ja‘far, known as Sayyid Panhān (d. 600/1203-4), whom Mufīd calls the “pearl of the oyster-shell of the imamate, robust tree of the meadow of generosity [or miracles].”¹³⁰ The stories associated with this saint, marvelously illustrate the function of the saint’s tomb as a chronotope and channel for the “life-giving” benefits from the past. What’s more, Mufīd gives water a critical role in conveying the particular qualities of the saint’s beneficial powers. Abu Ja‘far

¹³⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 539.

Muḥammad’s biography will make more sense once we have read Sayyid Panhān’s biography carefully.

Sayyid Tāj al-Dīn Ja‘far (Sayyid Panhān)

Mufīd’s account begins with the saint’s retirement in seclusion in the Maḥallah-i Shahrīstān,¹³¹ inside the city-center, where he remained in prayer throughout the day and night. The sayyid appeared every Friday for congregational prayer, at which time, “the populations of Yazd, having enjoyed the bounteous flashes of the lights of his blessings, witnessed miracles, which are mementos (*yādgār dāsht*) of the noble ancestors.”¹³² What follows is an anecdote demonstrating the saint’s miraculous nature:

[I]n the time of the Atābayks of Yazd, one of the attendants of the governor (*vālī*), having left his house in a state of drunkenness, placed his foot in the valley of seeking (*vādī-i talab*) in search of a tavern (*sharāb-khānah*). He rushed around in every lane and quarter. As it turns out he happened upon the house of the sayyid and set about screaming aggressively, calling for the sayyid. When the sun of guidance emerged above the edge of the eastern horizon of worship [i.e., when the sayyid appeared at the door], that drunk, made careless by the wine, brandished his staff (*ḥavālah... nimūd*) over the crown of the Sayyid’s blessed head (*farq*). By the utter power of God, the hand of that man was paralyzed (*khushk gardīd*) and remained up in the air, just as it was (*hamchunān dar bālā māndah*). That drinker of mind-numbing wine, placed his head at the Sayyid’s feet and with a supplicating tongue humbled himself thusly: *Mīsrā’*:

I swear an oath never to drink another
cup of rose-colored wine

*‘ahd kardam kih digar bādah-i
gulgūn nakhuram*

That honored man, smiling, prayed that he would find salvation in the two realms... In the very same instant, the hand of that person returned to its former state. He placed the ring of devotion (*ikhlāṣ*) in the ear of his soul and entered the path of the sayyid’s disciples. For the period of his life, he never veered from the straight path of following and devotion (*ikhlāṣ*).¹³³

¹³¹ Apparently near the Kūshk-i Naw neighborhood.

¹³² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 539.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 3: 540-1.

After relating that the sayyid died in 600/1203-4 and was buried in the very house where he had made his seclusion,¹³⁴ the author then ties this anecdote to an explanation of the contemporary ritual practice that surrounded the visitation of his tomb:

Anyone who, in utter faith, successfully recites “Sūrah-i Ikhlāṣ” a thousand times at that noble place on Friday night for the sake of his earthly and otherworldly desires will benefit in both worlds. In order to cure an illness that has been repeatedly experienced, one should recite the “Sūrah-i Fātiḥah” one time and the Sūrah-i [sic.] Tawḥīd, three times. That person should then send greetings twelve times.¹³⁵

Here the author makes clear the link between the recitation of “Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ” and the story of the repentant alcoholic whose *tawbah* and *ikhhlāṣ* to the sayyid effected the reanimation of his paralyzed hand. Mufīd’s word choice is significant. Here he returns to the water conceit that he has employed throughout the work: for “paralysis,” he uses the word “*khushk*,” which literally means “dried-up” or “withered.” For just as such *ikhhlāṣ* returned life-giving water to this man’s lifeless, desiccated limb, so too would the act of reciting the “Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ” at this tomb bring life giving benefits to the supplicant. But again, in order for the site to continue to produce the fruit of the sayyid’s tree, the events of the past must be as present there as the saint’s bones, and the story must circulate along with patronage that supports the place. The flow of story is the historian’s responsibility. Here again, we find an example of the text’s ability to affect the physical spaces it describes. We will return to this theme again and again, especially in section 7, which deals with historian’s benefit.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 3: 540.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 3: 541. Perhaps he means one greeting for each Imām

Imānzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad

Mufīd, along with his predecessors, honors Imānzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad as the ancestor of all the imānzādahs of Yazd. It is from the loins of this holy figure that all of Yazd’s imānzādahs emerged throughout the city’s long history. Mufīd significantly abridges his predecessors’ accounts of this figure’s imāmī lineage and glosses over their more detailed discussions of the reason for his settling in Yazd. This background information was obviously household information by Mufīd’s day; as is often the case with commonplace material, his barebones account gives way to flourishes of hyperbolic praise. Essentially, all the Yazdī histories relate that Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad is the great-great-grandson of the sixth Imām of the Twelver Shī‘ī lineage, Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq. His great-grandfather, ‘Alī ‘Arīzī, was the brother of the seventh Imām, Mūsá al-Kāzīm (see Figure 1, page 532). All three of Yazd’s historians open the Imānzādah’s story with a review of the turmoil following the Abbasid revolution. This was the period when various Shī‘ī groups found themselves in intense competition with the Abbasid house for political and religious authority over the Muslim community. This narrative of violence and tyranny sets the stage for the narrative about Imānzādah’s settlement in Yazd, which follows; these are events that occurred centuries before Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s lifetime, but the authors present them as immediately important for the story of the Imānzādah’s arrival in Yazd. All three accounts relate that Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad left the caliphal capital of Baghdad for Yazd (on his way to Khurāsān) because of the oppression of the descendents of ‘Alī, which had begun during the reign of Caliph Mutawakkil (r. 232-247/847-861), who had become particularly determined to eradicate the Shī‘ah.

Mufīd omits one thread from Aḥmad Kātib’s narrative, in which Mutawakkil, determined to destroy the tomb of Imām Ḥusayn at Karbalā, orders that the waters of the Euphrates be redirected in order to flood the shrine and wash away the tomb. A miracle saves the Imām’s holy remains from this desecration: “By the order of the Creator,” the waters refuse to pass beyond the threshold of the shrine. Imām Ḥusayn’s miracle is of course a model for the one that protects the tombs of his descendants during the flood that afflicted Yazd in 860/1456, which was discussed above (page 94). It is curious that Mufīd chose not to include this story. One possible explanation is that Mufīd deemed the tale to be too obviously spurious: Aḥmad Kātib had dated the event in 410/1019-20, centuries after Mutawakkil’s reign, but during the lifetime of Abū Ja’far Muḥammad. Although this kind of problem with chronology doesn’t usually prohibit Mufīd from integrating useful anecdotes such as this one in his history, this one may have been too problematic, even for him. In any case, Aḥmad Kātib explains that the Caliph became so enraged that his evil plan had failed that he ordered the massacre of all of Imām ‘Alī’s descendants. As a result, the sayyids went into hiding and scattered themselves across the planet, including Imāmzādah Abū Ja’far Muḥammad. Mufīd protects himself from such glaring anachronisms by deliberately leaving the details and chronology of the Imāmzādah’s arrival in Yazd vague. The effect of all three versions of the tale is the same, although somewhat less poignant in Mufīd’s rendition: With God’s help, this Ḥusaynī descendent of the Prophet conceals his identity and becomes established in Yazd in order to escape the (timeless) persecution of the Abbasid Caliphs.

Once the sayyid actually lands in Yazd, though, the narrative in all the renditions becomes less murky. He arrives during the Būyid period, during the rule of

the Daylamī, Fakhr al-Dawlah-i Daylamī, while Yazd was under the governorship of a just official by the name of Amīr Ūjash. The texts tell us that he came to the neighborhood (later called) Kūchah-i Ḥusaynīyān and arrived at a blacksmith's shop, where he earned his living by blowing the bellows (*bih damīdan-i dam ishtighāl nimūd*).¹³⁶ One night the governor Amīr Ūjash has a dream in which the Prophet Muḥammad visits him and tells him:

One of my descendents has come to this city. The Divine Will has made it inevitable that he make his home in this region (*va ārādah-i ilāhī bih tavattun-i ū dar īn sar-zamīn ta'alluq giriftah*). Honor him and pay him obeisance (*ū rā ri'āyat nimūdah garāmī dār*).¹³⁷

Because the sayyid has been living in the city incognito, the Amīr Ūjash cannot find him. He has a second nocturnal visitation. This time the Prophet makes him cognizant of the precise whereabouts of “that holy traveler (*musāfir-i qudsī*).” The governor finally finds the sayyid, who continues to deny his lineage “on account of his fear and dread of (*khawf va hirās*) of the Abbasids.” Once Amīr Ūjash gains his confidence the Imāmzādah reveals “the genealogical document of his the noble biography, which he had stowed in a pure vessel of water.”¹³⁸ Aḥmad Kātib phrases this last sentence somewhat differently, stating that he “exposed the pure wood of his family tree.”¹³⁹ The reader will note the use of the water and tree tropes again. Both emphasize the close relationship between the sayyid's blessed lineage and the most primary of God's blessings. In this context,

¹³⁶ Once again, Mufīd's telling is abbreviated and assumes the reader already knows the story. Aḥmad Kātib's version reads: “When the imāmzādah came to Yazd, he had no way of making a living (*az qawt-chārah nabūd*), and modesty prevented him from begging (*ū rā ḥayā' az su'āl mānī' shud*). He went to a blacksmith's shop in [the neighborhood, which later became known as] Kūchah-i Ḥusaynīyah, got himself employed blowing the bellows and took a daily wage and he earned his own livelihood.” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 152.

¹³⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 521, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 153.

¹³⁸ “*nasab-nāmah-i sharāfat-i tarjamah rā kih dar jawf-i muṭahhirah-i āb ta'biyah nimūdah būd zāhir sakht*.” Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 521.

¹³⁹ “*chūb-i muṭahhirah-i shajarah-i khūd bīrūn āvarad*.” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 153.

the tree represents not only the saint's own body, but that of his entire imāmī lineage. As is customary in Shī'ī writings, Mufīd regularly refers to this lineage as "the pure tree of prophecy (*shajarah-i ṭayibah-i nubuvvat.*)"

The opening story in Abū Ja'far Muḥammad's biography narrates the story of the transplantation of the saintly sayyid's pure tree from Mesopotamia to the region of Yazd. What follows is the story of that tree's flourishing, that is, the imāmzādah's establishment in a new community. The stories of the saint's rooting in Yazd's soil serve as an introduction to the hagiographical notices on his descendents who populated the city after his death, each of whom inherited his charismatic power. These comprise the remainder of this long chapter of Mufīd's work.

Continuing with Abu Ja'far Muḥammad's story, Mufīd relates that immediately after the imāmzādah reveals himself, the governor "bound his waist with the belt of servitude and drew the mantle of obedience over the ear of his mind."¹⁴⁰ Having become Abū Ja'far Muḥammad's disciple, Amīr Ūjash sets his master up in a luxurious home in Kūchah-i Ḥusaynīyān "as a residence for that star of constellation of guidance and orthodoxy (*akhtar-i burj-i hidāyat va rashād*)," which Mufīd explains is still standing at the time of his writing (1083/1672-3). In addition to installing him in a lofty house, Amīr Ūjash forges a family alliance with Imāmzādah Abū Ja'far Muḥammad, giving him his daughter in marriage.¹⁴¹

Thereupon, following his predecessors' model, Mufīd turns to the site of the Imāmzādah's tomb, which is the most important portion of the notice:

The place where the graves of many of the lights of that seed of pure folk (*kaṣīr al-anvār-i ān sulālah-i aṭhār*) are used to be a woods all the way to the village of

¹⁴⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 522.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Abrāndābād. It was tangled with trees, such that it was impossible for the swift-footed messenger to enter it. In that place, a lion made his home—on account of his awe, Taurus the bull of the celestial sphere used to hide in the hunting ground of the firmament of the day. On account of the dread of his presence, the path of travel [through that woods] was barred to humans. Owing to the fear of his attack, tranquility and assuredness was banished from the enclosure of minds and the environs of the hearts to the extent that one day when the ferocious beasts of fear and dread rushed upon the thicket of the minds of the residents of that piety-based region, they petitioned the governor. The amīr of justice chose the offspring of the Lion of God (*farzand-i shīr-i Yazdān*)¹⁴² and sought help from the peerless Ḥaẓrat for the warding off of that bloodthirsty beast (*sabu'-i khūn-āshām*). In the victorious cavalcade of his lineage (*dar rikāb-i zafar-i intisābash*),¹⁴³ he went to the edge of the forest (*bīshah*).

From a distance the lion observed that the Lion of the Forest of Sainthood (*shīr-i bīshah-i vilāyat*) had come to the threshold of his home. He emerged from his dwelling (*makān*); the people become terrified (*mutavahham*) and they scattered (*mutafarraḡ*). With divine power and with the strength of the hand of hereditary bravery, His Excellency of Imāmī lineage faced him without a care.¹⁴⁴ The lion threw himself upon the earth of humility (*khūd rā bih khāk-i mazallat afkand*) and placed his face upon the haloed foot of that Ḥaẓrat (*pā-yi farr-quḍusā-yi ān ḥaẓrat*). His Excellency drew his blessed hand over his head and said, “Don’t bother anyone again! (*dīgar kasī rā azzīyat ma’rasān!*)” Then he arranged for a sheep’s liver as the beast’s daily meal.

It has been written in *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd* that that lion achieved a place of intimacy with people such that young children would ride on his back and would play with him, and he never caused trouble to a single person again.¹⁴⁵ One day the lion came to that lord (*sarvar*), placed his head at his blessed foot, and liberally bestowed the cash of his life before his [the Imāmzādah’s] royal person (*naqd-i ḥayāt rā īsār-i muḡaddam-i humāyūnash namūd*) [In other words, he died]. So as to obtain God’s blessings, he washed the lion and wrapped him in a shroud and buried him on that very spot.¹⁴⁶

The narrative loops back to the lion story once more, but takes a short but significant detour first. Immediately after describing the lion’s burial Mufid address the

¹⁴² Imām ‘Alī is commonly known in Persianate literature as the Lion (*shīr* or *ḥaydar*).

¹⁴³ With this power metaphor, Mufid pictures the sayyid riding toward the forest accompanied by his saintly ancestors. *Rikāb* also means “stirrup”.

¹⁴⁴ “*janāb-i imāmat-nizhād bi-taqviyat-i ilahī va quvvat-i sar-panjah-i shujā’at-i irsī bī-mulāḥaḡah mutavajjih shudah.*”

¹⁴⁵ The published edition of TJY only claims that the lion played with children, not that they clambered onto his back. Aḡmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, TJY, 154. As we have seen, Mufid almost always upgrades his predecessors’ accounts, using more evocative images and baroque sorts of tropes.

¹⁴⁶ Mufid Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 3: 522-3.

reader directly: “Know, dear reader, that the lord of liberal bounty granted that Ḥaẓrat happy children and blessed their progeny (*nasl*).”¹⁴⁷ The author then proceeds to mention two of the Imāmzādah’s descendents who were living in Yazd at the time of his own writing. These are Amīr Muḥammad Ja‘far Muftī and Mīrzā Rafī‘ al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī (Figure 1, page 532). We will look more closely at the careers of those sayyids in chapter 4; for now, it is important to understand that Mufīd’s purpose in mentioning these figures here is to demonstrate the extensive reach of Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad six hundred and fifty years forward in time, all the way into the author’s own era. This reference to the saint’s distant descendents represents a common feature of Islamic hagiographical literature; it demonstrates the longevity and fertility of Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s seed. Its beneficial power remains planted in the region’s soil so that his blessed presence can be perpetuated forever.¹⁴⁸

Having demonstrated the extent of the Imāmzādah’s presence, Mufīd turns directly to the saint’s death and burial, which brings the story of the lion to a close:

In the year 424/1032-3 the desire for meeting his great ancestors in heaven overcame the Imāmzādah of the rank of sainthood.¹⁴⁹ His holy spirit departed for paradise, and, in accordance with his last will and testament (*vaṣīyah*), they buried his chaste body near the grave of the lion. After the time when his modest-natured wife hastened to the World of Subsistence, she cast the veil of concealment upon her face, beside that Ḥaẓrat, in the bridal chamber of the earth (*dar ḥajalah-i turāb*).¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 3: 533.

¹⁴⁸ Shahzad Bashir has developed a useful tripartite paradigm for talking about the ways in which Sufi saints perpetuate their beings/bodies after death. 1. Progeny/disciples, who inherit/embody their physical bodies and or spiritual knowledge and social station 2. Shrine complexes where the saint’s body infuses the soil with the physical manifestation of the saint’s blessing. 3. Narratives about the saints lives, collected and composed by disciples. See: Shahzad Bashir, *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), especially 188-9.

¹⁴⁹ The imāmzādah essentially conquers death; he need only die when he’s in the mood!

¹⁵⁰ This is a clever but rather macabre metaphor, likening the grave in which she is buried beside her husband to a bridal chamber. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3:526. Aḥmad Kātib felt the need to specify that the Imāmzādah’s wife was buried between her husband and the lion! One wonders what the imāmzādah’s preference would have been. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 154.

Toward the beginning of this tale, Mufid calls Imāmzādah Abu Ja‘far Muḥammad “the descendent of the Lion of God (*farzand-i shūr-i Yazdān*)” and “the Lion of the Forest of Sainthood (*shūr-i bīshah-i vilāyat*).” Thus, Mufid sets up the Imāmzādah’s confrontation with the wild animal as a contest between two lions, the lion of the forest and the lion of sainthood and Imāmī lineage. A certain allegorical reading would be obvious to a Muslim reader of the time: The lion of the forest stands for the lower, carnal self; the saint is one who has tamed that self and purified his soul of all but devotion. But the author has built upon this standard reading of this sort of “taming” story to incorporate this legend into the comprehensive conceit that he uses to bind his presentation of Yazd’s ecology of benefit to the history of its spaces. The saintly sayyids not only represent perfected men; they also epitomize the transformative or alchemical properties that Mufid understands to be at the heart of his city’s ecology of benefit production: The imāmzādah’s taming or conversion of the wild lion demonstrates that in the same way that trees do the work of transforming the pure divine benefit of water into nourishing fruits, the saints transform the wild and raw benefits of God’s creation into usable benefits, whether they be in the heart or in the external world. However, the transformations that saints engender are different in degree but not in kind from those of the rest of the benefactors in Mufid’s work. Saints stand at the top of the hierarchy and deal with elements of creation that are in their rawest, most natural form. The works particular to the vocations of all the remaining ranks of Yazdī folk follow from the artifacts of saints’ great transformations, whether they are rulers, writers, farmers, or craftsmen. Using Mufid’s water metaphor, we would say that saints stand at the source of the mountain streams. They construct the

first spillways that tame the natural, wild flow water and direct it toward the city; the rest of the population builds the vast and orderly network of canals and smaller vessels that accommodate the individual neighborhoods.

In the final paragraph of this passage, Mufīd takes this theme a step further. The Imāmzādah leaves instructions for his followers to bury him beside the very proof of his sainthood, the lion of Yazd, whom he tamed with the miraculous power that God invested in him.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, because the remains of both lions—beast and saint—were interred on the very same site that the miracle occurred, the place became a font of saintly benefit, exuding the saint’s *barakah* to anyone who visits it. But that benefit only flows when the story is commemorated; the saint’s blessings flow together with his miracle story, which is essentially a tale of morals. Moreover, by choosing the site where he performed the miracle as the site of the mausoleum for the lion and himself, the imāmzādah transformed the untamed and unutilized forest into a place of civility, where a variety of benefits could be harvested in perpetuity. In effect, the imāmzādah’s greatest benefit to the community of Yazd was his burial on this site, which brought this overgrown forest into the civilized space of the city.

Indeed, the two lions’ presence, a presence that was manifested in their bones, the lingering memory of their story, and the material aura of *barakah*, effected transformations in the morphology of the urban landscape, as the remainder of the *tarjamah* for Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad demonstrates: When the imāmzādah’s wife is interred on the site, her grave becomes the first of many such graves, which

¹⁵¹ Aḥmad Kātib’s telling places a slightly stronger emphasis on saint’s desire to be buried along with his lion friend. He includes a sentence that recounts the drawing up the will upon the lion’s death, which Mufīd omits: “The imāmzādah commanded that they wash him, wrap him in a shroud, and commit him to the ground in that very place, with his face toward the *qiblah*. The imāmzādah drew up a *vaṣīyat* stipulating: ‘when I die, they are to bury me near the lion.’” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 154.

house the remains of those seeking proximity to the saint's blessings until the resurrection. In fact, the remainder of the Imāmzādah's notice catalogues the important people buried beside his grave and records the various benefactors' important building projects and improvements, which they made to the shrine complex throughout the site's history.¹⁵² As new monuments—gravestones, arcades, gates, pools of water, and other expensive adornments— replaced the wildly growing trees, the new and sacred cemetery gradually became a major center around which the life of the city revolved. The imāmzādah's shrine slowly reconfigured the ritual and economic life of the city and determined both patterns of burial and urban planning for centuries. The imāmzādah's actions set off a chain of events that perpetuated the flow of benefit in Yazd. His deeds sustained the flow of his own charismatic blessing on site, distributed that beneficial power to the descendents, and engendered new architectural, ritual, and economic patterns in the city, which continue to propagate his original benefits and to generate new ones. All other stories and sites connect in one way or another to this one.

Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh

The next biography that Mufīd presents in his section on Yazd's Imāmzādigān is that of Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh. The early career of the sayyid actually consists of two intertwining biographies, that of the Sayyid Ḥusayn himself, and another spiritual adept, who was not a sayyid, called Pīr-i Khamīr:

¹⁵² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 526-30.

In his youth, that massive tree in the meadow of Imāmī leadership (*imāmat*)¹⁵³ and the light of the clear-sight of noble descent from the Prophet (*siyādat*) attended to the affairs of bread-baking (*nān-pazī*) in a bakery shop in the neighborhood of Sar-i Cham.¹⁵⁴ He always occupied himself with completing his prayer to the everlasting God; he never stepped far from the sweet path of the holy law. At the same time, there was a person who attended to the affairs of bread-kneading (*khamīr-gīr*) in a bakery in the bazaar inside the city; he achieved a high rank on the path of piety and became a master of the state of mystical ecstasy (*ṣāhib-i ḥāl*). Once he placed his hand into the dough and pulled out a stalk of narcissus (*shāk-i nargisī*).¹⁵⁵ He sent to Sayyid Ḥusayn [Gul-i Surkh]. After looking at it, the sayyid's august face blossomed into a smile like a red rose (*gul-i surkh shikaft*). He put his blessed hand into the fire of the oven and brought forth a red rose, which he sent it to the kneader along with the following message: *bayt*:

I am the model of the red rose and rose bud still.	<i>surkh-gul u ghunchah miṣālam hanūz</i>
I am awaiting the north wind still [i.e., the advent of winter].	<i>muntaẓir-i bād-i shamālam hanūz</i> ¹⁵⁶

Hearing this message, the kneader withdrew his hand from his work and busied himself with worship of God in a corner of retreat (*gūshah-i zāvīyah*) until he hastened to the eternal world. For this reason he acquired fame as “Pīr-i Khamīr” (Sufi master of bread-dough). His burial place is located in the neighborhood of Ḥammām-i Shāh near the *jalū-khānah* [probably *chalū-khānah*=rice house].¹⁵⁷ Kneaders and the rest of bakers' servants have this Excellency as a *pīr* of their own *ṭarīqat*, and in total, sincere devotion, they go in visitation to his *mazār*.¹⁵⁸

Mufīd has designed the opening episode in the narrative, which begins with the sayyid's modest, early career in the bakery, as a fabulous explanation of the origin of his mysterious name. Whereas most sayyids' *tarjamahs* open with an account of their Ḥusaynī lineage, this biography suspiciously brushes those conventions aside and

¹⁵³ I have chosen to translate the term *imāmat* as “Imāmī leadership” rather than simply “leadership,” which is the more literal meaning of the term. In this section on sayyids, Mufīd is emphasizing not only the sayyids rightful leadership and authority but also a particularly Twelver Shīī communal affiliation.

¹⁵⁴ This is the neighborhood constructed after the flood of 673/1275, allegedly called Sar-i Jam' when it was first built. (See above).

¹⁵⁵ The narcissus family of flowers, which includes the daffodil, are generally pale in color, and in Persian literature are often associated with the eyes of the beloved.

¹⁵⁶ The red rose is generally associated with the beloved's rosy cheeks, and the rose bud with the mouth. It is also a symbol of springtime.

¹⁵⁷ Neither of these places are mentioned elsewhere in the text. I have not been able to situate them on a map of the city.

¹⁵⁸ Mufīd *Mustawfī Bāfqī*, *JM*, 3: 533-4.

jumps directly into the saintly figure's friendly competition with another spiritual athlete who is employed in the same trade (albeit in a lower rank). Both the form and content of the presentation is uncharacteristically folksy in comparison with Mufīd's usual treatment such a noble class of men. Furthermore, the miracles themselves are rather more like parlor tricks in a game of one-upmanship than real miracles, which in Sufi hagiographical literature, are generally performed by saints in response to situations of dire need.¹⁵⁹ The bread-kneader is eager to show off his talent for the sayyid, who responds to the kneader's friendly throwdown with a somewhat more impressive trick, in which he not only generates a flower in the midst of fire, but reaches into the oven to retrieve it from the flames, unharmed. What's more, his red rose trumps the pale narcissus, which ranks lower on the hierarchy of figures of springtime beauty in Persian poetics. The real crux of the tale resides in the sayyid's versified message that he sends the kneader along with his rose. The verses, which remind the kneader of the ephemerality of the beauty in the visible world, have a miraculous effect on the kneader, who transforms into a dervish on account of them. The scene is reminiscent of the common scenario in hagiographical literature in which verses of Sufi poetry in Persian hurl listeners into ecstatic trances and sometimes effect conversion to an ascetic way of life.¹⁶⁰ It is actually not the verses themselves that

¹⁵⁹ The majority of these miracles have to do with providing food or water. Saints also commonly perform miracles that protect the city from diseases or invasion. See Shahzad Bashir's typology of miracles: Bashir, *Sufi Bodies*, 167-8. Vincent Cornell also provides a typology of miracles in his work on Moroccan Sufism. In his research with twelfth and thirteenth century Maghribī hagiographies, food miracles count for only about eighteen percent of the total number miracles he cataloged. Miracles involving non-ordinary powers of insight, such as mind-reading, spiritual insight, and prophecy far exceeded the others. Power over animals comes in just ahead of food miracles at twenty-three percent. Cornell, *Realm of the saint : power and authority in Moroccan Sufism*, 115-16.

¹⁶⁰ A famous example is the conversion story of Fuḏayl bin 'Ayāz, a highway bandit who hears verses of Qur'ān recited and immediately makes a *tawbah*. The tale appears in many accounts, the most famous three being al-Qushayrī's, and Hujvirī's, and 'Aṭṭār's: 'Abd al-Karīm ibn Hawāzin Qushayrī, *al-Risālah al-*

transform the kneader, but the saint's charismatic power and the divine reality, which the verses manifest in the material world.

In Mufid's presentation, the saint's real miracle is not the fancy trick with the rose, but rather its effect, its *aşar*. The true miracle lies in his establishment of a new spiritual center in the city, albeit one that is germane only to the bakers and kneaders of bread, a small group of inhabitants. Yet, despite the fact that Sayyid Ḥusayn "fathers" the new *pīr*, whose tomb eventually develops into a center of ritual visitation for this particular group of people, the sayyid only sustains an oblique connection with the new site. In fact, this new "*ṭarīqat*" that grows up around the Pīr-i Khamīr appears to be a *futuvvat* type of confraternity, which was a common mode of religiosity among craftsmen in Persianate cities in the post-Mongol period. Mufid is offering us a rare glimpse into the mythology and ritual practice of the bakers' *futuvvat* organization in Yazd. This explains the rather folksy character of the anecdote, in which the narrative is completely grounded in the materials specific to the bakers' craft.¹⁶¹ Nevertheless, this anecdote is instructive precisely because it reveals the ways in which Mufid worked to assimilate the legends and traditions associated with "patron saints" of extremely circumscribed communities within the city into the mythology of more illustrious (and more universally authoritative) saints, particularly saints with a

Qushayrīyah fī 'ilm al-taşawwuf (Beirut: Dār aḥyā' al-turāgh al-'arabī, 1419/1998), 35, Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Uthmān al-Jullābī al-Ghaznavī Hujvīrī, *Kashf al-Maḥjūb* (Russian Edition, 1957), 120, Farīd al-Dīn 'Aṭṭār, *Tazkirat al-Awliyā'*, ed. Reynold A. Nicholson (Tehran 1373/1994), 110. The story of Bishr al-Ḥāfī (the Barefoot), which appears in all the same works, is similar: Wandering around drunk, Bishr happens upon a slip of paper, upon which the words "*bi-ismi allāhi al-raḥmān al-raḥīm*" are written. He instinctively perfumes the slip of paper and his *tawbah* begins.

¹⁶¹ In Kāshifī's *Futuvvat-Nāmah-i Sulṭānī*, the author gives a mythological origin for each craft mentioned in the text. All derive from a prophet or a hero from Iranian mythology. (Kāshifī generally associates figures from this latter category with various Islamic prophets.) The work is incomplete; bakers do not appear in the extant versions of the text. For the craft mythologies of the crafts that do appear in Kāshifī's text, see: Kāshifī, *FNS*, 273-393.

Ḥusaynī lineage. At the same time, by subordinating the baker saint's *tarjamah* to that of the sayyid, Mufīd succeeded in placing that smaller shrine into the orbit of the great sayyid's and, simultaneously, in bringing those futuvvat communities into larger, Imāmī networks. The particular ways in which Mufīd structured his hagiographical narratives allowed him to configure the space of the city in accordance with an agenda that favored the Ḥusaynī sayyids. The sayyids' benefit was of paramount importance in Yazd. As we will demonstrate in chapter 3, the authority of the sayyids in Yazd only became predominant over the course of centuries (fourteenth-fifteenth) and was often contested. However, this anecdote demonstrates the discursive ways in which that universal authority was still being worked out and challenged even in Mufīd's day; chapters 3 and 4 demonstrate that his work stands as an important example of this process.

As has been noted already, Mufīd's decision to substitute the above narrative about the origins of Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh's peculiar name for the customary presentation on lineage smells fishy. One might suspect that this figure was not a sayyid at all. This biography may represent a conflation of some genuine imāmzādah by the name of Ḥusayn, whose lineage has been lost, with a non-sayyid, patron saint of the bakers. Possibly to cover his tracks, Mufīd makes no attempt to link this anecdote in the *tarjamah* with historical time; rather than offer a verifiable lineage, he provides a myth. The second half of the biography employs a rather different strategy. Mufīd grounds the second anecdote in the saint's life, in the events of the rather recent past and works to establish Sayyid Ḥusayn's authority and power as a major figure in the Shī'ī program of the Ṣafavid regime (which we will take up in detail in chapter 4). The second

anecdote reads as follows:

Know dear reader, that among the elite and commoners of this realm (*valāyat*) he [Sayyid Ḥusayn] achieved such fame and achieved such vigor that in the era of the reign of the country-conquering Pādishāh, Shāh Ismāʿīl Jahāngīr, by the commandment of the Pādishāh of the Uzbeks, a group from Turkistān came to that realm, bent on invasion and pillage (*tākht va tāvāji*) of the secure habitation of Yazd (*amanābād-i Yazd*). When they reached the place of the Zangīyān, which is outside the city, the weak and helpless folk came out of the city out of fear and terror rather than out of a desire for battle and fighting. When they beheld the intrepid ranks of the Uzbeks, they stripped their heads bare. They made a supplication to God (*ḥaẓrat-i mujīb al-daʿvāt*, i.e., His Excellency who hears prayers) for their deliverance and that of the rest of the Muslims. Sayyid Ḥusayn, who was busy baking bread in the bakery shop, came out. He took off the apron,¹⁶² which he had been wearing; by the power of the exalted Creator, sparks of fire, having burst into flames from his apron scattered. Some from the men in the Uzbek army who were in front were burned by the fire of wrath (*bih ātish-i ghaẓab*) of the Ḥaẓrat of violent retribution (*qahārī*). Those who remained turned away in flight, without stopping anywhere until they reached Turkistān. *Shiʿr*:

Raging fire doesn't do to rue seed
what the sigh of the intoxicated heart does.

*ātish-i sūzān nakunad bā sipand
ānchah kunad āh-i dil-i mast-mand*

The ranks of Uzbek soldiers who returned to the service of their pādishāh, narrated the miracles they had seen to him. Once the Pādishāh heard that report, sincere devotion and the desire of discipleship (*ikhlaṣ va irādātī*) moved him to service of the sayyid. He sent someone to the sayyid with favors and gifts. By the time the courier reached Yazd, the sayyid had entrusted the cash of his life to the Taker of Souls (*qābiẓ-i arvāḥ*).

After learning of this, the Pādishāh of the Uzbeks resolved that they should make a mausoleum, a tomb, and a *khānqāh* (Sufi hospice) for that respected leader (*vajh*). And toward that end, he built the sayyid's tomb and a masjid facing it. They designed a lofty *khānqāh* at the top [of the complex] and at the terminus of the Āb-i Fīrūzābād, they dug a pool (*pāyāb*) lined with baked brick (*ājar-i pukht*). Every day they served food on behalf of the poor and the indigent (*fuqarāʾ va masākīn*),¹⁶³ and he resolved to made endowments for that.

In the time of inscribing this notebook (*daftar*), which is three stages past the year 1080/1669, the *khānqāh* is abandoned (*bāʿir*), the illuminated *mazār* is

¹⁶² The word I am translating as “apron” is “*jāmah*.” *Jāmah* is a generic term for garment or robe, but in this case clearly indicates the garment he had put on over his clothes for baking bread.

¹⁶³ The term *fuqarāʾ*, which literally means “poor people” is also a technical term referring to mendicant dervishes. Considering that the complex in question was a *khānqāh*, it is likely that this more specific usage was implied.

ruined (*kharāb*), and the pious endowments of the supervisor (*mawqūfāt-i sar-kār*) have gone outside the possession of the trustee (*mutavallī*).¹⁶⁴

In comparison with the opening passage of the *tarjamah*, the quality of Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh's thaumaturgy has changed significantly in this latter passage. While the instrument of his power is still drawn from the tools of the baker's trade (the baker's apron), the sayyid uses that piece of cloth to save the city from certain devastation at the hands of the accursed Uzbeks, Sunni enemies of the Shī'ī Ṣafavids. Indeed, in this anecdote, Sayyid Ḥusayn no longer occupies himself with parlor tricks; he now works on the level of his noble ancestor, Imāmzādah Abū Ja'far Muḥammad, who had been the first to save the city with a miracle. In Abū Ja'far's era it had been a ferocious lion who menaced the pious inhabitants of Yazd; by Sayyid Ḥusayn's day such a threat came from the likes of the staunchly Sunni Uzbeks and Ottomans, whom the Ṣafavids cursed as the enemies of the Imāms and of the Muslim community. The episode takes place during the early years of the Ṣafavid era, before Shāh Ismā'īl had smashed his Uzbek rival, Uzbek Khān Shaybānī at the Battle of Marv in 916/1510, but ostensibly after Ismā'īl had taken control of Yazd in 909/1503. Uzbek Khān's army had been flexing its muscles deep into Khurāsān and was even threatening the young Ṣafavid conqueror's newest possessions to the west and in Fārs. Mufīd placed Sayyid Ḥusayn's story just after that of Abū Ja'far Muḥammad in order to demonstrate the continuity of that founding sayyid's protective blessing in the land of Yazd. Furthermore, Mufīd's juxtaposition of Sayyid Ḥusayn's miracle tale beside Abū Ja'far Muḥammad's provides evidence that Abū Ja'far Muḥammad's tree continued to bear

¹⁶⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 534-5.

fruit in the city's recent memory; Mufīd's narrative proves the Sayyid's original stream of blessings timeless.

It is in the nature of the genre of hagiography to demonstrate that saints' benefits and blessings stand on the boundaries of historical time; saints blessings are timeless. Mufīd was clearly working within the conventions of this genre when he composed his presentations on the Imāmzādahs of the city. Yet, his work also accomplishes something more sophisticated than is usual for hagiographical notices. Mufīd plays with the hagiographical form in order to make these notices on saint's bodies and blessings advance a distinctly historical argument. In this regard, it is critical that, beyond simply rescuing the city from the pillaging Uzbek army, the sayyid actually converts the Uzbek monarch to the true path of Islam (that is, Imāmī Islam). In the same way that the sayyid's message to the kneader had inspired his *tawbah* and dedication to an ascetic life, the report of the sayyid's miraculous defense of Yazd triggers Uzbek Khān's (apocryphal!) *tawbah* and, consequently, causes him to become the sayyid's disciple, i.e., a subject of the sayyid's spiritual domain. So, in Mufīd's history, it was the spiritual head of Yazd who first subdued the "infidel" Uzbek Khān Shaybānī, even before the Ṣafavid ruler defeated him militarily. As a consequence, afterward, the Uzbek king becomes the sayyid's biggest patron, for it is he who constructs Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh's tomb complex and khānqāh in Yazd, which, in turn, enables the sayyid's benefits to flow in perpetuity. The champion of Shī'ī Islam, Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī, had nothing to do with it!

The crux of Mufīd's historical argument, however, appears in the last sentence of the *tarjamah*, where we learn that the sayyid's complex stands in ruin during Mufīd's

lifetime. While the early Şafavids had continued to offer patronage for the sayyid's shrines, by the time of Mufīd's birth they allowed the pious endowments, which had perpetuated the sayyid's benefits, to become corrupted. In the end, Mufīd has transformed a standard hagiographical argument for the eternal perpetuation of Imāmī blessings into a tacit criticism of the latter Şafavid monarchs, who had been neglecting their responsibility to the local sayyids and who had stopped up the flow of their benefits at their shrines. The placement of this narrative is critical; it immediately follows the *tarjamah* of Imāmzādah Abu Ja'far Muḥammad, the progenitor of all of Yazd's sayyid lineages, who planted the first seed of saintly blessing in the region.

Şāhib-i Khaṭṭ-i Sabz

From here we turn to an anecdote set in the neighborhood of Ghāzīyān, outside the city. This concerns the grave of an unnamed saint, called Şāhib-i Khaṭṭ-i Sabz, around whose tomb important Yazdīs later came to be buried. The story takes place during the reign of Mubāraz al-Dīn Muḥammad Muẓaffar (d. 764/1363), the first Muẓaffarid to have truly ruled in his own right, when “the realms of Fars and Iraq came under [his] domination” and “the royal capital was in the courtyard of the garden of Yazd.”¹⁶⁵ This period was a moment of glory for the city, which rarely saw itself as the political center of an empire, and as we shall see, this benevolent sovereign proves to have been an important agent in promoting this mysterious and generous saint. The story begins with the ruler commanding the refortification of the city. While the excavators were digging a moat,

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 3: 542.

they exposed a grave, and they saw a person, whose body parts were all intact (*a'zā-yi ū durust*), and who had in his hand two pieces of green silk that had green writing upon them, and also a small Qur'ān suspended from his neck (*muṣḥafī-i ḥamā'il*).¹⁶⁶ The *pādishāh* of the workshop of justice, having learned of this circumstance, came to that place and commanded that they take the pieces of silk from the hand of the corpse and find out about the writing on it. However much they tried, could not get it out of his hand. The *pādishāh*, leaving the task for another time, returned home. That night, he saw that person in a dream-vision (*vāq'ah*); he was standing in the presence of His Holiness of Prophetic Shelter [the Prophet Muḥammad himself](May God bless him and his family and give them peace), whose tongue was loosed— he was complaining: “They desired to take my deed of manumission (*khaṭṭ-i āzādī*)!” In awe of this vision, the *pādishāh* woke up. *Bayt*:

The next day: the high firmament again
cast the sun's beam upon the earth.

rūz-i digār kih bāz charkh-i buland
partaw-i mihr bar jahān afkand

The *pādishāh* issued the command that they should bury that person with the two pieces of silk in the exact place [where they had found him]. There he erected a cloister (*ṣawma'ah*) over him. People have seen many signs (*'alāmāt*)— which serve as the proof of miracles (*karāmāt*) in that holy shrine (*makān-i mutabarrak*). In the same neighborhood outside the city, which is known as “Ghāzīyān,” they have laid to rest many scholars and righteous men, such as Mavlānā Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Vā'iz and Mavlānā Nūr al-Dīn Khaṭīb,¹⁶⁷ who were among the saints (*awlīyā*).¹⁶⁸

This “Deed of Manumission” (*khaṭṭ-i āzādī*) is somewhat puzzling. It may signify that the Prophet Muḥammad had presented the man with this document in order to render him free from sin (and in so doing, elevate him into sainthood).¹⁶⁹ Alternatively it may have been meant to indicate a kind of diploma from the Prophet, marking the occasion of the man's *tawbah* (turning away from sin) or even of his conversion to Islām. In either case, in trying to snatch it away, the king and his men were violating the purity given this saint by the Prophet. In other words, the sanctity of this figure was understood to have been bound up in this talismanic document. The moral of the story is that blessing and

¹⁶⁶ Small Qur'āns can be worn thus as an amulet.

¹⁶⁷ Nūr Allāh is mentioned (but with the title, *al-Vā'iz* instead of *al-Khaṭīb*) in the section on *khuṭabā*, 3: 337-8 in the course of another's notice.

¹⁶⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 542.

¹⁶⁹ I would like to extend my thanks to Paul Losensky for this insight.

freedom from sin cannot be so easily dug up; it must be earned or produced through sinless, pious deeds. It is not enough to visit holy places in order to simply collect benefits, for these come only when the supplicant strives toward pious and benevolent acts. In this regard, while this saint may have served as a font of miracles for Yazdīs, and while his grave may have been the first in this graveyard of saintly men, in Mufīd's telling, it is the Muḏaffarid sovereign, Mubāraz al-Dīn, who constructed the architectural and financial infrastructure for the shrine, the conduits that enabled the flow of his blessing. Only in this way could the king finally acquire this deed of manumission. Mufīd is implying that by constructing and endowing this shrine and others, Mubāraz al-Dīn must have received a similar document from the Prophet in the hereafter. Moreover, the ongoing flows of miraculous benefit bubbling up from this shrine were not only signs (*alāmāt*) of God's truth, and the sovereign's piety, but also, by extension, reminders of the Prophet's validation of the city's (temporary) political centrality.

This last story epitomizes the interplay between saintly figures and sovereigns, a rather critical relationship in Mufīd's work. The relationship is generally symbiotic; the flow of benefits produced by each of these two classes of benefactors relies upon the flow of the other. However, as we will discover in the next chapter, sometimes the divide between saints and sovereigns becomes blurred; kings take on the kind of knowledge, authority, and non-ordinary powers generally thought to be the purview of saints. At the same time, saints appropriate the authority and symbols of temporal rule. Mufīd uses this overlap (and the conflicts which occasionally result from it) to polemical effect. As I will demonstrate in chapters 2 and 3, he structures his telling of

important turning points in the narrative of Yazd's history around these instances of overlap between saintly figures and kings. At this point, our narrative turns to the benefits particular to benevolent sovereigns and to the sites that memorialize those kingly benefactions.

4. The Well Ordered Realm: Kingly Justice and Royal Patronage

Rulers' architectural complexes stood as a testament to their inherent justice and benevolence; indeed Mufid presented royal building projects as manifestations of such princely qualities. In many cases, Mufid's just and righteous kings stand on the threshold of sainthood. In addition to evincing perfected faculties of reason and judgment, a disinterest in worldly gains, extreme piety, and a commitment to building religious edifices, the saintly kings evidence nonordinary powers of insight that succor them in their pursuit of justice and the prosperity of the principality, as was the case in the story of Mubāraz al-Dīn Muḥammad Muẓaffar, discussed above (page 120). Moreover, Mufid imbues the narratives of their reign with miraculous happenings. There are a handful of such figures in Mufid's work, but there are also a good many more who illustrate the principles of good governance by modeling its antithesis; these rulers bring suffering or ruin upon the city because they make decisions from a place of base self-interest rather than from a desire to benefit the community. These selfish decisions leave traces upon the urban landscape. Indeed, the tale of Yazdigard I, whose unfortunate encounter with the magical horse of the Green Spring we examined

earlier, comprises the first of these models of bad governance. It was Yazdigard who introduced tyranny into the Yazdī landscape.¹⁷⁰

Mufīd and his predecessors repeatedly come back to stories of the fifth/eleventh century Kākūyid ruler, Abu Ja‘far Sulṭān ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah bin Majd al-Dawlah Kālinjār, and his Saljūq wife, Arslān Khātūn, whom they portray as the paragons of justice and benevolence. The Kākūyids had previously possessed the city of Iṣfahān but Sulṭān ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah eventually capitulated to the Saljūq Sulṭān Malik Shāh and handed the city over in exchange for Yazd as an *iqṭā‘* and a favorable marriage to Arslān Khātūn, daughter of Chaghrī Bayk.¹⁷¹ In the Yazdī historians’ characterization, this couple ruled as the munificent mother and father of the city; they constructed and endowed countless buildings and public works, which remained until the seventeenth century and after, including the earliest portions of the Great Congregational Mosque of Yazd (Masjid-i Jāmi‘-i Kabīr).¹⁷² In addition to these benefits, the two provided forums for justice and regular charity for the poor.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰ This discussion of Yazdigard I’s story begins above, on page 62.

¹⁷¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 43-4. According to Mufīd, this exchange occurred in 504/1110-1111, but by that date Malik Shāh had already been dead for over a decade. The date does fall during Malik Shāh II bin Bark Yaruq’s short reign, which appears, at first, to resolve the problem. However, earlier sources prove the date to be much too late. In fact Mufīd and the other Yazdī historians have conflated two different events and have confused then names of both Saljūq and Kākūyid rulers. Other sources (such as Ibn al-Athīr) relate that Tughril Bayk took Iṣfahān from the Kākūyids in 443/1051 from the Kākūyid ruler, Farāmurz b. Muḥammad, and gave Yazd as *iqṭā‘* to that ruler. The marriage alliance with Arslān Khātūn was made in the year 469/1076-7 (during Malik Shāh I’s reign) with Farāmurz’s son. See: C.E. Bosworth, "Dailamīs in Central Iran: The Kākūyids of Jibāl and Yazd," *Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies* (1970): 84, 86. Ja‘farī’s chronology is a bit more consistent with the earlier sources. Ja‘farī, *TY*, 19-21.

¹⁷² Sulṭān ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah had four generals, Abū Mas‘ūd Bihishtī, Abū Ya‘qūb Daylamī, Abū Yūsuf, and Kiyā Narsū. Under the Sulṭān’s command, these four men constructed the city’s ramparts, lookout towers, and four gates—named for each of them respectively. They also built villages, qanāts, mosques, and the like. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 77-9. This section also contains a miracle story, which takes place at one of the amīr’s mosques during the early Ṣafavid period. This story will be considered in chapter 4. Mufīd’s entry on the founding of the Jāmi‘ mosque is found in 3: 643-9.

¹⁷³ “The wife of the sulṭān, Arslān Khātūn, was an upright woman of pure faith. Relatedly, she would dress the [poor] people in clothes and would hold a feast (*shilān*) each day for two classes of people: One for the elites, and one for commoners. And she would receive the people, with great ceremony at the

According to Mufīd and both his predecessors, this model king's benefits went beyond those of an ordinary king. All three writers recount the story of the Sulṭān's construction of the Madrasah-i Dū Manārah in connection with his death, because he built his own tomb there. Here we discover that in death, this patriarch of the city has much in common with the Sufi saints and sayyids:

And Sulṭān 'Ālā' al-Dawlah, mercy upon him, oversaw the planning of a lofty madrasah in the Maḥallah-i Shahrīstān. And over the entranceway of the madrasah, he built two minarets. And for the sake of his own burial, he caused a high dome to be completed. Today, that madrasah has come to be called, Madrasah-i Dū Manārah (Mosque of the Two Minarets), and Sulṭān 'Ālā' al-Dawlah is buried in the interior of that dome. The construction of the madrasah was in the year 513/1119-20.¹⁷⁴ That Madrasah has turned its face toward ruin. And in the *Tārīkh-i Qadīm-i Yazd*, they have mentioned that the body of the Sulṭān has not decomposed and has slept upon the platform— he is like a person who is asleep (*andām-i sulṭān az ham napāshīdah va mānand-i kasī kih dar khvāb bāshad bar takht khvābīdah ast*). The completion of this occurred in the year 513/1119-20. And in the time of the aforementioned Sulṭān, many buildings had come to be built in Yazd.¹⁷⁵

The miracle of the incorruptible corpse commonly appears in hagiographical literature and always serves as a sign of a saint's continuing ability to impart his benefits— *barakah*— to his devotees long after his death. Authors generally reserve such a topos for Sufi saints or saintly sayyids; in the Yazd corpus, worldly rulers rarely exhibit these qualities. The benefits appropriate to kings' "craft" generally have to do with justice, wisdom, and generosity. Nevertheless, on a few occasions, the categories of sovereigns and saints cross over in the Yazdī histories, and the rulers of Yazd offer the benefits of

head of the feast, such that they related that her attendants would take pains to look for people in the bazaars to come to the feast." Ibid., 1: 76.

¹⁷⁴ As with the date of the date of the marriage alliance between the Kākūyid ruler and Arslān Khātūn, there is a major problem with the chronology here, exacerbated by the fact that the succession of rulers in the Kākūyid dynasty is completely garbled in the Yazdī sources. 513/1119-20 falls during Sanjar's reign and is far too late for the husband of Arslān Khātūn, who was the sister of Alp Arslān (d. 455/1063). (This chronology will be examined more fully in chapter 3.) For the record, TY says gives an even later date: 523/1128-9. Ja'farī, TY, 21.

¹⁷⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 1: 76-7.

justice and peace in tandem with miracles and *barakah*. It is important to note that in the Yazd corpus, this sort of crossover only occurs among very early Muslim rulers, i.e., under the Kākūyids and the early Atābayks, never the later rulers; the full significance of this will be explored in chapter 3.

In fact this Kākūyid ruler exudes only a whiff of saintly charisma and never performs any real miracles in the narrative. However, a ruler from another Yazdī dynasty, Atābayk Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, who ruled Yazd between 673/1275 and 696/1297,¹⁷⁶ appears as a full-blown saintly king in the Yazdī historians' reckoning. The Atābayks of Yazd were Persian vassals of the Saljūqs who ruled Yazd on behalf of the female descendents of the Kākūyids. As Mufīd would have it, they ruled benevolently from the mid-sixth/twelfth century until corruption, greed, jealousy, and outright savagery brought the last Atābayk to a disgraceful end, beneath the foot of the Īlkhāns' agents.¹⁷⁷ We shall deal with the Atābayks in detail in chapter 3; here, we shall examine only Mufīd's treatment of Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, who was the most magnanimous of the Atābayks. I have chosen Quṭb al-Dīn as an example because Mufīd (along with his predecessors) makes the traces of Quṭb al-Dīn's benefits pivotal in the greater narrative of the rest of the work. What we present here will be of major importance when we return to a more systematic treatment of the Yazdī historians' presentation on the Atābayks.

Of Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn's numerous projects around the city, significant is a *dawlat-khānah* and beside it, a hippodrome (*maydān*), which he constructed in the

¹⁷⁶ These are the tentative dates supplied given by Bosworth, but are problematic. Clifford Edmund Bosworth, *The new Islamic dynasties: a chronological and genealogical manual* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 209. A full explanation of the complexities of this dating can be found in chapter 3.

¹⁷⁷ The actual date of the Atābayks' demise is under contention, but occurred sometime at the end of the seventh or early eighth century A.H. See discussion in chapter 3.

center of the old city, in the vicinity of the cemetery for the Ḥusaynī Imāmzādīgān. Abutting these structures, which accommodated the activities of governance and courtly life, he built a madrasah and *gunbad* for his own burial, a complex for which he made numerous endowments. (Nearly all of these structures had vanished by Mufīd’s time.)¹⁷⁸ In time, this quarter would become the locus of all the Atābayk’s major building projects thereafter. Moreover, the members of the Atābayk family constructed themselves lofty mausolea in that area and had themselves interred beneath their domes. The place became something of a necropolis for the Atābayks, who considered it sacred ground, a view that residents apparently shared—at least in part. Nonetheless, Mufīd’s notice on Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, whom the author calls “the sovereign of the gnostics (*sulṭān-i ‘ārifīn*) and the Pole of those who seek the truth (*quṭb-i muḥaqqiqīn*),” opens with a summary of his wisdom, justice, and commitment to knowledge.

He was a monarch (*shahriyārī*), possessor of glory and a sovereign (*jahāndārī*) of lofty ambition. He had sagacity and courage to perfection and [his] treasure chest was filled to the brim (*mālāmāl*) with the coins of the sciences (*nuqūd-i ‘ulūm*). They relate that when the era of the authority of the Sulṭānat of Yazd fell into the palm of his capable hand (*kaff-i kafāyat-i ū*), in his time, oppressive and unjust customs were hidden away from existence (*vujūd-i ‘anqā girift*) and he rolled (*dar navardīd*) the treatise of the justice of Anūshīrvān together with the munificence of Ḥātīm.¹⁷⁹ God, may he be exalted, granted him success in the *vilāyat*. He would bring worship to the nights and the day to devotion. He would engage in discussions with the ‘*ulamā*’ by day, and most of the superior ones would come [to him] and he occupied himself with things associated with the important affairs of humankind.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 87-8.

¹⁷⁹ A man from the Arab tribe of Ṭayy who was legendary for his generosity.

¹⁸⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 86.

Immediately afterward, Mufīd presents an anecdote, set inside the Masjid-i Furṭ, ¹⁸¹ in which a *darvīsh* prophesies (and in fact engenders) the good fortune of Yazd under the Sulṭān's wise rule:

It is transmitted that in the time of his sulṭānat one day a *darvīsh* from among those given over to divine grace (*az majzūbān*) came to the city of Yazd. He was extremely hungry; no one had ever been in such a state as he. When his endurance was broken he snatched up a loaf of bread (*girdah*) from the bakery in the bazaar. The baker took it back and abused him (*bi-ranjānīd*). He went into another shop and did the same thing. Likewise, they took it back and abused him. The demoralized *darvīsh* came to the door of Masjid-i Furṭ, went to a corner inside the masjid and put his head down on the ground. He said, "I will not pick my head up off the ground lest this city will be ruined." The sulṭān [Quṭb al-Dīn] had perception by the light of divine authority (*sulṭān bi-nūr-i vilāyat dar yāft*). He mounted [his horse] on the spot, came to Masjid-i Furṭ, went before the *darvīsh*, and making reparations for him said, "You have the right to ruin a realm for the sake of a loaf of bread, which is the preservation of the self (*ḥifz-i nafs*)." When the *darvīsh* heard this, he lifted his head from the ground and said, "In this realm, during the time when you are sulṭān, it will never be ruined; day by day it will grow more built up and more populous, God willing."¹⁸²

Following this tale, Mufīd includes an anecdote, typical of the genre of Persian literary jokes, that illustrates the Atābayk's wit and wisdom:

It is transmitted that one day, Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn 'Umar Ustādān, God have mercy on him, took fever. The Shaykh said, "O fever, what do you want out of this intimacy with me (*az shuḥbat-i man chih mīkhvāhī*)? Go before Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn; he is dear to you and has kindness; he will wine and dine you and he'll put you to bed in silken pajamas."¹⁸³ All at once, the fever vanished from the blessed being of the shaykh and the sulṭān took fever. The sulṭān behaved hospitably and laid a feast for three days [for the fever] while reclining in bed. On the fourth day, sending someone before the shaykh, he gave a message saying, "People have not suffered such a guest in Yazd beyond three days; they seek help through the Fātiḥah." The shaykh recited the Fātiḥah and prayed; the fever quitted the Sulṭān.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ See full treatment of this mosque in chapter 4.

¹⁸² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 86.

¹⁸³ Literally: "He will give syrup and juice and put you to sleep in sleeping clothes of cotton and silk (*shīrah va sharbat dihad va dar jāmah-i khvāb-i nakh va kamkhā khvābānad*)."

¹⁸⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 86-7. Mufīd is following the example of Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib, who also include this humorous anecdote. Ja'farī, *TY*, 25-6. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 70.

The *ṣuḥbat* invoked in this anecdote is, of course, between the sovereign and shaykh, not the shaykh and the illness.¹⁸⁵ But Mufīd is playing on the transmissive property that characterizes the *ṣuḥbat* relationship; it is the forum through which teachers or Sufi masters transmit knowledge, authority, bodily comportment, and *barakah* to their disciples. The contagion that the saint’s body harbors actually doubles as his *barakah*, which he passes to Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn. Here, Mufīd is showcasing the Atābayk’s wit, and in doing so, evokes his intimate and congenial relationship with the famous Shaykh. This is an intimacy (*ṣuḥbat*) that facilitates the sovereign’s infection with some of the shaykh’s perfected *adab* and extraordinary, saintly powers: As the two spar with quips and jests, they also playfully knock this disease back and forth in a game of saints’ tennis. The anecdote establishes that this Atābayk is no ordinary ruler; he is a disciple, and even a peer of Sufi shaykhs.

Next, Mufīd illustrates how the king’s miraculous faculty of perception affects his ability to rule with justice:

It is transmitted that a caravan came to Yazd from Astarābād carrying silk. They stopped in the Rīg-i Fayrūzābād so that they could enter the city in the morning. In the night, a thief stole two bundles of silk from the caravan. They brought their grievance before Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn. The Sulṭān asked, “Why were you sleeping so that the thief could take your silk?” They said, “Oh, and we suppose that the Sulṭān was awake?!” After these words, the Sulṭān put his head down [in thought] for a while. Then he picked his head up and commanded one of his retinue, “Go to so-and-so’s house in such-and-such neighborhood and summon the owner of the house.” In accordance with this order, they brought that person into the presence [of the sulṭān]. The sulṭān said to that person, “Return to its owner the two bundles of silk, which you snatched up from the caravan in Rīg-i Fayrūzābād last night so that I may forgive you.” That person denied the charge saying, “I don’t know anything about it.” The sulṭān said, “Go to his house and search in the pile of firewood (*hīmah*). They did as he ordered.

¹⁸⁵ Ja‘farī actually introduces the anecdote with the sentence: The Sulṭān was in the company of Shaykh Taqī al-Dīn ‘Umar Ustādān (*sulṭān bā shaykh Taqī al-Dīn ‘Umar Ustādān ḥāzir būdand*.)” Ja‘farī, TY, 25.

Having found the silk, they brought it before the sultān and returned it to the owner.¹⁸⁶

Following this anecdote, Mufīd turns to the Atābayk's building projects. After describing his complexes in the old city, which we cataloged above, the author then describes the rather extensive building projects of the Atābayk's mother, Maryām Tarkān, including a qanāt from Mihrījard into the city, as well as the village to the east of the walls, called Maryamābād (Maryābād), and a new gate opening in that direction, called Mādar-i Amīr or Māl-i Amīr, which was surrounded by bazaars.¹⁸⁷ After this list of accomplishments, Mufīd adds that Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn built a site of visitation at the stopping place of the Eighth Imām, 'Alī Riḏā, which we will pick up again in chapter 4.¹⁸⁸

Mufīd concludes the notice with a statement stressing that the Atābayk was buried in his own madrasah and reports that “Nobles and notables and elites and commoners, having gone in visitation to that great man, obtain bounty for their desires.”¹⁸⁹ Apparently some Yazdīs were making visitations to Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn's tomb as they did for sayyids and other saints. We will take up the significance of these visitations to the Atābaykid mazārs in chapter 3. For the time being it is important to note that while we find plenty of wise and just kings who assist saintly figures in the performance of miracles and maintain the flow of barakah at holy sites through patronage, after Quṭb al-Dīn, we do not find any examples of full blown saint-kings in Mufīd's (or either of his predecessors') works until the era imperial Ṣāhib-Qirānī rulers,

¹⁸⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 87.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 1: 88. Maryam Tarkān appears to have been a daughter of the Qarā Khitayid Qutluḡ Khāns of Kirmān. George E. Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* (Routledge, 2003), 104. This was the first of series of important alliances between the Atābayks of Yazd and the powerful women of this dynasty in Kirmān, in which women commonly ruled in their own right. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

¹⁸⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 88.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

which started in earnest after Tīmūr. The nature of those kings' sanctity will come under inspection in the next chapter.

At this point the tour of Yazd's sites moves away from the benefits of saintly men and rulers whose grand monuments determined the rhythms and patterns of the region's ritual, political, and economic life. No less important were the benefits produced by the city's scribes—writers, accountants, and men of knowledge— who maintained the operations of government and of the endowments for religious institutions so that kings and saints could have spaces to work their miracles and feats of justice. The traces of scribes beneficial activity resided in the walls of those monuments as well, albeit somewhat less obviously. But at the same time, the scribal class left traces of their benefits in a form that was unique to their vocation. A scribe's benefits were just as monumental as those of kings and saints, but were totally mobile. The scribe's benefit were texts; his traces, the written word on page. The next section treats the all important *aṣḥāb al-qalam* (Comrades of the Pen) and the place of their writings in the history and ecology of Yazd.

5. Separating Night from Day: Men of the Pen

As the Yazdī historians represent it in their histories, in the local economy, the miracle, which is the hallmark benefit of saints and sayyids, parallels blessing of water in that it ranks as a primary and direct grace from God and functions as a basic engenderer of prosperity in the city. The rest of Yazd's inhabitants' benefits derive from saints' charisma, which flows out from their blessed bodies, manifests as miracles, settles into the spaces of the world, and makes them fertile. Next to miracles, the

justice and wisdom of kings comes in at a close second, except on the rare occasions when sovereigns perform miracles in the service of feats of justice, thereby becoming saints themselves. It is no accident, then, that the bulk of Ja‘farī’s and Aḥmad Kātib’s books deal with the deeds of saints, sovereigns, and the sites associated with those figures. But while Mufīd, too, does devote over half of his work to these people and places, he also dedicates hundreds upon hundreds of pages to the benefits that the slightly less illustrious classes of people make flow in their daily activities and commemorates countless sites that perpetuate the circulation of these benefits. Of course, these classes of men include every Muslim inhabitant, down to the minor craftsmen and peasants, who each contribute in their own small ways to the prosperity of the region. Nonetheless, of these classes, Mufīd focuses on the literary classes, the learned figures. It is the ministers and bureaucrats, the legal experts, scientists, engineers, poets, and calligraphers, whose various fields of expertise enable the construction of the infrastructure necessary for the conveyance of the higher order of benefits throughout the province. Of course, Mufīd himself hailed from this demographic.

What are the benefits by which the “men of the pen” promoted their city’s peace and prosperity? These of course varied by profession and activity. However, they all come under the heading of knowledge, both intellectual and technical. The signs or traces of knowledge manifest in the world, particularly the written word, and thus the medium through which their benefits flow is ink. As an illustration, we need only examine the simple introduction to Mufīd’s chapter on the scholars, judges, market

inspectors, preachers, Friday sermon-givers, astrologers, calligraphers, physicians, poets, notables and dignitaries,¹⁹⁰ which consists of nothing but three lines of poetry:

O Lord! I utter panegyrics for you first because the highest of all speech is praise of you.	<i>khudāyā sanā-yi tū gūyam nukhust kih bālātar az har sukhan ḥamdat-ast</i>
You are the fashioner of the stars and the nine spheres. Among the lights of your grace, the sun is but a mote.	<i>tū-ī ṣāni'-i anjum u nuh sipihr zi-anvār-i lutf-i tū yak zarrāh mihr</i>
Owing to the elegant writing ¹⁹¹ of your creation, in the world the black writing is night and the white page, day.	<i>zi-inshā-yi san'-i tū dar rūzgār savād shab ast u bayāz nahār¹⁹²</i>

If the creation is the inscription of God's word, manifest in the world, then the writings of knowledgeable men are the reflection that divine word. This conceit, which casts the black ink of writing (*savād*) and the white page of the notebook (*bayāz*)¹⁹³ as a reenactment or continuation of God's primordial cleaving of night and day,¹⁹⁴ repeats throughout these chapters of the text dealing with all variety of "men of the pen." If the saints and kings, are God's lieutenants in the city, i.e., those who move the first principles of life there, then the "men of the pen" are responsible for the daily administration and maintenance of that life force. Through their knowledge, skill, and, most especially, their artful writing, they are the "regulators" of night and day, so to

¹⁹⁰ The title of the *maqālah* is: "Dar zikr-i 'ulamā' va qazāh va muhtasibān va vā'izān va khuṭabā va munajjimān va khaṭṭātān va aṭibbā va shu'arā va ashraf va a'yār az khavvāṣ va 'avāmm."

¹⁹¹ The term I am translating as "elegant writing" is *inshā'*. This is complex term in Persian and Arabic discourse. In its most basic sense, it refers to epistolary writing and belle-lettres. But, as Collin Mitchell and others have argued, this definition does not go far enough in encompassing its extension into the field of financial administration. *Inshā'* refers to the varied forms of writing associated with the literary, scribal class, and even more importantly, to the culture of writing and manners associated with the members of that class. See Mitchell's assessment in Colin Paul Mitchell, "To Preserve and Protect: Husayn Va'iz-i Kashifi and Perso-Iranian Chancellery Culture," *Iranian Studies* 36, no. 4 (2003): 486-7. Also see Mitchell's survey of the history of *inshā'* from the beginnings of the Umayyad period to the Safavid period, which he traces alongside the development of an overlap between the sciences of rhetoric and political ethics in Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric* (New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2009), 6-16.

¹⁹² Mufid Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 298.

¹⁹³ *Bayāz*, from the Arabic word for whiteness, *bayād*. In Persian usage, the word denotes a pocket notebook, usually opening lengthwise, employed for the scribbling of verses or notes.

¹⁹⁴ Reference to God's creation of dark and light/night and day in al-Qur'ān appears most famously in Q 6:1 (*wa ja'ala al-zulumāt wa al-nūr*). See discussion in Daniel Carl Peterson, "Creation," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1: 477.

speak. This rhetorical comparison of divine creation and the act of writing serves the author as a key device by which he conveys not only the importance of writing in the ecology and economy of the city, but also, the crucial interaction between the various spheres of scientific and practical knowledge and the literary arts. The literary arts comprise a key vehicle for transmitting this knowledge. Both knowledge and rhetoric are integral to the functioning of a prosperous city; as we will explore more thoroughly in chapters 2 and 3, this overlap will manifest itself in the structure of social networks and will determine the particularities of architecture and social practice at the sites in which these networks of people congregate.

In order to understand precisely how Mufīd envisions the role of expert writers in his local ecology of benefit, let us examine the opening of his set of chapters on agents of the chancellery, the scribal (*dabīrī*) class, which follows directly upon his lengthy article on the sayyids. These include sections on provincial governors (*ḥukkām va vuzarā'*), mayors (*kalāntarān*), comptrollers (*mustawfīyān*), and the military offices of *mīn-bāshīyān*¹⁹⁵ and *yūz-bāshīyān* (regimental commanders of a thousand troops and company commanders of a hundred troops, respectively). Almost all of Mufīd's chapters and sub-chapters open with a florid introduction, but the author truly gives this one the form of a second *dībāchah*, stocking it with all the usual tropes and schemas found in the *dībāchahs* that generally open works in Persian. As we will discover when we examine Mufīd's real *dībāchah* in the last section of this chapter (page 148), these

¹⁹⁵ "mīn" is a Persianized form of a variant pronunciation of the Turkic word *bin/biñ*, which means "thousand." There are various pronunciations: *mīn/miñ/mün/mi.n*. Except in loan-words, and a few onomatopoeic cases, Turkic phonology generally forbids initial "m" unless it is followed by a nasal, such as the case under consideration here. See: Sir Gerard Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 346-7. Also see page 765 for the discussion of initial "m."

schemas include opening praises of the Prophet; an encomiastic introduction to the subject matter at hand, composed in ornate prose; mention of important reference texts; reasons for writing the work; and even a dialogue with a friend who convinces the author to take on the project in spite of his deficiencies. This second *dībāchah*, embedded in the middle of the work, signals Mufīd’s intent to set this section of the work apart from the rest of the chapters. From the start, in his lines of praise for the Prophet Muḥammad, Mufīd equates the art of book production with the act of devotion to the Prophet of Islam:

Your name is the ornament of the book of victory and triumph!	<i>ay nām-i tu zīb-i nāmah-i fath u zaḡar</i>
Your mention is the adornment of the frontispiece of speech!	<i>v-ay zīkr-i tu ‘unvān-i sukhan rā zīvar</i>
One never attains the crown of sovereignty unless the hand of your favor comes over the head.	<i>hargiz nashavad kasī bi aḡsar-i sarvar tā dast-i ‘ināyatat nayāyad bar sar¹⁹⁶</i>

In these verses, the author compares Muḥammad’s name to book ornamentation and, in particular, to a frontispiece (*‘unvān*), i.e., the piece of decoration that opens the text of the codex. Here, Mufīd’s written words, which emphasize the Prophet’s primary rank, function as an instance of metapragmatics, demonstrating that the practice of ornate writing constitutes an exalted form of piety. The next section of the *dībāchah*, the description of the scribal class, further develops these conceits:

Upon the minds of the princes of the principalities of reason and wisdom and the thoughts of the travelers of the pathways of merit and vision, it will not be concealed under the veil of doubt: A group of skilled horsemen in the hippodrome of written composition and eloquence (*ṭā’ifahī az shahsavarān-i miẓmār-i inshā’ va balāghat*) and of those seated on the cushion of the throne of written composition and elegant speech (*masnad-nishīnān-i awrang-i inshā’ va faṣāḡhat*) who galloped through the realm of oratory and conquered the climes of witticism with the spear of the pen’s writing, (through the best phraseology and most auspicious metaphors) have exhibited the munificence of the gracefully strutting reed-pen in the plaza of explication of the circumstances of the viziers

¹⁹⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāḡqī, *JM*, 3: 114.

of Mercury's Rank.¹⁹⁷ Verily, those pages [full] of models of witticism and works of epistolary marvels in precise rhetoric and masterful articulation are of such a level that the composers of the meadow of correct writing and the melody makers of the rose garden of written composition acknowledge that as long as the sharp reed-pen of the [Divine] Scribe (*dabīr*) is writing the circumstances of existence upon the gold-scattering page of the shining sun and [as long as] the Almighty Maker's hand of fate is adorning the azure pages of the celestial sphere with paintings of the twinkling stars, at no time have they granted adornment to the face of the parts of composition with musky-black writing and at no time have they decorated the countenance of bridegrooms of composition with the brow of the ambergris-scented lock of hair, as they have in the wonderful book of meritorious works, *Dastūr al-Vuzarā'* ("Manual of the Viziers"),¹⁹⁸ whose ravishing turns of phrase bring increasing mirth like the union of moon-faced lovers and whose colorful metaphors give pleasure like the sweet red lips of nymph-faced beauties. One could set its black writing (which is truly the jeweled kohl of meaning) upon the white page of the eye and one can place its white (which without exaggeration is the blaze of the morning of joy) upon the black pupil of the world-seeing eye. *Maṣnavī*:

Its inky writing illuminates the eye of the nymph;
its white page full of light like the face of the sun.

savādash nūrbakhsh-i dīdah-i hūr
bayāzash chūn rukh-i khurshīd-i pur nūr

Illuminating the world like the day of youth,
increasing joy like the dawn of life.

jahān-afrūz chun rūz-i javānī
nashāt-afzā chu ṣubḥ-i zindagānī

Its prose, pleasant like the locks of the moonlike;
Its poetry, mellifluous like the ruby lips of the
ravishing.

chu zulf-i mahvashān naṣrash dilāvīz
*chu la'l-i dilbarān naṣmash shakar-rīz*¹⁹⁹

As in the poem quoted on page 133, in these lines of praise for good scribes and for *Dastūr al-Vuzarā'*, a famous biographical dictionary of model viziers,²⁰⁰ Mufīd makes paramount the conceit of the *bayāz* and *savād*—i.e., the white pages and black text inscribed upon them. The author draws this pair of devices from the principal paraphernalia of professional writers and equates them to the beautiful face of the beloved, a consummate emblem of beauty in Persian poetics. Here again, Mufīd pivots on the light/dark motif to liken the art of elegant composition to God's primal act of

¹⁹⁷ As in Greco-Roman traditions, the planet Mercury (*Uṭārid*), is associated with the scribal class, epistolary writing, the rational sciences, and esoteric knowledge.

¹⁹⁸ Mufīd is most certainly referring to the work composed by Khvāndamīr in the late fifteenth century C.E. There is also a work by the same name, composed by Niẓām al-Mulk in the eleventh century.

¹⁹⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 114-15.

²⁰⁰ Khvāndamīr, *Dastūr al-Vuzarā'* (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1938).

creation, the ordering of night and day. The remainder of this section's *dībāchah* (not quoted here) consists of the standard scheme of Persian and Arabic prefaces, where the author describes his feeling of unworthiness, which had initially prevented him from putting pen to paper, and subsequently presents an exchange with a friend, who calls him "a lazy fool" (*nādān-i dūn-himmat*) and cajoles him into proceeding with the work's composition. As will be discussed in greater detail below, this is a standard feature of the *dībāchah* form and serves to highlight that the section ought to be read as a real *dībāchah*; these chapters that follows must be taken as a work within the work. Immediately thereafter, the *tazkirah* begins in earnest.

It is of primary import for our purposes that while the opening verses of this *dībāchah* compared the enduring works (*āṣār*) of the scribal classes to those of religious devotees, the metaphors in this second passage compare the work of scribes with that of the military ruling classes—skilled horsemen, cushion sitters on the throne—who "compete in the hippodrome," "conquer," and "gallop forth." There is much precedent in Persianate literature for this kind of comparison between eloquent speech and military prowess, particularly in works dealing with *futuvvat*, i.e., the ethical code of urban craft confraternities. A classic example is the celebrated, tenth/fifteenth-century *Futuvvat-Nāmah-i Sulṭānī* of Vā'iz Ḥusayn Kāshifī. In that work, the author explains that "the arena of trial is the place where each competitor demonstrates his skill just as on an arena of battle."²⁰¹ The author uses the metaphor of the *ma'rūkah* (field of trial) or *ḥarbgāh* (battlefield) to liken the skills and benefits particular to each craft to the chivalrous ethic and battle prowess. This device allows the author to consider the

²⁰¹ Kāshifī, *FNS*, 275.

entire hierarchy of craftsmen as a group and to assess each of them according to the same (ethical) principles. Mufīd’s allusion to *futuvvat* and his adaptation of the *futuvvat*-style conceit of manliness and battle prowess serves to situate his presentation on “men of the pen” and their particular benefits in relation to his presentation on other vocations, other crafts—broadly conceived—and other classes of men. As in Kāshifī’s work, in Mufīd’s work, each inhabitant of the city has the responsibility and the moral obligation to benefit the city with the *āṣār* of his or her expertise. The figure of the battlefield, borrowed from *futuvvat* literature, helps Mufīd develop a common rationale for bringing together each of the classes of benefactors into a unified (albeit hierarchical), ecological system of benefit production, which maintains the overall health of the city. Each class produces a particular kind of benefit that can be measured against and related to all the others, orators, soldiers, bakers, wrestlers, farmers, and even saints and princes. The form of benefit apposite to the “men of the pen” in general, and specifically, to the scribes is beautiful language, written down.

Mufīd’s concluding *maṣnavī* in praise of Khvāndamīr’s *tazkirah* of exemplary viziers, *Dastūr al-Vuzarā’*, make this last point clear. The three couplets rehearse the conceit of the black ink-white page/sunshine-darkness, which we examined earlier. Clearly, eloquent writing does not account for the full extent of this class of men’s benefits; the biographical notices of each subgroup detail other categories of professional expertise and aptitude, including such fields as administrative procedure (*siyāsāt*), knowledge of accounting techniques and notation (*ḥisāb/siyāq*),²⁰² and diplomatic correspondence or epistolary writing in general (*inshā’*). In connection with

²⁰² See brief discussion of *siyāq* in Mehdi Keyvani, *Artisans and Guild Life in the Later Safavid Period: contributions to the social-economic history of Persia*, Islamkundliche Untersuchungen. Bd. 65 (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1982), 200-01, 317.

these skills, these notices present these men as paragons of polish and proper manners (*adab*), and as embodying the qualities of foresight (*abṣār / pīsh-bīnī / dūr-bīnī*), subtlety of mind (*‘aql / idrāk / baṣīrat / mash‘ar*), and piety and virtue (*taqvá and faẓl*). As Mufīd portrays them, these faculties and technical skills, when mobilized in the service of their professional duties, benefit the city as a whole and, by extension, the imperial realm. Moreover, in addition to these less tangible *āṣār*, the wealthiest and most powerful members of this class also construct monuments and public works in the fashion of princes. Nevertheless, Mufīd presents the qualities of temperament and intellectual capacity and the various kinds of expertise that are necessary for running an effective bureaucracy to be inseparable from the eloquent documentary and literary products of their craft, where these aptitudes become manifest. Eloquent writing, particularly versification, does not serve the scribe as a vehicle for representing administrative order; on the contrary, writing is the medium through which the scribe creates order. In Mufīd’s eyes, then, ornamentation does not constitute a peripheral dressing up of facts; the ornament is the very site of noetic content. This notion bears crucial importance for one particular form of writing practiced by many members of the scribal class; that is, the writing of history. After all, it is through the medium of history that Mufīd chose to nest his presentation on his fellow scribes.

Questions about the function of history and the form of its composition constitute one of the main axes around which Mufīd’s work turns. We shall return specifically to Mufīd’s historical theory in a moment (page 148). But first, we must examine Mufīd’s sub-chapter on his own professional class of scribes, *mustawfīs*, i.e., the comptrollers. While Mufīd appears to have spent his nighttime hours (and periods of

unemployment) writing history, the business of accounting served as his day job. If we treat the author's two occupations in succession, we will be able to see precisely the ways in which the benefits resulting from the specific expertise of financial administrators intersect with those resulting from the literary skills of the historian.

6. The Flow of Funds: The *Mustawfīs*

The subchapter on *mustawfīs* in the article on the men of the pen begins with a long introduction, which actually accounts for more than half of the chapter. Unlike the introduction discussed above, which the author presented in the form of a model *dībāchah*, this one jettisons most (but not all) of the rhetorical flourishes, relying simply on anecdotes to introduce the class of men in question. The opening anecdote introduces the key themes in operation throughout the chapter and in doing so lays out the criteria by which the *āṣār* of any *mustawfī*'s career must be judged.

They have transmitted that in times of past sovereigns, one of the masters of the pen, having been ordered to an important appointment, was sent to a village and agricultural community. That person stopped at the home of one of the peasants there. As much as he was able, that poor man stood in service and did not neglect hospitality or courtesy for a single moment. Even though the custom of [the scribes,] that indispensable class of people (*ṭāyīfah-i lāzim*) was respectfulness (*iḥtirām*), he [the *mustawfī*] had profit and the envy of the supervisor of the *dīvān* on his mind, and he forgot the method and manner of the law and of accounting . . . And he determined a heavy value on the property that was in the possession of that poor land holder (*bīchārah*).²⁰³ Afterward, the scribal administrator, Mercury's peer (*dabīr-i 'uṭārid-nazīr*), turned from the house of that farmer (*dihqān*) to attend to another place. However, he forgot his pen and ink. The poor man, out of fear that the other man should have cause to come back to get them back and afraid that that man of the rank of the house of heaven, would bring him to ruin, picked up the pen and ink and set out after him, shouting, "O kind friend, you have forgotten your flint and burner (*ātishdān*)." The *dabīr*, stopping, said, "My dear, it's a pen-set (*qalamdān*), not a

²⁰³ The word *bīchārah* literally means, "without remedy" and connotes a person who is helpless or who lacks the means of bettering his situation.

burner.” The poor man (*darvīsh*) replied, “O you of esteemed rank, with this weapon you have set fire to the harvest of my fields and the space of my house. How can I call it by any other name?” *Bayt*:

The fire of your tyranny has burned all, both wet and dry. *bi-sukht ātish-i zulm-i tu jumlah-i tar u khushk*
It was like when fire fell upon the meadow. *chunīn buvad chu dar uftād bih marghzār ātish*²⁰⁴

While the body of the chapter on *mustawfīs* deals with the careers of historical *mustawfīs* from Yazd’s population, the characters in this humorous anecdote are nameless types whose interactions give instructions for how the rest of the chapter is to be read. The story introduces the key opposition between honest stewardship and embezzlement. A *mustawfī* ought to perform his job with accuracy, precision, and honesty and to make sure that funds fall into the right hands. But the potential for corruption is great; in the remainder of the stories, *mustawfīs* fall, ultimately, on one side or the other and end up either benefitting themselves and injuring the community or putting aside their own greed for the sake of the city. Moreover, in the humorous anecdote above, Mufīd describes the helpless farmer as a *darvīsh* and a *dihqān*, two sympathetic types in Persianate culture: The former term, which simply means poor man, also denotes an ascetic or a person devoted to spiritual practice. The later term, *dihqān*, means farmer or peasant, but Mufīd actually plays upon an earlier usage of the word. The word *dihqān* originally referred to a member of the class of wealthy landowners of the Sassanian empire, the country gentry, who saw their power, authority, and land holdings decrease during the first centuries of the Arab dominion. With this term, Mufīd is casting this narrative of corruption and oppression in the guise of this other common theme in Persianate historiography, namely local oppression and

²⁰⁴ Mufīd *Mustawfī Bāfīqī*, *JM*, 3: 250-1.

disenfranchisement at the hands of foreign invaders and the promise of redemption.²⁰⁵ By using these two terms, Mufīd invokes simultaneously two common and somewhat contradictory figures for nobility: The first presents the true nobleman as a simple farmer who has not been corrupted by the trappings of urban leisure or material temptations. The second presents the true nobleman as one who has ancient ties with the land, whose lineage precedes the Islamic dispensation. Both present the *mustawfī* or the tax assessor as a foreign representative of the court bureaucracy, which is easily corrupted. He represents the antithesis of nobility. All in all, Mufīd is not advocating a populist political position, but is simply mobilizing these tropes didactically, in order to cajole members of the elite into acting with humility and conscientiousness.

Mufīd then launches into a handful of famous examples of *mustawfīs* from the Tīmūrid and early Ṣafavid periods. Aside from a few purely positive accounts, most of these notices relate that at some point these officials “fell pray to temptation of the carnal self (*ighvā-yi nafs*) and abused the peasants (*ru‘āyā*) and farmers (*dahāqīn*).”²⁰⁶ The notices portray the very real temptation that the *mustawfīs* faced every day because of the nature of their work. In these examples Mufīd is really talking about the financial officers of the *dabīr* class in general, rather than about the group of *mustawfīs* to which he belonged, the *mustawfīyān-i awqāf*, who oversaw the pious endowments. In effect, these examples still constitute a part of the introduction to Yazd’s *mustawfīs* proper. Before he turns to those notices, he concludes his introduction with the following

²⁰⁵ Early on, the *dihqāns* often participated in messianic movements, some of which called for a return of the Sassanian kings and /or a revival of Zoroastrianism, or a highly syncretic form of ‘Alid-centered Islam. See Elton L. Daniel, *The political and social history of Khurasan under Abbasid rule, 747-820* (Minneapolis: Bibliotheca Islamica, 1979).

²⁰⁶ Mufīd *Mustawfī Bāfīqī*, *JM*, 3: 253.

orotund piece of prose, which echoes that of the embedded *dībāchah*, where he introduced the *dabīrī* classes in the first place:

May the bringing to light (*injlā*) of the writers of the pages of aspirations and the authors of the subtleties of good fortune not remain hidden (*makhfi*) from the sight of the sun, such that a summary of the circumstances of the comptrollers of the Sign of Mercury, who, by virtue of the order and command of the *pādishāhs* of great rank, have risen to the business of stewardship of pious endowments (*istifā*) in the region of Yazd. It had become evident to this humble servant that, with the aid of the pen of the mirror of eloquence, he should put it into writing (*tahrīr payvast*). And in this position he has also seen the necessity of memorializing a collection of the companions of the pen (*aṣḥāb-i qalam*), who, having made progress by degrees of wisdom, attained a high station and in this good land (*baldah-i ṭaybah*), by the aid of great ability and talent (*qābīliyat va istiḍād*), having brought the mediation of the pen into the field (*maydān*) of sheets of paper, as competitors, galloping forth (*javālān*), they have—with the point of the calligraphic spear (*sinān-i nīzah-i khaṭṭī*)—received the property of the entirety of humankind (which are the rare deposits of his Excellency, the Creator, may he be glorified, whose bounty is universal). Let the fame of that honor-demanding class remain in the pages of time.²⁰⁷

Note again, Mufīd’s use of military, *futuvvat*-flavored metaphors: the paper as a field of trial, the pen as spear. After such a haughty homage to his own profession, the author gives a little wink and tosses in a tradesmen’s joke, which encapsulates his true valuation of some his colleagues by playing on the same metaphors:

It has been transmitted that there was one of the masters of the pen, who was characterized by the modesty of the virtues of the mind and by the acquisition of human accomplishments and known equally for probity and self-control. Having attended the circle of devotion of one of the wise and virtuous men, he had cast the mantle of belief upon his shoulders and hastened to join him with diligence. As for the lordly, wise man, he never paid much attention to this fellow. Once, in the presence of one of his friends, he [the “master of the pen”] started complaining. He said, “I don’t know the reason for my lord’s indifference (*‘adam-i tavujjuh*). However much I bind the sash of servitude about my waist for the sake of his high threshold, I don’t ever see a trace of [his] compassion (*shafaqatash*). My desire is this: that you disclose some of this issue [to him] and you relay to me whatever he says in response.” So, that person went in servitude to the Shaykh and explained what had been going on and made the entreaty on behalf of his dear friend. The Shaykh said, “The reason is this: He

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 3: 264.

wastes precious life on a task that displeases the Provider of both worlds, and he subjects His creatures to discomfort with the spear of his pen and injures and afflicts them with the sword of his tongue.” *Shi‘r*:

It’s all fraud and artifice, trickery and deception— *hamah rīv u rang-ast u makr u farīb*
 Neither honesty nor chivalrousness, neither *nah šidq u muruvvat nah šabr u shakīb.*
 patience nor tolerance.

The friend said, “[That would be so] if my dear friend’s deeds were bad or his behavior were indecent, but he has a pure constitution (*tīnatī-yi pāk*) and a chaste heart (*dil-i šafā*). The cup of purple wine has never passed his lips! The eye of treachery (*chasm-i khīyānat*) has not opened (*nagushādah*) upon the beauty of good people. In accordance with his ability he has paid out with the rigor of prayer and worship. Day and night he has occupied himself with preparation for the times that pride and ignorance would have spoiled and has made ready the provisions for the road to the hereafter in repentance (*tawbah*) and atonement (*anābat*). By the aid of the radiance of the morning of old age, he glorifies and makes lustrous the tarnish with which the darkness of the black night of youth must cover the mirror of the breast.²⁰⁸ He does his work in accordance with the meaning of this verse (*bih maẓmūn-i īn bayt ‘amal nimāyad*).
Bayt:

The morning of old age dawns. At last for a *ṣubḥ pīrī mī‘dimad ākhir damī hushyār shaw*
 moment come to your senses!
 Sleep is no good. At the break of dawn, wake up! *khvāb nīkū nīst dar vaqt-i saḥar bidār shaw*

The Shaykh said: “That which you have said is true, honest, and free of the evil of trickery and dissimulation (*ghā‘ilah-i makr va riyā*). But he has a place in the circle of the masters of the pen and the characteristic of that glorious profession (*tabaqāt-ah-i jalīlah*) is that they possess the disposition of a snake (*mār*). Thus, those of this group are like asps (*arqān*) or vipers (*afī*); those men among them who *are* good are like the enemies of snakes (*shatar-i mār*) and snake-repellers (*mār-ābī*). Yet, even though not too much harm comes to humankind on account of the second group, just by looking at them, the mind (*khaṭar*) still gets irritated (*mukaddar mīgardad*)!”

In brief, the truth became evident to this poor humble one about the circumstances of the Comptrollers of the Sign of Mercury, who— by the order of the sovereigns of the world—had kindled the knowledge of authority (*‘ilm-i iqtidār*) in the region of Yazd; he should explain these with the aid of the fingertip. At this point, he saw that it was necessary that a compendium of the circumstances of all who possessed that rare knowledge in their era and who were the chief clerk of the scribes (*sardaftar -i dabīrān*) of their age should come to be written in these pages.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ “*va zangārī kih zulmat-i shāb-i siyāh-i javānī bar āyīnah-i sīnah mī‘bāyad bi-madad-i rūshnā‘ī-ī ṣubḥ-i shaykhūkhat jalā dādah nūrānī mī‘sāzad.*”

²⁰⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfāqī, *JM*, 3: 264-5.

To a certain degree, Mufīd wishes to counter the negative stereotypes about scribes that were rather common in his day, even if he does acknowledge that many of them were true. The author, of course, includes himself in this small group of upright, honest, and knowledgeable *mustawfīs*, who have woken up “in the morning of old-age.” Mufīd’s critique of his fellow *mustawfīs*—those ignorant whippersnappers who remain asleep in the “black night of youth”— accrues a new potency when one considers the above passage in light of the sorry state of Yazd’s shrine centers and institutions of learning during Mufīd’s lifetime, a point discussed at length. Having held for a time the honored post of *Mustawfī-i Awqāf* (Mustawfī of the Pious Endowments), Mufīd knew better than any other how the mishandling and lack of diligent oversight of Yazd’s endowments had contributed to the dereliction of the city’s madrasahs, khānqāhs, and mazārs. Mufīd, of course, demonstrates elsewhere that he was well aware of the fact that embezzlement and poor stewardship resulted from more wide ranging political and social circumstances that were problematic throughout the Ṣafavid realm and had affected Yazdīs’ standing vis-à-vis the imperial center. These were problems associated with poor administration on the imperial level and a general lack of attention to Yazd and her elite families. The circulation of benefits locally was dependent on the free flow of benefits across the realm more widely, and these circuits that traversed Yazd’s territory had broken down. We have already seen an example of Mufīd’s criticism of the Ṣafavids’ oversight of the pious endowments in his discussion of the ruined mazār complex and khānqāh of Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh (page 119). We will examine this issue in great detail in the remaining chapters of this dissertation; at this point, it suffices to say that fiscal impropriety of local officials was by no means the sole cause of

urban decay. Nevertheless, rampantly poor stewardship did contribute to the ruin of many of Yazd's most important sites and, consequently, disrupted important social networks of people who interacted with those spaces; religious experts, men of knowledge, masters of the literary arts, and bureaucrats of all colors gave up on their city and quit both region and realm when the funding for these sites had been diverted.

In the eyes of a proper *mustawfī*, the uninhibited flow of money throughout the region proved, like the circulation of water, vital to the health of the body of the *vilāyat*. Those main vessels through which Yazd's cardinal humors flowed had become clogged with the plaque of corruption and negligence; the pulses had grown weak. Funds for the important sites' big endowments, most of which were generated by local properties—shares of *qanāts*, orchards, fields of grain, craft workshops, and markets—were of primary importance to the functioning of the city, so much so that the other professions and trades that benefitted the city were directly dependent on the upkeep of those endowments. Mufīd makes this point about the central role of the *mustawfīs* clear by placing the article on *mustawfīs* even before the articles on experts in religious knowledge, judges, market inspectors, preachers, homilists, astrologers, calligraphers, physicians, poets, and notable men.²¹⁰ The livelihoods and, in some cases, the training of these men revolved around these endowed institutions and monumental complexes. The entire economy of the city and the networks of people who kept that economy alive—men of knowledge, craftsmen, merchants, and even farmers—circulated through and around the sites that these endowments funded. Without the benefits conveyed through the endowments that the *mustawfīs* supervised properly, there would be no

²¹⁰ Mufīd's terms in Persian (actually all Arabic loanwords) for these classes of men are as follows: *'ulamā'*, *quzāt*, *muḥtasibān*, *vā'izān*, *khuṭabā*, *munajjimān*, *khattātān*, *aṭibbā*, *shu'arā*, *va ashraf*.

beneficial learning, no blessings available at saints' tombs, no justice, neither at court nor in the markets. The *mustawfī* contributes to the general benefit through his diligent accounting, which keeps the monumental urban centers flowing healthily with activity.

Still, when the situation gets bad enough, even a dedicated *mustawfī* can no longer perform his duties. Frustrated by the city's irredeemable stagnancy and embittered by the silting up of his prospects, Mufīd decided to cut his losses. He followed in the footsteps of the many Yazdīs who absconded for brighter horizons. He abandoned the region to its ruin and carted off the tools of his trade to find more productive and lucrative work in the various ministries of the Deccan and Hindūstān, where (he hoped) his expertise and diligence could benefit some other place. But Mufīd did not give up on his city altogether. Although he left the finances to someone else, he never completely abandoned his homeland or the major sites that had once kept the city in bloom; in exile he writes his magnum opus, the history of Yazd, which is an elegantly constructed, monumental reservoir of memories about the city's past. The author recognizes quite consciously and explicitly the relationship between his two vocations, that of *mustawfī* and that of historian: While the *mustawfī* benefits those sites by maintaining the flow of funding, the historian benefits them by perpetuating the narratives of their history. The health of the city necessitates that both money and memory flow through these spaces together. History writing, indeed the very book of *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, stands as the author's final attempt to repair the damage his city had suffered during his lifetime. As I will demonstrate, its stories both make a plea for help from the Ṣafavid Pādishāh, the work's dedicatee, and provide a model for its

restoration. For this reason, we conclude this chapter by exploring Mufīd’s presentation on what he sees as the most vital and fundamental of occupations, the composition of history.

7. Framing the Flow: the *Dībāchah*, the Historian, and the Benefits of History

Despite his emphasis on history writing, Mufīd does not give historians their own chapter in *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī*. Indeed, Mufīd never explicitly speaks of “historians” in his work at all. As curious as these omissions may seem at first, they should not surprise us to much; history writing had never been considered a discrete discipline in Islamicate literary classification prior to Mufīd’s era, nor was history considered a discrete field of knowledge, despite its ubiquity, its heavy patronage, or its important function in court culture. Furthermore, history was a never considered science in its own right, but rather a subfield of rhetoric. Excepting the works of a spare few historians, historical thought remained largely un-theorized.²¹¹ Accordingly, historical writing had always been a hybrid genre. Those who wrote history considered that endeavor to be subordinate to the genres of versification, epistolary writing, anecdotes, advice literature, manuals of statecraft, and the like. The point is that works of history constituted a rather special category of writing that borrowed elements from other sorts of writing and yet stood above them all. In many ways, historical writing transcended genre itself. For this reason, we cannot expect to find a treatment of historians or their works of history alongside Mufīd’s notices on “men of the pen” or

²¹¹ Intimations of historical theory do appear in the *dībāchahs* and *muqaddimahs* of most historical works, but with the exception of the “Muqaddimah” of Ibn Khaldūn’s *Kitāb al-‘Ibar* or perhaps the *Tārīkh-i Bayhaqī* of Bayhaqī, this theorizations are essentially not systematic.

other vocations. In Mufīd's work, history writing constitutes an entirely different vocation, perhaps even a transcendent one.

It turns out that Mufīd reserves the preface or *dībāchah*, which holds the most honored place in the work, for his presentation on history writing. There, in the heart of the *dībāchah*, which introduces his encyclopedic commemoration of Yazd's history, the author presents an essay on the purpose and function of historical writing. In other words, this essay on history is meant to serve as frame for the entire work; what Mufīd articulates here as being the general function of historical writing doubles as the objective of his work as a whole. At the same time, Mufīd places his dedication to the reigning Ṣafavid monarch, Shāh Sulaymān, in the midst of this essay on the purposes and benefits of historical writing. The dedication comprises an integral piece of his explanation of the function of history and the purpose of the work, and Mufīd works to connect the two explicitly. As I will suggest in a moment, once I examine the content of the preface closely, taken together, these two elements of the *dībāchah*— the explanation of historical writing's purpose and the dedication to the Shāh— demonstrate that the work of local history is intended to mediate the flow of benefits between the city and the imperial center. In fact the pairing of these two elements of the *dībāchah* calls attention to the ability of local historical knowledge to broker the flow of benefits between the local and the imperial realms; the work of local history benefits both the local and the imperial realms, but does so by maintaining a flow, a kind of dialog, between them. In this way, Mufīd is able to show that the scope and relevance of his work of local history actually falls beyond the boundaries of the Yazd province and that the health of the local and imperial worlds are interdependent. Both

require the flow of local knowledge. Ultimately, the *dībāchah* provides the reader with the set of instructions for how to read the rest of the work, which comprises Yazd's history in its totality. Let us turn now to a close reading the *dībāchah*:

Now then: So says the sinful slave, the one drowned in the sea of transgression, necessitous of the Creator's favor, Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī ibn Najm al-Dīn Maḥmūd ibn Ḥabīb Allāh Bāfqī, who, even though he has neither foundation in knowledge (*ilm*) nor capital in skills (*hunar*), has always bound the sash of devotion to the great sayyids and generous '*ulamā*' around the waist of his soul and has invested his complete attention toward gathering materials on the subject of the qualities and manners of august rulers and emperors, possessors of power, famous viziers, and notables of high esteem into eloquent prose (*risālah*) so that it will be a model (*dastūrī*) for the masters of high rank and the leaders of the age and will remain a memento (*yādgārī*) in the treasury of the age. And by the intercession of the disquiet of transitory time (*tashvīsh-i zamān-i nāpāydār*) and the collision of deceitful Fate (*muṣādīmat-i dahr-i ghaddār*) and by the command of "a time when no free-person can be of help (*zamān^{um} lā yusā'idu kullu ḥurr^{im}*)"²¹² this vocation (*dā'īyah*) had fallen into the realm of inertia (*ḥayyiz-i tavaqquf uftādah būd*) until in the year 1079/1668-9²¹³... when the Munshī of the Dīvān of "You give rule to whom you will (*tu'tī al-mulka man tashā'u*)"²¹⁴ [i.e., God] adorned (*muvashshaḥ sakht*) the royal diploma (*manshūr-i pādishāhī*) of the surface of the Earth with the name and title of His successful Excellency... Shāh Sulaymān al-Ṣafavī.²¹⁵

That old vocation came into motion and brought a portion of several of numerous books from out of the valley of dispersion (*vādī-i parīshānī*) onto the path of assemblage (*salk-i jam'iyat*). By chance part of that, which was still in notebook form (*bi bayāz burdah*) fell into the hands of a loyal friend from among the notables and nobles. He acted in good faith (*i'tiqād-i durust dāsh*) on behalf of this broken down one [Mufīd], and he never neglected the customs of friendship for a moment.²¹⁶

In the preceding passage, Mufīd begins by offering proof of his literary aptitude.

He does so, not by boisterously stating outright that his skills were up to the task, but

²¹² This saying reads has the ring of a ḥadīth, but I have not been able to trace it.

²¹³ Shāh Sulaymān's reign actually began just under two years earlier in the autumn of 1077/1666.

²¹⁴ A phrase from al-Qur'ān. (3:26). The entire verse reads: "*qul allahum mālik al-mulk tu'tī al-mulka man tashā'u wa tanzī'u al-mulka miman tashā'u.*" (Say! O God, Ruler of the Realm, you give rule to whom you will; you take rule from whom you will.)

²¹⁵ The ellipsis here masks an extremely long series of titles, thickly embroidered with verses and other ornaments, which carry on for the better portion of a page. These will be considered in detail in the opening pages of chapter 2.

²¹⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 2-3.

paradoxically, by presenting himself in a modest and pious posture and by lamenting his shortcomings as a writer. The catch is that he expresses those inadequacies through feats of literary athleticism and through an emphasis on his devotion to the sayyids and learned men. By mobilizing this technique of apophasis, Mufīd succeeds in presenting himself as an *adīb*, i.e., a man of perfect refinement, noble comportment, piety, modesty, and literary expertise. Indeed, his very writing comprises a metapragmatic demonstration of his worth as polished writer.²¹⁷

The last lines of the passage, which introduce the character of this friend, effect a transition into a new section of the *dībāchah*. After a few requisite verses in praise of friendship, the author relates the story of how this friend persuaded him, after a lengthy debate, to complete his work despite his initial reluctance. This is a standard schema in Persian *dībāchah* composition, as has been mentioned above. The conceit of the disputation between friends constitute the vehicle through which the author articulates the purpose for writing his work of history and, therein, his theory of historical composition.

In the passage quoted above, which opens the *dībāchah*, Mufīd had presented his qualifications for writing the present work in an oblique manner; however, the formal restraints of the disputation-schema requires that he now assume a slightly different posture in this context:

In this era there have appeared ignorant pretenders, who never have any experience in versification or prose. They have thrown sand in the eye of skill and have blackened over virtue and wisdom (*faẓl va dānish*). The level of speech has reached such a debased level that for most people there is no longer any

²¹⁷ On the use of apophasis and *ta'āruf* in poets' competition for claims to expertise and authority in their vocation see my article: Derek J. Mancini-Lander, "Dreaming the Elixir of Knowledge: How a Seventeenth-Century Poet from Herat Got His Name and Fame," in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed. Özgen Felek and Alexander D. Knysh (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012), 77-97.

difference between one who is ignorant (*ghāfil*) and one who is knowledgeable (*dānish*) and one who is defective (*nāqiṣ*) and one who is perfect (*kāmil*); each has been raised up as equal among the others.²¹⁸

Bad writing obscures virtue and wisdom. If the purpose of historical knowledge is to engender wisdom, then only good writing can convey the knowledge necessary for that purpose. Mufīd's main complaint is that if he should finish the project, the benefits of his own good writing will be swamped in the tsunami of drivel and lost.

Nevertheless, the friend chastises the author for this diatribe and his selfish resignation and argues that work's completion is a moral necessity:

One must direct one's ambition to the perfection of spiritual virtues (*takmīl-i faḡā'il-i nafsānī*) and to the revivification of the teachings of human accomplishments (*iḥyā'-i ma'ālim-i kamālāt-i insānī*). Take to heart the admonition (*naṣīḡat*) presented by the illustrious ones:

If you want to be near the Beloved
What you need doesn't come from rivals'
cruelty.

agar khvāhī kih nazd-i yār bāshī
nabāshad chārahāt az jawr-i aghyār

If you want to see the face of the rose
you have to put up with the thorn

agar rūy gulat bāyad kih binī
bibāyad sākhtan nāchār bā khār

In every era, the virtuous folk of elegant speech and the silver-tongued folk of eloquence have inscribed the explanation of the manner of the ordering of affairs, both universal and trifling, and the benefits (*favā'id*) of the organization of the world, both high and low, on the pages of night and day with the pearl-raining pen. With the fingers of diligence and striving (*jidd va ijtiḡād*), they have dressed the truth of the affairs and events of the kings of the world and the happenings and wonders of this variously colored planet (*ḡavādiṣ va gharā'ib-i 'ālam-i būqalamūn*) in the clothes of figuration and the cloak of metaphors (*labās-i 'ibārāt va kisvat-i isti'ārāt*). And so they are free from any fear of enemies' talk.
Shi'r:

If not for the fixity of writing, how would
many-colored meaning and nurturing
thought remain in bloom?

agar nah qayd-i kitābat buvad kujā mānad
shikuftah ma'nī-yi rangīn u fikr-i jān-parvar

If not for the refreshing waters in the world,
no trace of rose or sweet basil would remain
in the garden.

zi āb-i silsila'hā dar jahān agar nabuvad
*namānad az gul u rayḡān bi-bāgh hīch aṣar*²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfḡī, *JM*, 1: 4.

²¹⁹ These verses comprise a *qiṡ'ah*.

Thus, from the beginning of the world's creation until this age, the affairs and circumstances of the elder prophets and the sovereigns, possessors of power, have become manifest and clear upon the tongues of the age (*alsinah-i rūzgār*).

Nāẓm:

Whoever came would tell a new anecdote—
He pierced subtleties, like a hidden pearl.

*har kih āmad hikāyat'ī naw guft
nuktah'hā'ī chu durr-i mahnūn suft*

While he sat in the corner of silence,
he sealed his lip from conversation.

*chun bi-kunj-i khamūshī ū binishast
lab-i khūd rā bi-guftagū bar bast*

The other hoisted the banner of speech;
he gave polish to stories, new and old.

*dīgarī rāyat-i sukhan afrākht
dāstān-i naw va kuhan pardākht*

If you don't make the articulate-natured diver of eloquence plumb the contemplation of speech, you will thereby conceal the lustrous pearls of articulation and the royal pearls of speech inside the shell of materiality (*dar baṭn-i ṣadaf-i hayūlā'ī*). If you don't loose the parrot-speech of the learned and virtuous men upon the sugary place of the tongue's explanation, replete with the reports and surviving works of the preceding masters and with the marvels of the deeds of the leaders of excellence and nobility, you will not make the narration (*ḥadīṣ*) of that illustrious class of people flow upon anybody's tongue.

Maṣnavī:

If there were no poets in the world,
who would narrate the descriptions of emperors?

*sukhanvar nabūdī agar dar jahān
kih mīguft awṣāf-i shāhanshahān*

Because of the sayings of the wise Firdawsī,
the name of Kay Kāvus will live on.

*zi-guftār-i Firdawsī-yi hūshmand
hamī nām-i Kāvus Kay shud buland*

If Anvarī²²⁰ didn't polish speech,
who would speak of Sanjar or his glories?

*sukhan gar napardākhtī Anvarī
kih mīguft az Sanjar o Sanjarī*

Who would remember Qizil Arslān,²²¹
if Zāhir²²² did not praise of justice?

*Qizil Arslān rā kih mī-kard yād
Zāhīrash nadādī gar az madh-i dād*

Nizāmī, who swept clean the treasure-mine of
speech,
pierced the pearl well enough in his description of
Iskandar.

*Nizāmī kih kān-i sukhan rā biruft
bi-vaṣf-i Sikandar basī durr bisuft*

Because many benefits (*favā'id*) are registered inside the of books of history and biography (*tārīkh va siyar*), and because the dispositions of many people desire and yearn for knowing about that and for being informed about historical

²²⁰ Anvarī (d.1189) wrote an important panegyric poem honoring Sulṭān Sanjar Saljūqī.

²²¹ Ildigid ruler of Azerbaijan (581-586/1186-1191)

²²² Zāhir al-Dīn Nīshāpūrī, who wrote the *Saljūq-Nāmah*. See: Zahir al-Din Nishpuri, *The Saljuq-nama of Zahir al-Din Nishpuri (The History of the Seljuq Turks)*, ed. Edmund Bosworth, trans. Kenneth Allin Luther (Routledge, 2000).

reports (*akhbār*) and enduring works of the past (*āṣār-i salaf*), you too must begin that enterprise. Don't neglect my request.²²³

The friend thus concludes his declamation with this injunction to write. The figure of this unnamed friend clearly serves as the mouthpiece through which Mufīd can articulate the key elements of his theory about the purpose and benefits of historical writing. Moreover, he personifies the historian's proper moral orientation. Accordingly, in the *exordium* section of his response to Mufīd, this friend frames his argument as a piece a *naṣīḥat*, moral advice or admonition, and presents himself as an intermediary, who transmits the counsel and wisdom of the "illustrious ones" of the past. In fact, throughout the rest of the work, Mufīd portrays exactly this task of mediation as the historian's primary occupation. To be sure, throughout the rest of the work the author will explicitly present the act of writing or speaking itself as a process of mediation between memory of the past and the spoken and written narrations of that past. As such, the author constantly invokes the instruments of articulation and inscription, the tongue and the pen, for their role in mediating between the immaterial world of ideas (termed *ʿālam al-miṣāl*, the world of images, in Islamic ontology) and the material world of oration and composition. Here, the reader should recall the epigraph chosen for this chapter's opening, in which Mufīd calls on the assistance of the pen to sketch the commemoration of the cisterns. In this sense, the product or *aṣar* of the historian, the written composition, functions like the monuments of the urban landscape, cisterns, mosques, tombs, and the like. Books and buildings both stand as points of intersection between a remembered past and a material present. Both types of *āṣār* manifest the chronotopic fusion of time and space.

²²³ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 1: 4-6.

Beyond articulating the effect of history and the functional role of the historian in unfolding of the historical process, the figure of the friend—channeling the voice of Mufīd, the author—portrays the function of history in moral terms. He explains that since the beginning of time, those who possess the aptitude for composing good prose and poetry are the stewards of the past; they are bound to edify people who “desire and yearn for knowing about that and for being informed about historical reports.” That is, they provide the “benefits . . . of history and biography,” “the affairs and circumstances of the elder prophets and the sovereigns,” “the ordering of affairs, both universal and trifling, and the benefits of the organization of the world.” Lastly, to those who require edification, writers supply “the marvels of the deeds of the leaders of excellence and nobility.” The historian’s duty is the “revivification of the teachings of human accomplishments.”²²⁴

This moral obligation to edify has two valences. First, the friend frames the historian’s duty in personal, spiritual terms, “the perfection of spiritual virtues,” which he characterizes with language drawn from the stock of mystical Persian love poetry: The writer becomes “close to the Beloved [i.e. God]” (*nazd-i yār*) by fulfilling his responsibility to write and convey knowledge of the past. Second, the friend presents

²²⁴ In the *dībāchah* to the second volume of *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī*, which deals exclusively with the history of the Ṣafavid kings, Mufīd makes a similar claim about the historian’s role: “Every one of the secretaries of the tongue of excellence and every one of the copyists of the beautiful pages of eloquence performs his obligations and responsibilities to give precedence to the requirements of assiduity (*sharā’iṭ-i ijtiḥād*) and the necessities of diligence (*lavāzim-i ihtimām*) in [recording] all the events and choice memorable activities of the servants of the heavenly sphere of glory so that the extent of delicacy (*luṭf*) and violent force (*quhr*) and perfect justice and beneficence, and decorum of empire (*ā’in-i jahāndārī*), and conquest of countries (*kishvar-gushā’ī*), and stewardship of the canons of religion (*qānūn-i dīn-parvarī*), and ornamenting the firmament of the world (*falak-ārā’ī*), and the customs of war-making (*rusūm-i razm-sāzī*), and opposing sorcery (*mukhālīf-i gudāzī*), and the customs of enemy-burning (*‘ādāt-i dushman-sūzī*) and good governance (*dawlat-navāzī*) of that Seal of Heaven’s Exaltation [should all] remain stable and permanent amidst the two worlds until the final frontier of the epoch (*dāman-i rūzgār*) and the extinction of the turning of the ages (*inqirāz-advār*.” Ibid., 2: 196-7. Also see version in BM manuscript: Muḥammad Mustawfī Mufīd Bāfqī, “intikhāb-i tārikh-i salāṭīn [Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī, jild-i duvum] (OR 1963),” in *majmū‘ah: khulāṣah-i siyar-i mullā mu‘īn* (London: British Museum), 59a.

this moral duty in terms of the historian’s relationship with the sovereign, to whom the work is dedicated. As steward of the knowledge of the past, the historian has the authority and unique opportunity to advise and admonish the sovereign. As many scholars have explained, in the premodern Islamo-Persianate literary classification, historical writing,²²⁵ along with *vaṣīyat-nāmahs* (testaments) and *pand-nāmahs* (counsels), falls into the general category of advice literature, customarily rendered in English as “mirrors for princes,” in which events and anecdotes from the past serve as edifying lessons (*i’tibār*) or warnings (*ībarat*) designed to guide the moral behavior and statecraft of the ruler.²²⁶ The Islamo-Persianate theory of the circle of justice figures the king’s moral state as determinative of the entire realm; a king who acts with justice and wisdom maintains order, balance, peace, and prosperity in every sector of the realm; the authors of mirrors for princes and Persian literature more broadly imagine the perfected realm as a garden, a paradise on earth.²²⁷ As Mufīd’s friend portrays it, the narration of history constitutes the advice (*naṣīḥat*) that is vital for the edification of the sovereign, both moral and otherwise; in turn, the historian’s advice is necessary for the maintenance of the order of the realm, i.e., “the ordering of affairs” and the “organization of the world.” Of course, when the realm stands in a state of balance, so too do all its parts; an ordered realm directly benefits Yazd, which can then contribute

²²⁵ Here I am mostly speaking of the category of writing termed “*tārīkh*” as distinguished from “*nāmah*.” The former is essentially a prose form, often ornamented liberally with verses. The *nāmah* form is generally associated with epic and romance, and always composed entirely in verse, using the *maṣnavī* form (rhymed couplets). While indeed *nāmahs* can certainly serve as advice literature, this is not nearly as defining a characteristic of the *nāmah* form as it is for *tārīkh*.

²²⁶ Much has been written about advice literature and mirrors for princes in Islamic literature. On the role of the poet as adviser and poetry as advice, see: Julie Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 10-14.

²²⁷ Maria E. Subtelny has elegantly and authoritatively examined the interrelationship between Islamo-Persianate concepts kingship, the circle of justice, horticulture, and hydrology in Maria E. Subtelny, *Le Monde est un Jardin: Aspects de l'Histoire Culturelle de l'Iran Médiéval* (Paris: Association pour l'Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2002), esp. Chapitre 2. Le Cercle de Justice: l'Éthique dans le Gouvernement, 53-76.

to perfecting the realm as a whole. In the friend's own advice to the author, then, by conveying moral advice (*naṣīḥat*) to the ruler in the form of history and knowledge from the past, the historian stands above even the sovereign as the guardian of the order of the realm or the gardener of the "world garden," and his occupation constitutes a moral duty. But, of course, the facts of history must be presented "in the clothes of figuration and the cloak of metaphors (*labās-i 'ibārāt va kisvat-i isti'ārāt*)," i.e., in the masterful language of the *adīb*, the man of perfect subtlety and refinement. Not only does that kind of language stand as a mark of the author's authority and knowledge, it also embodies that knowledge in and of itself, modeling the subtlety, elegance, and civility necessary for evading dissension and disorder in the realm.

In his initial justification for not writing, Mufīd had claimed that inferior writers had "blackened over virtue and wisdom" in their works. The friend brings the *inventio* of his response to a climax by turning Mufīd's own trope of obfuscation against him: Likening the historian to a pearl-diver, the friend warns that if a man of Mufīd's knowledge of the past and literary skill fails to live up to his obligation to write, he would end up concealing the pearls—the beneficial lessons of the past and health of the realm—in the "shell of materiality." In other words, the benefits of knowledge would never materialize. Thus, in the end, Mufīd would be guilty of the very crime of obfuscating the benefits of past wisdom, which he had accused his rivals of committing.

Ultimately, Mufīd cannot counter his friend's *refutatio*, and eventually concedes defeat:

Even though I looked for all sorts of excuses, citing prior engagements (*ma'āzīr-i tamassuk*), it was no use (*fā'idah nadād*). However much I made appeals, invoking conspicuous obstacles (*muwānī'-i zāhir*), these weren't accepted. Since I didn't deem the defiance of his commandment to be permissible (*chun khilaf-i*

farmānash jā'iz nimīdānistam), I relied upon divine virtue and favor and the aid of his Excellency (with the exaltation of his sheltering message) [i.e. Muhammad] and the Excellencies, the impeccable Imams (blessings of God and peace upon them all), and I turned my face to the assemblage of these pages. *Shi'r*:

I girded my waist for this labor like a man; I left other affairs by the wayside.	<i>bidīn shughl bastam miyān mardvār. giriftam zi-ashghāl-i diḡar kinār</i> ²²⁸
I sank the head of thought into the collar of imagination so that I might make beautiful the object of my desire.	<i>sar-i fikr burdam bi-jayb-i khayāl kih maṭlūb shāyad nimāyad jamāl</i>

These verses conclude the dialogic portion of the *dībāchah*, after which the author turns to presenting an outline of the contents and structure of the entire work, and then, commences the work in earnest. The verses echo the opening motif of the *dībāchah*, where Mufīd “binds the sash of devotion” to the sayyids and ‘ulamā’ around the waist of his soul” in pursuit of his vocation.²²⁹ The lines invoke the initiatory, waist-binding ritual of the *futuvvat* brotherhoods, the spiritual societies of urban craftsmen,²³⁰ in so doing, he once more mobilizes the motif of the *javān-mard*, the spiritual champion, to characterize his undertaking— namely, the beautification of the knowledge of the past and the admonishment of the ruling sovereign—not only as a personal, spiritual obligation, but also as one such occupation among the many other necessary vocations that he portrays in his work.²³¹ While Mufīd may consider his occupation to be at the top of the hierarchy, all are necessary for the maintenance of the flow of benefits.

²²⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 6.

²²⁹ These lines were quoted on page 150.

²³⁰ On the waist-binding ceremony in Kāshifī’s fifteenth-century manual of *futuvvat*, see: Kāshifī, *FNS*, 131-47.

²³¹ It is worth noting, that despite the prevalence of images drawn from *futuvvat*, Mufīd does not present a prosopography of craftsmen and street performers in Yazd. These are the vocations most commonly associated with *futuvvat*. He certainly honors particular crafts and craftsmen (for example, the hagiographic story of the kneader and baker above [page 112]), but he does not treat craftsmen in a systematic way. Mufīd is clearly concerned with the elite professions, having to do with Islamic knowledge and the administration of the realm, rather than craftspeople. Nevertheless, this does not mean that he intended his references to *futuvvat* to be metaphorical purely; elites did participate in

When we consider this *dībāchah* in light of the social hierarchy that Mufīd presents throughout the remainder of the work, where the men of every vocation produce the benefits particular to their vocation and standing, we realize that the historian and the *mustawfī* both perform profoundly fundamental tasks in service of the realm, which are parallel and interrelated. Just as the *mustawfī* maintains the flow of finances, the historian maintains the flow of stories about peoples, places, and events. As stewards of this flow, both occupations maintain the infrastructure and buildings of the city, and both preserve the order and prosperity of the communities of Yazd and the realm at large. At the heart of the friend’s speech, Mufīd has the friend invoke the image of the garden—the quintessential metaphor of the flourishing city and perfect realm—with these evocative verses:

If not for the fixity of writing, how would many-colored meaning and nurturing thought remain in bloom?

If not for the refreshing waters in the world, no trace of rose or sweet basil would remain in the garden.

With this simple analogy in the *dībāchah*, Mufīd perfects the conceit of flowing water, which flows throughout his entire work, and sums up the purpose for writing the book’s composition: Through the mouth of the admonishing friend, Mufīd makes explicit the relationship between the flow of life-giving waters and the flow of writing, which vivifies the realm and transforms it into a flourishing garden. If we recall the opening quotation about cisterns, which opened this chapter, Mufīd is clear that water and memory serve similar functions in the city. The survival of the city requires that mountains’ “water of life (*āb-i zindagānī*)” flow through qanāts to the cisterns; just as

futuvvat brotherhoods as well as regular craftspeople. In fact, Kāshifī considers orators (his own profession) to be the most illustrious and dignified of the participants in *futuvvat* organizations.

vital is the memory (*zīkr*) of the past, which the historian makes flow through his pen to those who thirst for wisdom. Although Mufīd may have given up on being able to restore Yazd to prosperity with the *mustawfī*'s tools, he continued to trust in the efficacy of the historian's tools. *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* comprised Mufīd's last attempt to reconstruct the channels of communication between Yazd and its hinterland and between Yazd and the imperial court. This was the only way to convey the water of life back to Yazd. The writing of history quite literally has an effect on its own unfolding.

The next chapter picks up with this idea that the writing of local history benefits both the city and imperial court simultaneously, specifically by nurturing the symbiosis between them. We will begin by peering down into a well that, as legend would have it, comprises the only remaining traces of the first site ever erected in Yazd, by the city's founder, Alexander the Great. We will scrutinize the variant emplotments of this rather curious local legend and explore the ways in which the three historians of Yazd address this interplay between the local community and the court. Here we study the mythic origins of the city at the hands of the greatest conqueror the world has ever known in order to understand the changing discursive strategies by which Yazd's historians put the benefits of Yazd's local history to use in service of a larger project, which was to solidify Yazd's role as an important center of the realm and secure the exchange between imperial courts and the *mamālik* of the provincial city. Our underlying task will be to discover exactly what unique benefits Yazd delivered to the imperial court in exchange for the royal attention, patronage, and favor, which were necessary for the city's well-being.

Chapter II

Localizing Empire: Commemorating Alexander the Great and the Founding of Yazd

His successful Excellency, whose stirrups are heaven, *Khusraw*, king-maker (*tāj-bakhsh*), enthroned in the glory of Alexander (*takht-nishūn-i Iskandar-shūkat*), Sulaymān in dignity, sapling of the orchard of sovereignty and prosperity, bouquet of the flower-garden of justice and sovereign of the vast carpet of security and peace, world-conquering lord of the conjunction (*ṣāhib-qirān-gītī-sitān*), victorious through the assistance of God, the Master of Munificence (*al-malik al-mannān*)... Sulṭān, son of the Sulṭān, son of the Sulṭān; Emperor, son of the Emperor, son of the Emperor, Abū Manṣūr Sulṭān Shāh Sulaymān al-Ṣafavī al-Mūsavī al-Ḥusaynī, Bahādur Khān, may God perpetuate his kingdom and his reign.²³²

- Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī

1. Introduction

With these words Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī extols the virtues of the reigning shāh of the Ṣafavid Empire, Shāh Sulaymān (r. 1077-1105/1666-1694) in the *dībāchah* (prologue) of his *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī*. Though they seem florid enough, the lines cited here in fact offer but a taste of the sumptuous feast of praises that the author spreads across the first pages of the work on behalf of the shāh. The richly brocaded language of *Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī’s dībāchah* is typical of good seventeenth-century prose. As one expects, after eulogies for the Prophet Muḥammad and the Imāms, the author praises his dedicatee in superlative terms and describes him in exaggerated fashion; the sovereign is carted out

²³² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 2-3.

in his finery, weighted down by endless titles and panegyric verses stitched into his vestiments like pearls and gemstones. Despite the pomp and razzmatazz, such strings of titles should neither be dismissed as stylistic filler nor as straightforward expressions of the writer's sincere devotion. Though formulaic and often drawn from pools of stock figures of speech, an author's choices of titles and encomiastic verses are meant to index particular ideological alignments or circles of affiliation and are sometimes redolent with overtones of irony, sarcasm, or admonition that need to be considered carefully. Consequently, in the prefaces of historical works such particularities of titulature often help the author tacitly establish the vision of history that he will use to frame the narration of events that will unfold throughout the rest of the work. The telling of history in seventeenth-century Persianate historiography, as in the centuries before, was deeply bound up with the activities of the sovereign, even if only obliquely so; in the same way that the author's organization of the narrative can reveal much about his vision of history, the way he characterizes the ruler's place in the world also reveals a great deal about how he conceptualizes historical causation, the relationship between historical events and the organization of the cosmos. This is particularly true when we remember that Mufīd composed his history "as a model for the masters of high rank," a point which we discussed at length in chapter 1 of this dissertation. Since Mufīd's work is a history of his local home city, or perhaps more accurately, a history of the realm from the perspective of Yazd, we must read such a discussion of the pādishāh's place in the world in terms of his relation to Yazd. From Mufīd's point of view, not only does the theorizing about empire have local implications, it is a process that unfolds locally, in the spaces of his home city.

We must then seriously consider Mufīd’s choice of titles for Shāh Sulaymān in light of his intension to offer such an example to the reigning monarch and interrogate such usages in order to understand how the author conceptualized the relationship between the person of the sovereign, the cosmos, the passing of time, and of course, the chronotology of Yazd. Among the many superlative designations Mufīd plies, he dubs his shāh “Şāhib-Qirān,” a rather protean but consequential term meaning “Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction,” which in the long history of its use, took on a great variety of implications: sometimes, in its more generic usage, the term simply indicated a great temporal leader or great conqueror; at other times it signified one of a series of messianic and millenarian kings, whose rise was tethered to the roughly thousand year cycles of planetary conjunctions.²³³ While the association between great rulers and planetary conjunctions was always implied with this term to one degree or another, this latter, rather technical usage, which linked the rise of great kings with specific cosmic events, though fully elaborated in early medieval astrological treatises, only became fully developed in historical writing during the fourteenth century, after another historian from Yazd, the eminent Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī outfitted Tīmūr Khān (d. 807/1405) in a Şāhib-Qirān suit of his own fashioning, into which he had delicately

²³³ The origins of this term are disputed. The most thorough surveys on the evolution of the use of the concept and term in medieval and early modern Islamic literature can be found in Naindeep Singh Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Şāhib-Qirān," *Iran and the Caucasus* 13, no. 1 (2009). Cornell Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Sülaymān," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: Actes du colloque de Paris, Galeries Nationales du Grand Palais*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: La Documentation Française, 1992). Ahmed Azfar Moin, "Islam and the Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran" (University of Michigan, 2010). Melikian-Chirvani offers an interesting argument that the concept derived from the symbology of kinship evident in ritual drinking ceremonies (*bazm*) of the Sasanian emperor at Nawrūz, which made use of a crescent or boat-shaped chalice that represented the conjunction of the sun and new moon, itself a rite that had replaced the pouring of blood libations. A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Iranian Bazm in Early Persian Sources," in *Banquets d'orient*, ed. Rika and Bernus-Taylor Gyselen, Marthe, *Res orientales* (Bures-sur-Yvette : Leuven (Belgique): Groupe pour l'étude de la civilisation du Moyen-Orient, 1992).

woven—as only a Yazdī connoisseur of fine silks could have done—all these threads of astrological and numerological subtleties and messianic allusions that later became *à la mode* for Persian kings. It is significant that Tīmūr is the only other ruler whom Mufīd calls Ṣāḥib-Qirān in his work, a point that we will look at more closely later. Moreover, Ṣāḥib-Qirān is a title that Mufīd also occasionally employs as a moniker for the Prophet Muḥammad.²³⁴ In the meantime, we note that the aforementioned specific, astrological usage, which appeared simultaneous with the popularization of messianic and millenarian ideologies such as that associated with the Ḥurūfiyah, the Nūrbakhshīyah, the Ni‘matullāhīyah and others, all movements whose leaders’ authority came in part from expertise in esoteric knowledge, including numerology, the science of letters, and astrology, was part of a trend in which both saintly and kingly forms of authority came to be legitimated in millenarian terms and by means of strategies derived from the esoteric sciences. As I will argue, among Tīmūr’s successors, successful claims to Ṣāḥib-Qirān-hood and heavenly-sanctioned, universal rule depended on the expertise of scholars who had mastered this constellation of disciplines. In fact these rulers actively sought their participation.²³⁵

Moreover, in the same breath that Mufīd declares Shāh Sulaymān to be the Ṣāḥib-Qirān of the age, he also states his shāh is the enthroned glory of Alexander the

²³⁴ For example: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 550.

²³⁵ Imperial sovereigns’ systematic efforts to collect experts and specialists in every field of knowledge was not new in Tīmūr’s age. Thomas Allsen and Michal Biran both show that the gathering and redistribution of specialists from among the urban, sedentary populations of the China and the Iranian world was institutionalized already under the earliest Chingīzids. Experts in military technology, bureaucratic administration, astronomy/astrology, medicine, esoteric sciences, printing, agriculture, and mechanical-engineering were counted in the census of the 1230s so that their skills could be mobilized in the interest of the empire. Michal Biran, "The Mongol Transformation from the Steppe to Eurasian Empire," *Medieval Encounters* 10, no. 1-3 (2004): 349. See also: Thomas T. Allsen, *Culture and Conquest in Mongol Eurasia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 83-176. What was new in the Tīmūrid age, as I will contend, was the growing importance of esoteric knowledge to the imperial project of legitimizing universal rule.

Great, the great world conqueror of the ancient world and a supremely popular figure in Islamic lore, known in the Persianate tradition as Iskandar-i Rūmī, Iskandar bin Faylaqūs,²³⁶ Iskandar-i Maqdūnī (the Macedonian) or simply Sikandar.²³⁷ In fact, as the conqueror of nearly the entire known-world, Alexander had been a favorite model for the eulogizers of kings ages before the Islamic dispensation; his tale remains part of the cycle of stories recited by professional storytellers in Iranian cities today.²³⁸ Historians promoted their sovereigns by demonstrating contiguity or affinity with Alexander, as a famous episode in Cassius Dio's Greek *Historiae Romanae* demonstrates: After defeating Mark Antony and Cleopatra, Octavian (Caesar Augustus) visits Alexander's tomb in Alexandria and even touches his body (apparently breaking off his nose in the process).²³⁹ The conqueror's signifying power continued well into the Islamic era, and long before the seventeenth century, Iskandar and the figure of Šāhib-Qirān were brought together in the chains of panegyric monikers given to kings of the Islamicate

²³⁶ Meaning "Iskandar the Roman" and "Iskandar son of Philip" respectively. In this case, the term Rūm referred to the geographical area controlled by the Byzantine Empire, as well as those parts of Anatolia that had been taken from the Byzantines. The term also referred to Greek and Greco-Roman culture in general. It should be noted, that most texts note that Iskandar's place of origin within Rūm was Yūnān, a term that designated mainland Greece, but came originally from the Persian for Ionia, named for the people who lived on the Western Coast of Asia Minor.

²³⁷ "Sikandar" is generally used in the context of verse.

²³⁸ Professional storytellers generally move incrementally through a cycle of story's drawn from the *Shāh-Nāmah*, which takes a couple of months to complete. The whole repertoire generally ends with Iskandar's conquest of Dārā's realm and does not reach into the material dealing with the Sasanians. Mary Ellen Page, "Professional Storytelling in Iran: Transmission and Practice," *Iranian Studies* 12, no. 3-4 (1979): 197, 204.

²³⁹ Cassius Dio, *Dio's Roman History VI*, trans. Earnest Cary, 9 vols. (Cambridge: Loeb Classical Library, Harvard University Press, 1955), 51:16, 44-47. The precise meaning of this passage is somewhat ambiguous. Dio seems to imply that Octavian did not make this visitation of his own volition, but that the Alexandrians were zealous about taking the newly victorious emperor to see all their kings' tombs. In the end, Octavian felt that only Alexander was worthy of a man of his stature; he refused to visit the Ptolemies, calling them "corpses" and "cattle," as opposed to Alexander, whom he called "king" and "god." It is unclear whether Dio intended that Octavian had touched Alexander out of reverence and affection, breaking his nose accidentally, or that he broke it deliberately, in order to demonstrate his superiority. With either reading, the author is placing Octavian on par with Alexander alone and makes Alexander's body the site upon which the emperor articulates and enacts that vision of empire; Alexander is the model to be emulated or surpassed.

world and were sometimes even used as synonymous designations. When and how this association became conventional is not exactly clear, but the idea that Iskandar had been a *Ṣāḥib-Qirān*, whose rule coincided with an important conjunction of the planets Saturn and Jupiter, was an early one. Nevertheless, in the wake of the reign of the great world conqueror, *Tīmūr Khān*, the importance of the title “*Ṣāḥib-Qirān*” intensified; all of the *Tīmūrid* historians who composed histories of that emperor for his descendents designated *Tīmūr* as the *Ṣāḥib-Qirān*. Beginning with one of these, the illustrious *Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī* (d. 858/1454), such historians rendered the *Ṣāḥib-Qirān*’s association with Iskandar solid and resolvedly inserted *Tīmūr* into this cosmic lineage, capitalizing on all its messianic and millenarian resonances.²⁴⁰ In the centuries following—even, in some cases, up to through the twentieth century— all rulers lived in the shadow of *Tīmūr*’s glory and felt compelled to place themselves in his pedigree. *Tīmūr*’s memory possessed a power that writers would try to win a share of for their own patrons, placing them in the great conqueror’s lineage, quietly making associations between their patrons’ deeds and those of their powerful predecessors. Nearly two centuries after the fall of the *Tīmūrid* house in Iran and central Asia, in claiming *Ṣāḥib-Qirān*-ship for *Shāh Sulaymān*, *Mufīd*, like many before him, was still

²⁴⁰ On *Tīmūr*’s titlature, genealogy, and his rank of *Ṣāḥib-Qirān* in *Tīmūrid* historiography see: John E. Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1987).; E. A. Poliakova, "Timur as Described by the 15th Century Court Historiographers," *Iranian Studies* 21, no. 1/2 (1988). Also see Moin, "Islam and the Millennium". On *Yazdī*’s work see: İlker Evrim Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (ca. 770s-858/ca. 1370s-1454): Prophecy, Politics, and Historiography in Late Medieval Islamic History" (doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago). Also see Ron Sela’s summary of *Tīmūr*’s legacy in the context of post-*Tīmūrid* Iran, Central Asia, Hind, and the Ottoman world in Ron Sela, *The Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane: Islam and Heroic Apocrypha in Central Asia*, Cambridge Studies in Islamic Civilization (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9-13. Sela demonstrates a renewed fervor for legends about *Tīmūr* in eighteenth-century Central Asia (still popular today), called *Tīmūr-Nāmahs*. The prologues of *Tīmūr-Nāmahs* always place *Tīmūr* and Iskandar in a special category of their own, recounting their similar qualities and stressing their common descent from *Yāfith bin Nūh* (Noah’s son). (pp. 22-4) On *Tīmūr* and Iskandar’s common descent from the Prophet Noah in *Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī’s Zafar-Nāmah*, and the importance of the flood story, see below (page 253).

designating his king the awaited successor of Tīmūr and Iskandar, whose authority and power were guaranteed by the cosmos and whose kingdom was the entire world.

Though Mufīd's claim was grand, it was not unlike those of previous Ṣafavī shāhs or their contemporaries in the Ottoman and Mughal realms, whose historians also commonly employed the titles, Ṣāhib-Qirān, Iskandar of the age, or both in combination. What is curious is that Mufīd makes these assertions for Shāh Sulaymān while living abroad in India, working and writing for princes of the Mughal court. He pays such an honor to the Ṣafavī shāh in spite of that fact that he had been forced, like so many of his countrymen, to leave the Ṣafavī realm, precisely because Yazd had begun to fall into ruin under the shāh's protection. Thus, one of the main questions of this chapter is why Mufīd should have been compelled to lavish such praise upon this king who had failed him, a king whose service he had abandoned so many years before.

The first clues come upon the heels of the author's *dībāchah*, in the opening chapter (*maqālah*) of Yazd's history, for this entire chapter relates the tale of Iskandar, his rise to power, his defeat of the Persian Empire, and his importance to the city of Yazd. It was Iskandar, Mufīd tells us, who founded Yazd and who planted the seed of her later glory. In this, Mufīd was following the example of his predecessors, Ja'farī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn Kātīb, both of whom also opened their histories with Iskandar's story. This opening chapter (*maqālah*) of Mufīd's work is entitled:

On the commemoration of Iskandar-i Rūmī, presented in summary form, and the coming of that peerless king (*pādishāh-i 'adīm al-miṣāl*) to 'Iraq and Fārs and the murder of Dārā, the Emperor (*farmān-farmā*) of Iran and Iskandar's construction of the Kaṣah, which was the first building of Yazd, and which is famous as the Prison of the Two-Horned One (*zindān-i zū al-qarnayn*).²⁴¹

²⁴¹ This is the Persianized form of the Arabic "Dhū al-Qarnayn" (possessor of two horns), the Qur'ānic figure who, in Islamic hermeneutic tradition, came to be associated Alexander the Great (Iskandar). See more below.

The chapter climaxes with the rather singular description of how the city came to be founded, where it narrates the story of Iskandar's construction of its first building, this "Kaṣah," which was a fortress with a pit-like dungeon (*chāh*) whose traces, Mufīd tells us, were still visible in the old city during his day.²⁴² In part, the Yazdī historians include this myth in order to explain why on earth anyone would have wanted to erect a city in such an arid waste as the plane of Yazd, but in fact this explanation is only the beginning; it is in the way that the authors use the Iskandar story that one can perceive its full significance. This site, the Kaṣah, marks the first stop in Mufīd's tour of the city's historic monuments, but the author leads his readers here only after a somewhat lengthy introduction that narrates Iskandar's great conquests elsewhere. In arranging his chapter this way, right from the start of the work Mufīd is setting up his main narratological device, which we introduced in the preceding chapter, namely the mapping, opening, and probing of chronotopes around the city, turning the physical

²⁴² To this day, there is still a structure with a high *gunbād* and the ruins of a madrasah in the Shahrīstān of Yazd, called the Zindān-i Iskandar (or Sikandar), located beside the Davāzdah Imām. The courtyard of the madrasah contains a deep well, which many claim to be Iskandar's *chāh*. In his dissertation on the Zoroastrians of Yazd, the anthropologist, M.M.J. Fischer reports (in 1973) that residents of the city explained that this well served as the entrance to a tunnel large enough to admit a galloping horseman, which passed beneath the city walls all the way to Taft. Michael M. J. Fischer, "Zoroastrian Iran between myth and praxis" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1973), 2. In 1975, when Īraj Afshār completed his *Yādgār-hā-yi Yazd*, the author reports that the structure on the site was in regrettable condition and was being used as an oil press. Afshār refutes Āqā-yi Karīm Pīr Niyyā's assertion, made in his *Yād-Dāshthā*, that the Zindān-i Iskandar is in fact the very same building as the Madrasah-i Zīyā'īyah of Mavlānā Zīyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn Rizā bin Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī (a member of the powerful Yazdī family, the Awlād-i Razī). Afshār bases his evidence on the fact that Mufīd presents both these structures in *JM* as being two separate sites: the Zindān, Mufīd says, was still standing at the time of writing, but the Madrasah-i Zīyā'īyah was in ruins, save the minaret (Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 656.). Afshār speculates that both structures may very well have stood in the same enclosure (*muḥavvaṭah*) though. The Zindān-i Iskandar may have been a house for one of the family members of Zīyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn Rizā's household, and the Gunbād of the Zindān-i Iskandar, clearly part of a vanished larger structure, was probably a household mausoleum. See Afshār's extended discussion of the Zindān-i Iskandar (with photographs and diagrams) in Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 797-801. It is worth noting that Afshār dates these structures to the eighth century A.H.; except for his reference to the Iskandar legend found in pre-modern histories of Yazd, Afshār makes no sustained attempt to explain how the site upon which these buildings were erected got the name Zindān-i Iskandar, or to determine the provenance of that name. The Madrasah-i Zīyā'īyah will be discussed in chapter 3.

spaces of his city's present into portals that open onto the past. By exploring the depths of this Kaṣah in Mufīd's chapter, a pit from which, as he would have it, the entire history of Yazd originated, our objective is not only to understand how the author envisioned his current city's relationship with the past, but more importantly, what his telling of that past (or in this case, his retelling of it) intimates of his present experience.

The fact that the three authors of Yazd's history have all chosen the story of the illustrious (and, as it turns out, controversial) figure of Iskandar as the opening episode of their city's history is significant; a comparison promises to reveal much about the authors' view of Yazd's present and past as well as its relationship to the world outside it. In the crafting of any story the choice of where to start is perhaps the most important, not simply because the opening episode hits the reader first, but because, even in narratives that begin *in medias res*, the opening of a story has the effect of making itself seem the natural and primal origin of the story itself and not merely of its telling. Storytellers are magicians; their narratives are parlor tricks; beginnings appear to be contingencies of history rather than crafted literary events, selected and composed. After all, stories simply begin when they begin and not before. But it is here that the reader falls prey to the illusion that time and narrative are one in the same, for in fact the opening of a book of history has less to say about the past than about the moment of writing. Where an author begins his story is where his own story begins and *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī* is as much a story of self as it is of a city.

This chapter explores the significance of this choice of beginnings for all three historians and ultimately examines Mufīd's repackaging of the Iskandar narrative in

order to understand why, writing from where he was writing, he should have called Shāh Sulaymān the Ṣāhib-Qirān and compared him with the mighty Iskandar. For although Mufid creates Yazd's history and its landscape largely out of blocks of history inherited from his forefathers, he does so in his own voice, tempered by his own experiences, and scented with the fragrances of his own world. These fragrances are subtle though and can rarely be discerned in the elements of plot. After all, history's authenticity rests in its antiquity; a historian's skill lies not in creating new stories, but in verifying, correcting, and most importantly (at least in the Persianate historical tradition), beautifying what he has inherited from the past. It is in that art of beautification that the historian's voice comes through. In fact, as he presents his own testimony in the *dībāchah* about the proper role of the historian, Mufid himself intimates that to hear his message we must look beyond the content of the stories; he guides us instead toward the innuendo of the artifice and ornament with which he adorns the tales he has received from his predecessors, saying:

the articulately learned and eloquently eloquent inscribe on the pages of day and night with the pearl-raining pen the manner of the ordering of affairs, both universal and trifling, and the benefits of the organization of the world, both high and low. And with the fingers of diligence and striving (*jidd va ijtihād*), having dressed the truth of the affairs and events of the kings of the world, and the happenings and wonders of this variously colored (*'ālam-i būqalamūn*) world in the clothes of figuration (*labās-i 'ibārat*)²⁴³ and the cloak of metaphor (*kisvat-i*

²⁴³ *'Ibarat* is a difficult word to translate. Most literally, it means phrase, expression, wording, or style; i.e., the means through which the idea or meaning (*ma'nā*) is expressed in language. However, the word frequently implies the kind of phraseology that embodies or requires some degree of interpretation. Moreover, the term *'ibārah* often conveys the sense of figurative expression, dissimulation, word-play, or even allusion. Premodern Arabic and Persian rhetoricians devoted much attention to the functions and effects particular to different techniques of phraseology in both versification and prose. See, for example the presentation on *itnāb*, *ijāz*, and *musāwāh* in Julie Scott Meisami's master work on Arabic and Persian poetics: Julie Scott Meisami, *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: Routledge, 2003), 130-33. The word, borrowed from Arabic, is etymologically related to the term *'ibarah*, which means admonition or warning and *i'tibār*, which has the sense of warning by example.

isti'arat),²⁴⁴ they are free from any fear of enemies' talk (*az qawl-i ḥāsīdān bāk nadāshṭah-and*).²⁴⁵

And then, in the very first line of the Iskandar chapter, just after the *dībāchah* itself:

With the assistance of amber-colored pens, which are nightingales of the melody-makers of stories (*bulbul-i navāyān-i ḥikāyāt*) and the song-singers of story-telling salons (*naghmah-sarāyān-i anjuman-i ravāyāt*), the poetic temperament (*tab'ī sukhan-pardāz*) adorns the entries of the registers of historical reports (*unvān-i jarā'id-i akhbār*) and the preface to historical facts (*dībāchah-i ḥaqā'iq-i āsār*).²⁴⁶

With these words we realize that our project is resoundingly inter-textual; we can only reconstruct the paratext and the innuendo around Mufīd's narrative by looking at the transmission of Iskandar's story across three generations of its telling and by listening to the three Yazdī authors' implicit dialogue with one another, a conversation that occurs principally on the level of style and structure. In tracing the author's recreation of Yazd, our task is two fold. First, we must explore the ways in which Mufīd maps the chronotopic landscape of the city. In this way we will understand the mechanics of his text and use that understanding to approximate a direct understanding of the author's knowledge of the city and to discern its uses and its benefits. Second, we must trace the discursive tradition in which that knowledge of the city was transmitted between generations of historians, received by each in turn, and pressed into something new with each successive composition. And so we begin where our three historians began, at the imagined dawn of Yazd's history, with the coming of Iskandar-i Rūmī, the first

²⁴⁴ Meisami cites al-Jurjānī and others in order explain that metaphors do not simply compare or describe, but make arguments by means of invoking likenesses and comparisons. *Isti'arah*, which literally means "borrowing," is "a comparison that makes a claim for likeness between two things, without the necessity of proof." *Ibid.*, 342. This point comes in the course of an extended discussion of metaphor in the chapter of this volume, which is titled "Ornament: Metaphor and Imagery," pp. 319-403.

²⁴⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 1: 5.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 8.

Şāhib-Qirān; surely, by styling Shāh Sulaymān an Iskandar and a Şāhib-Qirān, Mufīd was pointing us here for an explanation.

But before we descend into the ruins of the well of Iskandar's Kaşah to begin our excavation of Yazd, we must step back and consider Iskandar's place in the Islamo-Persianate literature that preceded the production of Yazd's histories. For, while much scholarship has been written on Iskandar in the Islamic tradition, particularly the Persian versified epic tradition, and further, while much careful work has been done on Persianate local histories,²⁴⁷ no one has yet looked at the intersection between these two fields of literature. Thus, we must first take stock of where Iskandar fit into works of Persianate local history that preceded the composition of the Yazd corpus. After completing this task, we will study the story of Iskandar and Dārā in the Yazdī histories and compare the variant renderings of the story of Yazd's founding. Having teased out the key themes and formal elements of these narratives, in the latter half of this chapter, in sections 5 and 6, we compare the Yazdī historians' divergent ways in which Yazd's historians use the story of Iskandar as a Şāhib-Qirān-type to frame the entirety of the rest of the city's history. There, we will take our discussion behind the text of the Iskandar narratives in order explore the changes in relationship between two key and intersecting pairs of conceptual oppositions, which are in operation throughout the texts of the Yazd corpus; these are the relationship between the notion of the foreign and the local and the relationship between the universal and the particular. In the course of this latter discussion we will study the ways in which the authors frame the

²⁴⁷ See footnote 16 in the Introduction.

relationship between the city and the realm at large, a framing that sometimes renders the boundaries around the city ambiguous.

2. Welcoming Iskandar: late antique literary legacy in Islamicate historiography

It is not particularly remarkable that Iskandar should make an appearance in Yazd's histories, for from early on he was generally accepted as being the prophet named "Dhū al-Qarnayn" in the Qur'ān (Q 18:82-98). Alexander became part of Muslims' memory of a remote past, even if he was never one of the most pivotal prophets in the cycle of salvation history presented in the Qur'ān. It appears that Dhū al-Qarnayn's association with Alexander was not universally agreed upon at first and a consensus on the prophet's identification with the young conqueror from the Aegean world only developed a century or so after the Prophet Muḥammad's death;²⁴⁸ that such an

²⁴⁸ Clearly, this connection had been made prior to the advent of Islam. The sixth century Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes has Alexander say to God: "I know in my mind that thou hast exalted me above all kings, and that thou hast made me horns upon my head, wherewith I might thrust down kingdoms of the world..." Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The history of Alexander the Great, being the Syriac version of the Psuedo-Callisthenes*, ed. Ernest A. Wallis Budge, trans. Ernest A. Wallis Budge (Cambridge: The University press, 1889), 146. Later God says to Alexander: "Behold, I have magnified thee above all kingdoms, and I have made horns of iron to grow on thy head that thou mayest thrust down the kingdoms of the earth with them." Pseudo-Callisthenes, *HAG (Syriac)*, 156. However, Minoo S. Southgate demonstrates that early on the title was also associated with other mythological figures. For example, in his ninth-century work, *al-Tījān*, Ibn Ḥishām concluded that Dhū al-Qarnayn referred to a Ḥamīrī king of Yemen, Ṣa'ib, called Ṣa'ib Dhū al-Qarnayn. Ibn Ḥishām gives an account of Ṣa'ib Dhū al-Qarnayn on the authority of Wahb ibn Munabbih (654-732 C.E.). On this account see *Iskandar-Nāmah*, ed. Minoo S. Southgate, trans. Minoo S. Southgate (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 198-201. Nevertheless, Dhū al-Qarnayn's association with Alexander became essentially universal later on. We should note, however, that in his early sixteenth-century *Tārīkh-i Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, Khvāndamīr states plainly that the Prophet Dhū al-Qarnayn was not the same person as Iskandar-i Rūmī, the world conqueror and provides various conflicting accounts of who he was. He revisits the Iskandar material later on, in a section entitled "*Zīkr-i Iskandar Zū al-Qarnayn*," where he distinguishes two Zū al-Qarnayns, Zū al-Qarnayn al-Akbar and Zū al-Qarnayn al-Aṣghar (Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn ibn Humām al-Dīn al-Ḥusaynī Khvāndamīr, *Tārīkh-i Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, ed. Jalāl al-Dīn Humāī, 4 vols. (Tehran: Kitāb-Khānah-i Khayyām, 1333/1954), 1: 207-14.) Some say that Zū al-Qarnayn al-Akbar was known as the builder of the Wall [against Gog and Magog] (*Ṣāḥib-i Sadd*) and Zū al-Qarnayn al-Aṣghar was Iskandar-i Rūmī. However he cites the Quranic commentators, al-Ṭabarī and Qāḍī Bayḍāwī [thirteenth century] saying the opposite. Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 1: 40, 209. This discussion is similar to that in his grandfather's

association was made at all speaks to the fact that tales of Iskandar's conquest of the Persian empire and his adventures across the known and wondrous world, which had long been circulating in the late antique Mediterranean region, had remained compelling while a new historical sensibility and mythical imagination was still forming throughout the first centuries of the Islamic dispensation. As a consequence, stories of Iskandar became (or remained) a part of the collective memories of Muslims and those who were ruled by them and continued to evolve along with those memories.

In addition to a body of stories circulating orally, early Muslim authors inherited a corpus of texts about Alexander from the late antique world that proved influential in their development of the Islamicate figure of Iskandar. This body of works is known in modern scholarship as the Pseudo-Callisthenes corpus and consists of a series of four recensions of a text, composed between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. in Greek.²⁴⁹ The latest of these recensions, termed the "Pseudo-Callisthenes δ " is not extant but has been partially reconstructed from the translations in European, African, and Asian languages which had been made after the original was translated from Greek into Pahlavī sometime in the late antique period and afterwards,²⁵⁰ and from Greek into

work, Muḥammad Mīr Khvānd, *Tārīkh-i Rawzat al-Safā*, ed. 'Abbās Zardāb, 6 vols. printed in 2 vols. (Tehran: Chāp-Khānah-i Mihrāt, 1994), Vol. I-II-III, 27, 139-42. (These three volumes are bound together.) Interestingly, the Ilkhanid-era historian, Shabānkārahī, whose work offers a rather curious take on the history of Fārs in that period, makes a completely different (and rather sly) argument for why Iskandar should not be considered a prophet. He states that since Iskandar was the pupil (*talmīz*) of Aristotle, he could not have been a prophet, for prophets do not have teachers (*ustād*); rather, their knowledge comes through divine illumination (*ladunī*). Muḥammad 'Alī bin Muḥammad Shabānkārahī, *Majma' al-Ansāb*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddīṣ, 2 vols. (Tehran: Mu'asasah-i Intishārāt-i Amīr-i Kabīr, 1381/2002), 1: 211.

Shabānkārahī's work will be of greater concern to us in the next chapter. On Iskandar in the Qur'ān see John Renard, "Alexander," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1: 61-2.

²⁴⁹ Minoo S. Southgate provides an extremely useful history of the Pseudo-Callisthenes corpus and all its descendents in Arabic and Persian in the appendices to his translation of the twelfth to fourteenth century anonymous *Iskandar-Nāmāh: Iskandar-Nāmāh*, 167-204. Especially helpful is the diagram on p. 185.

²⁵⁰ Southgate has proposed that this translation was made by an Armenian author, a theory that accounts for why an author writing in Pahlavī could possibly have produced such a favorable account of the

Latin²⁵¹ in 950 C.E. The Pahlavi version was also lost, but not before being translated into Syriac²⁵² in the sixth century C.E. and then into a New Persian or Arabic version during the first centuries of the Islam. This recession has been lost, but was in circulation in variant forms during the early Islamic period; early Islamic historians, such as al-Dīnāwarī and al-Ṭabarī, writing in Arabic, made use of this branch of the Pseudo-Callisthenes literature in combination with other sources, including oral ones, and adapted them for use in their universal histories, which proved foundational for a new, distinctively Islamic historiographic tradition, which sought to bring the Qur'ānic notion of salvation history into harmony with both Near Eastern and Iranian histories.²⁵³ The Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition influenced New Persian literature too, mixing with the new Arabic versions in al-Ṭabarī, Bal'amī's Persian translation of al-Ṭabarī, other works in Arabic, Syriac, and Pahlavī, and colored with local oral tales. The Persian tradition eventually developed a variety of discernable strands, the most pervasive ones being Firdawsī's early eleventh-century, versified account of Iskandar in his *Shāh-Nāmāh*, Nizāmī's late twelfth-century, two-part work on Iskandar, the *Sharaf-Nāmāh* and the *Iqbāl-Nāmāh*, which formed part of his *Quintet (Khamsah)*, Amīr

conqueror, who in the Pahlavī texts of Zoroastrian authors had been damned as an agent of Ahrīman. Ibid., 186. The cursing of Iskandar in Pahlavī literature will be taken up later in this chapter.

²⁵¹ The Latin version is Leo of Naples's *Nativitas et Victoria Alexandri Magni Regis*, completed in 950 C.E., which was itself a source of many later versions in Latin. In his introduction, Leo states that his translation was made from Greek. Ibid., 167-8.

²⁵² The Syriac version was translated into Arabic in the ninth century. This was in turn translated into Ethiopic sometime between the fourteenth and sixteenth century. This Arabic version has itself vanished. Ibid., 168. The Syriac text was translated into English in the late nineteenth century and has been cited above. It should be noted that Budge, in his introduction to the nineteenth-century English translation of the Syriac believed that the Syriac translation had been made from an earlier Arabic translation and not a Pahlavī one, and further, that the translation was made some time between the seventh and ninth centuries, C.E. Pseudo-Callisthenes, *HAG (Syriac)*, lx-lxii.

²⁵³ Two studies that explore the early development of Muslim (particularly Arabic) Historiography are: Tarif Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought in the classical period*, Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic historiography*, Themes in Islamic history (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003). For the case of al-Ṭabarī's work, see: Khalidi, *Arabic historical thought in the classical period*, 78-81.

Khusraw's thirteenth-century *Āyinah-i Iskandarī* (also part of a *Khamsah*), and Jāmī's late fifteenth-century *Khīrad-Nāmah-i Iskandar*. Although Iskandar had long been seen as a prophet, Niẓāmī was the first to make him into a mystic, an innovation that Jāmī elaborated upon in the fifteenth century. The anonymous prose *Iskandar-Nāmah* written some time between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries C.E., clearly draws from the earlier Arabic and Persian works in the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, but adds a great deal of material concerning his fantastic adventures in wondrous lands, in particularly his adventures with fairies.²⁵⁴ We should also mention Tāj al-Dīn Ibrāhīm Aḥmadī's *Iskandar-Nāmah*, completed in 1390, which is quite an earlier example of a *maṣnavī* written in Ottoman Turkish. Though this work never greatly influenced later Ottoman works on Iskandar per se, by the sixteenth century its popularity was notable and in fact, served as the model for Mavlānā Īsā's *Jāmi' al-Maknūnāt* (Compendium of Hidden Things), an important work that presented the Ottoman emperor, Ḳānūnī Sulṭān Süleymān, as the unrivaled world conqueror and the millennial Şāḥib-Qirān of the Final Age.²⁵⁵ Moreover, in Khurāsān and Central Asia,²⁵⁶ books containing this work were understood to embody talismanic power, as witnessed by the fact that the Shaybānī Uzbek Khān slept with it under his pillow and carried it into battle.²⁵⁷ This practice

²⁵⁴ *Iskandar-Nāmah: ravāyat-i Fārsī-i Kālīstanis-i durūghīn*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Bungah-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1964). In fact this work is sometimes referred to as the Persian Pseudo-Callisthenes, but this work is no more closely related to the older translations than any other of the medieval Persian translations, much less the Greek Pseudo-Callisthenes δ. Julia Rubanovich explores Persian folk literature surrounding Iskandar, but her dissertation, entitled "Beyond the Literary Canon: Medieval Persian Alexander-Romances in Prose" is written in Hebrew and is not accessible to me.

²⁵⁵ Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah," 165. It should be noted, that Iskandar's story only serves as part of the farming narrative of this work.

²⁵⁶ See Caroline Sawyer, "Sword of Conquest, Dove of the Soul: Political and Spiritual Values in Aḥmadī's Iskandarnāma," in *The Problematics of Power: Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, ed. J.Ch. Bürgel M. Bridges, *Scheizer Asiatische Studien* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996).

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 137. See also mentioned in Robert Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol Şāhnāma," in *The Problematics of Power: Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, ed. J.Ch. Bürgel M. Bridges, *Scheizer Asiatische Studien* (New York: Peter Lang, 1996), 205.

must not have worked however, since Shāh Ismā‘īl defeated him outside of Marv in 1510 C.E., had him suffocated underneath a pile of his own soldiers’ corpses, and then (if we believe the account given in the *Zayl-i Ḥabīb-i Siyar* by Amīr Maḥmūd), let his Qizlbāsh devotees devour his flesh before ordering the poor Khān’s skull fashioned into a chalice, out of which he was known to quaff his wine!²⁵⁸

The figure of Iskandar also filtered into some pre-Mongol, local historiographical traditions in the Iranian world, where his conquests were sometimes remembered alongside those of other kings from the Iranian mythical tradition and elsewhere. Yet, despite both the growing popularity of Iskandar’s story in versified *nāmāhs* and universal *tārīkhs* and the honorable station he was understood to have occupied in the Qur’ān, we find surprisingly little celebration of the legendary conqueror in the numerous local histories produced during the centuries leading up to the Mongol conquests. In fact, contrary to what one might expect, Yazd’s local histories, written in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, hold the honor of being nearly the only pre-modern works of Iranian local history that give Iskandar such a central role. In many of the well-known works of that period, Iskandar is not mentioned at all or only in passing. This is in part because most early works of local history in the Islamicate world (written in Arabic), prior to 1000 C.E., were essentially biographical dictionaries of notables and ‘*ulamā*’ who lived in various cities. In those works, such as, for example, in Abū Nu‘aym’s *Kitāb Dhikr Akhbār Iṣbahān*²⁵⁹ (early

²⁵⁸ On this and other incidents of Ṣafavid cannibalism discussed in the Ṣafavid sources, see: Shahzad Bashir, "Shah Isma‘il and the Qizilbash: Cannibalism in the Religious History of Early Safavid Iran," *History of Religions* 45, no. 3 (2006).

²⁵⁹ Aḥmad ibn ‘Abd Allāh Abū Nu‘aym al-Iṣbahānī, *Kitāb Dhikr Akhbār Iṣbahān* (Deli: al-Dār al-‘Ilmīyah, 1985).

eleventh century C.E.) or al-Fārisī's *Kitāb al-Siyāq li-Tārīkh Nīsābūr*²⁶⁰ (early twelfth century C.E.), aside from some casual mention in the introductory section, usually centered around a description of topography, one would not expect to find Iskandar's story to be recounted.²⁶¹ But as local histories more commonly came to be vehicles for relating the histories of sovereign families, one does begin to find space opening up for the kind of storytelling into which Iskandar's story would fit comfortably alongside other such legendary figures. Still, even in the works we might expect to find him, we are often disappointed. Iskandar is totally absent from al-Narshakhī's tenth-century *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*²⁶² and from Māfarrūkhī Iṣfahānī's eleventh century *Maḥāsin-i Iṣfahān* (or more accurately, from the Persian translations of those books, done in the early twelfth²⁶³ and fourteenth centuries respectively).²⁶⁴ Nor is the conqueror mentioned in the Ibn Funduq's *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, composed in 563/1168.²⁶⁵ Similarly, Iskandar plays no significant part in the histories of the Caspian region, where he is only mentioned

²⁶⁰ 'Abd al-Ghāfir b. Ismā'īl Fal-Fārisī, *al-Muntakhab min Kitāb al-siyāq li-tārīkh Nīsābūr* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Fikr, 1993).

²⁶¹ For a full discussion of local prosopographical works, see: Rosenthal, *A history of Muslim historiography*, 142-9.

²⁶² In this work the original citadel of Bukhara was built by Siyāvush ibn Kaykāvus, after he fled from his father to Tūrān, where he married that daughter of Afrāsiyāb. Later Afrāsiyāb killed him and he was buried in the citadel near the gate of Ghūriyān, where the Zoroastrians (*Mughān*) perform rituals of mourning for him, and kill a rooster (*khurūs*) before sunrise on Nawrūz (in order to seal a vow). Muḥammad ibn Ja'far al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1351/1972), 32-33. (English trans: Abū Bakr Muḥammad ibn Ja'far ibn Zakarīyā ibn Khāṭṭāb ibn Sharīk al-Narsakhī, *The History of Bukhara*, ed. Richard N. Frye, trans. Richard N. Frye (Cambridge, MA: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1954), 23.

²⁶³ The original Arabic text, which al-Narshakhī presented to the Sāmānid Amīr, Nūḥ ibn Naṣr in 332/943-4, is no longer extant. It was later translated into Persian by Abū Naṣr Aḥmad al-Qubāvī in 522/1128-9 and was then abridged by Muḥammad ibn Zufar ibn 'Umar in 574/1178-9, who also made editions from other works, notably the *Khazā'in al-'ulūm* of Abū al-Ḥasan 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad al-Nīshāpūrī. This latest version remains. See Frye's introduction to the translation: al-Narsakhī, *The History of Bukhara*, xii.

²⁶⁴ al-Mufaḍḍal ibn Sa'd Māfarrūkhī, *Maḥāsin-i Iṣfahān*, trans. Ḥusayn ibn Muḥammad Ibn Abā al-Rizā'āvī (1949). Rizā'āvī's Persian translation was made in 1328-9 and presented to the vazīr of Abū Sa'īd, the last Īlkhān.

²⁶⁵ Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī ibn Zayd Bayhaqī Ibn Funduq, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaq*, ed. Aḥmad Bahmaniyār, second ed. (Iran 1965).

obliquely, if at all.²⁶⁶ It is indeed perplexing that a figure who had such an impact on the ancient world and whose memory surfaced in other genres would be absent from these works on local history and prosopography. Of course, we must consider the possibility that the historians from these cities simply found no traces of Iskandar among the flotsam from the ancient world, the shells and pearls washed up on history's shores, gathered, polished, and strung with the telling of tales about their cities. While this may have been the case in some regions, the conqueror's absence, or near absence, may be more measured.

Iskandar in Ibn al-Balkhī's *Fārs-Nāmah*

Where Iskandar does make an appearance, he generally plays a rather peripheral role and his depiction is not exceedingly glorious, particularly in works produced in western Iran, especially in Fārs. An example is Ibn al-Balkhī's twelfth-century *Fārs-Nāmah*, which does contain a rather animated little section on Iskandar's reign, but presents it only as a brief interlude between the long reigns of four pre-Islamic dynasties of Fars.²⁶⁷ In the introduction, the author outfits him with a noble genealogy, tracing his lineage back to the Prophet Ibrāhīm,²⁶⁸ but the narration of his deeds, which comes later, is anticlimactic: despite the fact that Ibn al-Balkhī describes

²⁶⁶ Muḥammad b. Ḥasan al-Isfandiyār's thirteenth-century *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* makes no mention of Iskandar at all. Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥasan Ibn Isfandiyār, *Sargu Zashṭ-i 'Alaviyān-i Ṭabaristān va Āl Ziyar bih rivāyat-i Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* (Tehran: Ahl-i Qalam, 1381/2002). In Ḥāshir al-Dīn Mar'ashī's fifteenth-century *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān va Rūyān va Māzandarān*, Iskandar's only appearance comes about in reference to his appointment of Ṭabaristān to the ancestors of Jusanafshāh. Ḥāshir al-Dīn Mar'ashī, *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān va Rūyān va Māzandarān*, ed. 'Abbās Shāyān (Tehran: Chāp-khānah-yi Firdawsī, 1333), 228. In the same author's *Tārīkh-i Gīlān va Daylamistān*, there is only one passing reference to Iskandar in a *qaṣīdah* for Amīrah 'Ālā' al-Dīn Fumanī, who briefly ruled in Rasht. Ḥāshir al-Dīn Mar'ashī, *Tārīkh-i Gīlān va Daylamistān*, ed. Manūchir Sutūdah (Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Īrān, 1347/1969), 363-4.

²⁶⁷ al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmah*, 8-9. Meisami briefly discusses Iskandar's part in Ibn al-Balkhī's work: Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 170-1.

²⁶⁸ al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmah*, 15-6.

the conqueror as wise and just, the short summary (*mukhtaṣar*, as he calls it) that he provides commemorates Iskandar's deeds, but only in so far as they exemplify the political intrigue playing out in Dārā's household, political games that Dārā's viziers managed to draw Iskandar into, using him like a pawn.²⁶⁹ In fact, Ibn al-Balkhī explains that though Iskandar's legacy was great, the full story would be out of place "since the purpose of this book is the remembrance of the kings of Fārs (*mulūk-i furs*) and their circumstances."²⁷⁰ So according to Ibn al-Balkhī, Iskandar, who was not from Fārs, naturally falls outside this group. Furthermore, he explicitly emphasizes the fact that Iskandar's rule was short lived and that after his death, Dārā's son succeeded him and expelled all the Greek governors.²⁷¹ Iskandar was an anomaly, a foreign conqueror whose memory, though essential to the narrative of Fārs's history, was only incidental to the story of Fārs's Kings. The kings of Fārs were, like Iskandar, world conquerors themselves, but of course their world empire had been centered in their native Fārs, the place where their ancestors had been buried.

Moreover, despite the great wisdom and chivalric honor Iskandar was supposed to have possessed, Ibn al-Balkhī's portrayal itself is not totally consistent with these noble characteristics: he reports that Iskandar decides to indiscriminately massacre all the noblemen of Fārs and only refrains from doing so after Aristotle advises him that

²⁶⁹When Dārā ibn Dārā became king upon his father's death, he removed his father's old vizier, Rushtin, from his post in retaliation for the vizier's poisoning the king's most beloved childhood friend years before, a murder which Rushtin had committed because the boy had been ridiculing him in concert with the young prince. In place of Rushtin, Dārā appointed his murdered friend's brother, who turned out to be extraordinarily oppressive and encouraged Dārā to tyranny. The bitter and scheming Rushtin, having accurately predicted that the demoralized subjects would turn against Dārā and his house, allied himself with Iskandar and persuaded him to attack the empire. *Ibid.*, 55-6, 57.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 57.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 58.

such violence is not in his own best interest.²⁷² Assuredly, the conqueror scores points for heeding sage advice, a mark of good kingship, but this Iskandar is a far cry from the prophetic figure we find in the epics. Moreover, we are told, rather ambivalently, that Iskandar achieved the conquest of each of Iran's cities by trickery and cunning (*bi-makr va dastān*) and by the use of ruses (*ḥaylāt*) (Both the killing of the Persian nobles and Iskandar's trickery are themes that will surface again in later presentations, and we shall return to them.) Further, the author demonstrates that the only reason for Iskandar's success in Fārs was that he appeared at a moment when Dārā and his administrators had become oppressive (*zālim*), immoral (*bad-sīrat*), and misguided (*bad-rāy*), such that the subjects abhorred them (*az vay nafūr va nākhushnūd*); the crafty nobles of the court wished to make use of him for the sake of their own vendettas and thus pulled him into the affairs of empire.²⁷³ Throughout the rest of the work, the author only mentions Iskandar again with regard to the havoc he wrought on Iranian cities, such as his conquest of Bishāvūr²⁷⁴ and Fīrūzābād.²⁷⁵ Overall, the impression one gets from Ibn al-Balkhī is that Iskandar was a stereotypically imperfect king—sometimes noble and capable, and at other times, impetuous, vain, wily and even pliable. Such an ambiguous portrayal may certainly have resulted from the fact that the author was stitching together fragments from contradictory accounts; however, that he left his seams rough speaks to the fact that presenting a consistent characterization of Iskandar may not have been a priority for Ibn al-Balkhī, for whom Iskandar could never

²⁷² *Ibid.*, 57-8.

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, 56, 57.

²⁷⁴ Ibn al-Balkhī has Iskandar flood the city by diverting a mountain torrent, a deed that left the city inundated until the Sasanian king, Shāpūr b. Ardashīr rebuilt it, giving it the name Bīshāpūr. The old city that Alexander destroyed had been called “Dīn-Dilā,” and had founded by Ṭahmūrṣ. *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁷⁵ In Alexander's time, we are told, the city was known as Jūr or Juvār. *Ibid.*, 137.

have been one of Fārs's true heroes. Ultimately, in this work, Iskandar was portrayed as an outsider and a minor figure, whose conquests were anomalous.

Iskandar in Tārīkh-i Qumm

The tenth century *Tārīkh-i Qumm*²⁷⁶ provides another example of Iskandar's somewhat ambiguous place in local Persianate historical imaginations. In this work, other than a brief passage in which Iskandar is remembered for founding a waterway,²⁷⁷ the author remembers Iskandar more forcefully for his destruction of the region than for his building projects. One passage sums up that writer's perspective on the conqueror:

When Qubād arrived in that region (Qumm)... it was in total ruin. He asked about the state of ruin. They said, "No king had ever ruined every region and place like Iskandar had done; he took no joy from settled places and habitations."²⁷⁸

Reading these lines, one cannot help but be reminded of much later writers' formulaic accounts of Chingīz Khān or Tīmūr's murderous disdain for civilized, urban life that appeared after their conquests. Chingīz Khān was not the first figure in the Iranian world to have been laden with the crude habit of the barbarian conqueror, for it appears that historians of the Mongol era had tropes available for their *bricolage*, some of which had previously been tried for Iskandar's narrative. Later on, Chingīz, Tīmūr, and Iskandar would prove to be strange bedfellows again, when their commemorators would view them all in a more gallant light.

²⁷⁶ The tenth-century, original Arabic text done for the Buyid vizier, Ismā'īl b. 'Abbās is not extant. Only a portion of the 1402-3 Persian translation of the work remains.

²⁷⁷ Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Ḥasan Qummī, *Kitāb-i Tārīkh-i Qumm*, ed. Sayyid Jalāl al-Dīn Tihrānī (Tehran 1353/1934), 22.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 24.

Iskandar in Sayfī Haravī's Tārīkh-Nāmah-i Hirāt

We find some change in Sayfī Haravī's local history of Hirāt, entitled *Tārīkh-Nāmah-i Hirāt*, written in the fourteenth century, after the Mongol conquest but still before Tīmūr. This work is essentially a dynastic history of the Kart house, whose sovereigns ruled Hirāt as vassals of the Īlkhāns, but who eventually came to rule in their own right up until the Tīmūrid conquest. The author of this work makes clear that the history of Hirāt is the story of its rulers and not of its scholars or any other group. Of importance to us is that the author opens his story of the Kart dynasty with a long chapter on the founding and development of the city, a chapter in which Iskandar plays a large role. Sayfī Haravī explicitly states that his account of the city's founding comes from the history of Fāmī, one of four or five biographical dictionaries of Hirāt (most probably of the 'ulamā'), which are not extant.²⁷⁹ In some much earlier, disparate sources we do find oblique mention that Iskandar had founded Hirāt, so we know that for this city, the idea of Iskandar as founder had been in circulation,²⁸⁰ but we don't know how great a role he may have played in Hirāt's much earlier histories; nevertheless, whatever part the Iskandar stories may have played in these earlier works, in Sayfī Haravī's version of Kart Hirāt, Iskandar does play a key role.

²⁷⁹ Jürgen Paul, "The Histories of Herat," *Iranian Studies* 33, no. 1 (2000): 99-101.

²⁸⁰ Ibn al-Balkhī states that some sources credit Iskandar with the founding of Hirāt, along with Marv and Iṣfahān. al-Balkhī, *Kitāb-i Fārs-Nāmah*, 58. The Pahlavī work on Iranian provincial cities, written during the Caliphate of al-Manṣūr, claims Iskandar founded the same three cities. J. Marquart, *A catalogue of the provincial capitals of Irānshahr (Pahlavi text, version and commentary)*, ed. Giuseppe Messina, *Analecta orientalia; commentationes scientificae de rebus orientis antiqui cura Pontificii institut biblici editae*. 3 (Roma: Pontificio istituto biblico, 1931), 11, 21. Other sources also consider Iskandar to be the founder of Iṣfahān (or more properly old Jay). al-Tha'ālibī quotes a verse by Abū al-Ḥasan ibn Ṭabāṭabā, condemning the actions of Abū 'Alī al-Rustamī al-Iṣfahānī for tearing down a section of the old citadel of Jay (Iṣfahān) saying punningly, "Jay shone with the justice of the governor, but this bastard (Abū 'Alī al-Rustamī) obliterated its brilliance / The Two-horned (Alexander) built the city, but this *cornuto* [horned one, i.e. cuckold] destroyed its wall." As quoted in: David Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma'shar*, ed. E.H. Gombrich, vol. 30, *Studies of the Warburg Institute, University of London* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 1.

Sayfī Haravī's material from Fāmī cites several rather diverse accounts of Hirāt's founding and development. The first, a rather long section, which does not mention Iskandar at all, connects the city's origins with Iran's mythical past.²⁸¹ A second narrative traces the city's development from a settlement of desert dwellers between two trading centers to its actual founding by Hūmay, daughter of Bahman b. Isfandiyār, who gives permission for the construction of ramparts around the town.²⁸² The actual construction of the city itself is begun by Dārā ibn Dārā, but is then interrupted by Iskandar's invasion. At this point in the text Sayfī Haravī offers a verse on Iskandar's victory that clearly sympathizes with the plight of Dārā and his house, even while simultaneously acknowledging God's favor of Iskandar's venture:

With the assistance of the Creator, most great (*bi-ʿawn-i khāliq-i akbar*), Iskandar put Dārā ibn Dārā to death. Poem (*shi'r*):

The kingdom of Faridūn remained no longer; the Chalice of Jamshīd dropped from his hand.	<i>mulk-i Afrīdūn namānad u jām-i jam az dast shud.</i>
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He shattered the house of Dārā and he shattered that glorious dominion.	<i>dār-i Dārā bar shikast u bar shikast ān dārugīr.</i> ²⁸³
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Afterwards, as we are told, Iskandar himself finished the city's construction and built strong, square towers. But shortly thereafter, when Iskandar's *dawlah* had elapsed, sovereignty passed back to the *mulūk-i ʿajam*, in the person of Dārā's son Ashk. Ashk's deeds in Hirāt are revealing. The new king:

covered the lovely towers' gates, which Iskandar had built, and over the surface of each tower, he built a round tower so that the evidence of Iskandar's building projects was obliterated (*madrūs shud*).²⁸⁴

²⁸¹ In this account he first explains that the region in which Hirāt would eventually come to be built was developed by Pashang bin Afrāsyāb and was called Fawshang; that the city itself was founded in the time of Tahmūr̄s bin Hūshang bin Furst (Farast? [Should be Siyāmak]) bin Kayūmars. Ibn Muḥammad ibn Yaʿqūb Sayfī Haravī, *Tārīkh-Nāmah-i Harāt* (1943), 25-6. The narrative continues up to the reign of a certain king Arghānūsh (up to p. 37)

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 39.

²⁸³ *dārugīr* = *dār va gīr*. *Ibid.*

The author provides a third story (a short one without Iskandar) explaining that Hirāt was built by Zāḥḥāk’s daughter²⁸⁵ and then launches into a fourth, rather unique narrative, in which Iskandar founds the city on the advice of his mother with whom he remains in regular correspondence throughout the whole affair. The entire narrative centers Iskandar’s affairs in Hirāt and in this version he only conquers Khurāsān and ‘Irāq after he has first built that city. Later he brings captives from all those conquered lands back to Hirāt, as though that city had become his capital, the center of the world empire. More curious is the fact that here the great conqueror cannot make a single move without first receiving his mother’s counsel from Rūm, a portrayal that was most likely not intended to evoke an entirely favorable impression. The narrative ends casually with the mention that as he was finishing the construction of the city, Iskandar had seventeen hundred people killed on his mother’s advice: “some he killed with blows of the lance; some he imprisoned inside the walls of the ramparts.”²⁸⁶ Thus, the city was literally built out of Iskandar’s victims.

In one rather fantastic account in Sayfī Haravī’s chapter on Iskandar, which is the only wholly favorable portrayal of Iskandar in that work, Iskandar finds a box that contains plans for the construction of Hirāt that were drawn up by Jesus’ disciples, who had settled in that place. He arrives at the site of the city, which by that time had fallen

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 40.

²⁸⁵ Zāḥḥāk is the satanic arch-villain of Ancient Persian mythology, figured in Firdaw’s *Shāh-Nāmāh* as conqueror from Arab lands, who destroyed the kingdom of Jamshīd.

²⁸⁶ Sayfī Haravī, *Tārīkh-Nāmāh-i Harāt*, 43-44. “ba’zī rā bi-zukhm-i chūb bi-kusht va ba’zī rā dar dīvār-i bārah girift.”

into ruin. There, he rebuilds Hirāt in accordance with the plans in his box and allows it to become repopulated.²⁸⁷

Despite Iskandar’s centrality in this opening chapter of the *Tārīkh-Nāmah-i Hirāt*, in all of the contending foundation stories Sayfī Haravī supplies,²⁸⁸ only a single one presents a purely favorable portrayal of the conqueror, and this the author provides in short summary form at the end of the chapter, writing in a more whimsical tone, a move that we may take to indicate the trivial weight the author wished to assign the report. It is also worth noting, moreover, that after this chapter concludes the author never mentions Iskandar again. Nowhere does he make any explicit or implicit connection between the Kart kings and Iskandar as we would expect in later works. It would seem that on the eve of the Tīmūrid era, Iskandar had indeed come to find a place in local memory, at least in Hirāt, but he did so in no especially glorious way. This will change in the years after Tīmūr, where we find that fragments of memory that were once limited by convention to one or another genre, spill over into others.

Iskandar in Abū al-‘Abbās Zarkūb Shīrāzī’s Shīrāz-Nāmah

If we return to Fārs in the mid-fourteenth century, we find the same unequivocally negative presentation of Iskandar that we found in Ibn al-Balkhī’s work. In *Shīrāz-Nāmah* of Abū al-‘Abbās Zarkūb Shīrāzī (d. 789/1387), cataloguing the

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 44. This box is curious and may have some relation to the motif in the Central Asian cycle of legends about Iskandar where Tīmūr receives a mysterious box from the Ottoman Sulṭān Yılrım Khān. Inside Tīmūr finds a letter written to him from Iskandar, explaining his messianic lineage and destiny. See discussion. See full discussion and citations below (footnote 393).

²⁸⁸ There are four more brief ones I haven’t mentioned. Two feature Iskandar and two do not. One of these, (the only one which refers to Iskandar as “Zū al-Qarnayn”) explains that he was instructed to build Hirāt by God himself. Ibid. The last of these is given on the authority of an oral source, which explained that the founding of Hirāt went back to the prophet Būhī, who was instructed by Jabra’īl. Sayfī Haravī, *Tārīkh-Nāmah-i Harāt*, 45.

geography and prosopography of Shīrāz province, Iskandar makes a cameo appearance. In the course of describing the great building achievements of the ancient kings of Fārs, we are plainly told, “when Dhū al-Qarnayn came to Pārs, he ruined it (*kharāb kard*).”²⁸⁹ The author also gives a more emotive description of the conqueror’s destruction of the flourishing town of Fīrūzābād, a story that had also been mentioned in Ibn Balkhī’s work:

It is related that when Iskandar came toward Fārs as part of his world-conquest (*jahān-gīrī*), Fīrūzābād was extensively populated (*ma‘mūr*). He tried hard to subdue it but could not. There was a river (*rūd-khānah*) on the outskirts of the city, which had its source at the top of the mountains. Dhū al-Qarnayn ordered that they turn the water of the *rūd-khānah* from its sources, and hurl the water at the city. Now, on every side of Fīrūzābād were mountains; it was located among four of them, so the water of the river collected in the city and overwhelmed it. When it didn’t have an outlet (*manfaz*), many thousands of people who were residing in that city, were all drowned under the water.²⁹⁰

So apparently, even as late as the 1360s, when *Shīrāz-Nāmah* was completed, despite the heroic image Iskandar had attained elsewhere and in other genres, in some corners of Fārs memory of his violence in the region was still worthy of reporting. Certainly, the terror of violent invasion remained very relevant in the fourteenth century and may possibly have even reinvigorated stories of Iskandar’s savagery. But we might also mention here a curious, and rather suggestive little inconsistency in Zarkūb Shīrāzī’s *Shīrāz-Nāmah*: notwithstanding this author’s outright vilification of Iskandar, elsewhere he does not hesitate to praise the currently reigning Injūī monarch of Shīrāz, named Abū Ishāq Jamāl al-Dīn, with the moniker “Iskandar-i Sānī,” the second Iskandar.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ Abū al-‘Abbās Zarkūb Shīrāzī, *Shīrāz-Nāmah* (Tehran: Chāp-khānah-i Dāvar-panāh, 1350/1971), 28.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 199. Abū Ishāq was the last of the Injūīd sovereigns, before the Muẓaffarids extended their power throughout Fārs. Zarkūb Shīrāzī notes that the date in which he was writing the section in which he called Abū Ishāq Iskandar-i Sānī was 744/1343-4, while Abū Ishāq was still reigning. For Zarkūb Shīrāzī’s entry on him, see pp. 108-20.

Clearly, here the author had provided a recitation of Iskandar's violent conquest from the cache of local legend that had been mobilized for rhetorical effect in accordance with local narrative traditions; the figure of Iskandar was no longer a purely odious one.

The Cursing of Iskandar and the Gravity of Form: local history writing as bricolage

With this apparent contradiction in mind, before moving on to Iskandar's connection with Tīmūr in the post Tīmūrid historiography, we must consider more explicitly why Iskandar was negatively remembered in local historiographical traditions even as his story as a hero was becoming so popular in other genres.²⁹² One might conjecture that this lack of interest in or even contempt for Iskandar in the local historiography was a survival from the conventional Zoroastrian hatred of Iskandar as a foreign barbarian, evidenced by an near ritual cursing of the figure in Pahlavī literature that lasted even until after the rise of Islam in works such as *Nāmah-i Tansar*,²⁹³ which portrayed Iskandar as a desecrator of the Zoroastrian rite, and *Kārnāmag-i Ardashīr-i Bābagān*, which linked Iskandar with other foreign enemies of Īrān-zamīn, such as Ẓahḥāk and Afrāsiyāb, and presented Ardashīr-i Bābak, founder of

²⁹² It should be mentioned, that despite the heroic portrayal of Iskandar in the great *nāmahs* and in the early general histories, such positive depictions were not universal. Bayhaqī and Gardīzī, who wrote general histories at the Ghaznavid court, for example, were unequivocally dismissive of Iskandar's greatness. Gardīzī writes disdainfully about Iskandar's destruction of Zoroastrian books and institutions of learning (more about this theme below). See discussion of Gardīzī's take on Iskandar in: Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 79. The appropriate section in Gardīzī's work itself is: 'Abd al-Ḥayy ibn Ẓahḥāk Gardīzī, *Tārīkh-i Gardīzī*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥayy Ḥabībī (Tehran: Chāp-Khānah-i Armaghān, 1984), 56-9. In the same vein, Bayhaqī criticizes Iskandar for conquering too much territory to administer properly and rails against him for his deceitfulness and conniving. Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 83-4. The anonymous author of *Mujmal al-Tavārīkh va al-Qisas* explains that Iranians never liked Iskandar because of his devastations, but mentions a number of his great deeds nonetheless. Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 193.

²⁹³ The original Pahlavī version is lost. The text survives in an Arabic translation by Ibn al-Muqaffa' and an early thirteenth-century new Persian translation from Arabic by Ibn al-Isfandiyār. See *Iskandar-Nāmah*, 187.

the Sasanian dynasty, as the descendent and redeemer of Dārā who returns Iran to its former glory.²⁹⁴ In the tenth-century encyclopedia of Mazdaen Zoroastrian doctrine and liturgy, *Dēnkart*,²⁹⁵ it is related that Iskandar's wave of destruction caused the scattering of portions of the sacred texts of the Zoroastrian religion, the *Avesta* and *Zand*, as well as teachings on these works across the world, despite Dārā's efforts to preserve pristine copies of these before Iskandar's accursed arrival. The text gives Ardashīr I, the honorable role of overseeing the collection of the remnants of these scattered texts and bits of lore from all over the realm and outside of it and of reestablishing an authoritative textual tradition, centered at the court.²⁹⁶ This schema appears circulated in a number of Arabic translations during the early 'Abbāsīd

²⁹⁴ On the negative treatment of Alexander in Pahlavī literature, see Southgate's appendix II to his translation of the Persian *Iskandar-Nāmah*, entitled "Alexander in Pahlavī Literature" in: *Ibid.*, 186-9. Also mentioned in Southgate's discussion is *Ardāvīrāfnāmag*, which makes Iskandar an "agent of Ahrīman". *Iskandar-Nāmah*, 188. This hatred of Alexander is patent in *S'ahristānīhā i Ērān*, a short Pahlavī treatise on the important provincial cities of Ērānshahr, where Alexander is always called "*gujastak Sōkandar*" (the accursed Alexander, an moniker usually reserved for Ahrīman). Marquart, *A catalogue of the provincial capitals of Irānshahr (Pahlavi text, version and commentary)*, 9, 11, 21. The earliest demonization of Iskandar apparently comes from the *Sibylline Oracles*, book IV, in 325 B.C.E., a work that is discussed in: Samuel Kennedy Eddy, *The king is dead: studies in the Near Eastern resistance to Hellenism, 334-31 B.C* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1961), 10-14. Also see Pourshariati's discussion of the use of Iskandar's demonization in the context of the formation of an official imperial Sasanian historiography: Parvaneh Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire: The Sasanian-Parthian Confederacy and the Arab Conquest of Iran* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 34-5. Pourshariati also discusses *Ardā Wīrāz Nāma*, a Zoroastrian work concerned with the Day of Judgment, which opens with a description of Iskandar's devastations and the subsequent chaos that overwhelmed the institutions of kingship and religion. See: Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 431-2. In contrast, from a decidedly Muslim perspective, Iskandar's destruction of Zoroastrian temples and books is celebrated in Amīr Khusraw's *Ā'īnah-i Iskandarī* (Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī, *Khamsah-i Amīr Khusraw Dihlavī* (Tehran: *ntishārāt-i Shaqāyīq*, 1362/1983), 456-573.) See discussion in: Angelo Michele Piemontese, "Sources and Art of Amir Khosrou's "The Alexandrine Mirror", in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday*, ed. Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma (West Lafayette, Indiana: Rozenburg Publishers & Purdue University Press, 2007), 35.

²⁹⁵ While the text was compiled in the tenth century, it consists of much older texts. Even the section on Iskandar is believed to have been composed during the reign of Khusraw I (531-78 C.E.) See Dimitri Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture: the Graeco-Arabic translation movement in Baghdad and Early 'Abbāsīd society (2nd-4th/8th-10th centuries)* (London: Routledge, 1998), 35-7. On page 40, Gutas also explains that the story of Iskandar's burning of books is also in Pahlavi Book of Lords (*Khvadāy-Nāmag*).

²⁹⁶ The text then states that his successor, Shāpūr I continued this project by also collecting works on astrology and medicine from all over the world and adding these to a fair copy of the *Avesta*, which was stored in the royal archives. Clearly, knowledge of the movements of the heavens was thought to be critical for the political and religious administration of the empire. We shall return to this below. Also see mention of Iskandar's dispersion of knowledge in: Pourshariati, *Decline and Fall of the Sasanian Empire*, 325.

period.²⁹⁷ A parallel version appears in an book on Zoroastrian astrological history, *Kitāb al-Nakḥmuṭān*, which was composed by Abū Saḥl al-Faḍl ibn Nawbakht, a member of the eminent Persian Nawbakht family, court astrologer of the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Manṣūr, and a translator of numerous Pahlavī texts (some of which were themselves translations of Greek works) into Arabic.²⁹⁸ The author of that book relates the story of Iskandar’s devastation as a part of his longer narrative on the history of the transmission of sacred astrological knowledge, which had supposedly originated with the mythical kings of ante-diluvian times.²⁹⁹ This was a science that, in Sasanian times had emphasized the important influence of planetary conjunctions over the events of history—in particular of the planets Jupiter and Saturn.³⁰⁰ Depending on the location of such an event in relation to the signs of the zodiac and other planets along the ecliptic, astrologers interpreted a conjunction of these two superior planets as signifying (and

²⁹⁷ As in the Arabic translation of *Zoroastrian Book of Nativities (Kitāb al-Mawālīd)*. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 37-8.

²⁹⁸ Abū Saḥl’s father, Nawbakht, was Al-Manṣūr’s first court astrologer. It was he who divined the auspicious time for the breaking ground on the Caliph’s new city of Baghdad. He also made other key prognostications for Manṣūr. See: *Ibid.*, 33-4. Gutas makes the case that the Nawbakhtīs shaped the ‘Abbāsīd imperial ideology in the Persian Sasanian model, and did so by making astrology a centerpiece of the court. Gutas uses Abū Saḥl’s narrative on Iskandar’s translation of Persian works into Greek and subsequent scattering of them to argue that the Persian elites at the ‘Abbāsīd court were presenting Zoroaster as the author of all known sciences (in the *Avesta*); all Greek works, were therefore simply translations of older, Persian ones. This, Gutas claims was part of a program to ingratiate the “Persian” constituencies (as well as those of the Aramaic speakers of Mesopotamia) to the ‘Abbāsīd house. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 42-5. Of course, for ibn Nawbakht, Zoroastrian knowledge was thoroughly Islamized. The Abbasids were to be seen as the leaders of a new revolutionary cycle of kingship, inheritors of the Sassanian and Achaemenid empires. This imperial ideology was essential in the competition with other Persian, revivalist, Zoroastrian-influenced messianic movements. Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 46-7.

²⁹⁹ Also see discussion of the Zoroastrian history of the transmission of the sciences in: Gutas, *Greek Thought, Arabic Culture*, 38-40. In ibn Nawbakht’s work, Jamshīd was the originator, but in many other works of the early Islamic period, this science originated with Hūshank, who was associated with the first Hermes. In most of these works (as well as in the Sasanian ones) the flood was dated to -3101 (or -3102) and was sometimes said to have occurred during Jamshīd’s reign.

³⁰⁰ That this emphasis on Saturn-Jupiter conjunctions is the only innovation of the Iranian tradition that distinguishes it from the Mesopotamian and Indian systems from which it derived is discussed in: David Pingree, "Astronomy and Astrology in India and Iran," *The History of Science Society* 54, no. 2 (1963): 245-6 (in particular).

causing) major changes in great cycles of history that affected the entire world order, changes that began with the highest echelon of society— kings, priests, and the like.³⁰¹ Depending on the alignment of the heavenly spheres at the time, such a conjunction could portend the rise of a new king, a new prophet, or both. Figures who rose under such events came to be known later in Perso-Islamic discourse as *Ṣāḥib-Qirān* (Lord of the Conjunction). The concept of *ṣāḥib-qirān* will be key in our discussion later in this chapter; for Iskandar was himself made into a *Ṣāḥib-Qirān* in medieval Islamic literature, an association that in *Tīmūrid* times, was given particularly millennial resonances. However, returning to Ibn Nawbakht, for the time being I wish merely to call attention to the fact that this author cast Iskandar as a figure who interrupted the flow of this cosmological knowledge, which was crucial for recognizing and navigating these patterns in history:

³⁰¹ These conjunctions occurred every twenty years or so. As the heavenly spheres turned, they occurred in a different location along the ecliptic each time, as observed on the vernal equinox. Along the way, they passed through four triplicities, which are families of three zodiacal constellations, grouped by their association with a common element (Fire: Aries, Leo, and Sagittarius; Earth: Taurus, Virgo, and Capricorn; Air: Gemini, Libra, and Aquarius; Water: Cancer, Scorpio, and Pisces). The conjunctions that occurred within a triplicity were considered minor ones (small conjunction). When they passed out of one triplicity into another, a switch (known as the *intiqāl al-mamarr*= the transfer of the transit) that generally occurred every two hundred and forty years (termed middle conjunction), they were said to portend important worldly events. The whole progression through all four triplicities would start over again every nine hundred and sixty years, the first of these conjunctions, termed the “Great Conjunction,” would signify a major transformation in the world, a new millennial era, marked by the appearance of a new prophet or prophet-king. The elemental character of the triplicity in which any conjunction occurred determined the general character of the changes, but the relative position of the other planets and stars at the time provided more of the specifics, which astrologers used to interpret the signification of the conjunction and the character of events it portended. Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma’shar*, 244-5. Also Abū Ma’shar, *On historical astrology: the book of religions and dynasties (on the great conjunctions)*, trans. Keiji and Burnett Yamamoto, Charles, Book of religions and dynasties (Boston: Brill, 2000), 583-7. The process by which such interpretations were made were extremely complex and took into account the turning of a number of other cosmological cycles of varying lengths as well. Of course, the methods by which these calculations were performed was disputed and changed over time. A good description of these can be found in: Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma’shar*, E. S. Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology," in *Studies in the Islamic Exact Sciences* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983), E. S. Kennedy, "The Sasanian Astronomical Handbook Zīj-I Shāh: the Astrological Doctrine of "Transit" (Mamarr)," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 78, no. 4 (1958).

When Alexander invaded Persia, he razed al-Madā'in [anachronistic reference to Ctesiphon and Seleucia] and destroyed the stones and pieces of wood bearing inscriptions [on astrological sciences].³⁰² However, he had the Persian manuscripts in the Treasure Houses and Archives of Iṣṭakhar (Persepolis)—including one on astronomy, medicine, and physics entitled *al-Kashtaj*—translated into Greek and Coptic before being burned; the translations were sent to Egypt. But on the advice of their prophets, Zaradusht and Jāmāsb, earlier Persian kings had concealed copies of those books in the confines of India and China, where they escaped the ravages of Alexander. 'Iraq, then was without learning till the reign of Ardashīr ibn Bābak, who sent to India, China, and Rūm for copies of the lost books and had them translated back into Persian...³⁰³

Thus, Iskandar is not only the destroyer of cities and the enemy of Zoroastrian religion, but relatedly, is also the pillager of knowledge of the stars, which among other things, provided knowledge of kings' natures and destinies and as such was necessary for proper administration of the realm. Here again, the Sasanians are remembered in this literature as the restorers, not only of the political and social order, but also of the sacred knowledge that allowed the men of knowledge and the kings they served to bring the affairs of the realm in line with the heavens and to predict both disastrous and auspicious events and, in particular, the rise of new dynasties. Whereas, Iskandar would later be made into a Ṣāḥib-Qirān—a point that we will discuss at length later—he appears in the literature of this older tradition as something of an anti-Ṣāḥib-Qirān! For, he dispersed and burned the books of astrology that taught diviners to read the heavens and, with the smoke of his violence, clouded their view of the planets that would have told of the rise of Ṣāḥib-Qirāns. Here we introduce an essential role of great

³⁰²Early Arabic astrological literature often relates that ancient astrological texts were found in holes or inside of the walls of ancient buildings, having been inscribed on pieces of hard wood (of khadank trees, called *tūz*) or stones and hidden to save them from disasters like floods, earthquakes or invasions. In fact, Abū Ma'shar's *Kitāb ikhtilāf al-zjāt*, quoted in Ibn Nadīm's *Fihrist*, has it that the legendary king Ṭahmūrath caused the most important works of astrology to be inscribed on *tūz* and deposited in the Sārawīyah, which he had built for the purpose of housing scientific works in expectation of the great deluge. See discussion in Pingree, *The Thousands of Abū Ma'shar*, 1-4.

³⁰³ As translated in: Ibid., 9-10. Pingree's translation comes from a quotation of Ibn Nawbakht's work that appears in the *Fihrist*.

emperors, in this case demonstrated by the kings of Fārs in contradistinction to Iskandar: as the custodian of knowledge and patron and protector of men of knowledge, in the greatness and justice of his realm, and the majesty of his person, the emperor is also the embodiment of that knowledge he has caused to flourish. We will return to this concept again and again as we examine the works of later writers, where we will find the characterizations of Iskandar and Dārā being reversed.

Returning now to our local historians, considering this baggage attached to Iskandar's legacy in Pahlavī writings, one could certainly surmise that local historians, particularly those from Fārs, might have been drawing on Pahlavī literary traditions precisely because these agreed with local attitudes about Iskandar among unconverted Zoroastrian communities or among Muslims of early Irano-Islamic *ghuluvv*³⁰⁴ movements that sometimes drew on pockets of Mazdian ideology and ritual.³⁰⁵ One might even propose that such a negative view of the foreign Iskandar went hand in hand with the ideals of an Iranian-centered, anti-Arab movement. While I would not deny that such movements might have employed the trope of the accursed, foreign conqueror to further such ideological programs, particularly during the first centuries of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, such an explanation does nothing to explain why Iskandar was being cursed in the historiography of Iranian cities at the same time that he was being absorbed into the Perso-Islamic epic tradition as a hero, or even as a prophet of

³⁰⁴ *Ghuluvv* is a derogatory term, deriving from the word for "exaggeration," which adherents of so-called "orthodox" forms of Islam applied collectively to various (and often quite distinct) heterodox Islamic communities. Despite the great variety of features that these so-called *ghuluvv* movements displayed over the ages, a common trait was often what detractors described as an exaggerated reverence for Alī, sometimes to the point of deification. However, the criteria for classification as *ghuluvv* were not limited to this one aspect of belief and included a host of other beliefs and practices such as belief in the transmigration of souls (*tanāsukh*) and incarnationism (*hulūl*).

³⁰⁵ For an overview such movements in Abbasid times, see: Daniel, *The political and social history of Khurasan under Abbasid rule, 747-820*, 125-56. For the roots of Ṣafavid-era *ghuluvv* movements in earlier Mazdian resistance movements see: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 121-60.

Islam; nor does it account for why historians like Zarkūb Shīrāzī should rant about the accursed Iskandar's devastation of Fārs and at the same time praise his sovereign as the Second Iskandar. Firdawsī, for example, was rather keen on a millennial-type restoration of the glory of Iranian Kings, vanquished by foreign conquerors, but at the same time, was sure to celebrate Iskandar as a great hero, making him not only part of the Iranian legacy but actually a prince of Dārāb's house, as we will discuss below. We must be careful not to mistake differences between the formal conventions of genres for real differences in ideological perspective between the authors of local histories and those of epics or universal histories. To do so reifies what is an observable distinction between local and universal perspectives on history in the literature, as if each of these literary perspectives was grounded in the cultures of distinct social circles. Such a reification gives these perspectives an ontology outside the boundaries of the space of writing and further assumes the existence of sociological distinctions that may not or do not exist; as a consequence, it privileges a reading strategy that seeks to find authors' (or societies') authentic attitudes or feelings through literary presentations over a more productive strategy that focuses on tracing inherited conventions of genre and accounting for change.

Essentially, the authors of local histories and the authors of epics belonged to the same circles of affiliation and hailed from the same collection of geographical regions; authors of these two genres did not come from different social groups. The fact that in some genres Iskandar is despised and is beloved in others at the same time says little about how any particular author might have actually felt about him or about how his representation might have served the ideological program of any particular social

group (political, religious, or regional); rather, it indicates that in the process of composing a narrative, authors' memories of the past came to be determined by the parameters of genre. Of course, ideology cannot be totally separated from literary form; I am not arguing that authors wrote without intention or without an ideological program. I am simply suggesting that in order to explain this negative characterization of Iskandar in the local historiography of the medieval period, we shift the emphasis away from explanations rooted in local ideology toward ones rooted in local discursive traditions, and thus focus on social networks built around the transmission of writing conventions rather than solely around the transmission of ideas. Such an approach allows us to observe how Iskandar might simultaneously have been celebrated and damned in different contexts.

Of the many differences between the *nāmah* tradition (or the universal *tārīkh* tradition) and the local history tradition, a defining one is the role that space plays in the narrative, how it is divided, bounded, and marked in ways which give the rest of the narrative significance: the epic and the universal history narrate the story of the entire world, the local history, a circumscribed portion of it. As authors emplotted the story of Iskandar they targeted different configurations of geographical space in accordance with the conventions of genre. Thus, this disparity among genres does not necessarily reveal much about local social formations or their attendant ideals, but rather it reveals something about the ways in which authors writing in different genres collected, marshaled, and emplotted fragments of the past differently: emplotment of historical narrative is a *bricolage*, but depending on the scope of the project (and depending on conventions of bounding space), the gaze of the author (his/her orientation in that

space) falls upon a different selection of narrative fragments, artifacts inherited from the past. Further, the writer selects and assembles those pieces in different configurations. Again, that local histories of the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth centuries adopted the accursed Iskandar rather than the beloved one found in the epics derives not from some affiliation with either local or global (or national) sentiments, for no such opposition ever existed; authors always belonged to a range of overlapping circles of social affiliation, each of which might be categorized by the *degree* to which such communities were local or global, not by whether they were either global or local. So, with their abhorrence for Iskandar authors weren't representing any decidedly local sentiment per se; rather, they were presenting particular configurations of memories that were ordered both by the contingencies of the spaces they were writing from and by the conventions of bounding the spaces they were writing about. In sum, the form of the presentation determines the set of materials available to an author, the character and arrangement of that material in the narrative, as well as the *apparent* attitude of the author. In essence, writers of local history were writing from a particular attitude or posture of memory, which determined not only the authors' disposition toward the material, but the very choice of materials they selected. With this in mind, authors of local histories did not, by nature of some local sense of affiliation, categorically despise Iskandar; more likely, in the pre-Tīmūrīd eras, even while the legend of Iskandar conveyed in other literary genres might have captivated or excited the imaginations of these same writers, when it came to composing local histories, few had yet discovered in their troves of local lore any glorious memories of

Iskandar's deeds in their own cities to draw from, and no ideology had yet driven them to try to recall such memories.³⁰⁶

All the same, proposing that conventions of literary practice are determinative of content does not deny the influence of socially bound ideology upon authorial intention; certainly ideology can always come in to play. However, I am arguing that one has to make the case that such an ideology (and its attendant sense of belonging) actually exists in any given time and place before identifying ideology or social affiliation as a determinant. In this case, before the time of Tīmūr, I see little evidence that the authors of local histories portrayed Iskandar in similar ways because they adhered to any like ideology, and certainly not one that stood in opposition to that of the authors of epic works.

Greek legacy as local legitimacy: The Case of Sīstān

Before we turn to historiographical tradition of Yazd that begins in the Tīmūrid period, it behooves us to mention one rather early exception to the picture we've painted above. This exception appears in a work that bears some rather striking similarities to Iskandar's portrayal in the later Yazdī histories and might possibly have had some influence on that corpus. The anonymous *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* (completed in the

³⁰⁶ It is worth noting here, that in his Īlkhānid-era history, Shabānkārahī, who knew Fārs well, provides a brief history of Yazd's origins in his account of the Atābayks of Yazd, which he states that he assembled from spare oral accounts he had collected. While he does mention some legendary accounts of the city's founding, including figures from the Shāh-Nāmāh tradition, there is no reference to the Iskandar story in that work. It is also possible that no version of Iskandar's legend was even in oral circulation at that time. We shall deal with Shabānkārahī more fully in the next chapter. Muḥammad 'Alī ibn Muḥammad Shabānkārahī, *Majma' al-Ansāb*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddīṣ, 2 vols. (Tehran: Mu'asasah-i Intishārāt-i Amīr-i Kabīr, 1363/1984), 210.

eleventh century C.E., but appended in the fourteenth)³⁰⁷ contains a section on Iskandar’s deeds in Sīstān, which, though short, makes him an essential figure in Sīstān’s early history. *Tārīkh-i Sīstān* does not open with Iskandar, as do the Yazd histories; rather it begins with a chapter on the building of Sīstān by Garshāsp, the great dragon-slaying king in the Iranian mythology, who is the great-great grandfather of Rostam, the Herculean paladin from Sīstān, most famous in Firdawsī’s *Shāh-Nāmāh*. The section on Iskandar appears in the second chapter, on the virtues of Sīstān (Zabūlistān), in which the author gives a report on four foundational figures in Sīstān’s ancient past, drawn from Iranian and Abrahamic cycles: Kayūmars (Gayūmars), whom the author explicitly associates with Adam,³⁰⁸ Garshāsp, his descendent, whom we have already mentioned as Sīstān’s founder, Sulaymān (Solomon), and finally, Iskandar. It is worth quoting the Iskandar passage in full:

Once Iskandar-i Rūmī killed Dārā ibn Dārāb and made Rūshank—Dārā’s daughter—his wife, and had snatched up Hind, he went to Sīstān. There was a fortress (*qal’ah*) there, which Kay Khusraw had built on the north side of Sīstān. (And there is another fortress on the south, which Ardashīr-i Bābakān had built afterwards.) He stayed there seven days and gave blandishments to the commander (*ispahbad*) of Sīstān, who did him great service and became obedient to him. He commanded that they make the place, which had been the watchtower (*dīdbāngāh*) of the fortress, into a separate fortress (*qal’ah*). And Rūshank stayed in it until the work of Hind was finished and he (Iskandar) returned there and they had finished the fortress. Then, he stayed there one month until its beautification was complete. He said, “There should be an *arāk* inside the *qal’ah*—and thus it was done.” And “*arāk*” means “*dīdbāngāh*”

³⁰⁷ There appears to have also been additions made in the Saljūq era as well. The early seventeenth-century history of Sīstān, Mālik Shāh Ḥusayn ibn Mālik Sīstānī’s *Ihyā’ al-Mulūk* should be considered a recension of this same text. It is entirely possible that Mufīd had read Sīstānī’s work. We shall return to this later.

³⁰⁸ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Ja’far Mudarris Ṣādiqī (Tehran: Nashr-i Markaz, 1994), 1. In the early Islamic period, both Muslims and Zoroastrians often associated Gayūmars/Kayūmars with Adam, but not universally so. In fact some authors were explicitly opposed to such an association. See discussion in Touraj Daryaei, “Gayōmard: King of Clay or Mountain? The Epithet of the First Man in the Zoroastrian Tradition,” in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hanns-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003), 342-4.

(watchtower) in the Greek tongue. The point is this: that now, there is a fortress of Sīstān, which they call Arāk, which Zū al-Qarnayn made.³⁰⁹

In this work, Iskandar appears as one of the earliest figures to leave his mark in Sīstān in a beneficial way, though he is not the original founder of the habitation there.

Nonetheless, the author lists Iskandar among prophets. As in the Yazdī corpus, to which we will turn our attention in a moment, Iskandar is a military leader, who builds, or rather improves upon a fortress, in this case, a fortress/watchtower, which still remains at the time of the work's composition and continues to be known by a name which we are told is the Greek technical term for the building.³¹⁰ Clearly, the author felt the glory of the region's Iranian and prophetic past was enriched by its connection

³⁰⁹ *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, 5. Mālik Shāh Ḥusayn ibn Mālik Sīstānī's reworking and updating of *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*, entitled *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk*, which he composed in the early seventeenth century a generation before Mufīd's time, quotes this same passage nearly verbatim. Mālik Shāh Ḥusayn ibn Mālik Sīstānī, *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk*, ed. Manuchihr Sotudeh (Tehran 1344/1965), 11-12.

³¹⁰ The real etymology of this term, "arak," which appears in both the *Tārīkh-Sīstān* and *Iḥyā' al-Mulūk*, is unclear. There is a possible connection with Greek "ἀκρα," (*akra*) which means top, and also citadel. But it is likely that there was also a cognate (apparently lost) in Eastern Middle Iranian, from which the New Persian "arg/ark" (fortress inside the city walls / citadel) derives. This term "arg" is attested in Pahlavī, but only in the compound form "argbed" (fortress commander). There is no obvious cognate in Sogdian, but the term might be related to derivatives of the word "r'ys- (*āraxs*), which means to take refuge with, to rely on, or to support. See: B. Gharib, *Farhang-i Sughdī (Sogdian Dictionary)*, ed. S. Fotouhi (Tehran: Farhang Publications, 1995), entries 231-5. Further, in his *Encyclopaedia Iranica* article, John Perry has proposed that the word may have come into Iranian languages from the Latin word for fortress *arx/arcis*. John Perry, "Arg," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica Online* (December 5, 1986). However, since variations of the word "arg" bearing the significance of "high" or "top" appear in many Indo-European languages, as in the Greek and Latin words cited above, but also in the Sanskrit word अग्र (*agra*= top), we don't know whether the terms "arak" or later "arg" are borrowed from the Greek word for citadel or whether the Greek, Latin, Indic, and Iranian words for citadel/city/fortress all shared a common ancestor. There is also the possibility that "arak" was the term for citadel or tower in the old Saka language. Clearly, though the authors of the Persian histories of Sīstān report that the name of this building in Sīstān was of Greek origins and do not seem to have recognized any relation of "arak" to "arg," a word that the authors of these histories employ throughout the rest of the text. The Persian term "arg" was also operable in the Arabic geographical work, *Ṣūrat al-Ard (Kitab Masālik wa Mamālik)*, by Ibn Ḥawqal who used it to describe the building the Saffārid Amīr 'Amr bin Layth constructed in the Sīstānī capital, Zaranj. However, it is noteworthy that Ibn Ḥawqal uses the word "qal'ah" to describe the citadel at Kathah, Yazd. Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Ard* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Maktabah al-Ḥayāh), 350. See also the English version: Ibn Ḥawqal, *Kitāb Masālik wa Mamālik (The Oriental Geography of Ebn Haukal, an Arabian Traveller of the Tenth Century)*, ed. Sir William Ouseley, trans. Sir William Ouseley (London: Oriental Press, by Wilson & Co., 1800), 204. al-Narshakhī also uses the word "arg" or "ḥiṣārak-i arg" for the citadel of Bukhārā in *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*. al-Narshakhī, *Tārīkh-i Bukhārā*, 32. Mostly, however, he uses the term "ḥiṣār." The term "arg" may have been added later. Arg is the term used for this site in Bukhara today.

with the Greek world conqueror, whose traces were thought to still remain on the physical landscape and in the language of Sīstān. With this attention on these elements of Greek heritage, the author is not so much invoking Iskandar's foreignness or Greekness for its own sake. Instead, he does so because these traces offer proof that Iskandar had been there.

Mention of Iskandar's traces—and in particular, traces of Greek—in local language and geography turn out to be important devices in the Yazdī historiography too, but as I will establish, in that local historiographical tradition, they become even more powerful signs of the city's glory and are profoundly interconnected with debates about the relationship between the foreign world-conqueror's empire and local places within it. Nonetheless, until the Tīmūrid period, *Tārīkh-i Sīstān*'s uniformly favorable treatment of Iskandar, as a peer of prophets and as a benevolent, though absolutely foreign figure, appears to be exceptional. As I will emphasize, in Yazd especially, Iskandar eventually rose to the top of this pool of local memories in the post-Mongol era at a time when powerful Turko-Mongol conquerors (and their hired pens) found affinity with that ancient conqueror irresistible.

In the meantime, to recapitulate, it suffices to say that aside from the one early Sīstānī account, there is sparse interest in Iskandar in local Persianate historiography.³¹¹

³¹¹ I should mention a thirteenth century work, Ānavī's *Anis al-Qulūb*, written for the Saljūqid sultān of Rum, 'Izz al-Dīn Kay Kāvus I (607-616/ 1210-19) which is a strange amalgam of genres. The bulk of the work is versified in the tradition of the *qiṣṣat al-anbiyā'* works, providing the history of the prophets from Adam to Muhammad. The last section gives the history of the Caliphs, then the Saljūqs. The entire work is composed with a decidedly local sensibility. In this work, the author presents Iskandar as one of the prophets, and not as barbaric conqueror by any means. In fact, Ānavī makes plain that Iskandar was neither a native of Iran or even of Greece (Yūnān), but rather, a native of Rūm! I have not been able to examine the unique manuscript of this work myself. The reader should refer to: A.C.S. Peacock, "Local Identity and Medieval Anatolian Historiography: Anavi's *Anis al-qolub* and Ahmad of Niğde's *al-Walad al-shafiq*," in *Studies on Persianate Societies* (Tehran: The Association, 2004), 118-19. [on Iskandar's origins in

Nevertheless, by the fifteenth century the Yazdī historians remember Iskandar as the very founder of their city and, by opening their works with an account of his exploits, they make him directly and incontrovertibly relevant to their own city's past. Until this time, with the exception of the histories of Sīstān, the historians of Yazd are the only authors of local histories to have given Iskandar a primary, positive role in their city's founding or to have opened their works with his story.³¹² It is not until the boom in local history writing that occurred during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that we find unambiguously positive portrayals of Iskandar in the histories of cities.³¹³

The remainder of this chapter asks why Yazdī historians gave Iskandar this place. More importantly, with a view toward exploring changes in these three authors' perspectives

Rūm, see folio 196b] Of course, we cannot imagine that the residents of Rūm should have felt any of the same nostalgia for Dārā as did those of Fārs.

³¹² As mentioned, Sīstān's seventeenth-century continuation of this history reconfirms Iskandar's important role in Sīstān's founding. There are plenty of works that discuss the cities in Iran that Iskandar was thought to have founded; my point is that other than the Yazd histories, there are no works of specifically local history in New Persian that claim Iskandar as founder. One early work in Pahlavī language that lists the founders of Iranian cities cites Alexander as the founder of Iṣfahān, Marv, and Hirāt: *S'ahristānīhā i Ērān*, a short treatise on the important cities of Ērānshahr, explains that Iṣfahān (Gay) was built by Alexander: "The capital of Gay (Ispahān) was built by the accursed Alexander the son of Philip." Marquart, *A catalogue of the provincial capitals of Īrānshahr (Pahlavi text, version and commentary)*, 21. The same work also presents Alexander as the founder of Marv and Harēv (Hirāt), p. 11, 46. This text does not mention Yazd or Kaṣah.

³¹³ For example, in *Sayrām Tarīkhi*, a local history of the town of Sayrām/Isfījāb (in modern-day Kazakhstan, not far from Tashkent, Uzbekistan), Iskandar appears as the founder of Samarqand. When the benevolent conqueror eventually comes to the town of Sayrām, he wisely appoints the Prophet Khizr (who had been living there apparently) as governor of that town. The only manuscripts of this work date from the second half of the nineteenth century; while the work does apparently contain some very old sections, it was probably compiled no earlier than the late eighteenth century. While Iskandar was not the founder of Sayrām in that work, the author of that work makes the famous relationship between Iskandar and the Prophet Khizr from the epic tradition part of the (sacred) local tradition of Sayrām. See discussion in: Devin DeWeese, "Sacred History for a Central Asian Town: Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin in Histories of Sayrām, 18th-19th Centuries," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89-90, no. juillet (2000): 262. There are also nineteenth century regional and city histories of the Volga-Ural region (modern Russian Federation) which relate that Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn (along with Socrates!) founded various cities on his way to build the wall to contain Gog and Magog. Allen Frank gives evidence that these myths in that region actually dated back to pre-Mongol times. He cites the Andalusian traveler, al-Gharnāṭī, who visited the Bulgars in 540s/1150s and recorded oral tales to this effect. Many leaders from among the Bulgars and other peoples claimed descent from Iskandar. See: Allen J. Frank, "Historical Legends of the Volga-Ural Muslims Concerning Alexander the Great, the City of Yelabuga, and Bāchmān Khān," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89-90, no. juillet (2000).

on their city's history, this next section of this chapter examines, diachronically, how each author of the three versions of the story adjusted the narrative. Because it dealt with a quintessential world conqueror and sometime prophet, Iskandar's story was a favorite site in which the ideology of kingship could be contested and worked out in all variety of media, both literary and pictorial. By exploring the changes in the presentation of Iskandar's story in Yazd's three successive local histories, I will demonstrate that in their particular declamations of Iskandar's story, each of Yazd's historians worked to position their own city in the contemporary disputes about the nature of the king's power and authority, which marked the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries respectively. Moreover, in so doing, the authors were able to tacitly center their home region's elite families in the struggle to define the role of local notables in the construction of the imperial program.

3. Iskandar and Dārā in the Local Historiography of Yazd

The earliest of the three histories of Yazd, Ja'farī's *Tārīkh-i Yazd* opens with the statement that the entire world brought tribute to the court of Dārāb just as they would do again for the Sasanian king Ardashīr-i Bābāk. (The significance of this reference to Ardashīr in the opening lines will be discussed in a moment.) Then, Ja'farī simply reports that "the king of Rūm, Faylaqūs Yūnānī [Phillip of Macedon] had died and Iskandar had taken possession of the principalities."³¹⁴ He then commences his account of the conflict between Iskandar and Dārā:

³¹⁴ Ja'farī, *TY*, 7.

Iskandar now refrained from sending the tribute that Faylaqūs had annually sent to Shāh Dārāb [read Dārā].³¹⁵ Rūm’s annual tribute they had been sending to Dārāb had been several eggs (*bayzah-i chand*) made of gold and silver. When news of Iskandar reached Dārāb, he sent an emissary (*ilchī*) toward Rūm for Iskandar, seeking the proscribed tribute. Iskandar said, “The bird that used to lay that egg has flown the coop (*parvāz kard*).” The emissary returned to Dārāb unsatisfied. When the emissary came before Dārāb, he sent another emissary before Iskandar, this time with a ball and a polo stick (*bā gūī va chawgān*), meaning: “You are a child, you should play with a ball and a stick. What do you know about the customs of rule?” When the envoy brought the ball and polo stick in front of Iskandar, Iskandar took it as an auspicious sign (*fāl-i nīk*) and said to his elite circle, “Dārāb has sent to me a ball and polo stick, signifying that the ball of the principalities will come into the crook (*kham*) of our polo stick.” When word of this reached Dārāb, he filled a purse with sesame seeds and sent it to Iskandar, meaning, “My army is without number and you will be destroyed by my army.” Iskandar stated, “They have gathered sesame seeds; I shall have valiant champions (*bahādurān*) since your army has been gathered for you in this way [i.e., I have champions, whereas you have plenty of men, but they are insignificant and weak].” When this report reached Dārāb, he commanded the king of Rūs to bring the army toward Rūm and devastate it (*vīrān kunad*), capture Iskandar, and send him into his presence. When the army of Rūs had turned to Iskandar, Iskandar brought out his own army to meet the King of Rūs and a great battle occurred. The army of Rūs was routed and much booty fell into the hands of the Rūmīyān. When news of this reached Dārāb, he commanded that he army of Zangbār (Zanzibar) turn in war upon Iskandar, reduce Rūm to ruins, and send Iskandar to him in chains. When the army of Zangbār turned its attention to Rūm, Iskandar came out to greet them with his army, made war, and made them flee in defeat. When Dārāb became aware of this, he turned his attention to making war on Iskandar with four hundred thousand riders, under his own command. Iskandar too came out personally with his army to welcome the army of Dārāb. The two armies had come together in the vicinity of Hamadān.³¹⁶

In Ja‘farī’s version of the Iskandar story, the whole narrative of Iskandar’s conquests, and then Yazd’s founding, is triggered by Iskandar’s cheeky refusal to pay the customary tribute, which his father had agreed to pay annually. The history of Yazd, which occupies the author for the remainder of the book, is born out of Iskandar’s

³¹⁵ Ja‘farī calls Dārā by the name Dārāb, a name which most other versions reserve for Dārā’s father. However, the anonymous Persian *Iskandar-Nāmah* also calls Dārā by the name Dārāb. *IN*, 13-15.

³¹⁶ Ja‘farī, *TY*, 7-8.

refusal to pay what his father had promised and his arrogant and insubordinate treatment of his overlord.

The later two historians of Yazd make dramatic changes to Ja'farī's opening. But, before we turn to these other works, let us continue with Ja'farī's presentation:

Four generals of Dārāb, who were among his close circle (*khāṣṣān-i ū*), had written to Iskandar in a secret letter that if Iskandar would give each of them a principality they would put Dārāb to death. When the day of battle came, Iskandar promised each one of them a principality and issued them a written oath. On the next day, when both armies had met and war had been joined, these generals pursued their ill intent with Dārāb and wounded him. Dārāb fell from his horse and his banner was overturned (*nigūn shud*) and his army was routed. Thus Iskandar raised himself upon the pillow of Dārāb's throne (*bi-bālīn-i Dārāb rasīd*). He dismounted his horse and sat down beside Dārāb's head. He humbled himself before Dārāb and sought forgiveness. He said, "Your people have betrayed you (*ghazar kardand*). I myself had no evil intent for you (*man qaṣd-i tū nakardam*). Now present your last will and testament (*vaṣīyat kun*) so that I may make your will manifest (*tā man vaṣīyat-at bi-jā'ī āvaram*)." Dārāb said, "I will three things: First, bring my murderers to punishment (*ghīṣāṣ birasān*) lest other subordinates (*bandigān*) take steps toward spilling the blood of their own masters (*khudāvandān*). Next, wed my daughter so that when a child of hers comes into being (*zāhir shavad*), rule will remain in my house. Third, be kind with my people so that after you they will be kind to your people too. . ." When Iskandar beheld the situation (*īn ḥāl bidīd*), he went off running and mourned for himself since he too had needed to drink this poison (*kih ū nīz zahr bāyast khūrad*).³¹⁷ Afterward he commanded that they place Dārāb in the tomb of his ancestors (*dakhmah-i ajdādash*) in Fārs and then he assumed all of Dārāb's possessions and took the entirety of Fārs. Then he said, "The last will and testament of Dārāb ought to be fulfilled." He had assigned a principality to the murderers of Dārāb, each one and dressed them in robes of the elite. He said to them, "I am fulfilling my own oath and yet it is necessary that Dārāb's will also be fulfilled." He commanded that his generals mete out their punishment.³¹⁸

Beyond the arrogance that was evident in his haughty exchange with Dārā, in the midst of battle we discover that despite his military genius, Iskandar's conduct is

³¹⁷ The meaning of this line is not entirely clear to me. On one hand, it resonates with a fairly common scenario in Persian literature in which the victor recognizes his own mortality in his opponents death. (My thanks to Paul Losensky for this observation.) On the other hand, Ja'farī may intend that Iskandar is upset because he realizes that he would have to betray his pledge to protect those generals who conspired against him; in other words, he is forced to swallow the same poison of treachery that had killed Dārāb. Iskandar has lost his honor, if not his life.

³¹⁸ Ja'farī, TY, 8-9.

far from chivalrous and is in fact plainly deceitful at times: he actually colludes with Dārā's assassins and then, after repenting, has them punished in accordance with Dārā's dying wishes. I have not seen any other rendition of the Iskandar story in which Iskandar actually conspires with Dārā's assassins, neither in any of the descendents of Pseudo-Callisthenes, nor in the later two Yazd histories. In each of these others, as we will see, Iskandar only learns of the assault after the fact and is clearly appalled by the act of treachery. This innovation in Ja'farī's text is extraordinary. Still, in fulfilling his promise to execute the traitors, we are supposed understand that Iskandar redeems himself and lives up to the standards of just kinship. All the same, nowhere in the story does Iskandar come off as a paragon of kinship as he does in Aḥmad Kātib or Muḥīd's works. Certainly, he is no *javān-mard* or Khusraw. In this regard, Ja'farī's presentation is aligned more closely (though not entirely) with the earlier local history tradition that presents Iskandar as a clever strategist at best and a crafty rogue at worst.

Yet, at the same time that we note Iskandar's patent roguishness in Ja'farī's work, a quality so familiar in the local histories we have seen thus far, it is also immediately evident that Ja'farī's narrative is markedly different from those earlier works of local histories, for it blatantly draws heavily from the Persian epic and Arabic historical tradition of the Pseudo-Callisthenes lineage. For Ja'farī, the story of Yazd is presented through the prism of the larger conflict and thus entails a detailed recitation of that conflict's unfolding as it is presented in those works descended from the Pseudo-Callisthenes. Ja'farī includes major elements of plot included in this tradition: the conflict over tribute, the exchange of symbolic gifts and letters (replete with boasts and quips), the battle itself, treacherous regicide committed against Dārā, Iskandar's

promise to make Dārā's dying will manifest, and lastly Iskandar's further conquests. In the previous local histories we have examined, these elements were either only partially represented, totally implied, or most often, decidedly absent. That Ja'farī is transparently referencing this older tradition in a deliberate way is evidenced by his inclusion of some rather curious and distinctive schemas, which are conspicuous in almost every major work of the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition, but which do not appear in any of the earlier local histories. One of these concerns the form of the tribute that Iskandar's father, Faylaqūs is said to have paid in golden eggs, a custom Iskandar rejects, saying, "The bird that used to lay that egg has flown the coop." In Niẓāmī's *Sharaf-Nāmāh*, for example, Iskandar says:

Fortune has shown another cheek in the mirror;
time is up for that bird who lays the golden egg (*khāyah-i zarīn*).

The heavens have folded up that old carpet
and freshened up the realm with a different one.³¹⁹

³¹⁹ Ḥakīm Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Sharaf-Nāmāh* (1335/1956), 157. The golden egg trope appears in al-Ṭabarī too, but in that text, Iskandar claims to have killed and eaten the chicken: "Some mention that the tribute that Alexander's father used to raise in payment (*kāna yu'addibu*) to the Persian kings was golden eggs...[when asked for tribute, Iskandar says] "I slaughtered the hen that used to lay that egg and I ate its meat. So announce war!" (*wa dhakara ba'ḍu-hum anna al-itāwata al-latī kāna abū al-Iskandari yu'addibu-hā ilā mulūki al-fursi kāna bayḍ^{an} min dhahab... anna-nī qad dhabahtu tilka al-dajājata al-latī kānat tabīḍu dhālika al-bayḍa wa akultu laḥma-hā fa-adhin bi-al-ḥarb.*) al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 1: 577. Also: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'riḥ al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, Abū Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *The History of al-Ṭabarī: Volume IV, The Ancient Kingdoms*, ed. Moshe Perlmann, trans. Moshe Perlmann (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987), 89-90. Firdawsī also mentions the golden egg tribute, which in this case are bejeweled eggs: (*chihil kardah mişqāl-i har khāyah-i, hamān nīz gawhar girān-māyah-i*) Abū al-Qāsim Firdawsī, *Shāh-Nāmāh*, ed. Djalal Khaleghi-Motlagh, 5 vols., Book of kings (New York: Bibliotheca Persica, 1988), 5: 521. In refusing to pay this tribute, Firdawsī has Alexander say, "The hen that used to make golden eggs died and the source of the tribute is gone (*murghī kih zarīn hamī khāyah kard bimard va sar-i bāzh bī-māhah kard*)." Firdawsī, *Shāh-Nāmāh*, 5: 532. The egg tribute is mentioned in the anonymous Persian *Iskandar-Nāmāh* (IN, 3.), but the quip about the hen flying away/being killed does not appear anywhere. The egg and bird schema comes up in later Arabic universal histories too, such as in Ibn al-Athīr's account of Iskandar: 'Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīḥ* (Bayrūt: Dār al-Şādūr, Dār al- Bayrūt, 1385/1965), 1: 182. It even appears in Khvāndamīr's sixteenth-century universal history. There, however, the eggs are no longer golden: "The bird who had furnished those eggs has flown the coop of the world of subsistence (*murghī kih mutaqqabil-i ān bayḡ-hā būd bih āshyānah-i 'ālam baqā parvāz nimūd*)." Khvāndamīr, *ĤS*, 207.

Another conspicuous schema is the symbolic gift-exchange (ball, stick, sesame seeds) that appears in nearly all the most popular descendents of the Pseudo-Callisthenes corpus, both the *nāmāhs* and the *tārīkhs*, most notably in the works Niẓāmī,³²⁰ and al-Ṭabarī.³²¹ Interestingly, the Syriac Pseudo-Callisthenes features this exchange too,³²² but has Darius send Alexander a whip, ball, and a box of gold, which are to be interpreted in essentially the same way as they are in the Persian and Arabic versions.³²³ The schema

³²⁰ “He [Dārā] sent with the messenger a ball, a polo stick, and a container filled with innumerable sesame seeds /...Having arrived [the messenger] stepped before Iskandar and loosened his tongue with Dārā’s message. / Firstly, he presented the polo stick and ball, signifying, ‘You are a child, you should play with these. / If the desire for battle should come to you, out of your heart’s folly, harm will come to you.’ / Iskandar, who had the wisdom of the turning world, divined a great victory in these signs. / He likened that all would flee before him; for by wielding the polo stick he will be the most powerful. / ‘The shāh gave that polo stick to me only to bring invasion and destruction to the door of his own realm.’ / That expert in human nature placed that ball upon the ground in order to make an analogy [saying], / ‘Just as the ball of the king’s ground is entrusted to me, by means of this ball, I will take that ball from him. . .He poured out the sesame seeds in the courtyard of the palace with the intension of bating birds to the sesame. / In a flash the birds were upon it; all at once, because of the seeds, they had covered the ground . . . ‘If the shāh rouses the army from out of these sesame seeds, an army will come to me of sesame-seed-eating birds.’ / Then, he gave a tiny amount of mustard-seeds to the messenger as compensation for the sesame seeds. / Signifying that, ‘If the shāh assembles an army, likewise recognize that an army [will gather] to me in the same manner.’” Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Sharaf-Nāmāh*, 159-61.

³²¹ al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa al-Mulūk*, 1: 573-4. See also, an account very similar to al-Ṭabarī’s in Ibn al-Athīr: Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 1: 283-3. Khvāndamīr omits this scenario in his account.

³²² Darius writes to Alexander: “Now we command thee, withdraw and return and go to thy mother, and sleep in the bosom of thy mother Olympias, for as yet thou art a child and art in fact not educated; therefore I send thee a whip, wherewith thou mayest train thy youth; and a ball, wherewith thou mayest play with the boys of thine own age and not meddle with the business of men; and a box full of gold for thy expenses, that thou mayest be able to retire and go back to thine own country...” Pseudo-Callisthenes, *HAG (Syriac)*, 46. He also sends sesame seeds (p. 46), which Alexander tastes and finds lacking in taste (p. 47). In response, he sends the emperor some mustard seeds. (p. 50). The polo-stick exchange is notably absent from the anonymous Persian *Iskandar-Nāmāh*.

³²³ The polo-stick and ball motif was a popular one in pre-modern Persian literature, and turned up in all variety of genres. On this subject see: Asghar Seyed-Gohrab, “My Heart is the Ball, Your Lock the Polo-Stick”: Development of the Ball and Polo-Stick Metaphors in Classical Persian Poetry,” in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday*, ed. Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma (West Lafayette, Indiana: Rozenburg Publishers & Purdue University Press, 2007). The polo-stick motif in the Iskandar stories is unexpectedly absent from the analysis in this article. For the use of this trope in Mavlānā Maḥmūd ‘Ārifī’s mystical *maṣnavī* composed for the Timūrid Sultān Muḥammad in 1438-9, roughly contemporaneously with Ja’farī and Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn’s works, see: ‘Ārifī, *Gūy va chawgān, yā, Ḥāl-nāmāh (The ball and polo stick, or, The book of ecstasy)*, ed. W. M. and Ziai Thackston, Hossein, trans. W. M. and Ziai Thackston, Hossein (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 1999). Here the ball is a metaphor for the self-sacrificing lover’s head, severed by the beloved and rolling at his feet (i.e., the annihilation of the *nafs* for the sake of the divine.)

shows up in Ja‘farī’s work unchanged from its presentation in the earlier versions, albeit in slightly abridged form.

So, while it is clear that for the opening of his history of Yazd, Ja‘farī has chosen to make use of the long-form Iskandar works, which all share a host of common features, we must nonetheless recognize that these works also diverge from one another in key, though sometimes subtle, ways. In fact, while clearly Ja‘farī has read many versions, and borrows from each, he most definitely bases his rendition on Niẓāmī’s version of the story, and this preference has interesting implications. Niẓāmī had explicitly broken from the established presentation of Iskandar’s genealogy reproduced in Firdawsī, the anonymous *Iskandar-nāmāh*, and the early Arabic accounts in one critical way: these others had each made Iskandar into Dārā’s long-lost brother, son of Dārāb and Faylaqūs’s daughter (sometimes named Nāhīd, and rarely, Rūqiyā), who had been given in marriage to the Persian emperor and had become the favorite wife until Dārāb discovers, in bed one night, that his bride has suddenly developed a frightful case of halitosis.³²⁴ Even after being cured, Dārāb sends her back to her father in Rūm, unaware that she is pregnant.³²⁵ After the baby Iskandar is born in concealment, his mother keeps his parentage a secret, and it remains so until Iskandar himself later divulges it to Dārā.³²⁶ Niẓāmī overtly rejected this story as nonsense, maintaining that Iskandar was of pure Rūmī stock and was the son of Faylaqūs.³²⁷ In

³²⁴ In Firdawsī, the phrase goes: “*az nakhatash bū-yi nā-khūsh bi-yāft* (he discovered an unpleasant smell on her breath).” Firdawsī, *Shāh-Nāmāh*, 5: 523. The comparable passage in the anonymous Persian *Iskandar-Nāmāh* reads: “*nāgāh bū-yi nā-kūsh az dahān-i ān dukhtar bar āmad.*” IN, 4.

³²⁵ In some versions, Iskandar is named after the medicinal herb that cured her.

³²⁶ Firdawsī, *Shāh-Nāmāh*, 5: 523-6. IN, 3-6.

³²⁷ “*Dar īn ān har dū guftār chustī nabūd gizāfah-sakhn rā durustī nabūd./ durust-i ān shud az guftah-i har diyār kih az Faylaqūs āmad ān-shahriyār.*” Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Sharaf-Nāmāh*, 82. In his introduction and conclusion to the work, Niẓāmī rails against the lies that previous authors (namely Firdawsī) have introduced into the story. See Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Sharaf-Nāmāh*, 9, 68, 523. Also see J. C. Bürgel’s discussion of Niẓāmī’s treatment

Nizāmī's writing, Iskandar was a purely foreign conqueror, stripped of any Achaemenid pedigree.³²⁸ It is remarkable that in the Islamic Middle Period, even as the authors of epics and universal histories worked to enhance the glory of the Iranian heritage by folding the mighty Greek conqueror's legacy into it, the authors of local histories made no such move during the same period, a point that we have already discussed in detail. Later however, Ja'farī's Iskandar of the fifteenth century is a true hybrid of the Pseudo-Callisthenes and local history traditions. That he tapped into the heroic Iskandar materials but specifically adopted Nizāmī's polemical stance is revealing: simply by imitating that literature, Ja'farī causes Yazd to absorb some of the heroic resonances that had surrounded Iskandar in the epic genre and universal histories, even though he does not explicitly invoke them, and in doing so he bestows upon his city the aura of glorious origins; however, in making Iskandar an outsider and something of a

of truth (*rāstī* or *durustī*) and lies (*durūgh*) in: J. Christoph Bürgel, "On Some Sources of Nizāmī's *Iskandar-nāma*," in *The Necklace of the Pleiades: Studies in Persian Literature Presented to Heshmat Moayyad on his 80th Birthday*, ed. Franklin Lewis and Sunil Sharma (West Lafayette, Indiana: Rozenburg Publishers & Purdue University Press, 2007), 24-6. In his early thirteenth century, Arabic, universal history, Ibn al-Athīr provides both accounts of Iskandar's birth and lineage. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil fī al-Tārīkh*, 1: 282-3. In his sixteenth-century, Persian, universal history, Khvāndamīr presents the story of Iskandar's birth by Faylaqūs's daughter and Dārā, but provides much evidence refuting it. Recounting the logic of Mīr Khvānd in *Rawzat al-Ṣafā*, he refutes the possibility of Iskandar being Dārā's brother, since he had married Dārā's daughter, Rūshang, and, being a pious and God-fearing king (*pādishāh-i khudā-tars-i dīn-dār*), he would never have married a niece (*barādar-zādah*). Further, he cites the thirteenth-century Quranic commentator, Qāzī Bayḍāwī, confirming that Iskandar is the direct descendent of Faylaqūs (*pisar-i ṣulbī-i Faylaqūs*). According to Bayḍāwī, Faylaqūs, is in turn, descended from 'Īsā bin Ishāq. Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 209. In an earlier account, Khvāndamīr relates that Iskandar was the son of Faylaqūs, but that both were descended from Romulus and Remus (Rūmānus va Rūmulus), the legendary founders of Rome! Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 208-9. It noteworthy that the Ilkhanid-era historian, Shabānkārahī, who wrote extensively about the affairs of Fārs and other western and southern provinces, accepts the lineage offered by Firdawsī, with Iskandar being Dārāb's son, and summarizes that version of the story. So we cannot make the claim that the Dārāb-lineage, which the Yazdī historians rejected, had always been the position of Western Iranian writers. See: Shabānkārahī, *Majma' al-Ansāb*, 1: 210-11.

³²⁸ I am taking some license here. References to the dynasty called "Achaemenid" in Greek sources is essentially absent from Sasanian and Islamic texts in Persian. Much has been made of this near silence. Based largely on the "millenarian" narratives in Sasanian texts, scholars have traditionally pointed to Iskandar's conquest as the cause of the amnesia. Richard Frye points instead to genealogical wrangling that occurred among rivals for the throne during Darius's reign. He suggests that the idea of a common ancestor, Achaemenes, was a resent invention of Darius' time, and was short lived. See Frye's article: Richard N. Frye, "The Missing Achaemenids," in *Paitimāna: Essays in Iranian, Indo-European, and Indian Studies in Honor of Hanns-Peter Schmidt*, ed. Siamak Adhami (Costa Mesa: Mazda, 2003).

scoundrel, we sense a survival of the attitude in the earlier local history tradition, and by extension, the stances of the Pahlavī literature which, as we have seen, chiefly remembered Iskandar for his destructive conquests and wiles. Moreover, Ja'farī's insistence in the first line of the chapter that the founder of the Sassanid dynasty, Ardashīr, would soon receive the world's tribute as the kings before Iskandar had, recalls the negative sentiments we observed in earlier local histories, which had figured Iskandar as only a blip in the history of Iranian kings (where Ashk had restored the order of his father), but, at the same time, invokes the millennial outlook observed in the Pahlavī *Kārnamaḡ-i Ardashīr-i Bābagān*, *Dēnkart* and others, where Ardashīr was portrayed as the long-awaited restorer, avenger, and descendant of Dārā's house after Iskandar's reign of terror and the centuries of disorder that followed. As we will discuss in detail later, Tīmūr's commemorators participated in a similar millennial strain, portraying that king (and his descendents) as the awaited conqueror and restorer of justice; significantly, they would choose as their model, Iskandar, conqueror from distant lands in place of Ardashīr, the son of native kings of Fārs. By that time, in the struggle to build an imperial hegemony, the attribute of foreignness was given currency as valuable as the attribute of nativeness had been earlier on.

Within a generation after Ja'farī had completed his work, Aḡmad ibn Ḥusayn Kātib had repackaged his predecessor's treatment of Iskandar in his own account of Yazd's history. Although Aḡmad Kātib followed Ja'farī's basic plot structure and adopted Niẓāmī's perspective on Iskandar's lineage, he made some important changes. Aside from a few key instances, which we shall discuss below, Mufīd's introduction to Iskandar's story is lifted from Aḡmad Kātib's *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd* almost word for word,

with very few significant changes. In fact this is largely true of the whole of Mufīd's chapter on Iskandar. I should be clear: I do not mean to imply that by copying Aḥmad Kātib's text, Mufīd intends to merely repeat his predecessor's program. On the contrary, Mufīd is using the very same material (in fact the very same words!) to lay out an entirely different program. However, in order to see how this is possible, we must compare the works as wholes, looking to examine the context in which these chapters, which contain nearly identical material, were embedded. Only by such a comparison will the subtle and insinuating inflections in Mufīd's voice become apparent; we certainly will not find them in these sections where Mufīd repeats his predecessor's words verbatim. This comparison of the works of the whole is of course one of the greater projects of this dissertation and will only develop slowly. Nevertheless, for the time being, I shall sometimes write about Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib as though they are speaking with the same voice, as if they are the same person, even. In fact, where the texts are essentially identical, I will quote from Mufīd exclusively and only give references to the analogous passages in Aḥmad Kātib's text in the notes. However, my amalgamation of these texts will be temporary and is a tactical move that will allow me to show how Mufīd was making explicit connections with Aḥmad Kātib's presentation; later I will complicate and historicize the relationship between the texts by considering Mufīd's wholesale incorporation of Aḥmad Kātib's material in light of key material that appears elsewhere in his work. In this way, I hope to illuminate the process by which Mufīd implicitly communicates his purpose in using his predecessor's material in the service of very different and historically contingent ends. With this in mind, I quote Mufīd's introductory passage, letting it speak for Aḥmad Kātib as well:

When Iskandar sat down upon the throne of rule in the kingdom of Rūm after the passing away of Faylaqūs [Philip of Macedon] and became the possessor of the crown and diadem (*tāj va dihīm*) he placed Arastāṭālīs (Aristotle) the Wiseman (*ḥakīm*), who was the exemplar of wisemen and the leader of sages, in the vizierate. And through the advice (*bi-ṣavābdīd*) of that peerless vizier, he cast the customs of tyranny (*ẓulm*) and transgression (*ta'addī*) out of the realm. In little time, the fame (*ṣīt*) of his justice (*'adālat*) came to be propagated (*intishār yāft*) in all quarters and parts of the world. And the whole of the principalities of Rūm and the regions of the west up to the frontiers (*sarḥadd*) of Miṣr and Ifrīqīyah came under his possession (*taḥt-i taṣarruf-i ū*). And people of every quarter (*aṭrāf*) from every class (*ṭabaqah*), especially sages (*ḥukumā'*) and wisemen from every region turned their faces to his world-sheltering court (*va mardum-i aṭrāf az har ṭabaqah bi-takhṣīṣ-i ḥukumā' va khiradmandān az har dīyār rū bi-dargāh-i 'ālam-panāhash nahādand.*) And Iskandar, having given favors to all of them, increased the standing (*pāyah*) of each of them, according to his merits (*bi-qadr-i hunar*). And day by day, his preeminence and fortune was increasing. And time sang these lines upon the tongue (*mutarammin būd*) on this subject:

Since today this valiant shāh rules with justice,
a rabbit can birth a child upon a lion's back.

*kih imrūz bā 'adl īn shāh-i dilīr
kunad bachchah khar-gūsh bar pusht-i
shūr*

His call for justice (*dād*) is such that the wise old fox
carries the child to the lion to give him milk.

*chunān-ast dārash kih rūbāh-i pīr
barad bachchah rā tā dihad shūr shūr*³²⁹

Both Muḥīd and Aḥmad Kātib open their treatments of the Iskandar by presenting him in terms of traditional Perso-Islamic ideals of just and wise kingship. It is Iskandar's

³²⁹ Muḥīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 8. The analogous passage from Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn's text reads: "The reputable masters of the histories, may God bless their souls have so brought to light that after Faylaqūs died, Iskandar sat in the Dār al-Mulūk of Rūm in sovereignty and placed the crown of kingship upon his head. And he placed Aristotle (Arastāṭālīs) the Wiseman (*ḥakīm*), who was the exemplar of wisemen and the leader of sages, in the vizierate. And through the advice of his world-adorning opinions (*bi-ṣavābdīd-i rā'ī-i 'ālam-ārā'ī-i ū*), he cast the customs of tyranny (*ẓulm*) and transgression (*ta'addī*) and subjugation (*taghallub*) and despotism (*tasalluṭ*) out of the realm. Locals and travelers (*mujāvirān va musāfirān*) caused rumor (*āvāzah*) of his justice and munificence to reach every corner of the world. And no creature could oppress (*sitam nīyārast nimūd*) another person for half sixth of junky silver coin (*nīm-i dāng-i sīm-siyāh*). And in a short time (*bi-andak rūzī— JM says bi-andak rūzgārī*) he took all the principalities of Rūm and Yūnān and the region of the Maghrib and Europeans (*afrānjah*) and Miṣr and Andālūs into the sphere (*ḥawzah*) of his possession (*taṣarruf*). And men (*mardum*) of every quarter (*aṭrāf*) who were set apart as sages (*ḥukumā'*) and wisemen turned their faces to the foundation of his most lofty throne. (*va mardum-i aṭrāf bi-takhṣīṣ-i ḥukumā' va khiradmandān rū bi-pāyah-i sarīr-i a'lā nahādand.*) And Iskandar, spoke with flattery to all of them. And he would bring up all, in accordance with the standing of their merit (*va bi-qadr-i pāyah-i hunar m'afzūd*). And day by day, his preeminent fortune was increasing. And the tongue of the times used to say *Bayt*: Since today this valiant shāh rules with justice, the child of a rabbit can ride upon a lion's back. /His call for justice is such that the old fox carries the child to the lion to give him milk." Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 19.

embodiment of these ideals that allows him to bring the kingdom into balance.³³⁰ This is a characterization that is notably absent from Ja'farī's work. The verses play on a classic trope in which even the animals are seen to fall into the king's peaceful order and circle of justice. Both accounts expanded upon their predecessor's opening; Ja'farī's work had begun simply, forgoing any such panegyrics, which in Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd's works have the effect of casting the Greek king in accordance with a distinctively Perso-Islamic ideal of kingship. So, while both Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd follow Ja'farī's lead in depicting Iskandar as an outsider (as Niẓāmī had done), they make an effort to forcefully reintegrate him into a Persianate history in practice, as an adoptee, if not in pedigree.

Now we turn to Aḥmad Kātib's and Mufīd's presentation of the narrative itself. In the early portion of the narrative, with one exception, which we will discuss later, the two narratives are essentially the same; I quote from Mufīd:

When rumor of the reign and conquest of Iskandar spread throughout the world, Dārā, son of Dārāb, who was the last of the Kayānī kings, whose tributaries (*kharāj-guzār*) were Arab, 'Ajam, Turk, Hind, and Rūm, and who was the descendent of Isfandiyār and offspring of Bahrām Shahrīyār. He became haughty (*maghrūr*) on account of his army, his treasures, and his glory; he opened the hand of tyranny and transgression against his subjects, and he made oppressors predominant over the oppressed. Day and night he perpetually remained drunk with wine. And people were completely fed up with his tyranny (*az jawr-i ū bi-jān rasīdand*). Of course, in a short time, his fortune expired (*siparī shudah*), and the smoke of sighing (*dūd-i āh*) of the oppressed struck fire in his house (*dūdmān*)...

And when news of the rule and justice of Iskandar reached Dārā, the flame of envy came to a blaze in his heart and he dispatched a messenger to Rūm, seeking the continuation of tribute. Iskandar spoke harshly in reply and sent his

³³⁰ For a survey of early Islamicate mirrors for princes and the notion of the circle of justice see: Ann K. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes," *Quaderno dell'Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei* 160 (1971). Also see Meisami's treatment of Niẓām al-Mulūk's *Siyar al-Mulūk* in Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 145-62. The notion of the circle of justice in Persian literature is perhaps best articulated in Kaykāvūs ibn Iskandar's *Qābūs-Nāmāh*.

[Dārā's] messenger back, without attaining his purpose. Dārā, offended by this, assembled his army. He mustered nearly nine hundred thousand heavily armed horsemen (*savār*) with the intension of making war on Iskandar and razing (*takhrīb*) the land of Rūm, and he set out from his capital (*dār al-mulūk*). When this news reached Iskandar, he ordered the preparation of the glorious and victorious armies (*'asākir-i fayrūzī-ma'āṣir*) and hastened to meet Dārā in battle with three hundred thousand cavalry. In the outskirts of Mūṣul the two armies came together to face one another. After the wheat-field of soldiers' ranks was set ablaze with the fire of war, the harvest of many lives of valiant men of courage and lion-bodied champions burned. A war came to pass, which reached the limit of arduousness; in the end, defeat befell Dārā's army. Dārā fled to Āzarbāyjān, and Iskandar, in pursuit of the army, reached the borders of that region. When the soldiers and subjects there refused to succor him [Dārā]—on account of the fact that Dārā had offended them—he went from Āzarbāyjān to Fārs, and Iskandar overtook him from the rear. Dārā commanded the armies of 'Iraq and Fārs to make war.³³¹

The Dārā of Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib's works is noticeably changed from Ja'farī's.

Whereas Ja'farī's Dārā (Dārāb) was overly confident and prideful, Mufīd's is downright corrupt, tyrannical and debauched. Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib's Dārā is, of course Iskandar's foil; for despite his great power and wealth, he has failed in his responsibility as king to maintain the circle of justice, so much so that his own subjects refuse to come to his aid once Iskandar achieves an initial defeat. His failures stand in opposition to each of the Iskandar's virtues outlined in the opening passage of the chapter. Also noteworthy is the fact that these two later historians have jettisoned the golden egg tribute and polo-stick gift-exchange schemas, which, as we witnessed, Ja'farī had used both to reference the epic and universal history traditions and to highlight Iskandar's crafty and uppity nature. The later renditions worked to deemphasize this element of Iskandar's nature in exchange for others.

Next Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib present Dārā's treacherous murder:

³³¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 8-9.

Now, Dārā had two viziers: One was named Māhyār and the other was named Jānūsyār. While the armies were occupied with fighting, these viziers plunged a dagger into Dārā’s flanks, each from either side. Dārā fell onto the ground from the back of his saddle. The murderers came to His Excellency, Iskandar, and presented a description of what had transpired. Iskandar, having commanded their imprisonment and incarceration, personally turned toward Dārā’s encampment. When he saw Dārā, amidst the dirt and blood, he dismounted and lifted Dārā’s head from the dirt and placed it in his own lap. *Bayt*:

He placed his weary head upon his lap;	<i>sar-i khastah rā bar sar-i rān nahād</i>
he placed the dark night upon the radiant day.	<i>shab-i tīrah bar rūz-i rakhshān nahād.</i>

In this position, Dārā opened his eyes and beheld Iskandar. He said, “O Iskandar, I have several charges for you as a last will and testament. You must comply and fulfill your promise in this: First—I have a daughter, possessor of beauty, whose name is Rawshank—marry her and let the child that comes into being from her sit as king after you, lest rule pass outside the emperors of Kayān. Second, that you not hurl my kinsmen and their dependents from their standing. Third, that you put my murderers to death and that you not depend upon transitory sovereignty (*bar sulṭanat-i dū rūzah i ‘timād na-nimā’ī*).”³³² He said this and passed away. Iskandar commanded that they bear his body according to the custom of kings, and he himself accompanied the coffin (*na‘sh*) on foot for part of the way and interred him in the tomb (*dakhmah*) of his ancestors, which was in Persepolis (Iṣṭakhar), in Fārs. Iskandar, having come to Persepolis, which had been Dārā’s capital, sat upon the throne of sovereignty.³³³

If the sign of a perfectly balanced realm is a rabbit who feels so secure that it can produce offspring while riding upon a lion’s back, then the sign of a realm in chaos is the king murdered at the hand of his own confidants. Unlike in Ja‘farī’s version, where Iskandar had a hand in Dārā’s murder, in these later works, Iskandar holds the moral high ground over Dārā and his treacherous ministers; he is totally outside the plotting and is utterly shocked when he learns of such dishonorable, cowardly behavior. For Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib, the germ of this regicide originates in the debased body of the king, not in the wiles of a foreign upstart; an infection, having

³³² Literally: “don’t rely upon two-day-sovereignty.” I.e., that he not rely upon governors who have no long-standing, noble genealogy or upon methods of governance that befit such ignoble rulers. To do so would result in a short lived rule.

³³³ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 9-10.

taken hold throughout Dārā's kingdom, finally erupts into cancers of greedy ambition and treachery among his subjects, which consume both king and kingdom from the inside out. Though in Ja'farī's work, Iskandar's foreignness, his "outsider-ness" had been a detriment to his prestige, Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd turn it into a benefit: as an outsider, Iskandar stands uncontaminated by the corruption that has become epidemic in the land of Persian kings. And yet, as a restorer of order and justice, just as the millennial king Ardashīr had been in Pahlavī literature, ironically, Iskandar has become an adoptee of the *mulūk-i Īrān*. As I will demonstrate when we look more closely at the interplay of millennial thought and the notion of foreignness later in this chapter, the role of foreignness in millennial thought has important implications for our study of local histories in the imperial context, particularly in the context of the discourse surrounding the figure of the Šāhib-Qirān, which we have mentioned above. Such efforts to adopt the foreign conqueror, or shall we say, "Persianize" him, is not a new phenomenon in the fifteenth century; it can be observed in writings as early as those of the Ghaznavid court. Not surprisingly, the figure of Iskandar often turns up in this literature; Iskandar's status betwixt and between foreign conqueror and Persian King made him a key device in dynastic historiography for brokering the status of contemporary (foreign) conquerors, particularly conquerors' status vis-à-vis a Persianate mythic history. We shall examine the subject explicitly in the last section of this chapter.

So far, I have presented Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib's renditions as if they are identical. This is largely true, but not entirely, for it is evident that Aḥmad Kātib chooses not to uproot every trace of Iskandar's earlier, ignoble character. Mufīd, on the

other hand purifies Iskandar of any such residue of the old local historiography. Let us backtrack for a moment to highlight the one key difference in the two accounts as we have seen them thus far. As in the opening passage, Mufīd’s treatment of Dārā’s debauchery and Iskandar’s honorability remains substantively the same as that found in Aḥmad Kātib’s work³³⁴ with one major exception: In Mufīd’s work, as we have seen, just after the opening praises of Iskandar, the narrative jumps directly into Dārā’s depravity and aggressive provocation of Iskandar. However, Mufīd has omitted an important section that Aḥmad Kātib had inserted between these two pieces of narrative: before turning to Dārā’s aggression, Aḥmad Kātib gives a full account of Iskandar’s conquests in Africa against the king of Zangbār (land of Blacks) and his subsequent construction of the city of Iskandarīyah (Alexandria), two triumphs that piqued Dārā’s sense of jealousy.³³⁵ Here, Iskandar’s victory over the barbaric people of Zang is certainly clever but in his cleverness, he appears in a not altogether sympathetic light: After Iskandar learns that the king of Zangbār orders his men to murder Iskandar’s envoy and then publicly drink his blood (*khūn-i ū rā biyāshāmīdand*), a savage move that terrifies Iskandar’s men, Aristotle, here Iskandar’s principal advisor and vizier, devises a plan to reverse this setback. He advises Iskandar:

The upright thing to do here is this: the champions (*bahādurān*) after taking captive a group of the *Zangīyān*, should bring them to you. With [the appearance of] reckless abandon and rage (*sar-i tahavvar va ghazaḅ*), command that they cut off some of their heads in your presence. You should then give [those heads] to the kitchens so they can cook them for a feast; the kitchens, having [in reality] cooked several heads of a black sheep should then bring these out to the feast [instead of the human heads]. Then tear a piece from that sheep with relish and eat several morsels [publically]. Once the captive *Zangīyān* behold the significance of this, they will take flight. The effect will be that when this news

³³⁴ The corresponding passage in the TJY is: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, TJY, 21.

³³⁵ Ibid., 19-20. The reader will recall that in Ja‘farī’s version, the Zanj, along with the Rūs, both Dārā’s vassals, had attacked Iskandar at Iskandar’s behest.

reaches the king of Zangbār and his army, they will fear us so that their swords will go soft (*kih āhan bih āhan-i narm shavad*).³³⁶

Aristotle's ruse has the desired effect of softening the Zangīyān's mettle, for in the end, after Iskandar implements the plan, the Zangīyān become demoralized, their leader killed, and the survivors enslaved, branded and made a part of Iskandar's retinue.³³⁷ The episode concludes with Iskandar's triumphal founding of Iskandarīyah on the North African coast (paid for by the spoils from the Zang) and his subsequent issuance of a *fath-nāmah* (victory announcement) to all corners of his realm.³³⁸ To be sure, Aḥmad Kātib's characterization of the young warrior-king is still favorable; nonetheless, we ought to consider carefully the effects of two verses the author inserts just after his presentation of Aristotle's stratagem:

This demon in the guise of a man,
he is a crocodile who has brought ruin upon us.

*kih īn dīv-kirdār mardum-khiyāl
nahangī-st k-avardah bar mā zavāl*

He eats the Zangī raw
the way the Zangī eats almonds.

*chunān mīkhūrad zangī khām rā
kih zangī khūrad maghz-i bādām rā*³³⁹

As is commonly done in Persian prose, Aḥmad Kātib has inserted this verse to give some subtle commentary that is not explicitly stated in the narrative itself, with the effect of coloring Iskandar's character a shade darker. He has adopted Aristotle's wily plans and in so doing, steps out of the *javānmardī* comportment befitting a king, for rather than relying upon noble, straightforward skill, he has depended on trickery, which, no matter how ingenious, is still below his station.³⁴⁰ Iskandar thus becomes the

³³⁶ Literally: "so that iron will become soft iron" but the implication is that their cocks will go limp from fear; i.e., that they will lose their manliness. *Ibid.*, 20.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 20-1.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 20. There may be a bit of pun in this last hemstich of this *maṣnavī*, which makes a jab at the Zanī's canabalistic taste. *Maghz-i bādām* means almonds, but *maghz* also refers to brains or marrow.

³⁴⁰ The concept of trickery is universally anathema to the *javānmards* in Persian literature. On the incompatibility between the ideal of *javānmardī* and trickery, see Arley Loewen's treatment in his dissertation on *javānmardī* and *futuṣvat*: Arley Loewen, "The Concept of Jawanmardi (Manliness) in

devious crocodile rather than the honorable lion, the standard kingly symbol he invoked in his opening praises of Iskandar, a pairing that any reader would expect for a ruler of dignified rank. For the sake of victory, Aḥmad Kātib's Iskandar, by opening himself to Aristotle's cunning, is willing to sacrifice his stature and appear just like his barbaric adversary. Mufīd's retelling deliberately jettisons this entire episode, a move which has the effect of bringing Iskandar's comportment in the narrative totally in line with the praises he offers at the beginning of the chapter. However, in the grand scheme of things, this is only a minor difference between the two authors' works. As mentioned earlier, the two use essentially the same material in this chapter on Iskandar toward quite different ends, differences that are only discernable after considering the materials outside this chapter. We shall draw more global comparisons in good time; the reader should only consider the preceding discussion to have been a preliminary step in this larger comparison.

To take stock thus far: despite this one discrepancy, it is clear that the two later writers followed Ja'farī's lead in working the epic tradition into their story of Iskandar's founding of Yazd, but were in accord with one another in moving away from Ja'farī's characterization of Iskandar: rather than depicting him as a crafty, insubordinate, prideful conqueror, whose pride triggers the entire episode, Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd choose to give Iskandar the moral high ground, portraying him as the restorer of

Persian Literature and Society" (University of Toronto, 2001). In particular, see Loewen's discussion of the *Shāh-Nāmāh*'s greatest warrior, Rustam, who tarnishes his *javānmardī* and feels immense shame at having resorted to trickery in his duels with both Suhrāb and Isfandiyār, pp. 67, 111-113, 120-3. For the concept of trickery, Firdawsī employs terms such as *chārah* (scheming), *majāz* (feigning), *kazhī* (guile), *nayrang* (deception/illusion).

justice after Dārā's lapse into pride, inebriation and corruption.³⁴¹ In contrast to the Firdawsī tradition in which Iskandar is literally born of Kayānī kings, here, as their adopted son, Iskandar is the renewer of the realm's glory. Furthermore, from the Yazdī historians' perspective, he has the honor of being the first benefactor of their glorious city. It is to this latter point that we turn our attention now.

4. Iskandar and the Founding of Yazd

In all three works, the story of Iskandar's conquest of Dārā's empire provides a backdrop for the main action of the chapter, the founding of Yazd, and is designed to implicitly key various resonances associated with the different genres of the Iskandar story, as we have discussed. Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd both clearly make this back-story subordinate to the founding story, which constitutes the climax of the chapter. After all, the founding story explains how Yazd had come to into existence in such an apparently God forsaken place.

Ja'farī balances the back-story and the account of the foundation of Yazd somewhat differently than his successors do. He places greater weight on the former part of the narrative and leaves the latter quite spare. In fact, Ja'farī's information about Yazd's founding seems vague in comparison with the later accounts:

After that [Iskandar's establishment of an administration that would keep the local nobles weak], Iskandar travelled together with some of Dārāb's generals

³⁴¹ Moreover, in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn and Mufīd, Iskandar's son and successor abdicates (in the style of Firdawsī's Kay Khusraw) in favor of a life of spiritual solitude. He retires to a cave to pray. What follows is four hundred years of decentralized rule, during which the Prophet ʿĪsā (Jesus) appears, and then the just founder of the Sassanid dynasty, Ardashīr I, rises to power. Despite the decentralization, this lapse in unified rule is a far cry from the chaos and violence Iskandar's reign begins in other sources. In these versions, the Sassanids are not the awaited avengers of Iskandar's destruction; rather, they are the inheritors and renewers of his dispensation. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 28. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 13.

whom he did not trust [to leave alone for fear of rebellion] and turned his attention from Iraq to Khurāsān. When they reached the frontier of the desert of Khurāsān, which is now the city of Yazd, he ordered his army to build a fortress (*qal'ah*). And they made a canal (*nahrī*) flow. And a person from that [army] settled himself there (*kasī az ān khūd rā bi-nashānad*) and settled (*sākin gardānīd*) that group [of the late Dārāb's un-trusted generals] in that place. And that place, is called "Kaṣah" and this is the first building of Yazd, which they call "The Prison of the One with Two Horns" (*zindān-i zū al-qarnayn*). In preceding books Yazd is not mentioned, but there is mention of the Kaṣah in *Ṣarīḥ al-Buldān* (The Clear-Cut Explanation of the Lands) and *Masālik wa Mamālik*³⁴² (Roads and Realms), which give the length and width of [various] lands.

In this passage we find narrative elements that Aḥmad Kātib will later pick up on and flesh out: Iskandar's traveling with the untrustworthy generals of the former emperor; the building of a fortress (*qal'ah*) and canal; the settling of Dārāb's generals; and the identification of this place, called "Kaṣah" with the Zindān-i Zū al-Qarnayn. Ja'farī makes no effort to explain what *kaṣah* meant or what its connection with a prison might have been; as I will discuss in a moment, the later historians do concern themselves with the explaining the origins of this name. Ja'farī leaves the significance of these fragments of information rather opaque. Moreover, he implies rather than states what Iskandar's actual role in the founding of Yazd was.

What is more, Ja'farī buries this information about Yazd inside a summary of other episodes from Iskandar's career, which are familiar from the Pseudo-Callisthenes tradition. It is clearly that the author intends to weigh these episodes rather more heavily than that of the Kaṣah story: He founds other cities, including Hirāt, Samarqand, Machīn, and Iskandarīyah;³⁴³ he constructs the marvelous lighthouse in

³⁴² These titles were most likely meant to refer geographical works as a genre, known loosely by these terms, rather than to indicate any particular works. For the record, Ibn Khurdādhbih's late ninth-century work entitled *al-Masālik wa al-Mamālik* does not mention either Yazd or Kaṣah. Later works do, however. See below.

³⁴³ Ja'farī, *TY*, 10.

that city;³⁴⁴ he journey to the wondrous lands of darkness, *Zulumāt*, to seek the water of life (*āb-i ḥayyāt*).³⁴⁵ In most of the earlier versions, as well as in Aḥmad Kātib's rendition, Iskandar makes this journey in the company of the prophet Khizr; Ja'farī leaves this information out, but mentions that Khizr had succeeded where Iskandar failed. With the inclusion of this schema, we have one more indication that Ja'farī has no intension of including Iskandar among the ranks of prophets or saints, as so many of his predecessors had done. The verse that follows the episode sums up his view: "Iskandar had the luxury of kingship, but his life lasted two days. / Khizr was indigent, but had life everlasting."³⁴⁶

The only other indication that Iskandar's founding of the city should be taken as the central purpose of Ja'farī's chapter appears in the last line which states: "This Kaṣah is the first building in Yazd and after Iskandar, this Kaṣah became populated and a group congregated in that place and built buildings and farms."³⁴⁷ Ja'farī's commemoration of Iskandar's imprint on Yazd seems more designed to tap vaguely into some general feeling of glory that has come to be associated with that figure in the epic tradition, but while certainly some concrete memory of Iskandar's dealings in Yazd are evident, Ja'farī's memory of them is hazy. In fact, it is only in Ja'farī's following chapter, on the Sasanian kings, that his memories of Yazd's early history come into focus:

And after Bahrām, the reign came to Yazdigard bin Bahrām, and he was the *pādishāh-i zū al-shawkat* [possessor of glory] and 'Arab and 'Ajam were under his command, and he would travel around his kingdoms (*ṭawf-i mamālik-i ū*). When he reached Kaṣah, the climate of Kaṣah pleased him (*āb va havā-yi Kaṣah vay rā*

³⁴⁴ Ibid., 11.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ "Iskandar va tana'um-i mulk va dū rūzah-i 'umr / Khizr va shi'ār-i muflisī va 'umr-i jāvidān." Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

muwāfiq āmad.) He said: “I have vowed (*nazr kardam*) to built a city in this place with the name of Yazdān. He gathered the builders of the realm and the astrologers made Yazd under the sign of Virgo (*bi-ṭāli-i sunbulah*). And they built fortresses, walls, the bazaar, *ḥammām*, and the high *ātish-khānah*. And they built the Khānah-i Sulṭānat and made three streams of water (*nahr-i āb*) flow... When Yazd was built, it was known as Yazdigard.³⁴⁸

Clearly, for Ja‘farī, the credit for the real founding of Yazd belongs to Yazdigard bin Bahrām, descendant of Ardashīr, to whom Ja‘farī had given the honor of restoring the imperial order that Iskandar had destroyed in the preceding chapter. As we observed in the first chapter of this dissertation, Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd also provide accounts of the Sasanian’s building projects in Yazd; however their narrative—though actually more robust and systematic than Ja‘farī’s—presents the Sasanian projects in Yazd’s history as merely a continuation of the work Iskandar had begun. Ja‘farī’s presentation of Iskandar’s deeds in Yazd is fragmented and underdeveloped, as though he was reporting bits of lore that were circulating orally; we cannot yet observe an attempt to systematically integrate the Iskandar narrative into contemporary politics as we will find in the later works. For Ja‘farī, Yazd owed her real parentage to Yazdigard.

While Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd also give Yazdigard an instrumental role in the expansion of Yazd into a real city, both give much more acclaim to Iskandar and much more attention to his accomplishments than does Ja‘farī.³⁴⁹ In both authors’ works, the

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

³⁴⁹ To review the story discussed in chapter 1 of this dissertation: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn and Mufīd relate that Shāpūr [actually Yazdigard I, father of Bahrām Gūr] had become a wicked king, until astrologers (*sitārah-shināsān*) predicted that his death would come within a year in Khurāsān [*TJY* says Ṭabas, *JM* says Ṭūs] beside a green spring. After six months the king came to suffer an incurable nosebleed. His physicians advised that he would only be cured if he turned to god and poured the water from a spring in Khurāsān on his head. On his way to Khurāsān, he arrived at Kaṣah. The air had an effect on him and the flow of blood was significantly staunched. Having witnessed this, Shāpūr declared, “This soil is blessed! I shall build a city here.” He makes his *tawbah* to God and orders the building of the city in the vicinity of Iskandar’s Kaṣah and names the place Yazdān-gard, meaning “Turned toward God” in honor of his cure and repentance. Moreover, he himself changes his name to Yazdigard. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 29-30. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 13-14.

story of Yazd’s founding by Iskandar is much more involved. After Iskandar buries Dārā, both authors explain that after his conquest of the empire, his fulfillment of Dārā’s will, his establishment of order, and his righting of injustices, he was determined to return home to Greece.³⁵⁰ However, he is prevented from doing so by the outbreak of rebellion, an event that, by a twist of fate, preludes his founding Yazd (quoting from Mufīd’s version):

He was on the verge of setting out for Yūnān, when a man from among the descendents of Kāvus in Ray marched out in revolt (*khurūj kardah*). The nobles of Iran, having turned away from their obedience to Iskandar (*sar az iṭā’at-i sikandar tāftah*) directed their faces toward the palace of the prince of Kayānī-blood (*malik-zādah-i kayānī-nijhād*). When Iskandar learned of these events, he turned toward Ray. But since the Kayānī prince did not have Iskandar’s aptitude for war, he was routed with his army and he hastened to Khurāsān. Iskandar, came to Ray, put into chains every one of the nobles of ‘Ajām that he found, and wanted to put them to death. Aristotle prevented him and it didn’t come to pass; he said that spilling the blood of noblemen was inauspicious (*khūn-i buzurgān-rikhtan mubārah nabāshad*).³⁵¹ So, Iskandar, having put them in chains, carried them off to Iṣṭakhar (Persepolis) with him.³⁵²

Here, even in Mufīd’s account, in the midst of Iskandar’s heroism, we can detect shards of the earlier attitude of the local historians toward the conqueror. We had witnessed a

³⁵⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 23. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 10.

³⁵¹ This intriguing utterance, which appears in both Mufīd and Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn’s texts, has a kind of proverbial air about it and may have been a well-known saying; nevertheless, it appears in at least one other earlier work dealing with Iskandar, the anonymous Persian *Iskandar-Nāmāh*. At one point in that work, Iskandar appears in the guise of a messenger (*rusūl*) before the emperor of China (*khāqān-i chīn*)—a common stratagem in this work—but is discovered; the emperor plots to kill him and has him surrounded. Iskandar tricks the emperor into sparing his life by claiming he has no designs upon the emperor’s kingdom and then states that “malicious treatment and the spilling of king’s blood is inauspicious (*bad-fa’lī va khūn-i Pādishāh-rikhtan mubārah nabāshad*)”—almost the exact phrase that appears in the Yazd histories. He then succeeds in convincing the king to accompany him out of the pavilion, where, in accordance with Aristotle’s clever plotting, he is ambushed; the troops capture the emperor along with his sons, kill all his attendants, and plunder the city. However, Iskandar commands his men to plunder the city for only a single day and forbids the shedding of any blood in the process: “*yak imrūz ghārat ast amma khūn marīzīd va ghārat-i shahr shamā rā ast.*” *IN*, 267-8. Iskandar is wily here and only just wriggles out of execution by means of a ruse. But he is no hypocrite and no fiend, for he spares the emperor’s blood and forbids the slaughter of the city dwellers. This is in contrast to the Yazd histories where, following the local history tradition, Iskandar intends a wholesale massacre. It is Aristotle who brings up the proverb to stop him.

³⁵² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 10.

nearly identical schema in Ibn al-Balkhī's twelfth-century work. Iskandar, when faced with a rebellion, is moved to indiscriminant violence in vengeance, which only Aristotle (who appears to be the real brains behind the operation) wisely prevents. To be sure, this relapse in Iskandar's portrayal proves only momentary, for the overall effects of his innate sense of justice overpower this moment of indiscretion. Let us continue with Mufid's account:

And after the seizure and putting in order (*zabt va nasaq*) of Fārs, he turned his attention from the road of Abarqū to the desert of Ṭabas. When he reached this place, which is now the territory of Yazd, he stopped until he found some air that was extremely moderate. He inquired (*taḥqīq nimūd*), "In this area is there a single habitation or settlement?" They answered, "An area extending thirty leagues by thirty leagues had not a single habitation." He said to Aristotle, "The air of this place (*sar zamīn*) is extremely moderate. If it were near a habitation, I would have built for this territory habitations and settlements (*agar bi-ma'mūrī nazdīk mī'būd, īn sar-zamīn rā ma'mūr va ābādān mī'sakhtam*)." Aristotle replied, "This is a sandy land; its air is dry. There is no friendliness or agreeability in this land. The prudent course of action (*maṣlaḥat*) is this: Let them build a walled-fortress (*hisārī*) and prison for the captives (*band-khānah-i asīrān kardand*); because there is no reason for disagreement on this soil, strife will not come about." In accordance with the counsel (*ṣavābdād*) of the peerless vizier, Iskandar planned a building in that place, charged a Greek *ḥakīm* with the architectural design of that structure, and commanded them to sink a pit (*chāh*) in the ground for the purpose of imprisoning those nobles of 'Ajam, whom he had bound in chains. And at the bottom (*tah*) of the pit they built a high dome, and imprisoned them in it. The vestige of that pit is still remaining. And they say that pit is located (*vāqī'*) inside the city, in the Maḥallah-i Shahrīstān, near the Madrasah-i Dū Manār...

Now, this pit is [still] in this location and this building came to be named Kaṣah. And by the Greek word (*bi-'ibārat-i yūnān*) "kaṣah," they have meant prison (*zindān*). And they call this kaṣah, Zindān-i Sikandar. Thus, Khvājah Ḥāfīz, may God have mercy on him, made an allusion (*īmā'i*) to that [prison] in this verse. Bayt:

my heart has been seized by the terror of *Zindān-i Sikandar*;
let me pack up and go to the kingdom of Solomon.

dilam az vaḥshat-i zindān-i Sikandar bi-girift
*rakht bar bandam u tā mulk-i Sulaymān bi-ravam.*³⁵³

³⁵³ Ibid., 1: 10-11.

This verse from Ḥāfiẓ also appears in Aḥmad Kātib’s account, but Mufīd adds the following clarification:

And by “*zindān*,” the Khvājah means the city of Yazd, and by “*mulk-i Sulaymān*,” he means Fārs. The significance of these words is that Iskandar was the first to have built a building in Yazd, and he built a prison.³⁵⁴

To recapitulate: arriving upon the site of the future city, Iskandar seems to intuitively recognize the potential of the place in spite of its apparently barren soil and scorching climate and is inclined to found a city there. Aristotle, though certainly a sage, does not have Iskandar’s instincts (the instincts of a saintly king, a Ṣāhib-Qirān) and thus contradicts the king forcefully, noting that the place is a wasteland with barren soil and scorching climate. In place of Iskandar’s plans for a city on that site, the vizier proposes a prison for the disposal of the rebellious members of Dārā’s family, whom he had prevented Iskandar from slaughtering and who had been tagging along with the army ever since. Iskandar follows this advice and constructs the Kaṣah, a building which both Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib explain is none other than the still extant site known to contemporary Yazdīs as Zindān-i Sikandar, just as Ja‘farī had explained earlier. This is the climax of the whole chapter, for this pit (*chāh*), into which the nobles were cast, turned out to be the wellhead from which the entire city’s history emerged (playing on the word *chāh*, which means both dungeon-pit and well). In this well, Iskandar unwittingly founds the habitation he had desired to build from the start,

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 1: 11. Neither Mufīd nor Aḥmad Kātib quotes the first verse of this *ghazal* of Ḥāfiẓ (*ghazal* no. 359), which refers to Yazd as “*manzil-i vīrān*,” which means “the ruined house” or “ghost-town.” Mufīd is being a bit sneaky here when he explains that “*Mulk-i Sulaymān*” means Fārs; Ḥāfiẓ probably meant his hometown of Shīrāz, the most important and most cultured city of Fārs. Mufīd also counts on the fact that his audience would take the phrase “*Mulk-i Sulaymān*” as a punning reference to the kingdom of the contemporary Ṣafavid ruler, Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī, to whom Mufīd dedicates his entire work. The Ṣafavid shāh should, of course, protect his subjects from the horrors of such a prison. Whether Shāh Sulaymān actually fulfilled that duty is actually the question Mufīd raises in his work.

tapping the potential of the place, which he had detected intuitively upon his first arrival. Staring into this well, thousands of years later, visitors to Yazd as well as readers of these works see the very reflection of the city's first moments. The story gives meaning to the site and the site gives meaning to the story. It is a perfect chronotope.³⁵⁵

Nonetheless, for both authors the import of the Kaṣah for Yazd's history depends on the story being true; they offer two proofs to validate the claim. One is this verse from Ḥāfiẓ of Shīrāz, Fārs's cultural capital, a poet whose works many considered to carry the authority of scripture and consequently used them for divination. Ḥāfiẓ's verses were (and still are) thought to point to hidden truths; Aḥmad Kātīb and Muḥīd employed this one, which mentions zindān-i Sikandar, to seal indubitably the link between Iskandar and this supposedly original site of the city. Muḥīd was apparently anxious that the reader might not make the connection and added his rather overplayed interpretation to clarify.

³⁵⁵ The pit or cave is an extremely potent topos in mythology of origins and related ritualized activity. Perhaps most notably, Mircea Eliade wrote extensively on the concept of womb-tomb in initiation rites in Mircea Eliade, *Rites and symbols of initiation : the mysteries of birth and rebirth*, 1st Harper Colophon ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), esp. 57-60. The pit-cave/womb-tomb motif features prevalently in Islamicate hagiography and sacred geography as well. For an excellent example, see Devin DeWeese's study on the mythology surrounding the founder of the Yasavī Sufi order, Aḥmad Yasavī. The stories of Yasavī's life and of the rise of the Yasavī community are entangled with legends about the origins of the shaykh's shrine, where, in fulfillment of the Prophetic injunction favored by Sufis, "die before you die," the shaykh had himself entombed in a pit (chāh) in which he lived out the remainder of his long life in the fetal position, practicing intense spiritual exercises and performing miracles. That pit still remains the focal point of the shrine architecture. Another branch of the narrative cycle concerns a cave rather than a pit. This one explains the origins of one of the shrine's important ritual objects in the Yasavī tradition, the *khum-i 'ishq* (the vat of love), a kind of wine-cask or cup used for divination. The *khum* originally collected the sweat (or saliva) of the first Yasavī community-members' during ardent spiritual devotion in a narrow cave, which Shaykh Aḥmad Yasavī miraculously expanded into a vast space. These were stories that were committed to writing starting in the late sixteenth century. Devin DeWeese, "Sacred Places and 'Public' Narratives: The Shrine of Ahmad Yasavī in Hagiographical Traditions of the Yasavī Sufi Order, 16th to 17th Centuries," *Muslim World* 90, no. 3-4 (2000): esp. 359-66. In this article, DeWeese also references the famous death/rebirth story of Bābā Tükles in the fiery oven, which he deals with in full in Devin DeWeese, *Islamization and Native Religion in the Golden Horde: Baba Tukles and Conversion to Islam in Historical and Epic Tradition* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 243, ff.

At the same time, the two authors provide a more subtle proof, giving an etymological explanation of the building's name. This kind of explanation is familiar from the case of the "Arak" in Sīstān's local histories, discussed above. In both the Sīstānī and Yazdī historiographic traditions, the authors claim that buildings still standing were traces of Iskandar's benefit; the implication is that their names—both survivals from Greek—attest to the veracity of these claims. In the case of *Kaṣah*, while there are some Greek words for prison that seem promising candidates for the origins of these words—*katheirgnumi*, to imprison, to confine or *kathexis*, holding, retention—in the end it appears that such a connection is spurious. Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīm Pūyā, one of Yazd's twentieth-century historians, suggests that *kaṣah* derives from the Greek word, *katoikya*, a technical term for the lands administered from a military garrison town, allotted to one of Iskandar's lieutenants.³⁵⁶ Though Pūyā's explanation is plausible, the word is most likely of Eastern Middle Iranian origin, meaning city or fortress, derived from the verb to dig. In Sogdian, for example there are various derivations of *knθ* or *knθ/d*, *kθ*, or *knδ*, all meaning "city" in the sense of "place where fortifications have been dug."³⁵⁷ In fact many city names in Central Asia retain some derivative of this word in their names (Samarqand, Tashkent, Qandahar); the word, loaned into Turkic languages, has also survived in modern Turkish as a common word for city "*kent*." Along these lines, early Arabic geographies actually mention Kathah as the city's name in place of (or in addition to) Yazd, saying nothing about this particular

³⁵⁶ Pūyā argues that this *Kaṣah*, on the outskirts of Yazd, was set up as a garrison town by Iskandar's underlings or followers (not by Iskandar himself). He names analogous terms and toponyms for such settlements in Persian: *kaṣnavā*, *kaṣnavīyah*, *kata*, etc. Sayyid 'Abd al-'Azīm Pūyā, *Zindān-i Sikandar az Niḡāhī-i Dīḡar* (Yazd: idārah-i kull-i farhang va irshād-i islāmī-i ustān-i Yazd, 1368/1990), 67-1.

³⁵⁷ B. Gharib, *Farhang-i Sughdī (Sogdian Dictionary)*, ed. S. Fotouhi (Tehran: Farhangan Publications, 2004). These words all share a cognate in the New Persian, *kandan*, which simply means, to dig. See entry for "kanH¹" in: Johnny Cheung, *Etymological Dictionary of the Iranian Verb*, ed. Alexander Lubotsky, Leiden Indo-European Etymological Dictionary Series (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 232-3.

building, a point that Jaʿfarī himself notes, as we mentioned above.³⁵⁸ In fact, Kaṣah may likely not have been the place’s proper name, but rather a technical term designating a particular kind of settlement or fortification, whose specific meaning is now lost. In any case, lingering until the seventeenth century, this older designation for the place, Kaṣah as a proper name (or *kaṣah* as a technical term) must have caused quite a bit of confusion and speculation among Yazdīs, and its association with the Zindān-i Sikandar and the Greek legacy may have been just such an attempt to resolve the mystery, i.e., an attempt to organize these various, disparate fragments of the past—peculiar spaces, objects, stories, place names—into a coherent narrative.³⁵⁹ In any case, whether or not these authors actually believed these etymologies to be accurate is unknowable and is ultimately unimportant for our purposes. What is significant, however, is that both Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd went to lengths to ensure that the site’s connection with

³⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥawqal’s passage on Yazd/Kathah is cited in: Renata Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting" (Harvard University, 1972), 8-9. In his notice on "Kathah" in the *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, Yaqūt writes, "A place in Fars. It is a city in the district (*kūrah*) of Yazd, in the province (*kūrah*) of Persepolis (Iṣṭakhar). Iṣṭakharī says: Among the greatest cities in the province of Iṣṭakhar, from which Khurāsān begins is Kathah. It is a quarter (*ḥawmah*) of Yazd and Abarqūh. It is a city on the side of the open country (*barrīyah*) and has a good climate, and both a healthy and fertile soil. And it has farming villages (*rasātīq*) that contain healthy and inexpensive vegetation, and the predominant part of its buildings are of clay (*āzāj al-ṭīn*). And it has a city center protected by a wall and through the wall are two iron gates; the first of the two is named "Bāb al-Īzād" and the other, "Bāb al-Masjid," on account of its proximity to the al-Masjid al-Jāmiʿ. The entirety of it is within the walls (*raḥāq*)... And it is a very picturesque (*nuḥah*) city. And it has handsome, wide, fields. And it, and its fields are abundant with fruits, the surplus of which they carry to Iṣfahān and other places. Its mountains are abundant with trees and vegetation, which they carry to distant countries, Outside of the city center the territory consists of buildings and markets, all in permanent structures. And most of its people are men of letters and scribes." Shihāb al-Dīn Abī ʿAbd Allāh Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Murʿashlī, 8 books., printed in 4 vols. (Beirut: Dār iḥyāʾ al-turāth al-ʿarabīyah, 1996), 4: 120.

³⁵⁹ DeWeese makes the case that storytelling is often a way of piecing together incoherent fragments of from the past, whose meaning is obscure. In his attempt to understand the evolution of Yasavī narratives of origin, DeWeese explains that the pit and other ritual objects at the Yasavī shrine (discussed in footnote 355) were not devised in order to create evidence that well known stories about the Shaykh had occurred on that site. DeWeese argues that the opposite is true: Visitors to the shrine formulated systematic narratives that resonated with common elements of Sufi storytelling about unique features of the shrine (such as the pit) that they had found in the course of the experiences at the shrine in a ritual context. They did so specifically because these physical features had no (or had only fragmentary) stories attached to them. The storytelling explained accidental or unexplained features of the shrine. DeWeese, "Sacred Places and Public Narratives," 366-8.

Iskandar was soundly demonstrated. Moreover, just as in the case of Sīstān, the authors resolutely emphasize the foreign origins of the city's founder and celebrate the traces of that foreignness upon both language and landscape.

But this discourse on foreignness and the effects that foreign conquerors have upon the land becomes further complicated in the last section of the two authors' chapters. And here we can begin to discern the ways in which our authors are marking out, or more accurately, *working out* the boundaries between lands. Both authors introduce this concluding section with the word “*nuktah*,” which in this context means something like “point of contention”:

Know that according to the speech of Aristotle on this subject, the soil has no potential for agreeability (*dar īn khāk muvāfaqat imkān nadārad*); on the contrary, strife is prevalent (*nifāq ghālib-ast*).³⁶⁰ Since they built the first building for that group, who were the ringleaders of the mutiny of their time (*kih īshān sar-fitnah-i zamān-i khūd būdand*) and who were the most noble of their era, the inhabitants and notables of this realm turned out to be a most noble people (*ahālī va akābir-i īn vilāyat sharīftarīn khalā'iq bāsh-and*), though some are of common class and crude. Because the building in this land had been for the detention of the noblemen, for foreigners and natives alike, this soil seemed captivating (*gharīb va būmī rā īn khāk dāman-gīr āmad*), such that anyone who wants to stay for a week, finds himself staying in place for a month, and if for a month, a year. If a sick person comes to this land (*khāk*), he soon finds health. The intention of Iskandar, who was the founder, was to make the building as a prison, so that the rest of the settlers (*mutawaṭṭīnīn*), both ignoble and noble, would be sorrowful (*ghamm*), but would nonetheless live in good health and safety. When this building was completed, he appointed a group of guards over the prisoners, and he charged a group with farming and building. And he established a *qanāt* for the sake of the inhabitants and settlers' agriculture there. And he made determinations for their land allotments (*iqṭā*). That *qanāt* is named Qanāt-i Dihābād and it is still flowing today. . . [after conquering more countries and building more cities, Iskandar] intended to make for the realm of Rūm, but he

³⁶⁰ The word “*nifāq*,” discord or strife, has interesting resonances here, for the word seems to have been chosen to pun on the word “*nafāq*,” meaning “flourishing trade.” Earlier, Aristotle had insisted that there would be no reason for discord since the land was disagreeable and worthless; however, as the entirety of Yazd's history demonstrates, the town was often the site of violent confrontation in part because of its flourishing economy, which resulted from its ingenious and sustaining system of *qanāts*. So despite its disagreeability, discord becomes a sign of a place's agreeability and value; paradoxically *nifāq* implies *nafāq*.

fell ill on the way and hastened to the other world and, in disappointment, he bid farewell to both kingdom and possessions (*va bi-nākām vadā‘-i mulk va māl nimūd*). Thus Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sa‘dī Shīrāzī [i.e., the famous poet, Sa‘dī, another native of Fārs] alludes to this. *Bayt*:

Iskandar held dominion over a world; In that moment when he was leaving, passing from the world,	<i>Sikandar kih bar ‘ālamī ḥukm dāsht dar ān dam kih mīraft ‘ālam guzāsht</i>
he couldn’t make it that they take from him a world and yet give him a moment’s respite.	<i>muyassar nabūdash kiz-ū ‘ālamī sitānand u mahlat dahandash damī</i>
They left; everyone reaped what he sowed. Nothing remains save name, fair or foul.	<i>biraftand u har kas durūd ānchah kasht namānad ba-juz-i nām-i nikū u zasht.³⁶¹</i>

Thus Mufīd concludes the chapter on Iskandar with Sa‘dī’s verses on the transience of worldly power. Although these moralizing verses on Iskandar’s demise bring his opening chapter to a nice cadence, the passage leading up to them is more significant for our purposes. For in those lines we discover that, like a prophet, Iskandar had known intuitively the virtues of the place where Yazd would eventually grow; he sensed water there somewhere! If it hadn’t been for his inexplicable attraction to that site, Yazd would have never come to be. Aristotle, for all his wisdom, could see only the facts before him—sandy soil and arid climate; nonetheless, without knowing the consequences of his advice, he too made space for the city to rise up from the sand, even if he had intended the opposite: by advising Iskandar to dispose of the rebellious nobles, whom he had so wisely caused Iskandar to spare earlier, the city would have never come into being. For these authors, Aristotle, inherently knows the value of noble blood, and in particular, Kayānī blood: though he intends simply to have Iskandar hurl the mutineers into a prison to be rid of them, he has in fact unintentionally caused

³⁶¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 11-12. Mufīd is quoting Sa‘dī’s *Būstān*, the ninth chapter “On Repentance and the Path of Rectitude (*Dar Tawbah va Rāh-i Ṣavāb*),” from the verse that begins: “*khābr dārī ay ustukhvānī-qafas kih jān-i tū murghī-st nāmash nafs* (O bone-cage! Haven’t you heard that your soul is a bird? Its name is carnal-self/breath.)” See Muṣliḥ al-Dīn Sa‘dī, “*Būstān*,” in *Kullīyāt-i Sa‘dī*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Alī Farūghī (Tehran: Sharikat-i nasbī-i iqbāl va shurakā’, 1961), 231.

his king to plant noble blood in the ground. Leaching its benefit into the soil, Kayānī blood converts barren earth into fertile soil. The seeds take hold, and a prosperous city rises out of the pit and spreads outward, like vines in a melon patch. The presence of ‘Ajāmī nobles in the land had the benefit of bringing out the region’s natural, pleasant *āb va havā*, which had been hidden beneath the harsh landscape of an apparent wasteland. As we discussed in Chapter I, according to the Yazdī historians, God’s initial blessings of water remains dormant until humans bring it out of the ground. Just by being there, the nobles enriched the soil and gave the place a magical charm: Having imprisoned those rebels, the place later imprisoned the hearts of any passerby, so much so that kings couldn’t help but fight for possession of it.

However, all praise does not go to the Persian noble prisoners alone. Those figures merely contributed to Yazd’s growth accidentally. Iskandar, not ready to give up on his city idea entirely, settles other folk there too beside these noble prisoners, some of these were builders and some were guards. Of these, he instructs some to farm the land. For this purpose, Iskandar orders the city’s first *qanāt* dug, *Qanāt-i Dihābād*, which both authors stress is still flowing at the time of their writing. This is very significant. As we have already discussed in the previous chapter, as the only means of watering the otherwise arid city, *qanāts* are the conduits not only of water, but also of life itself into the city. Canal-digging is thus marked as the most fundamental and powerful act of benevolence in Yazd and epitomizes all acts of benevolence that depend upon the presence of water. By giving Iskandar the distinction of digging the first *qanāt*, they make him the ancestor of all benefactors in the city’s long history. And, like

his Kaṣah, his Qanāt-i Dihābād still carries the benefit of life-giving water to Yazdī's, its burbling still telling tale of how Iskandar had made it.

The prosperous city of Yazd, then was a joint effort according to Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd. The alchemy that brought her into being required both native and foreign ingredients. On the one hand, the city sprouted from Iskandar's *kaṣah* because the Persian nobles had been planted there; however, it was Iskandar and Aristotle, both outsiders, who had planted them there in the first place; it was they who initiated a chain of activities that allowed the city to come into being in earnest. The implications of this are enticing: by presenting such a division of labor between Iskandar, the foreign conqueror who initiates building projects and provides patronage, and his noble, native subjects, who accomplish the real work on the ground, the authors are tacitly invoking a parallel relationship in their own era between the conquering, only partially settled, Turko-Mongol men of the sword and the urban-centered Persian noble families, who, as men of the pen, administered the realm for their military overlords.³⁶² By making the story of Yazd's origins comprehensible in terms of these analogous pairs of oppositions (foreigner/conqueror/man of sword/uncouth/global rule/Turk-Mongol versus native/conquered/man of pen/refined/local administration/Persian), Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd may have been commenting upon the different ways in which outside rulers and local notables provided different kinds of benefits for their city. While the great conquerors and their families may have founded cities, they come and go; the local notables were bound to their inherited, local lands,

³⁶² These are ideal types; in reality, there was much overlap between these two groups. Nonetheless, there is an emic notion of exactly such an opposition (in which the concepts of Turk/ military activity/itinerancy were homologized and opposed to the similarly homologized concepts of 'Ajāmī/bureaucratic posts/urban life), which did exist in public discourse.

the fruits of which funded local institutions, where those notables were so often buried. In contradistinction from the conquerors, these figures of old from local families remain ever present and, over the course of generations, bring the outside conquerors' initial benefits to fruition. In any case, this presentation of Iskandar's foreignness is a long way from the presentations in the early local histories we examined, where his foreignness came out of the fragments of a local attitudes of memorializing that tended to present Iskandar and his conquests as anathema and were meant to conjure images of simple barbarity.

5. Localizing the World Conqueror

Alterity and Autochthony: Playing with Stranger-Kings

At this point we must ask why Iskandar was such a powerful figure for these three historians that they would open their works with his story and place him at the very dawn of their city's history.³⁶³ The answer is complex and lies buried in this controversy about Iskandar's origins. To uncover it we will have to digress further and briefly consider the history of thought on foreignness in Islamic kingship in the post Mongol period, an avenue of inquiry that will lead us back to the initial and paramount question of the chapter, which asked why Mufīd should have likened the Ṣafavid shāh to Iskandar and the Ṣāhib-Qirān, despite that monarch's patent shortcomings.

³⁶³ A helpful comparison can be found in Stephane Yerasimos's work, which studies Turkic legends concerning the founding of Constantinople. Those legends associate the origins of that city with King Solomon, another Prophet-Emperor. Yerasimos focuses on the foundation legends concerning the fictional figure of Yanko bin Madyan (a name that actually reflects an early misreading of Nykomadya [Nicomedia] as Yankomadya) and finds all manner of eschatological themes linking Solomon's story with Mehmet II's conquest of Constantinople in 857/1453 and tying the fate of Constantinople to that of Alexandria. Stephane Yerasimos, *Légendes d'Empire: La Fondation de Constantinople dans les Traditions Turques* (Paris: Institut Français d'Études Anatoliennes d'Istanbul et Jean Maisonneuve Successeur Librairie d'Amérique et d'Orient, 1990), 49-96.

It may be helpful to frame this issue of foreignness by mentioning one of the most renowned episodes of the Iskandar cycle of stories, which appears in the epic literature, the world histories, and the Qur'ān and tafsīr works, (not too mention Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic literature.) This is the story about Iskandar's or Zū al-Qarnayn's construction of a gargantuan metal wall to keep the monstrous or demonic peoples of Gog and Magog outside the civilized or godly world. This story does not appear in the earlier Persian local histories we have examined above for obvious reasons: Iskandar himself was a world conquering barbarian whose devastation such a wall was meant to kept at bay. But the story remains conspicuously absent from the Yazdī local histories too, which all cast Iskandar in a far more positive light than the older local works of history. Why? In each of the Yazdī works, the question remains unvoiced in the text; yet the attentive reader catches whispers of it throughout the whole narrative: From which side of the wall do world conquerers come?

Aḥmad Kātib had portrayed Iskandar as a benevolent foreign conqueror, who, having made the entire world his kingdom, held the status of a foreigner by birth and a native by disposition and who restored the justice of the kingdom when native or local kings had fallen into corruption and tyranny. Such a portrayal of Iskandar was a new development in Yazd's local historiography and in Persianate local histories in general. Earlier, I made the argument that local histories' portrayal of Iskandar as a villainous barbarian had less to do with residual hatred than with the desiderata of genre. However, as I will demonstrate, by the mid-fifteenth century, in accordance with new developments in thought about kingship, which were unfolding in response to changes that came about during the Tīmūrid dispensation and which were largely articulated

through the increasingly popular and compelling idioms of messianism and millennialism, Iskandar's heroic and near-saintly image in Yazd's historiography was fashioned in a very self-conscious way as a cipher for Tīmūr, whose very proximate and awesome havoc made him the model world conqueror of the day. Consequently, Yazd's historians exploited this kinship between the two conquerors as a way of entering polemical debates about succession to the Tīmūrid house at a safe distance, under the "cloak of metaphor and the clothes of figuration," to borrow Mufīd's own phrase. Aḥmad Kātib used the Iskandar narrative to refigure the genre of local history, not simply to speak about the world conqueror and his empire, but more importantly, to make the figure of Tīmūr (or more accurately, Tīmūr's descendents) significant for Yazd's history and simultaneously to make Yazd's history significant for the successors of Tīmūr's empire. Mufīd was continuing this project in the seventeenth century, imitating his predecessor's use of Iskandar to speak about Tīmūr, but in his case, extending the association to his own sovereign, Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī. Both Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd accomplished this centering of Yazd in the imperial realm by playing upon this image of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān, the Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction and world-conqueror par excellence, a charged concept that was very much in free play during Tīmūr's day, but also had deep roots much earlier, whenever conquerors came to rule over vast empires. In such situations, the ruler's foreignness came to be a key site of contention; at once, it was both the source of the ruler's power, authority and justice, and the root of his barbarity.

The question of who was foreign and who was not had been in play ever since the Arab conquests precipitated new encounters and new patterns of interaction

among the diverse communities (tribal, linguistic, confessional and otherwise) that had come to be assembled under the rather amorphous and unstable tent of the Islamic dispensation. It is precisely this discursive instability and social ambiguity surrounding foreignness that made it a key semiotic arena in which all facets of the hegemonic order could be contested: Clearly, wrangling over communal boundaries and simultaneously, competition for authority and power vis-à-vis an imperial hegemony continued, and in fact accelerated during the Mongol dispensation. Competitors from all levels of society (members of the ruling house, Turko-Mongol military elites, elites of the bureaucracy, and of the *'ulamā'*) negotiated their place in the social order by participating in polemical and confessional disputes and by marshalling and reconfiguring symbols with which to effectively articulate authority and power in the empire. Moreover, this wrangling over authority and boundaries often played out in historical writing, in the course of polemical disputations concerning the particularities of the king's ambiguous status between insider and outsider. For example, as Charles Melville demonstrates in his study of Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's thirteenth-century *Niẓām al-Tawārīkh*, even before Ghāzān Khān's conversion to Islam, historians in the employ of the Mongols were working to incorporate their royal patrons into the history of Iranian kings, even though the Mongols' non-Muslim status and (apparent) antipathy toward urban culture had often made them appear as outsiders and even barbarians, through and through.³⁶⁴ In part, Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's work promoted the Īlkhāns as champions of Fārs

³⁶⁴ See Charles Melville, "From Adam to Abaqa: Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's Rearrangement of History," *Studia Iranica* 30 (2001). Melville also compares the Mongol historian's project to that of the historians writing in the Samanid court, invoking Bal'amī's translation of al-Ṭabarī, and of course, Firdawsī's *Shāh-Nāmah*. Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's *Niẓām al-Tawārīkh* was composed in 674/1275.

through their continued trust in the local Atābayks of Fārs as vassals,³⁶⁵ and relatedly, their wise employment of local urban notables in high offices of the bureaucracy, a move which had shifted the center of imperial power and Muslim authority away from Baghdad, returning it to Western Iran, the former seat of Sasanian and Kayānī power.³⁶⁶ In presenting his Mongol overlords as paragons of the Fārsī tradition of virtuous kingship, the author was tacitly privileging his own local networks of affiliation, portraying notables of Fārs as key participants in the Mongol imperial dispensation.

Later, by the fifteenth century, after two centuries of Turko-Mongol domination, the concepts of foreignness and indigenusness clearly remained charged in the historiography of the Persianate world and played a key role in structuring the constellation of symbols that were mobilized in order to perform and effect power. The story of Iskandar, a world conqueror whose origins were contested and who stood both inside and outside the boundaries of the realm, was a key vehicle by which Mongol kings and their heirs among their successor dynasties could negotiate and articulate their own place in the history of Iranian kings.³⁶⁷ The meanings signified by the insider/outsider opposition were still in free-play at this time and remained a site

³⁶⁵ The Ilkhāns eventually turned against the Atābayks in the early fourteenth-century, an important narrative in the histories of Yazd, which we will examine in the next chapter.

³⁶⁶ Melville, "From Adam to Abaqa: Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's Rearrangement of History," 82-3. In the course of his argument, Melville alludes to Melikian-Chirvani's work, which demonstrates that the Salghurid Atābayks of Fārs themselves grounded their claims in Fārs by means of their role as "heir to the kingdom of Solomon," a title which gave them claims to both an Islamic prophetic affiliation and an Iranian legendary one, since Cyrus the Great's tomb at Pasargadae was associated with the Prophet Solomon. It was upon this site that the Atabayks constructed the Masjid of Solomon's Mother. See: A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "Le royaume de Salomon. Les inscriptions persanes de site Achéménides," *Le monde iranien et l'Islam* 1 (1971): 3-21. See also: A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, "The Light of Heaven and Earth: from the Chahār-tāq to the Miḥrāb," *Bulletin of the Asia Institute* 4 (1990): 119-20.

³⁶⁷ We shall discuss the ways in which Mongol kings used Iskandar's image and story below.

where relations of power could be affirmed, contested, reordered, and worked out heuristically.³⁶⁸

As Qāḍī Baiḍāwī's writing demonstrated above, a prime locus of this reordering was the sovereign, a key intermediary between worlds, whose function was especially semiotic,³⁶⁹ and whose quintessential characteristic was a perpetual vacillation between transcendence and immanence, remoteness and proximity, ubiquity and particularity. As a consequence, from the perspective of any of the king's subjects residing in any corner of the realm, the locus of the king's power was decidedly ambiguous. Since, for a king's subjects, an essential means of attaining power derived from proximity to the king's body or an extension of his person, this ambiguity was attended by all manner of attempts to make the king present in local spaces and local communities, and at the same time, by attempts to project and expand the local into imperial spaces. Power came by means of this twofold operation of simultaneously localizing the empire and rarefying the local. But more often than not, as I will suggest, locals often conjured the king into presence in order to tap his symbolic, universal power for use in local contestations rather than to make a play for universal, imperial power themselves. It was commonly through the discourse about the king's origins, his status as an insider or outsider, a foreigner or a local, that communities worked out the geographical and social boundaries in which their own communities lived and competed for power and authority. Since the sovereign's liminal status inherently rendered boundaries

³⁶⁸ In a later study, Melville also looks at the Persianization of Ghāzān Khān in *nāmah* literature and hagiography. Such literature seeks to place that conqueror in a much more universal tradition of Persian kingship, extending far beyond the region of Fārs. See: Charles Melville, "History and Myth: the Persianisation of Ghazan Khan," in *Irano-Turkic cultural contacts in the 11th-17th centuries*, ed. Éva M. Jeremiás, *Acta et Studia* (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003). This article will be discussed further below.

³⁶⁹ On the ways in which political actors, such as kings function in entirely symbolic domains of action, see: David Kertzer, *Ritual, politics, and power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988).

uncertain, calling attention to it had powerful ramifications for the ordering of spaces that these authors aimed to achieve through the composition their histories.

The archetype of the majestic stranger-king, who travels from afar—often from another world— to rule over indigenous peoples with justice and glory occupies an important place in the mythologies of peoples across the Eurasian world, a pattern Sir James Fraser noted in *The Golden Bough*.³⁷⁰ Many ethnographers and anthropologists identified this pattern in other places, most famously Raymond Firth, who wrote about the Pacific island of Tikopia, and later, Marshall Sahlins, who studied a variety of Pacific cultures.³⁷¹ Firth and Sahlins observe a tension in the narrative of authority that surrounds stranger kings, a tension rooted in claims grounded in simultaneous notions of autochthony and alterity (indigenesness and otherness). Where the figure of the stranger-king enters the discourse on political contention, notable families often base their claims of authority and power upon seemingly contradictory narratives of origin simultaneously: On one hand, there is an autochthonous claim, meticulously expressed through appeals to genealogy, which states that one's ancestors sprang from the local soil; the claimant, having been descended from the first inhabitants of the land, embodies local legitimacy in all manner of authority and power. At the same time, there is an invocation of allochthony, i.e., descent from foreign (or often non-ordinary) beings who had made the journey from across the sea, from beyond the desert, or down from the sky, bringing justice, otherworldly powers, esoteric knowledge, and teaching

³⁷⁰ Frazer, *Golden Bough*, 154-7. I mention Frazer here because his work occupies a prominent place, early in the lineage of thought on stranger-kings. By invoking his work, I am not arguing that there is a universal archetype of a stranger-king, observable in all cultures across the globe.

³⁷¹ For example, see Marshall Sahlins, "The Stranger-King; or Dumezil Among the Fijians," *Journal of Pacific History* 16 (1981). Also see Sahlins discussion in Marshall Sahlins, "Alterity and Autochthony: Austronesian Cosmographies of the Marvelous," in *Raymond Firth Lecture* (University of Michigan 2010). The same themes are central to his work Marshall Sahlins, *How Natives Think: About Captain Cook, For Example* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

new technical knowhow and skills. Claimants could invoke and awaken authority and power of the stranger-king through ritualized activities that implemented objects and signs of “otherness,” including, for example: the use of objects from abroad or from other worlds, or objects that were emblematic of travel itself, such as nautical equipment; the use of elements of foreign or otherworldly languages or foreign names; or even reenactments of journeys.³⁷²

Despite the fact that similar sets of tropes around stranger kings do turn up in cultures all over the world, these observations about Pacific cultures only have meaning in their local contexts. I invoke Sahlin’s work here not to posit a universal analytic for looking at stranger-kings, but rather to borrow some vocabulary and observations, which turn out to be helpful as a starting place for describing some patterns in the medieval, Islamo-Persianate representations of stranger-kings. The authors of post-Mongol Iran manipulate their stranger-kings in ways that are particular to their environments. In this context, claims to authority and power based upon the simultaneous embodiment of autochthony and alterity need not be limited to kings wishing to claim their rights over a particular place or people or even to local families claiming a share of a stranger-king’s charisma in the course of plays for local power. Local communities might appeal to the coupled autochthonous and alteritious attributes of a distant, high king or emperor in order to assert the authority of local notables vis-à-vis the king’s whole empire. As we will observe, with the recitation of Iskandar’s story, each of these three types of claims come into play in Yazd’s local historiography. It is by playing with the figure of the stranger-king and world

³⁷² Sahlin, "Alterity and Autochthony: Austronesian Cosmographies of the Marvelous," 3-10.

conquerer that authors struggled to work out the relationship between the city and the imperial realm.

As it turns out, the figure of Alexander the Great, a stranger-king par excellence turns up in places we might not expect to find him—in South-East Asian cultures, for example, among Malay Sultans and rulers in Sumatra and Borneo who sometimes claim descent from him.³⁷³ The appeal of Alexander's story comes not only from his prestige as a powerful conqueror from abroad, but also from his association with elevated beings, such as the Prophet Khizr, his entanglements with fairies, and his trips to the Realm of Darkness. Certainly, the example of Iskandar as a stranger-king is widespread largely because of the great breadth of his conquests in the real world, but in fact it is this breadth that sets him apart from other stranger-kings and makes the implementation of his stories exceedingly complex. As a world conqueror who spends his entire reign in conquest, essentially homeless, and perpetually on the move, in the literature, he is not just a ruler who comes from afar to rule over a local kingdom, but also a ruler who comes to rule over *all* local kingdoms, all over the world equally. In its universality, Iskandar's rule is diffused throughout the world; he is at once a foreigner to all places, and yet, where his subjects adopt him as a local hero, he becomes indigenous to those particular localities. The challenge of the universal ruler, in spite of, or perhaps, because of his alterity and universality— qualities which mark him with a transcendent tinge—is to become autochthonous everywhere, that is, to become universally local. At the same time, the challenge for every locality within the empire is to adopt the king as a local son and yet partake in his universality.

³⁷³ See the discussion in *Ibid.*, 40-7. Also see Giulio Soravia, "Alessandro Magno in Indonesia: una breve cronistoria," *Quaderni di Studi Indo-Mediterranei* 1 (2008).

Despite the pervasiveness of the Iskandar stories, our interest is neither in the extent of Iskandar's reach as a stranger-king in local kingdoms across the globe, nor in the operations by which a world conqueror such as he actually became a local hero. Rather, we are concerned with why and how writers from Yazd in the Tīmūrid period and afterwards, used the figure of Iskandar, who embodied these intersecting pairs of tensions—between autochthony and alterity on one hand and universality and locality on the other—to work out contemporary and local contestations over authority for Yazd vis-à-vis the empire as a whole. For, in their treatment of Iskandar's ambiguous or liminal origins—in fact, in their preoccupation with it—Tīmūrid writers, including those writing from Yazd, were exploiting exactly the same kind of tension between autochthony and alterity that anthropologists and ethnographers working on stranger-kingship in the Pacific world and elsewhere have spotlighted in their work. Moreover, there is no doubt that writers, such as our local historians of Yazd, who opened their works with the story of Iskandar, this quintessential universal king, were using that story to speak about their own contemporary rulers. In part, as Universal ruler, it was Iskandar's status betwixt and between foreign conqueror and locally born king (whether he was actually native or *nativized* by deeds that exemplified local ideals of kingship) that made him a key cipher and analog for contemporary kings, who wished to claim such universality (and therefore liminal sacrality) for themselves, and at the same time, wished to be “localizable” as well. Therefore, as we understand how those writers of the Tīmūrid period and afterward, who presented their own kings as Iskandar's successors and employed that legendary figure's story as a means of entry into contemporary contestations over local authority, I will establish that, in doing so,

these writers were working out heuristically the very meaning and scale of the local in the universal realm. At the same time, these historians were commenting upon and shaping the very mechanisms by which local leaders could contest and reestablish their power relationships with the emperor.

Yet, in order to understand the specific ways in which our three local historians were using Iskandar's story to engage in such political discourse, we must first look more generally at how the figure of Iskandar played into the refashioning of kingship that characterized the historiography of the post-Mongol world. When and in what ways did Iskandar become so appealing a figure in Persianate world during the Tīmūrid period and afterward? In what ways was his story useful, and to whom?

Iskandar-i Zamān and Šāhib-Qirān: structuring the emperor's universe in space and time

There is no doubt that Iskandar was a compelling model for earlier kings as well. This was true of the Mamlūks, the Delhi Sultans, the Īlkhāns, and many of their vassals too. On a number of occasions, the Mamlūk kings Baybars I (d. 1277), and later, Al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl (d. 1293) claimed to be Iskandar al-Zamān, the Iskandar of the Age.³⁷⁴ Among the Delhi Sultans, 'Ālā' al-Dīn Khaljī (r. 1296-1326) and later Fīrūz Shāh b.

³⁷⁴ For example, Baybars called himself Iskandar-i Zamān (the Iskandar of the Age) in various inscriptions in 1266. Al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl (689/1290-692/1294) had this title inscribed over the entrance to the fortress of Aleppo as part of his propaganda campaign against the Mongols, whom he wished to portray as barbarians: just as Iskandar, Dhū al-Qarnayn had built a wall to defend the civilized world against Gog and Magog, so too would the *ghāzī*, Mamlūk king defend his realm against the Īlkhāns. François de Polignac, "Un "nouvel Alexandre" mamelouk al-Malik al-Ashraf Khalīl et le regain eschatologique du XIII siècle," *Revue des Mondes Musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89-90 (2000): 70, 75-6. Much later, al-Ashraf Sayf al-Dīn Barsbay (r. 825/1422-841/1437) also used the title. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 223, note 52.

Muḥammad b. Tughluk (r. 1351-88) were likened to Iskandar.³⁷⁵ Similarly, the Īlkhānids, Öljāytü and Abū Saʿīd each called themselves the second Iskandar (Iskandar-i Ṣānī).³⁷⁶ Later, Yıldırım Khān (Bayezid I), the Ottoman pādishāh, whom Tīmūr captured, apparently claimed descent from Iskandar as well.³⁷⁷

Returning to the Īlkhāns for a moment, one of the most thoroughly elaborated associations between Iskandar and contemporary rulers came to be developed around the figure of Ghāzān Khān (r. 694/1295-703/1304). In his study of the Persian *nāmāh* tradition of the Ilkhanid court Melville delineates a compelling case for Iskandar's

³⁷⁵ 'Ālā' al-Dīn Khaljī was proclaimed the Second Iskandar and was also likened to Dārā and Solomon. Catherine B. and Talbor Asher, Cynthia, *India Before Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 37-8. Relatedly Amīr Khusraw dedicated his *Ā'īnāh-i Iskandarī* to this king. Interestingly, in certain Indian histories, written in Telegu and old Rajistani, 'Ālā' al-Dīn Khaljī was considered to have been an incarnation of a divinity. This was an explanation for his defeat of the Dekkanī king, Prataparudra. The goddess Padmakshi had promised Prataparudra's ancestor, Madhava Varma, that his descendants would reign for a thousand years. Prataparudra marked the end of that millennial era. See Cynthia Talbot, "The story of Prataparudra: Hindu historiography of Deccan Frontier," in *Beyond Turk and Hindu: rethinking religious identities in Islamicate South Asia*, ed. David Gilmartin and Bruce B. Lawrence (Tampa: University Press of Florida, 2000), 285, 92-3. Fīrūz Shāh was associated with the great Mauryan emperor, Ashoka, who was in turn likened to Iskandar. Asher, *India Before Europe*, 43-4. Earlier, a minor prince in Bengal, the Danishmenid Nuṣrat Shāh (1152-1161 C.E.) minted coins with Arabic and Greek writing, calling himself Dhū al-Qarnayn. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 224, note 53. Hillenbrand cites Speros Vryonis, Jr., *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Century* (Berkeley: XXX, 1971), 474.

³⁷⁶ Öljāytü called himself The Second Iskandar in an inscription at Baṣṭām in 1313. de Polignac, "Un "nouvel Alexandre" mamelouk al-Malk al-Ashraf Khalīl et le regain eschatologique du XIII siècle," 76. His successor, Abū Saʿīd commissioned the production of an illustrated *Shāh-Nāmāh* of Firdawsī, known as the Great Mongol *Shāh-Nāmāh*, in which at least twelve of the illustrations depicted scenes from the Iskandar story (a proportion not paralleled in any other codex before or after). See: Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 206-8. We should recall that Firdawsī's *Shāh-Nāmāh*, portrayed Iskandar as a descendant of the Kayānī kings, and not as a foreign conqueror. Clearly, of all the kings depicted in this great compendium, Iskandar (and specifically, an Iskandar who was decidedly *not* foreign), had come to take a special place in this rendering. That Abū Saʿīd saw himself as a second Iskandar *and* that his Iskandar had been a true descendant of Iranian kings, demonstrates in absolute terms that the ruler saw himself as inheritor of an Iranian legendary past in which Iskandar had played a key role. Hillenbrand pushes this argument further, noting that of all the paintings in the Great Mongol *Shāh-Nāmāh*, Iskandar is the only king depicted in the Sasanian style of portraiture, seated on a throne at the beginning of his rule and placed on a bier at the end of his reign. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 217. Further developing this strategy, the last Tīmūrid ruler of Hirāt, Ḥusayn Bayqara, had himself painted in the guise of Iskandar. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 223. We may add to the list of Second Iskandars, the Inju'id Sulṭān Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad Shāh of Fārs (1332-3 C.E.), who was also called the Second Iskandar. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 223, note 52. Hillenbrand references A.S. Melikian-Chirvani, *Islamic Metalwork from the Iranian World, 8-18th Centuries* (London 1982), 148.

³⁷⁷ Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol *Šāhnāma*," 222-3.

utility among writers struggling to negotiate the place of foreign conquerors in the Persianate heritage of kingship. Here writers deliberately insert Ghāzān Khān, who had famously converted to Islam in 694/1295, into the legacy of Persian kingship, a legacy that had long been exemplified by Firdawsī's prototypical *Shāh-Nāmāh*.³⁷⁸ Most significant for our purposes, Melville explains that as part of his mission to Persianize Ghāzān Khān in his mid-fourteenth century *Ghāzān-Nāmāh* (explicitly modeled on the *Shāh-Nāmāh*), the author, Khvājah Nūr al-Dīn al-Azhdarī, makes repeated reference to Iskandar throughout the work. For example, at one point, after hunting a magical ram in the mountains of Gīlān, Ghāzān Khān falls asleep in a meadow, awakens and then comes upon Shaykh Zāhid Gīlānī, an important Sufi who was the spiritual guide and father-in-law of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn, the founder of the Ṣafavī order.³⁷⁹ Ghāzān submits to the shaykh's spiritual authority and what follows is an exchange, presented in the classic *su'āl-javāb* (question and answer) style of Persianate wisdom literature and *Mirrors for Princes*, during which Shaykh Zāhid bestows his wisdom upon the conqueror. In the course of this dialogue, Shaykh Zāhid narrates a tale about Iskandar's

³⁷⁸ Melville centers his argument for the "Persianization" of Ghāzān around his characterization in the story of his meeting with Shaykh Zāhid Gīlānī in al-Azhdarī's *Ghāzān-Nāmāh* and Ibn Bazzaz's *Ṣafvat al-Ṣafā*. Shaykh Zāhid was the master of Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn, the founder of the Ṣafavī order. In many ways this article represents an extension of the author's earlier work on Ghāzān's conversion: Charles Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islām: the conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān," in *History and Literature in Iran: Persian and Islamic Studies in Honor of P.Q. Avery*, ed. Charles Melville (London: British Academic Press, in association with the Centre of Middle East Studies, University of Cambridge, 1998). Both articles should be read together. Melville states that *Ghāzān-Nāmāh* was explicitly conceived as a continuation of Firdawsī's *Shāh-Nāmāh*. (p. 142)

³⁷⁹ The author of the *Ṣafvat al-Ṣafā*, of course, uses this encounter between Shaykh Zāhid and Ghāzān Khan to bolster the later Ṣafavid shaykh's own claim to authority, a connection that was quite useful when the Ṣafavid shaykhs became conquering sovereigns themselves. Once the Ṣafavid family did become worldly kings, this episode in the *Ṣafvat al-Ṣafā* took on new significance and utility: the Ṣafavids were not only interested in inheriting their ancestor's saintly *barakah*, but also in inheriting the prestige their ancestors had acquired on account of their association with a great ruler such as Ghāzān. In other accounts, such as the Mamlūk writer, al-Jazarī's eighth-century *Jawāhir al-Sulūk*, Ghāzān also receives the *barakah* of the Kubravī Shaykh Sa'd al-Dīn, when, upon the Mongol king's conversion, that shaykh's son, Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm gives Ghāzān a *haykal* (talisman) from around his own neck, containing the prayers and sayings of his father, and instructs him in its proper use. See Melville's translation and discussion in: *Ibid.*, 163, 68.

just rule under Aristotle's guidance, exemplified by his judicious response to the emperor of China's bellicose provocation; the shaykh then secures Ghāzān's promise to rule according to what he has learned from him.³⁸⁰ Clearly, while the shaykh's tale of Iskandar's wisdom offers a model for Ghāzān's own rule, its presentation in the *Ghāzān-Nāmah*, which fashions a saintly and heroic image of Ghāzān over fifty years after his death, was intended to provide a model of his rule that could be used by his successors to claim his legacy.³⁸¹ Similarly, in another episode, after Ghāzān slays a dragon, an unnamed, wise, old sage leads him to Iskandar's fabled treasures. No doubt the narrative here was intended to effect the designation of Ghāzān as Iskandar's worthy inheritor and successor.³⁸²

Many Turko-Mongol kings who pursued connections with Iskandar also took steps to color that association with millennial and saintly overtones. Continuing with the example of Ghāzān Khān, the sources tell us that the young monarch was converted at the hands of the Kubravī Sufi, Ṣadr al-Dīn Ibrāhīm; the eighth-/fourteenth-century Mamlūk writer, al-Jazarī, transmitting Ṣadr al-Dīn's own eyewitness account, claims in his *Jawāhir al-Sulūk* that Ghāzān wore a woolen cloak (*ṣūf*) on the day of his conversion; the woolen garment is a classic signifier of one's adherence to the Sufi path and devotion to a Sufi master. The same source reports that after his conversion, Ghāzān ordered black banners made "like the banners of the ('Abbāsīd) caliphs, and demanded

³⁸⁰ Melville, "History and Myth: the Persianisation of Ghazan Khan," 138-9. Melville includes a transcription of the Persian for the episode of Ghāzān's encounter with Shaykh Zāhid as an appendix. The pages corresponding with the Iskandar passage are pp. 159-60 (fol. 133 A, B).

³⁸¹ The work was dedicated to the Jalayirid ruler, Sulṭān Shaykh Uvays (r. 757/1356-776/1374). Melville dates the work to between 758/1357 and 763/1362. *Ibid.*, 134. The only extant copy was done for the Aq Qoyunlu ruler, Uzun Ḥasan in 873/1469, a fact that demonstrates both the continuing appeal of Ghāzān as a model king and the continuing significance of his association with Iskandar in the fifteenth century.

³⁸² *Ibid.*, 135. Also see p. 143.

the *jizya* from the Jews and Christians,"³⁸³ a move designed to broadcast an image of the king as millenarian reviver of the revolution against the corrupt Umayyads who had brought the Abbasid caliphs to power in the eighth century C.E. The revolution was spearheaded by Abū Muslim, a heroic figure of legendary renown, whose tale came to stand at the center of various messianic *ghulāt* groups' ritual activities shortly after his martyrdom (755 C.E.) and then later in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as well.³⁸⁴ Such militant revivalism coupled with this rhetoric about collecting the poll tax on infidels served to portray Ghāzān as a *ghāzī*-king. Taken together, these nuanced portrayals fashion a double persona for Ghāzān Khān: he is both a Sufi disciple and millennial champion of Islam simultaneously. This is a characterization that looks very much like the Ṣāhib-Qirān of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and therefore dovetails nicely with Ghāzān's exemplary embodiment of the Persianate model of a wise emperor, which had been articulated by associating him with Iskandar, a figure who was sometimes associated with the Ṣāhib-Qirān.

The Mamlūk Sulṭān, Baybars I, explicitly added the title Ṣāhib-Qirān to Iskandar al-Zamān on at least three monuments after his victory against the Mongols at 'Ayn al-Jālūt in 658/1260,³⁸⁵ a pairing that we see mirrored in Mufīd's own dedicatory praise for Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī, which we introduced at the very beginning of this chapter. It is significant that among great kings and their eulogizers, an association with Iskandar often went hand in hand with claims of being the Ṣāhib-Qirān, a concept that, as we

³⁸³ This quotation comes from Melville's translation of al-Jazārī. Melville, "Pādshāh-i Islām: the conversion of Sultan Maḥmūd Ghāzān Khān," 164.

³⁸⁴ Melville provides this interpretation of the black banners theme in: Ibid., 270-1. On Abū Muslim in *ghulāt* movements in the wake of the Abbasid revolution see: Daniel, *The political and social history of Khurasan under Abbasid rule, 747-820*, 129-33. On later movements in the Ṣafavid period see: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 121-60.

³⁸⁵ Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāhib-Qirān," 95.

have mentioned, rang with magical resonances and could be charged with a millenarian valence.³⁸⁶ Nevertheless, before Tīmūr, the term Ṣāḥib-Qirān encompassed a spectrum of meanings and could be used in a variety of registers, and although the application of the title was common among the Īlkhāns,³⁸⁷ its use, even if not entirely figurative, was rarely if ever intended to index a vigorous or singular millenarian claim associated with a specific set of cosmic events; further, its employment seems rarely to have coincided with any systematic, messianic ideology of kingship.³⁸⁸ Early usage of the title was intended simply to recall or invoke the general characteristics of a great king or conqueror, whose rise would violently overturn the corrupted world order and whose *dawlah* had been divinely sanctioned and had been foretold by the stars in a general or unspecified way.³⁸⁹ In any case, the pairing of titles such as Iskandar al-

³⁸⁶ In Pahlavī Zoroastrian literature the rise of great kings who usher in new eons is signaled/caused by planetary conjunctions. For example, in the sixth century *Kārnāmak-i Araxsīr-i Pābākān*, Ardashīr's rise is foretold by the conjunctions of stars: "Under this conjunction, as the text reads, "a new lord (*xvatāy*) and ruler (*pātxāy*) will emerge (*o paytākīh āyet*), [who] will kill all small rulers and will bring again the world to the monarchical (*ēv-xvatāyīh*) rule." Ibid.: 94. Chann also cites *Zand ī Vohuman Yasn* which mentions the auspicious conjunction of planets with regard to the appearance of a savior-king: "That prince (the Savior) when he is thirty years old... When the star Jupiter comes up to its culminating points (*bālist*) and casts Venus down, the sovereignty comes to the prince." Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān," 94.

³⁸⁷ Chann, "Lord of the Auspicious Conjunction: Origins of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān," 95.

³⁸⁸ There are some exceptions. For example in his *Manāqib al-'Arifīn*, Aflākī quotes the Chūpānid Tīmūrtash (d. 1328), who ruled Anatolia under Abū Sa'īd, as saying, "I am the Ṣāḥib-Qirān, in fact, I am the Mahdī of Time (*Man ṣāḥib-qirānam balki mahdiyyi zamānam*)." Aflākī also claims that, "he was a second Anūshirvān." Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad Aflākī, *Manāqib al-'Arifīn* (Ankara 1961), 2: 977. But of course, this pairing could have added to the manuscript at a later time. I would like to express my thanks to Yoni Brack for calling my attention to this information. On Tīmūrtash, see also: Charles Melville, "Anatolia under the Mongols," in *The Cambridge History of Turkey: Byzantium to Turkey, 1071-1453*, ed. Kate Fleet (New York: 2008). Furthermore, Michal Biran demonstrates that some writers had attempted to portray Chingīz Khān as a *ḥanīf*, thus linking him with prophecy. Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī Qazvīnī, writing under the Īlkhāns, compares the coming of the Mongols to the *hijrah*. In so doing, such writers implied Chingīz was introducing a new Islamic Era, much like a ṣāḥib-qirān. See discussion in: Michal Biran, *Chinggis Khan, Makers of the Muslim world* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2007), 114-21. Biran shows that this portrayal is in contrast to others, such as Juzjani, writing under the Delhi Sultans, who depicted Chingīz as Iskandar's opposite: While Iskandar had built the iron wall to seal Gog and Magog out of civilized lands, Chingīz had melted this barrier and let the barbarians out. Biran, *Chinggis Khan*, 115-6.

³⁸⁹ In his description of Chingīz Khān's rise, Rashīd al-Dīn characterizes the Ṣāḥib-Qirān's appearance thusly: "When, by the gradual progression of the ages, the statutes of affairs come to languish and when, by the succession of days and nights, the state of the dawlah and the realm becomes disorderly and

Zamān or Iskandar-i S̄ānī with Ṣāhib-Qirān implies that kings so named were of the same ilk as Iskandar, an earlier (sometimes the first) Ṣāhib-Qirān, and were therefore inheritors of his glory.

While the earliest historians of the Tīmūrid age all refer to Tīmūr Khān in their works as the Ṣāhib-Qirān, they seem to have used the title in the rather generic way that their predecessors had most often employed it.³⁹⁰ However, with the works of the illustrious Yazdī historian and expert in esoteric sciences, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (d. 858/1453-4), who enjoyed the patronage of the Tīmūrid rulers of Fārs and other western territories, Iskandar bin ‘Umar-Shaykh, Sulṭān Ibrāhīm bin Shāh Rūkh, and Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Bāysunghur,³⁹¹ we begin to see a privileging of the title Ṣāhib-Qirān over others, and furthermore, a marked change in the characterization and usage of the figure of Tīmūr as the Ṣāhib-Qirān. It should be noted that Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī was a student of Ṣā’in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī, the great master of the occult sciences, in particular, *‘ilm al-ḥurūf*, the science of letters; Sharaf al-Dīn’s historical approach was profoundly shaped by the occult sciences that he learned from Turka.³⁹²

disturbed (*ikhtilāl va iẓtirāb*), in every age, a Ṣāhib-Qirān of great might and awesome violence, distinguished by heavenly and lofty endorsement (*bi-ta’āyīd-i āsmānī va mashrif*) and by the robe of penetrating command (*bi-khil’at-i nāfiẓ-farmānī*), in order to remove that disorder (*khalal*) and drive out that deficiency (*zalat*).” Faẓl Allāh Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Jāmi’ al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Bahman Karīmī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Iqbāl va Marvī, 1988), 1: 213. As Michal Biran explains, there is no question that from early on, Chingīz Khān was represented as being the universal ruler of the world, who had embodied the charisma of Tengri—the sky-god of Turko-Mongol steppe traditions—and the power to rule on his behalf. Biran, "The Mongol Transformation from the Steppe to Eurasian Empire," 340-41, 47. However, by the Īlkhānid era, this notion of universal rule had been hybridized with a Islamo-Persianate one.

³⁹⁰ See discussion in Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," 83-99.

³⁹¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn Kātib, a contemporary and compatriot of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, also enjoyed Sulṭān Muḥammad’s patronage, as did another historian from Yazd, Tāj al-Dīn Ḥasan Ibn Shihāb Yazdī, whose short history of Tīmūr’s successors contains two long *qaṣīdahs* to Sulṭān Muḥammad. That writer settled in Kirmān, however, and his history is somewhat oriented toward Kirmān. Yazdī, *Jāmi’ al-tavārīkh-i Ḥasanī*.

³⁹² See Matthew Melvin-Koushki’s excellent dissertation on Ṣā’in al-Dīn Turka: Matthew Melvin-Koushki, "The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Ṣā’in al-Dīn Turka Iṣfahānī (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 2012). Sharaf al-

After Yazdī's corpus of works, the pairing of Tīmūr with Iskandar came to be articulated in much more strongly messianic terms and implied that the current ṣāhib-qirān was Iskandar's awaited descendent.³⁹³ Although Yazdī was the first to work these messianic resonances into his presentation of the Ṣāhib-Qirān in historical writing of the Tīmūrid age, it is clear that such messianic characterizations of Tīmūr abounded in the years after his death and were coming to be articulated in other forms of literary expression.³⁹⁴ This having been said, Yazdī's work marks a turning point in dynastic

Dīn Yazdī's training under Turka forms an integral component of Binbaş's argument throughout his dissertation: Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī".

³⁹³ On Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's use of the title "Ṣāhib-Qirān" for Tīmūr in comparison with that of his predecessors, see Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," 102-5. The pairing of Tīmūr and Iskandar, presented as messianic prophet-kings was fully developed in the legendary lore about Tīmūr that circulated in Central Asia, and written down in the eighteenth century. Ron Sela's work on the *Tīmūr-Nāmahs* of that period reveals the following fascinating story: The Ottoman Sulṭān Yıldırım Khān (whom Tīmūr would later capture) sends Tīmūr the gift of a mysterious box that no one can open. Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (the author of the famous *Zafar-Nāmāh*—a history of Tīmūr) discovers how to open it and explains that it is the Ark of the Covenant (*tābūt-i sakīnah/ahd/shahādah*). The box is an ingenious contraption with many compartments, which contain portraits of all the past and future world conquerors (including Tīmūr) and the tokens of all the prophets. Most importantly, it also contains a letter written by Iskandar and addressed to Tīmūr, which says: "From me, Iskandar Dhū'l-Qarnayn, it reaches to you, Iskandar the Second. My wise men have informed me that after one thousand and six hundred years you, a man descended from Yāfith ibn Nūḥ (peace be upon him), will emerge. We placed in the coffer the cloak of His Holiness Ādam, the staff of His Holiness Mūsā, the goblet of His Holiness Yūsuf, the shirt of His Holiness Ibrāhīm, the sash of His Holiness Seth, the sandals of His Holiness Idrīs and the hatchet of His Holiness Nūḥ (blessings of Allāh upon them.) We have left a sign of each of the Prophets. Know that the Prophets also exercised sovereignty." Sela, *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, 98-100. Sela demonstrates this comes from a much older tradition in which Mulim emissaries to the court of Heraclius (Hirāql), who has in his possession a box with the portraits of all the prophets on silk inside, which Iskandar himself had handed over to the Prophet Daniel. Sela, *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, 101-2.

³⁹⁴ Around 1425, around the time when Yazdī was working on his *Zafar-Nāmāh*, Tīmūr's grandson, Ulugh Bayk, famous for his observatory in Samarqand, caused to be carved on Tīmūr's gravestone at the Gūr-i Amīr tomb complex an Arabic inscription, describing the miraculous birth of Tīmūr and Chingīz Khān's common ancestor, Buzanchār, the offspring of Alān-Go'a and the "Radiant Being" of Mongol mythology. The inscription brings into harmony Tīmūr's Chingīzid and Islamo-Persianate ancestry under one universal and sacred lineage, casting Tīmūr as an absolutely millennial figure and using the language of a distinctively 'Alid type of messianism. The inscription reads: "And no father was known to this glorious ancestor, but his mother [was] Alān-Go'a. It is said that her character was righteous and chaste, and that "she was not an adulteress" [Q 19:20]. She conceived her son through a light which came into her from the upper part of a door and "it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man" [Q 19:17]. And it was said that it was one of the sons of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib." My translation comes from Aigle's French translation, which is given in: Denise Aigle, "Les transformations d'un mythe d'origine: L'exemple de Gengis Khan et de Tamerlan," *Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée* 89-90, no. Juillet (2000): 153. See Moin's brilliant handling of this inscription, of which my treatment here is a summary: Moin, "Islam and the Millennium", 57-8. Moin's English translation from the French differs

historiography. In his *Ẓafar-Nāmah*, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī reworks the famous *khuṭbah* scene found in Shamī’s earlier work on Tīmūr, also titled *Ẓafar-Nāmah*; this is an important revision discussed in John Woods’ famous article on Tīmūrid Historiography. Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī changes Tīmūr’s title in the *khuṭbah* from “Amīr-i Buzurg”—which had indicated Tīmūr’s nominal subordination to the pādishāh of the Chingīzid line, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Khān—to “Ḥaẓrat-i Ṣāhib-Qirān,” without any mention of deprecation to the Chingīzid puppet.³⁹⁵ In this same work, Yazdī also provides Tīmūr’s horoscope in the introductory pages of the work, demonstrating the cosmos’s assent to

slightly from mine. The Qur’anic quotations, describing this miraculous birth of the Mongols’ ancestor come from the chapter on Maryam (Mary), mother of Īsā (Jesus), whom Islamic eschatology predicts will appear at the end of the world to help clear the earth of evil in preparation for the rise of the Maḥdī and the resurrection. The father of Alān-Go’a’s child, however, is a perfect, luminous being who is one of ‘Alī’s descendents, the last of which, in Alid eschatology, will return as the Maḥdī himself. Here, Tīmūr is thus the descendent, not only of the progenitor of the Mongols, but of ‘Alī, whose descendent, like Jesus, is a messianic figure. Thus, Tīmūr (and by extension his own descendents) are not only descended from these messianic figures, but are world conquerors charged with their charismatic power. Further, Tīmūr and his descendents are presented as the progenitors of the Maḥdī, and as world conquerors of elevated spiritual status, are positioned to usher in the new (perhaps apocalyptic) era. It is worth noting that much earlier, in his account of his famous audiences with Tīmūr in Syria, which supposedly took place in 1401, Ibn Khaldūn reports that he had flattered the great Amīr, telling him that in the western Islamic world, astrologers concerned with predicting the effects of the conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter of 784/1382, had pointed to the rise of a great world conqueror and messianic figure from in the east. He provides reports of several of his interactions with these astrologers from various groups, including ṣūfis, preachers, and a Jewish astrologer of the Castilian court. Ibn Khaldūn, *Ibn Khaldūn and Tamerlane, their historic meeting in Damascus, 1401 a.d. (803 a. h.) A study based on Arabic manuscripts of Ibn Khaldūn's Autobiography*, ed. Walter Joseph Fischel, trans. Walter Joseph Fischel (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1952), 35-6. See Moin’s full discussion of this event: Moin, "Islam and the Millennium", 38-41. Moin also points to the fact that Tīmūr’s fighting men made him the center of a certain ritualized devotional activity. This comes from the history of Ibn ‘Arab Shāh, and in keeping with the author’s general tone, was certainly intended to reflect badly on Tīmūr and his people. See discussion in Moin, "Islam and the Millennium", 51-2. Sela points out that the eighteenth-century *Tīmūr-Nāmahs* all feature scenes in which holy men predict to Tīmūr’s father that his wife would give birth to the conqueror of the world. Sela, *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, 58-61. Indeed, the messianic overtones are still palpable in these later works; however, there is no mention of the conjunction in any of the predictions; however, when the narrative comes to Ṣāhib-Qirān Tīmūr’s birth itself, the authors’ quote Tīmūr’s star-chart given in Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s *Ẓafar-Nāmah*. The text goes on to say that Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī reports that “three children were born in such an hour [when there was a conjunction in Capricorn]. The first was Iskandar Dhū’l-Qarnayn; the second was His Holiness the Messenger [Prophet Muḥammad], peace be upon him; and the third Amir Tīmūr *güregen*.” Sela, *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, 64.

³⁹⁵ See Woods, "The Rise of Timurid Historiography," 104. Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, *Ẓafar-Nāmah*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abbāsī, 2 vols. (1957), 2: 92. Shamī’s *Ẓafar-Nāmah*, 1: 192.

his preeminence and his calamitous overturning of the world order.³⁹⁶ The efficacy of Yazdī's claims for Tīmūr and his successors could not be pinned upon astrological proofs alone, which were perhaps not as compelling without mythological ones, especially since Tīmūr's reign did not actually coincide with the awaited, thousand-year great-conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, but only with rather minor ones. Thus, in his *Muqaddimah* Yazdī gives Tīmūr a new prophetic lineage, casting Tīmūr, the Şāhib-Qirān, as the millennial descendant of Iskandar:

Two individuals have come who by the strength of their arms, bravery and courage...have strengthened the religion of Islam...and brought the entire world under their dominion. The first one is Sikandar Zū al-Qarnayn, who is mentioned thus in the holy book: "they ask you about Zū al-Qarnayn; say, I will tell you his story; we established his power on earth" [Q, 18:83-84]. His manifestation (*zuhur*) and campaigns (*khurūj*) occurred in the cycle of the Greater Luminary (*Nayyir-i A'zam*) [the Sun]. The second is Ḥaẓrat Şāhib-Qirān... Amīr Tīmūr Gurigan...His manifestation and campaigns occurred in the time of the Lesser Luminary (*Nayyir-i Aşghar*), that is to say the cycle of the Moon. Both these men are from the progeny of Japheth [Yāfith] son of Noah.³⁹⁷

Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī references the two conquerors' common lineage from the Prophet Noah, thus emphasizing their common blood lineage from a prophet of Islam; however, this ancestry is not where the real strength of author's argument about kinship lies. The real weight is placed on a kinship between the two, based not on blood, but on the connection indicated by their horoscopes, which had made them both

³⁹⁶ Yazdī, *Zafar-Nāmah*, 1: 8-10. Poliakova interprets Yazdī's presentation of Tīmūr's horoscope as decidedly negative assessment of his reign, which shows that the stars predicted a reign marked by tumult and instability in comparison with the happy one predicted in Shāh Rūkh's horoscope. I disagree with Poliakova, however, that the horoscope is entirely negative in tone. Messianic dispensations are almost always cast as being heralded by a violent overturning of the old world order. See: Poliakova, "Timur as Described by the 15th Century Court Historiographers."

³⁹⁷ This passage is quoted from Moin, "Islam and the Millennium", 54. U of M Library has a film of the manuscript from British library, but has temporarily misplaced it! Sharaf al-Din Ali Yazdi, "Zafarnama (a)," British Museum, London, MS Add 18406, f. 3a. This comment is found not in the main chronicle but in a prologue (*iftitah* or *muqaddimah*) which was written separately and perhaps meant for another unfinished work but sometimes accompanies the *Zafarnama* manuscripts. There is confusion as to which work this *muqaddimah* was supposed to introduce. See Woods, "Tīmūrid Historiography," 100-101. Also see Binbaş's full discussion of this work: Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 236-49.

millennial world conquerors. Keeping the astrological vein in mind, Yazdī's highlighting of Iskandar and Tīmūr's common descent from the Prophet Noah takes on a new significance and renders his claim of millennial lineage for Tīmūr much more monumental: Noah had lived during the great flood, the most pivotal event that had occurred halfway through the turning of what was termed the world-year (*taḥwīl sanat al-‘ālam*) in Islamicised Sasanian cosmology. The world-year was the duration of the current manifestation of the world's existence, a period that was thought to encompass a period of 360 thousand solar years between Grand Conjunctions, that is, the conjunction of all the planets simultaneously at the first degree of Ares.³⁹⁸ Noah's flood, which had occurred on February 17, 3102 (or 3101) B.C.E., 180 thousand solar years since the beginning of the world-year, had coincided with an important conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in Cancer, one of the three water signs,³⁹⁹ a truly colossal cosmic event that had presaged the purging and renewal of the creation and the emergence of the Prophet Noah at the very center of the world-year.⁴⁰⁰ (Despite its center point in the world-year, Islamic texts refer to the period beginning with the conjunction marking the flood⁴⁰¹ as the Persian World-Year; all conjunctions of Saturn and Jupiter were

³⁹⁸ For an excellent introduction to the world-year concept, see: Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology." The Arabic and Persian literature on the cycles of the World-Year is extensive and is based on Arabic translations and adaptations from Zoroastrian Pahlavī works during the ninth century C.E., done by Persian scholars such as ‘Umar ibn al-Farrukhan al-Ṭabarī and included in astronomical handbooks, termed "zīj." Of the later works, C.E. Kennedy highlights, for example, the Persian Naṣr al-Dīn Ṭūsī's *Ilkhānī Zīj* (668/1270), *Zīj* of Shams-i Munajjim (719/1320), Ulugh Bayk's *Zīj* (843/1440), the Arabic Ismā‘īlī *Dastūr al-Munajjimīn*, al-Bīrūnī's *Qanūn*, Mūsā Ibn Nawbakht's *Kitāb al-Kāmil*, Abū Ma'shar, Sijzī's *al-Jāmi‘ al-Shāhī*, Kūshyār's *Mujmal*, and many others.

³⁹⁹ In some texts, the flood date is not just associated with a conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, but with a Grand Conjunction. *Ibid.*, 25 [353].

⁴⁰⁰ Scholars calculating the date of this conjunction disagreed about whether it had occurred at the time of the flood itself or rather 229, 231, 239, 266, 276 or 287 years earlier. *Ibid.*, 24 [352] - 25 [53].

⁴⁰¹ This event is often referred to in the literature as the Flood-Kaliyuga, from the Indian system, where the concept first appeared.

counted forward and backward from this event.⁴⁰²) The cosmic import of Iskandar and Tīmūr's descent from Noah, who was the lord of the great midway conjunction and renewer of the world-year, would certainly not have been lost on Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī; he invoked Noah here, precisely for this reason. Interestingly, however, Iskandar and Tīmūr's connection with Noah on the basis of conjunction astrology was actually weak;⁴⁰³ nonetheless, with a certain flourish of rhetorical legerdemain, that is, by evoking Noah in the course of a discussion of millennial kings, Yazdi effects an association between the three figures and in so doing, conjures the simulacrum of a solid astrological connection, which in the context of his historical writing, was good enough. Yazdī's intent was not to provide a treatise on conjunction astrology, but to elicit a particular kind of emotional response in his readers with regard to Tīmūr, a feeling charged with messianic and millenarian expectation. By implying that the three figures' fortunes were synchronized with the cycles of cosmic time, evident in planetary conjunctions, Yazdī thus effected the transfer of qualities and attributes between the figures forward and backward in time. Iskandar stood for Tīmūr; Tīmūr

⁴⁰² The flood-Kaliyuga is considered conjunction no. "0", whereas the conjunction of 571 B.C.E. that marked the rise of the Arabs and the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad was numbered "185." Events that preceded the Flood-Kaliyuga were assigned negative numbers. Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology," 25 [353], 31 [59]. This "Persian World-Year" should not be confused with a Persian reckoning from Sasanian times, but certainly earlier as well, that the world's existence spanned twelve one thousand year cycles, each coinciding with a sign of the zodiac. Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology," 37 [365] - 38 [66]. The Persian thousands were really never integrated into the Islamic system, though some vestiges of the system seem to have made their way in, as in the mighty *intiḥā'āt* system, which names thousand year periods for signs of the zodiac. See Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology," 28 [356].

⁴⁰³ In reality, there are many different ways to calculate when a great conjunction occurred, and certainly many ways to divide the ages into millennia. Although, Iskandar did in actuality live roughly a thousand years before Tīmūr, as far as I can tell, no Tīmūrid historians ever attempted to date Iskandar's conjunction in order to prove that his thousand year period was due (although, there were plenty of texts that had attempted to calculate when Iskandar lived). It was enough to claim that Iskandar, who reigned in the deep past, was the last Ṣāhib-Qirān, a fact that was common knowledge.

for Iskandar. In this way, Tīmūr, the new Iskandar, like Noah, had swept the world clean of injustice and iniquity with cataclysmic force, thereby ushering a new era.

The familial relation between Tīmūr and the earlier Ṣāḥib-Qirāns was characterized not by descent by blood, but rather by means of cosmological (and ultimately, divine) designation, indicated by the appearance of significant planetary conjunctions, which occurred in roughly thousand-year cycles. After Yazdī, for many writers, Tīmūr, the first such millennial world conqueror of the new era, was not just a ṣāḥib-qirān, but *the* Ṣāḥib-Qirān, Iskandar's (and Noah's) descendent, a true world conqueror and universal ruler.⁴⁰⁴ For kings (and for their historians who were constructing their image), the Ṣāḥib-Qirānī model of kingship was an incredibly potent one precisely because of its ahistoricity: it centered on the cyclical reappearance of a world conqueror, whose power was universal, even transcendent, and because he was ultimately nothing but a type— a timeless, empty vessel— his attributes could be transferred across time, both backwards and forwards in cyclical time. The histories of Ṣāḥib-Qirāns throughout the ages were, in effect, totally fungible. It is this fungibility that allowed historians to use the history of Iskandar to speak for Tīmūr or for one of his descendents, or alternatively, for the history of Tīmūr to speak for any other reigning king. In his timelessness, the Ṣāḥib-Qirān exists in all time; in the universality of his dominion, he occupies no space. So, just as the analytic of alterity and autochthony demonstrated the strength of claims to power based on liminal or ambiguous narratives of origin and relations in space, the temporal and spatial universality (and therefore liminality) embodied by the figures of Iskandar, Tīmūr, and

⁴⁰⁴ See: Moin. Moin, "Islam and the Millennium", 30-83.

the later *Ṣāhib-Qirān* is at the very core of the trope's power. The *Ṣāhib-Qirān*'s qualities of liminality and fungibility put it into play as a site of contest and therefore the perfect locus in which to enact a local strategy of engagement in imperial politics, which, as I will argue below, is exactly what Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and his fellow historians from Yazd were doing. For now we simply note that it was Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's rendition of the millennial king which, in its ability to transcend time and space, quickly became a universal mantle placed upon the shoulders of sovereigns who came to rule in Tīmūr's wake. These included the descendents of his own house, their competitors, and those who ruled after the Tīmūrids had been pushed out of Iran and into South Asia.⁴⁰⁵

As we quickly survey the centuries-long process by which historians who came after Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī routinized and transformed the charismatic legacy that Yazdī had first bestowed upon Tīmūr's descendents, it is important to keep in mind that the three local histories of Yazd, which we are considering here, neatly bookend these processes: Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's contemporaries, presented their histories just as the new, millennial idea of *Ṣāhib-Qirān* was coming to be worked out; alternatively, Mufīd wrote his work after the new millennium had passed and the concept had begun to weather and become brittle. The concept of the *Ṣāhib-Qirān* stands at the center of each of these historians' presentations of Iskandar's narrative, and yet, in light of the ways in which this key concept changed, each author

⁴⁰⁵ Among the competitors of Tīmūr's descendents, one important ruler who was given the title of *Ṣāhib-Qirān* is Uzun Ḥasan, the most powerful sovereign of the Aq Qoyunlu house, and ancestor of Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī. See discussion of Abū Bakr Tihrānī's *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah* in: Sholeh Quinn, "Notes on Timurid Legitimacy in Three Safavid Chronicles," *Iranian Studies* 31, no. 2 (1998): 152. I have not examined this text myself, but Quinn gives the pages: Abū Bakr Tihrānī, *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah*, ed. Necati Lugal and Faruk Sumer (Ankara: Chāp-Khānah-i Anjuman-i Tārīkh-i Turk, 1962-64), 11.

invoked Iskandar toward very different ends. For this reason, before we can understand exactly what Mufīd and his predecessors meant to say about Yazd’s history through Iskandar’s story, we must briefly survey the evolution and routinization of the concept of Ṣāhib-Qirān that filled the two centuries between Ja‘farī and Mufīd’s careers, a concept which we saw so clearly articulated in the writings of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī.

The Ṣāhib-Qirān’s legacy after the Tīmūrid House

In confluence with the rise of messianic expectation, which characterized the ideology of a number of esoteric groups in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this millenarian emphasis would become standard for over two centuries after Tīmūr’s reign. By the mid-sixteenth century, less than a hundred years before Mufīd was writing, in anticipation of a major confluence of events that signaled the start of a new era, the intensity of millennial expectation had reached a new pitch across the Islamic world. This was the conjunction of the planets Saturn and Jupiter in 991/1583 in the sign of Pisces, which marked the beginning of the transition from the watery triplicity into the fiery triplicity in Ares and the end of a 960-year cycle through all four triplicities. This important conjunction of these two planets was to mark just over a thousand solar years since the important conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter, which had occurred in Scorpio 571 C.E., around the time of the Prophet Muḥammad’s birth and which was known as the *Qirān al-Millah* because it was thought to have heralded the rise of Islam.⁴⁰⁶ Moreover, since the conjunction of 991/1583 just barely preceded the

⁴⁰⁶ See Kennedy on the astrological prognostication revolving around this, the 185th conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter since the flood. This event corresponded with the commencement a 360-year cycle (Mighty *farḍār* of Gemini-Venus)—actually starting in 582 C.E. It was thought that Venus was the star of the Arabs and therefore portended the rise to power of the Arab tribes. That *farḍār* ended in 942 C.E., during a

thousandth lunar year of the Hijrī calendar, its anticipation fueled the frenzy of expectation associated with the turning of the Hijrī millennium. This moment of synchronicity at an intersection between the millennial cycles of Saturn-Jupiter conjunctions and of prophetic history was thought to have enormous consequences among the most millenarian Sufi movements, whose leaders saw themselves as key players in an imminently unfolding eschatology. It was also a watershed moment for the great monarchs of the age, who, in their competition for the world's throne, were quickly absorbing the symbolic paraphernalia of Sufi Shaykhs' charisma and spiritual authority.⁴⁰⁷ Whereas Ṣāḥib-Qirāns sometimes staked their claims to the title on the occurrence of specific planetary conjunctions, the power of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān now harnessed the energy generated by expectation for this titanic celestial event, which synchronized the gear-wheel of Islamic cycles of time with that of the heavenly spheres.

The Ottoman, Ṣafavid, Mughal, and Uzbek sovereigns who called themselves Ṣāḥib-Qirān (or were so called by their panegyrists) were competing with one another for Tīmūr's and Iskandar's legacy and patrimony, the inheritance of which had become a prerequisite for imperial rule. As many scholars have recently shown, the wave of

period that was in fact characterized by the weakening of the (Arab) 'Abbāsīd Caliphate's power over much of the empire and the rise of autonomous Persian dynasties, such as the Sāmānīds and Buyīds. Kennedy, "The World-Year Concept in Islamic Astrology," 29 [357].

⁴⁰⁷ The conjunction of 1583 was a matter of great concern in Elizabethan England as well and occupied the attention of astrologers there, who, recalling the effects of a similarly located conjunction presaging Noah's flood, prognosticated calamitous consequences in the year 1588: barren fields, shipwrecks, fires, floods, sin, persecution, strife, and according to a few, the end of the world. It also entered the popular imagination, as evidenced by an obsession with it in the almanacs of the day. On the literature dealing with this event see: René Pruvost, "The Astrological Prognostications of 1583: Bibliographical Notes," *The Library* 14 (1933-4). Carroll Camden, "The Wonderful Yeere," in *Studies in Honor of DeWitt T. Starnes*, ed. Archibald A. Hill Thomas P. Harrison, Ernest C. Mossner, James Sledd (Austin: The University of Texas Press). Margaret Aston, "The Fiery Trigon Conjunction: An Elizabethan Astrological Prediction," *Isis* 61, no. 2 (1970), Carroll Camden, "Elizabethan Almanacs and Prognostications, part I," *The Library* XII, no. 2 (1931). For a more general survey of astrology in early modern England see: Don Cameron Allen, *The Star-Crossed Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941).

messianic expectation that had come to characterize the ideologies of a variety of religious movements, starting in the early fifteenth century,⁴⁰⁸ caused a conflation of the public discourses surrounding kingship and sainthood, allowing the language and symbols of messianism and millenarianism to work for both kings and saints, as we have already mentioned.⁴⁰⁹ As kings began to actively appropriate the kinds of authority that had previously been the domain of Sufi shaykhs, sovereigns became saints, prophets, and even the Maḥdī himself. Historians portrayed the reigns of these Ṣāḥib-Qirāns as marking the beginning of new dispensations of justice, and in some cases, the beginning of the eschaton.⁴¹⁰ Significantly, the influence of ‘Alid *ghuluvv* movements on kingship ideology in the late fifteenth century often demonstrated a

⁴⁰⁸ An excellent summary of the particularities of Islamic messianism in the fifteenth century, its roots in Shī‘ī thought and Sufism, and of the various theories accounting for its development at this time is provided by Shahzad Bashir, *Messianic hopes and mystical visions : the Nūrbakhshīya between medieval and modern Islam*, Studies in comparative religion (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 31-41. This study also offers the most current and thorough review of the history of Messianism in Islamicate thought up to the fifteenth century (pp. 3-28). Kathryn Babayan presents a similar narrative, but provides a more global and detailed account of the various Iranian *ghulāt* movements that came to be amalgamated in the post Mongol, Iranian world. See: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*. Babayan’s main goal is to flesh out the roots of the later messianic movements of the sixteenth century, however, and her discussion leans toward explaining the developments of that later period.

⁴⁰⁹ The conflation of the ideologies and ritual practices surrounding kingship and sainthood is largely the subject of Moin’s dissertation: Moin, "Islam and the Millennium". Moin situates the roots of this conflation in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but argues that the process had not really matured until the later sixteenth century. Bashir points out the rise of powerful messiah-Sufi shaykhs, who were connected with royal families, but never royalty themselves, coincided with the decline of universal empires (Abbasid and Mongol) in the fifteenth century in the midst of the succession disputes that fragmented Tīmūr’s empire. Bashir, *Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 33-8. Babayan demonstrates that the messiah-Sufi-kings of sixteenth century began to view these great shaykhs as political/religious rivals and moved to dominate them, either by bringing them under the umbrella of their own authority, or by eliminating them altogether. Babayan’s book centers around the culmination of this process, with Shāh ‘Abbās’s extermination of the Nuḡṭavīs. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 3-7, *passim*. For the Ottoman case see: Cornell H. Fleischer, "The Lawgiver as Messiah: The Making of the Imperial Image in the Reign of Süleymān," in *Soliman le Magnifique et son temps: actes du Colloque de Paris, Galeries nationales du Grand Palais, 7-10 mars 1990*, ed. Gilles Veinstein (Paris: École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1992). Also on the Ottomans kings as Sufis, see Özgen Felek’s recent dissertation: Özgen Felek, "(Re)creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions as a Means of Murād III's Self-fashioning" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Michigan, 2010).

⁴¹⁰ On the later uses of the Tīmūr as Ṣāḥib-Qirān, particularly in Mughal sources, see Moin, "Islam and the Millennium". For the portrayal of the Ottoman emperors, Yavuz Sulṭān Selim and Ḳānūnī Sulṭān Süleymān as Ṣāḥib-Qirāns and messiahs, see Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah."

belief in doctrines such as *tanāsukh* (transmigration of souls), which allowed kings to portray themselves as new incarnations of prophets of old and to manifest the transference of their attributes; in fact, Shāh Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī, considered himself to be the incarnation of Jesus, Muḥammad, ‘Alī, the twelfth Imām, Khiz̄r, and Iskandar—even of God.⁴¹¹ This concept of *tanāsukh*, as applied to the body of the shāh himself, allowed the monarch not only to manifest the mighty qualities of previous kings and prophets, but also to physically embody their souls as well. As such, Shāh Ismā‘īl and his Qizlbāsh devotees’ claims represented the most literal understanding of this notion of fungibility, which as I have suggested, made the figure of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān so utilitarian a figure in historical writing.⁴¹²

Shāh Ismā‘īl’s son and successor, Shāh Ṭahmāsb, backed away from the heterodox and the messianic claims circulating about his father and fashioned for

⁴¹¹ Shāh Ismā‘īl never used the title Ṣāḥib-Qirān for himself in his Turkish *dīvān*, even though his claims were well aligned with the significance of the title. See in particular Ghazal no. 246 in which he states: I am Khiz̄r, still sprightly, and Jesus, son of Mary; I am the Iskandar of the people of this age (*Khiz̄r zinda ilā ‘Īsā-yi Maryam / zamāna ahlinūn Iskandariyām*.) Shāh Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī Khaṭā‘ī, *Küllüiyāt-i Dīvān* ed. Mīrzā Rasūl Ismā‘īlzādah (Tehran: Al-Hoda, 1380/2001), no. 246. Although Shāh Ismā‘īl, never actually referred to himself as Ṣāḥib-Qirān, his son, Sām Mīrzā, did use the title for his father throughout his *Tazkirah-i Tuḥfah-i Sāmī*. See: Sām Mīrzā Ṣafavī, *Tazkirah-i Tuḥfah-i Sāmī*, ed. Rukn al-Dīn Humāyūn-Farrukh (Tehran: Asāṭīr, 2005), 6 ff. See discussion in Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 300. Amīr Maḥmūd ibn Khvāndamīr also uses the title. In other works, Shāh Ismā‘īl was more regularly dubbed *Khāqān-i Sikandar-Sha’n* (Emperor of Iskandar’s rank), as in Ḥasan-i Rūmlū’s *Aḥsan al-Tawārīkh*. Ḥasan Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-Tawārīkh*, ed. Charles Norman Seddon, Gaekwad’s Oriental Series (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1931). *Khāqān-i Sikandar-Sha’n* is also one of the preferred titles for Ismā‘īl in Munajjim Yazdī’s *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*. (Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Munajjim Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Sayf Allāh Vahīd Niyā (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Vahīd, 1987).) Babayan reads this title, *Khāqān-i Sikandar-Sha’n*, as a synonym for Ṣāḥib Qirān. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 340, note 33. In his *Khuld-i Barīn*, Vālah Iṣfahānī lists all the titles that Ṣafavid shāhs had struck into coins; there, Shāh Ismā‘īl is called *Khāqān-i Sikandar-Sha’n*. In that work, only the current reigning shāh, Shāh ‘Abbās II is Ṣāḥib-Qiran. Muḥammad Yūsuf Vālah Iṣfahānī, *Khuld-i barīn*, ed. Mīr Ḥāshim Muḥaddīṣ (Tīhrān1372/1993), 5. Rūmlū does employ the title Ṣāḥib-Qirān elsewhere for Timūr himself. See Ḥasan Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-Tawārīkh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā‘ī, Majmū‘ah-i Mutūn-i Fārsī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bungāh-i Tarjumah va-Nashr-i Kitāb, 1970), 2-8, ff.

⁴¹² The doctrine of *tanāsukh* was not limited to the Ṣafavid devotees, and was common among other groups in western Iran, such as the Nuqtavī’s (for background see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 57-108.) (See especially p. 107.) Anatolia, and South Asia as well, as exemplified in ‘Abd al-Qādir Badā‘ūnī’s *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh*. ‘Abd al-Qādir Badā‘ūnī, *Muntakhab al-Tawārīkh* (Lucknow1284/1868). English translation: ‘Abd al-Qādir Badā‘ūnī, *Muntakhabu-t-Tawārīkh by ‘Abdu-l-Qādir ibn-i-Mulūk Shāh, known as Al-Badāoni*, ed. M.D. George S. A. Ranking, trans. M.D. George S. A. Ranking (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1898).

himself a kingly image somewhat more in line with the political thought of Shīʿī jurists that focused on the idea of king as the shadow of God on Earth (*ẓill Allāh*).⁴¹³ Still, though not so exaggerated as his father's, Shāh Ṭahmāsb's claims were commensurate with those of other post-Tīmūrid rulers. As Ṣāhib-Qirāns, these rulers professed universal kingship for themselves and claimed to hold an intermediary rank between ordinary human beings and prophets, saints, and Imams. As he narrates his own life in his *tazkirah*, Shāh Ṭahmāsb describes a series of dreams in which he demonstrates in absolute terms, not only that he is the universal king, but that, through dreams, he has direct access to 'Alī, the other Imams, and Shaykh Ṣafī al-Dīn. These saintly figures provide him with special knowledge and legitimize his role as ruler of the world.⁴¹⁴ So, while Ṭahmāsb may have moved away from the heterodox claims of his father and certain members of the Qizlbāsh, he kept Ṣafavid kingship securely within the realm of the Ṣāhib-Qirān.

While other chroniclers writing during Shāh Ṭahmāsb's reign did not often employ the title Ṣāhib-Qirān for either the founder of the dynasty or his successor, and while they, following Ṭahmāsb's lead, often backed away from the most *ghuluvv* oriented characterizations of the shāhs, their portrayals still sometimes resonated with Ismā'īl's messianic self-image, well attuned to the figure of the Ṣāhib-Qirān. For example, Khvāndamīr portrays Shah Ismā'īl as the renewer and avenger of the religion

⁴¹³ See Babayan's in depth treatment of Shāh Ṭahmāsb's religious self-fashioning in: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 308-25.

⁴¹⁴ Ṭahmāsb dreams that three moons rise into the sky, one in the East, one in the West, and one in the middle. The East and West moons fall, but the one in the middle remains, then travels to Qazvīn, Ṭahmāsb's capital, and comes to rest over the king's rug. A luminous figure appears and explains that he is the middle moon, whereas the moon in the East is the Uzbek ruler, and that of the west is the Ottoman ruler. Ṭahmāsb ibn Ismā'īl Ṣafavī, *Tazkirah-i Shāh Ṭahmāsb* (Calcutta: Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1912), 67.

in his *Ḥabīb al-Siyar*, completed in 1527. In that work, Khvāndamīr summarizes Ismā'īl's mission thusly:

From the beginning, the lofty ambition and worthy desire of the shāh of sublime rank in demonstration of the phrase “the Sulṭān is the shadow of God (*al-sulṭānu ḡillu allāhi*)” ... was always turned toward purifying the garden of religion and dominion (*riyāz-i dīn va dawlat*) from the thorns of rebellion (*khār-i ṭaghyān*) of the leaders of revolt by means of the sharp saber of triumph, and—by means of the irrigation of the emerald-colored sword, having granted the quality of lushness (*naẓārat*) to the grassy meadow of kingdom and religious community (*chaman-i mulk va millat*)—was turned toward raising the foundation of conquest (*asās-i kishvār-gushā'ī bar afrāzad*).⁴¹⁵

In his continuation of his father's history, also written during Ṭahmāsb's reign, Khvāndamīr's own son, Amīr Maḥmūd explains that Shāh Ismā'īl had absorbed all titles of Muslim sovereignty, including imam, caliph, and Ṣāḥib-Qirān. In fact, both writers implied that Shah Ismā'īl had performed the role of the Mahdī.⁴¹⁶ Further, in his *Aḥsan al-Tawārīkh*, written in 985/1577, during the second civil war, just after Ṭahmāsb's death, Ḥasan-i Rumlū regularly refers to Shāh Ismā'īl as *Khāqān-i Sikandar-Sha'n* (Emperor of Iskandar's rank),⁴¹⁷ a title that continues to be used for the first Ṣafavid monarch in later works.

By the reigns of Shāh 'Abbās I, Sulṭān Murād III, and Akbar, each of whom presided over the turning of the Islamic millennium in the Ṣafavid, Ottoman, and Mughal empires respectively, the concept of the universal king was impressed with both sovereignty and sanctity. As such, their kingships—each in their own way—were epitomized by a refashioned conceptualization of Ṣāḥib-Qirān that by that time had

⁴¹⁵ Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 4: 446-7.

⁴¹⁶ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 301. Amīr Maḥmūd ibn Khvāndamīr, *Irān dar rūzgār-i Shāh Ismā'īl va Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafāvī*, ed. Ghulām Riẓā Tabātabā'ī, *Majmū'ah-i intishārāt-i adabī va tārikhī* (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Duktur Maḥmūd Afshār, 1370/1991).

⁴¹⁷ Rūmlū, *Aḥsan al-Tawārīkh*. Babayan reads this title as a synonym for Ṣāḥib Qirān. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 340, note 33. Rūmlū does employ the title Ṣāḥib-Qirān elsewhere for Tīmūr himself. Rūmlū, *AT*, 2-8, ff.

completely subsumed formerly disparate strands of messianism and millenarianism, which, as we noted, had largely been the purview of Sufi shaykhs beforehand. While writers of the first part of the fifteenth century had begun to hammer such messianic and millenarian ideas into their effigies of Tīmūr, the Ṣāhib-Qirān, by the time of the new Hijrī millennium, their newly alloyed crown of the Ṣāhib-Qirān had already cooled; sovereigns could easily pass it along to their successors and wear it quite comfortably, often making the explicit connection to Iskandar through Tīmūr when they did so.⁴¹⁸

As we know, the use of the title Ṣāhib-Qirān and its association with figures such as Iskandar were still current for rulers in the mid-seventeenth century. However, despite the fact that such appellations still echoed the millennial and saintly claims made by Ismāʿīl I, Sulṭān Sülaymān, Akbar, Jahāngīr, and their forefather, Tīmūr Khan, once the planetary conjunctions associated with the turning of the Hijrī millennium had receded into the distant past, the ritual value of these titles had become debased and thus could no longer engender the same kind of charismatic authority and power.

⁴¹⁸ For Shāh ʿAbbās I as the Ṣāhib-Qirān, the most notable example is found in Iskandar Bayk Munshī, who explicitly theorizes about the term in the fourth *maqālah* of his work, entitled, “On the Suitability of the Rank of Ṣāhib-Qirān and mention of the Perils and Conjunctions/Calamities with Happy Outcomes.” In that chapter he holds out, in particular, the conjunction of planets (unnamed), which he says occurred in the year 1012/1603 in Sagittarius of the fiery triplicity (*burj-i qūs-i muṣallas-i ātishī*). This was the only conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn to have fallen in ʿAbbās’s reign and was the first of the new fiery triplicity. Iskander Bayk Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī*, ed. Afshār Īraj (Tehran: Chāp-Khānah-i Mūsavī, 1955-6), 2: 1102. Junābadī also called ʿAbbās I the Ṣāhib-Qirān in his *Rawzat al-Ṣafavīyah*. Mīrzā Bayg Junābadī, *Rawzat al-Ṣafavīyah*, ed. Ghulām Rizā Ṭabāṭabāyī Majd (Tehran: Bunyād-i Mawqūfāt-i Duktur Maḥmūd Afshār, 1999). We should note that Shāh ʿAbbās I was a Ṣāhib-Qirān, even though he worked to divorce himself from the *ghuluvv* origins of his forefathers, preferring the authority of the newly empowered Twelver ʿulamāʾ to that of the Qizlbāsh Sufis. On this transformation see: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 349-437. On Ottoman historians’ use of the term Ṣāhib-Qirān, and in particular, their efforts to connect apocalyptic expectations associated with planetary conjunctions and the turning of the millennium with the reigning Ottoman pādishāh’s rightful inheritance of Tīmūr’s and Iskandar’s claim to the title of Ṣāhib-Qirān, see Fleischer, “Lawgiver as Messiah.” For the millennial claims of Murād III in particular, see Felek, “(Re)creating Image and Identity”. Felek focuses on Murād III’s messianic and millenarian dreams in: Özgen Felek, “(Re)creating Image and Identity: Dreams and Visions as a Means of Murād III’s Self-Fashioning,” in *Dreams and Visions in Islamic Societies*, ed. Özgen Felek and Alexander Knysh (Albany: SUNY Press, 2011). On the Mughal emperor, Akbar’s messianic and millennial rituals and ideology and its recollection of Tīmūr, see: Moin, “Islam and the Millennium”, 30-83, 200-58.

For the Ṣafavids and Ottoman pādishāhs, the sobriquets “Ṣāhib-Qirān” or “Iskandar-i Zamān” had become routine and generic.⁴¹⁹ In the Ṣafavī context in particular, the routinization and debasement of these titles was compounded by changes in the organization and ritualized practice of empire. In spite of the fact that the Ṣafavid Shāhs ‘Abbās II and Sulaymān were both capable rulers, who succeeded in bringing the realm under an effective central authority, the shāhs themselves never participated in any military campaigns, having become ensconced in the massive palace complex at the capital city of Iṣfahān. There, determined and capable viziers, palace officials, and the powerful women of the royal household, all jockeying to control access to the sovereign, shielded their shāhs from their subjects and from direct knowledge of the affairs of their provinces. As a result, the sovereigns’ gaze was focused instead on the most immediate affairs, which concerned the growing metropolis of Iṣfahān.⁴²⁰ At the same time, the shāhs’ preference for the Twelver Shī‘ī ‘ulamā’ at the expense of the Qizlbāsh, and relatedly, their mounting tendency to defer to the authority of the ‘ulamā’ in matters of religion, led to the end of the prevalence of *ghuluvv* notions of cyclical time, which had previously given kings the idiom through which to claim Mahdī-hood for themselves in the first place. As a result the city of Mashhad, which housed the

⁴¹⁹ For the debasement of the title Ṣāhib-Qirān in the Ottoman context see: Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah," 163. Fleischer actually shows that the millenarian characterizations of the Ottoman pādishāh began to fade even earlier, during Süleymān’s reign. As the sovereign aged, court chroniclers’ emphasis shifted to the sovereign’s skillful administration of a far-flung empire and his pursuit of justice as a head of state, which he accomplished by bringing shar‘ah under central control. Thus the title *pādishāh-i ‘ālam-panah* began to eclipse that of *ṣāhib-qirān*. See for example, Fleischer’s discussion of Faṭḥ Allāh ‘Ārif’s mid-sixteenth century Süleymān-Nāma: Fleischer, "Lawgiver as Messiah," 173. The Mughals were able to maintain the kind of kingly charisma associated with the Ṣāhib-Qirān-ship of Tīmūr longer. Moin demonstrates that the Mughal pādishāhs deliberately and successfully reconfigured the symbols of sacred kingship in order to perpetuate such charisma. It should be noted, however, it was not until Shāh Jahān’s reign that the title Ṣāhib-Qirān itself actually came into currency. Moin, "Islam and the Millennium".

⁴²⁰ Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 372-87.

shrine of the Eighth Imām, absorbed an immense proportion of royal attention and patronage, at the expense of other cities, like Yazd.⁴²¹ Further, notable families of the urban provincial cities, which had formerly enjoyed marriage alliances with the royal family and high posts, such as the Ni‘matullāhīs of Yazd, lost their elevated status.⁴²² During Shāh Sulaymān’s reign, despite the relatively peaceful state of affairs, a series of devastating famines, pests, and plagues afflicted the populace with miseries, which the central authorities’ relief measures were unable to mitigate. Such unrelieved hardships did nothing to promote the image of the shāh as protector or restorer of the realm.⁴²³ In short, by the time Mufīd began his history of Yazd, despite the net prosperity and stability of the shāh’s realm, the shāh himself no longer actively promoted the image of himself as a Ṣāhib-Qirān: having withdrawn from direct relationships with the cities around the realm, having rejected the mantle of spiritual authority worn by his predecessors, and having squelched the kind of messianic ideology that would have allowed him to manifest the heroic and saintly essences of previous Ṣāhib-Qirāns, such as Tīmūr and Iskandar, the use of the title Ṣāhib-Qirān and comparison with the legendary Iskandar could no longer have been intended literally. This was especially true coming from a formerly important urban center like Yazd, which saw its fortunes dwindle under Shāh ‘Abbās II’s and Shāh Sulaymān’s reigns. But during the latter years of the Tīmūrid Shāh Rūkh’s reign—the beginning of the golden age of the Ṣāhib-

⁴²¹ See *Ibid.*, 352, 472. Maria E. Subtelny, *Timurids in Transition: Turko-Persian Politics and Acculturation in Medieval Iran* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 205-7.

⁴²² Ni‘matullāhī alliances with the Ṣafavī *dūdmān* will be discussed in chapter 4.

⁴²³ Poor harvests occurred in 1666, 1667, and 1669. The latter year also witnessed a plague. The 1670s saw harsh winters, locusts, famines, and even earthquakes. These continued in the early 1680s. Thousands died as a result. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 94-5. These natural disasters are mentioned in: ‘Abd al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥusaynī Khātūn’ābādī, *Vaqāyi ‘al-sinīn va al-a ‘vām, yā, Guzārishhā-yi sāliyānah az ibtidā-yi khilqat tā sāl-i 1195 Hijrī* ed. Muḥammad Bāqir Bihbūdī (Tehran: Kitābfurūshī-i Islāmīyah, 1352/1973-4), 537-8, 43-4.

Qirāns— Tīmūrid princes did focus their attention on the city of Yazd. Largely on account of this princely attention, the local elites of Yazd city found themselves at the very center of the Tīmūrid project of empire building, and they took a leading role in shaping the courtly discourse surrounding the archetype of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān. Picking up with this thread of the story, we now turn to the role that Yazdīs played in the codification of this discourse during the end of Shāh Rūkh’s reign.

Local Knowledge and the Construction of Empire: Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī as a model for Yazd’s local history

As we have noted, the local histories of Yazd bookend this process of sacralisation and then routinization of Ṣāḥib-Qirāns. Here, we can finally focus in on the Yazdī historians’ part in developing, manipulating and exploiting the Ṣāḥib-Qirān trope as a means of both localizing the empire and universalizing the local. Particularly in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn Kātib and Mufīd’s histories, Iskandar stood (at least outwardly) as a cipher for Tīmūr, the universal world conqueror, and for any contemporary sovereign who wished to claim that world-conqueror’s inheritance. As such, for these writers, Iskandar’s story was the point of entry into the discourse on Ṣāḥib Qirān and kingship. It was through Iskandar that writers were able to broker a model of sovereignty for their royal patrons that manifested all the attributes of the Ṣāḥib-Qirāns. What is most significant, however, is that in the Tīmūrid historiography this very conceptualization of Tīmūr as the Universal king and millennial sovereign (and of Iskandar as his previous avatar) originated in the cities of Fārs—with strong roots in Yazd—and developed in context of a particularly local, Fārsī response to the succession disputes which marked the period after Tīmūr’s death. In this section, we will explore the local networks of

ideas and people who gave rise to the notion of universal, millennial kingship that remained current (albeit constantly evolving) until Mufīd completed his work.

As we have seen, such an explicitly universal and sacral conceptualization of kingship, or shall we say *orientation* toward kingship, as applied to Tīmūr, was first articulated by Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, one of Yazd’s most important and successful scholars, descended from one of the city’s most illustrious families, the Awlād-i Raḏī, whose progenitors were known for expertise in medicine. In the fourteenth century, the Awlād-i Raḏī had ties with Rashīd al-Dīn, the famous Grand Vizier of the Īlkhāns, who was a physician himself and held many assets in Yazd.⁴²⁴ The ideas about the sacrality of universal kingship that appear in Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s works came to be formulated in the context of the particular confluence of intellectual networks and Sufi circles, such as the Ni‘matullāhīyah, that were centered in Fārs, but which stretched outward to include urban notables of Egypt and Syria, such as the Cairene shaykh, Sayyid Ḥusayn Akhlāṭī (d. 799/1397), as well as illustrious figures from the East, including prominent Naqshbandīs. In addition to standard curricula of education for urban notables of the Persianate world, i.e., instruction in the transmitted and rational sciences, rhetoric, epistolary, and versification, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and his peers’ expertise also featured training in the esoteric sciences (*‘ulūm-i gharībah*), particularly numerology, the science of letters (*‘ilm-i ḥurūf*), and astrology, which he learned from the famous occultist, Ṣā‘in al-Dīn Turka.⁴²⁵ In his groundbreaking dissertation on Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s works, İlker Evrim Binbaş traces these intellectual networks in which

⁴²⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn’s connections in Yazd (both human and material) will be explored in detail in the third chapter of dissertation.

⁴²⁵ Yazdī’s training under the great letterist Ṣā‘in al-Dīn Turka is detailed in İlker Evrim Binbaş’s work. See his introductory treatment of the topic: Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 9. See chapter 4, pp. 76-174.

Yazdī travelled, studied, and found companionship.⁴²⁶ Mapping the itineraries of the most illustrious members of these networks as vectors of knowledge transmission across time and space, Binbaṣ provides not only the genealogy of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī’s thought, but further, places that author’s varying ideas about the nature of kingship in the context of his relationships with his patrons, the local Tīmūrid rulers of the western provinces, each of whom were regularly struggling to assert their own power and authority vis-à-vis, the pādishāh in the East. Tīmūr’s descendents were perpetually engaged in succession disputes; Fārs, an important appanage, though far from the imperial capitals of Samarqand and Hirāt, was often at the center of power plays during and after Shāh Rūkh’s reign. Princes assigned to governorships in the western reaches of the empire needed the material and human resources of Fārs to compete with their relatives in other parts of the realm; they accomplished this by cementing ties with local notables and with other imperial administrators in the region.⁴²⁷

Fārs’s centrality was certainly true during Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s career, particularly in the case of Sulṭān Muḥammad ibn Bāysunghur’s revolt against Shāh Rūkh, his grandfather, in which, starting around 847/1443, that prince cultivated ties with the notables of Fārs’s important cities, where he held no jurisdiction, and then boldly entered the city of Iṣfahān.⁴²⁸ The fullest accounts of this affair were deposited in Yazd’s books of local history. Yazd’s local historians diligently recorded these events

⁴²⁶ A brief summary of Yazdī’s scholarly itinerary, along with that of his teachers can be found pp. 29-32 of Binbaṣ’s dissertation, but detailed discussions are found 77-106

⁴²⁷ For example, Prince Sulṭān Muḥammad established strong client-patron relationships with men like Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī but also sealed a marriage alliance with Amīr Chaqmāq, the Turko-Mongol governor of Yazd, an important figure in Yazd’s history, to whom, the prince gave his sister in marriage. Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 259.

⁴²⁸ On Sulṭān Muḥammad’s revolt see: Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 49-61. Also see: Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 245-62. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, ed. *Cambridge History of Iran Volume 6: The Timurid and Safavid Periods* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 101.

and charted Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s involvement. It turns out that Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, along with almost all the notables of Iṣfahān, deemed it opportune to back Sulṭān Muḥammad’s scrap for power at his grandfather’s expense; after all, Shāh Rūkh was almost seventy years old—a war of succession was imminent.⁴²⁹ Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī and the other prominent notables encouraged the mutinous prince, who had sought to capitalize on local dissatisfaction with central taxation and an insurgence of local *ghuluvv* movements, such as that of the Musha‘sha‘ in neighboring Khūzistān.⁴³⁰

However, in order to get a better sense of why Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī and other prominent local elites should have risked backing this prince, we must say something of the writer’s earlier investment in the local princely regimes. Years before this revolt, when, under Shāh Rūkh’s authorization, Sulṭān Muḥammad’s uncle, Ibrāhīm Sulṭān, son of Shāh Rūkh (d. 838/1435), invited Yazdī to Shīrāz to put him in charge of history-writing at the court,⁴³¹ he commissioned Yazdī to compose a new rendition of Tīmūr’s history, along with other writings.⁴³² After Ibrāhīm’s death, when Shāh Rūkh appointed Sulṭān Muḥammad to the governorship of western provinces, the young prince continued to patronize Yazdī’s work. Both princes specifically sought this local blend of mastery of *inshā’*, history-writing, and versification on the one hand, and numerology and astrology on the other. It was through the composition of historical works,

⁴²⁹ In fact, Shāh Rūkh died in 850 A.H., shortly after subduing the revolt in Fārs.

⁴³⁰ In discussing the discontent in Fārs which led to the rebellion and the various constituencies of people who participated, Binbaṣ synthesizes the findings of Jean Aubin and Beatrice Forbes Manz. The former focuses on fifteen-century religious uprisings, such as the Musha‘sha‘ and Sarbidars; the latter emphasizes local anger about the tax burden imposed from Khurāsān. See Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 50-6.

⁴³¹ *Ibid.*, 42-4, 253.

⁴³² In addition to starting the *Zafar-Nāmah* for Ibrāhīm, Yazdī wrote the *Fath-Nāmah-i Šāhib-Qirānī* for this prince and dedicated it to him. *Ibid.*, 35, 42, 252.

qaṣīdahs,⁴³³ and his *tārīkhs* (versified chronograms),⁴³⁴ which he wrote for those princes and their allies, that Yazdī succeeded in cementing a place for his princely patrons in a newly fashioned, millenarian, kingly lineage, based on an astrology-centered understanding of the figure of the Ṣāḥīb-Qirān, which was closely linked with the mythical figure of Iskandar, as we presented above.⁴³⁵

Part of the strength of Binbaṣ's work lies in the fact that he reads this new discourse on Tīmūr's status as the battleground upon which his descendents' competition for power and authority took place. Moreover, he shows that princely competitors for Tīmūr's legacy constructed universalist, imperial ideals through the pens of the leading intellectual and spiritual leaders of local networks of urban notables in Fārs. These intellectuals' works were impressed and informed by the particularities of their education. Thus, as we witnessed, in Yazdī's work, Shāh Rūkh was intended to stand as the inheritor of Tīmūr's dominion and through him, of Iskandar-i Rūmī's destiny. However, for Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, the utility of Tīmūr's history, particularly such a sacralized history, was that it legitimized and sacralized Shāh Rūkh's own rule; so, despite the fact that he names Tīmūr as the Ṣāḥīb-Qirān, he is really speaking of Tīmūr's successors who were competing for that legacy. Moreover, despite the great praise Yazdī sings for Shāh Rūkh and the very auspicious horoscope he provides for

⁴³³ Apparently, Yazdī had written some verses for Sulṭān Muḥammad, which had encouraged him to rise up in revolt against his grandfather Shāh Rūkh. Shāh Rūkh interrogated Yazdī about this after the rebellion failed. (This interrogation will be discussed more fully later.) Mention of this particular verse appears in: *Ibid.*, 66. Yazdī started composing odes for rulers as early as 789/1387, when he composed one for Shāh Yaḥyá, the Muḥaffarid governor whom Tīmūr had installed, but most likely executed in 795/1393. See Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 20.

⁴³⁴ Yazdī had also prepared chronograms for the rival Tīmūrid line, the 'Umar Shaykhids, as in the one (giving the date 812 A.H.) that he prepared for the inscription on Pīr Muḥammad's tomb, which is found in Yazdī's *Munsha'āt*. Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 38.

⁴³⁵ Despite the fact that Yazdī did very well under the Shāh Rūkhid rulers of Fārs, he had served Iskandar bin 'Umar-Shaykh (a rival of the Shāh Rūkhids in Fārs) before them. *Ibid.*, 39. Yazdī played his cards shrewdly, serving any competent governors of Fārs.

that emperor, Binbaş urges us to read his works against the backdrop of the author's support for Sulṭān Muḥammad's (essentially unsuccessful) rebellion against Shāh Rūkh, which came to a head in 850/1446. In Ramaḍān of that year, Shāh Rūkh, personally marched into Fārs and forced the prince into flight and then ordered the slaughter of nearly all the urban notables of Fārs (Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī's allies) who had supported his grandson, hanging them from the ramparts of Sāvah. Those executed included the *naqīb* of the Ḥusaynī sayyids of Iṣfahān, Sayyid Shāh 'Alā' al-Dīn— a truly audacious move.⁴³⁶ Significantly, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī was one of the few whom the pādishāh spared. Taking into consideration Yazdī's support for Sulṭān Muḥammad's revolt, we see then that for Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, the figure of Tīmūr—along with the kind of sacred sovereignty he represents in Yazdī's works—should stand not just as a cipher for Shāh Rūkh, but also as a cipher for his own patron, Sulṭān Muḥammad. Sulṭān Muḥammad had wished to invigorate his own image in Fārs among his own subjects and, at the same time, replace his aging grandfather as the new Ṣāḥib-Qirān. This was a project that required the skills a man like Yazdī had to offer.⁴³⁷

Any Tīmūrid pādishāh's power vis-à-vis the provinces of the West was always precarious, and he was always on his guard against disloyalties among his

⁴³⁶ The others listed in *TJY* are Khvājah 'Abd al-Raḥmān, Mavlānā Imām al-Dīn Qāzī, Mavlānā Afzal al-Dīn Turka, the nephew or cousin of Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka (the famous letterist and teacher of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī); Amīr Imām al-Dīn, Amīr Quṭb al-Dīn, Qāzī Imām al-Dīn Faḍl Allāh, Shāh 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad Naqīb, and Aḥmad Chūpān. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 242.

⁴³⁷ Binbaş, p. 11. Yazdī had caused Ṣāḥib-Qirān Tīmūr to stand for his previous patron Ibrāhīm bin Shāh Rūkh: Binbaş closely examines Yazdī's *Dībāchah* to his *Faṭḥ-nāmah- Ṣāḥib-Qirānī* and determines that "Although the title of the *Dībācha* reads 'Dībācha-yi Tārīkh-i Amīr Tīmūr,' the close inspection of the text reveals that it was in fact ... dedicated to Abū al-Faṭḥ Ibrāhīm-Sulṭān b. Shāhrukh in 828/1424-25. Yazdī says that his work takes its title from one of the titles of Timur, i.e. *ṣāḥibqirān*." This *Dībāchah* itself contains a prologue (*muqaddimah*) which should not be confused with his other work, entitled *Muqaddimah*. The "muqaddimah" of the *Dībāchah* to the *Faṭḥ-Nāmah* traces Tīmūr's (Ibrāhīm's) lineage from Noah. Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 252. The extensive discussion of this work is found on pages 249-57.

administrators there. However, the fact that Shāh Rūkh would have these men of the pen killed, many of them not directly involved in the administration of Sulṭān Muḥammad's household, speaks to the power and value these notable men actually wielded in the imperial system. Certainly, this power was due in part to their elevated social standing—many of them were *sayyids* (descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad). It was also due to the close ties these notables fostered with the Tīmūrid princes and administrators who had been installed in Fārs:⁴³⁸ in exchange for their services and loyalty, local scholars, like Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, were given material rewards, including lucrative posts and even *suyūrghāls*.⁴³⁹ However, men like Yazdī were important (and potentially dangerous) to the imperial center, not only because of their social standing and their political connections with potentially dangerous rivals of the Tīmūrid house, but also because of the particular configurations of esoteric knowledge and literary skills they possessed. Princes needed men with such knowledge and skill at their disposal because they were essential for their attempts to embody sacred kingship and to build a universal empire, both of which were requisite for claiming Tīmūr's legacy as Ṣāḥib-Qirān. Despite their great utility to emperors, the particular set of skills

⁴³⁸ Such administrators were themselves always looking to secure their positions by making connections with both the Shāh's court and with other local leaders; men like Amīr Chaqmāq, Shāh Rūkh's appointed governor of Yazd, established alliances both with the pādishāh himself and with the princes governing the provinces. Shāh Rūkh had appointed Chaqmāq to Yazd (a second time) in order to keep an eye on Sulṭān Muḥammad's growing power. (Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 253. However, the Amīr also cultivated ties with Sulṭān Muḥammad, whose sister (Payanda Biki) he had married. Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 256, 59. Chaqmāq was also married to one of Bāysunghur b. Shāh Rūkh's daughters, Bībī Fāṭimah (to whom he had been Lalah). Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 232. 37

⁴³⁹ For example, as the *Jāmi' al-Khayrat* indicates, members of Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's family were the Superintendents of the Ruknīyah Madrasah in Yazd, a position from which he most likely benefited. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 70. See also: Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 36. Binbaṣ also reports that Sulṭān Muḥammad offered Yazdī large material incentives for joining his rebellion. Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 63. Later on, Bābur Khān gave Yazdī his native town of Taft as a *suyūrghāl*; although Yazdī would then support Pīr Būdāk (Jahān Shāh Qarā Qoyunlu's son) in place of Bābur. (Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 74.)

these men wielded, taken together with their local prestige, popular following, powerful alliances, and landed wealth, also posed a threat, if used in support of a rival claimant.⁴⁴⁰

In a handful of sources it is presented that Shāh Rūkh interrogated Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, demanding to know why he had encouraged Sulṭān Muḥammad’s revolt. Apparently Shāh Rūkh had been informed that Yazdī had composed some verses, using astrological figures of speech to encourage the uppity prince’s insubordination, saying: “Old is the celestial sphere, and young is your lucky star / Better the old give fortune to the young.”⁴⁴¹ Ultimately, Shāh Rūkh spared Yazdī’s life because the scholar responded nobly and judiciously: as Aḥmad Kātib puts it, Yazdī claimed that, despite the allusion to the stars, he had advised Sulṭān Muhammad based “neither upon the stars, astronomical study, nor divinatory miracles (*nah az nujūm va hay’āt va karāmāt*)” but rather “by pure, rational argument (*bih dalīl-i vāḥiḥ-i ‘aqlī*).”⁴⁴² In other words, Yazdī claims to have simply made a logical assessment of the circumstances without invoking

⁴⁴⁰ Invoking Shāh Rūkh’s endorsement of the work of the Haratī scholar, Muṣannifak, who countered the political arguments of western Iranian scholars in his *Tuḥfat al-Salāṭīn*, Binbaş demonstrates that Shāh Rūkh backed Haratī intellectuals in a rivalry between intellectuals of Khurāsān and their peers in Fārs. Further, Binbaş views Shāh Rūkh’s extraordinarily harsh treatment of the intellectuals of Fārs after Sulṭān Muḥammad’s revolt against the backdrop of these ideological differences which characterized the intellectual circles on either side of the empire; Binbaş explains that the Fārsī intellectuals sided with Sulṭān Muḥammad as part of project to assert their intellectual independence from Shāh Rūkh. Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 9, 59-61. However it seems that both the shāh and the Fārsī notables were probably less motivated by ideology than by political expediency. In other words, Shāh Rūkh’s backing of Haratī intellectual arguments seem more likely a political move, designed to counter the potentially threatening power of the scholarly circles in the West should they support a political rival, as they in fact did. Shāh Rūkh never rejected the services and skills of Fārsī scholars out of hand; in fact, as we have seen, he employed these scholars often. Similarly, even if the western notables did promote a ideological agenda that differed from the Khurāsānī scholars, the Fārsī intellectuals’ support of a rival claimant does not necessarily point to any sense of solidarity based on ideology as much as it does to solidarity with other local notables, based on established ties with the (current) local rulers.

⁴⁴¹ The verses are not included in any of the Yazdī historians’ works, but are reproduced in Khvāndmīr: Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 3: 635. See also: Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 66.

⁴⁴² Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 241. Mufīd summarizes Yazdī’s argument a bit, but the characterization is essentially the same. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 301. Also see discussion in Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 66.

the powerful arts, which were to be reserved for the pādishāh's own project of Ṣāhib-Qirān-making. For this reason, he could be pardoned.

The sources also tell us that Mīrzā 'Abd al-Laṭīf, the son of Ulugh Bayk, Shāh Rūkh's brother, interceded on Yazdī's behalf, saying that his expertise was needed in Samarqand, working at Ulugh Bayk's famous observatory.⁴⁴³ The combination of sciences that Yazdī learned among the scholars of Iṣfahān, Shīrāz, and Yazd made him indispensable to Shāh Rūkh's (as well as Sulṭān Muḥammad's) project of empire. This was a project that leaned heavily on knowledge of the stars and other forms of divination, or more accurately, on the ability to put that knowledge to rhetorical use and to connect those kinds of knowledge to narratives from the mythical past. Now, Binbaş actually finds little evidence that Mīrzā 'Abd al-Laṭīf's intercession ever occurred.⁴⁴⁴ Even if he is correct, the Yazdī historians' inclusion of the story demonstrates just how central Yazd's scholarship was to their understanding of how their city's progeny participated in the construction of the empire.

We must remember, though, that the spiritual/intellectual networks in which Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī travelled were rooted in the local economy of Fārs's soil. With this in mind, we must understand that Shāh Rūkh's need of Yazdī went beyond the literary application or exploitation of his knowledge and skills; the pādishāh also needed to partake of the social capital associated with Fārs's patrician families and to benefit from the fruits of the local economy. Yazd, in particular, excelled in the

⁴⁴³ This story is recounted in *TJY*: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 241. Further, we should recall that it was Ulugh Bayk who had ordered the inscription on Tīmūr's tomb that gave that conqueror's lineage from Buzanchār, the offspring of Alān-Go'a and the "Radiant Being" of Mongol mythology, and presented that legend in such a way that it drew an implicit connection between Tīmūr, Buzanchār, and the messianic, apocalyptic figure of the Prophet Jesus and Imām 'Alī. See footnote 394.

⁴⁴⁴ Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 67-8.

production of fine silk brocades, an industry that contributed to the wealth of the city's notable families and helped fund the endowments for local institutions of learning and ritual visitation, particularly the sites associated with the Ni'matullāhī family in Taft, a family to which both Yazdī and his teacher, Ṣā'in al-Dīn Turka had close ties.⁴⁴⁵ Silk, along with agricultural wealth, literally fueled the transmission of knowledge in Yazd. As a result, the knowledge and power the pādishāh and his rivals demanded (and feared) from Yazd were inseparable from the silk industry; the empire needed a share of Yazd's silk as well as her sagacity.⁴⁴⁶ A curious set of incidents concerning Shāh Rūkh's obsession with snatching the honor of producing the annual *kisvah*, the covering for the *Ka'bah*, away from his rivals in Egypt, the Mamlūks, demonstrates this need of Yazd's silk.⁴⁴⁷ Indeed, the city's scholars were woven tightly into that fabric. It turns out that, in pursuit of this undertaking, it was the workshops of Yazd that were given the task of fashioning the *kisvah* for the holy shrine.⁴⁴⁸ Significantly, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī himself was called upon to deliver the item to the royal court in Hirāt before its scheduled departure for Egypt in 848/1444.⁴⁴⁹ In his presentation of the silken textile to

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., 30-1, 71, 82-3.

⁴⁴⁶ On the significance of silk brocade to the Mongol performance of kingship Thomas Allsen notes Rashīd al-dīn Faḡl Allāh's summation of Chingīz Khān's stated objectives: " 'As my quiver bearers are black like a thick forest and [my] wives, spouses and daughters glitter and sparkle like a red hot fire, my desire and intention for all is such; to delight their mouths with the sweetness of the sugar of benevolence, to adorn them front and back, top and bottom, with garments of gold brocade [*zar-baft*].'" As cited in: Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A cultural history of Islamic textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 12. The original Persian can be found in: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *Jāmi' al-Tavārīkh*, ed. Bahman Karīmī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Iqbāl va Marvī, 1988), 1: 439.

⁴⁴⁷ These events are recorded in 'Abd al-Razzāq Samarqandī's *Matla'-i Sa'dayn*. For a full account of the affair and a bibliographical sketch, see Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 63-5. The struggle with the Mamluks for rank of "Servitor of the Two Holy Cities" flared up with the Aq Qoyunlus later on as well, and similarly involved Yazd and Yazdī silk, a point that we will discuss in the chapter on the Ni'matullāhī family. See: John E. Woods, *The Aqquyunlu: Clan, Confederation, Empire* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 1999), 107-8.

⁴⁴⁸ It was Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī himself who first urged Shāh Rūkh to have the *kisvah* sent. He apparently requested to take the cloth himself. Binbaş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 64.

⁴⁴⁹ A full discussion of the sources for Shāh Rūkh and the *kiswah* can also be found in Ibid., 63-5.

Shāh Rūkh at court, Yazdī stood as the representative of the intersecting intellectual and craft networks which had engendered the particular constellation of skills that he himself embodied and that the shāh's program of empire demanded for his competition with rival kings for the premier rank in power and piety. Moreover, Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's handing over the silken *kisvah* must be read as a ceremonial performance enacting ties of mutual trust and support between the pādishāh and the intellectual and economic networks from which Yazdī had come as an emissary, ties which were always attended by anxieties precisely because both parties needed the other so badly.⁴⁵⁰

With these examples we observe a certain reciprocity and symbiosis that characterized the relationship between the pādishāh and the notables of Fārs. The project of empire could only succeed by broadcasting the image of the king whose power was seen as ubiquitous, sacred, and bound up with the cosmic engines of history; furthermore, in order to construct such an image of universality and ubiquity and in order to defeat rival claimants to that image (both internal and external to the realm), the pādishāh needed the related technical knowhow and manufactured artifacts produced in the various corners of his empire. Additionally, he needed to share in the particular, local brand of prestige circulating among local notables, forging ties—sometimes marriage ties—with members of those families, in order to give himself a local presence in those places, a presence engendered not in terms of his transcendent,

⁴⁵⁰ After Shāh Rūkh, the Mamlūks secured the honor of delivering the *kisva* unchallenged for some time until Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū again did so in 871/1466. Uzun Ḥasan Aq Qūyūnlū also stirred up trouble with the Mamlūks when he pushed to deliver the cloth. As Tihirānī's *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah* states, Uzun Ḥasan had a *maḥmil* fashioned from Yazdī silk for his ḥajj caravan, and had it blessed by the head of the Ni'matullāhīs of Yazd, Shāh Ni'matullāhī II. This was a move that was probably done in imitation of Shāh Rūkh and was a clear projection of independence and legitimacy. See discussion in Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 107-8. Also see Tihirānī, *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah*, 553-4, 60-1.

universal, or alteritious attributes in this case, but manifested physically in space and time. In this way, he effected a claim to autochthony, even if only obliquely.

At the same time, the urban notables of the imperial provinces needed the king and his empire. They required the posts and patronage the pādishāh could provide, posts that provided access to power and, more importantly, literary commissions that allowed them to partake in the crafting of the shāh's imperial image. This was an activity that allowed the local notables to dictate the parameters of power and thus control the means of access to power. Once Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's image of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān had become standard, other historians, particularly writers of local history, could dress their sovereigns in that Ṣāḥib-Qirānī mantle too. For local historians, having a hand in tailoring the pādishāh's imperial robes was exceedingly useful precisely because, as we have seen, the fungible and liminal figure of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān could so easily be transferred to local claimants and used to negotiate the local principality's place within the universal realm.

6. Conclusion: Mirroring the Empire in Yazd

Still, despite its utility, such a need for an imperial image in line with Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's Ṣāḥib-Qirān became pronounced in each of the three local histories of Yazd only gradually. Having grounded our study of the figure of the Ṣāḥib-Qirān in the polemical controversies of Fārs, we can finally return to the local histories of Yazd, Each of these Yazdī histories began with the story of Iskandar, the father of world conquerors, and therein offered its own take on Yazd's place in the imperial realm. We recall that in Ja'farī's text, which was written toward the end of Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's

career, Iskandar still remains something of the brute, recognizable from the older local history tradition, in which authors tended to vilify Iskandar. In that text, Iskandar does leave his mark on Yazd, but Ja'farī does not portray him as a millennial restorer of justice. Ja'farī reserves that role for the Sasanian Shāh Ardashīr and his descendents. It is also significant that Ja'farī never uses the title *Ṣāhib-Qirān* for Tīmūr or any other king in his work. In fact, Tīmūr rarely even appears in the *Tārīkh-i Yazd*. Shāh Rūkh makes more appearances there, but only in so far as his deeds pertain to local events. Much more attention is given to Amīr Chaqmāq, the Tīmūrids' appointed Turko-Mongol governor of Yazd. Ja'farī's history, which he dedicated to the local Vazīr of Yazd, *Ẓiyā' al-Dīn Mas'ūd*, does not evidence any intent to negotiate a place for Yazd in a universal imperial project such as the one that his contemporary, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, was laying out. In that work, if Iskandar was to be a cipher for Tīmūr at all, it was solely to index Tīmūr's alterity (and perhaps brutality), as a conqueror from outside. Ja'farī's project is decidedly local.

On the other hand, Aḥmad Kātib's chapter on Iskandar does reflect the strain of thinking found in Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's works, and Mufīd's rendition follows in Aḥmad Kātib's footsteps; both frame their histories of Yazd in terms of its relationship with the imperial center. As we demonstrated earlier, both portray Iskandar as the restorer of universal justice and an adopted insider, in spite of his foreign origins. This Iskandar looks much more like the benevolent, contemporary pādishāhs, which both authors celebrate in their respective works: As for Aḥmad Kātib, he gives the highest praise to his contemporary ruler, Jahān Shāh Qarā Qūyūnlū. Although he does not call that king *Ṣāhib-Qirān*, he portrays him as a savior who restored order to the region

after it had been devastated by the violent disputes of Tīmūr's successors and the famines that had destroyed the land in the year 858/1454.⁴⁵¹ Mufīd's dedication to Shāh Sulaymān, with which we opened this chapter, explicitly makes the connection between Ṣāḥib-Qirāns— Iskandar, Tīmūr, and Shāh Sulaymān— the kind of connection that Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī had articulated so boldly, but which had become routine by Mufīd's time. In narrating the complete tale of Iskandar-i Rūmī's restoration of the world to justice, both Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd gave that world conqueror the honor of founding the city of Yazd. In this way, both authors made the story of Yazd's founding a central part of the greater narrative of Iskandar's conquest and his overturning of corruption, a narrative that could be transferred to any conqueror in later history.

In their histories of Yazd, Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd capitalized on what I have been calling the Ṣāḥib-Qirān's fungibility, that is, the ease with which the legacy belonging to any one Ṣāḥib-Qirān could be transferred and exchanged between each of the others across time and space. By unearthing Iskandar's traces at the center of the city's chronotopography at the very opening of their works, each of the authors of Yazd's local historians made that world conqueror's story locally relevant. Furthermore, both Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd, speaking "in the clothes of figuration" and "the cloak of metaphor," could place their city squarely at the center of contemporary politics, letting Iskandar speak for Tīmūr, Tīmūr for the current ruler, i.e. Jahān Shāh Qarā Qūyūnlū and Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī, respectively. In these authors' works, while Yazd may not have stood at the center of imperial court politics, as it did in Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's dynastic history of universal empire, the city certainly was an

⁴⁵¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn Kātib describes the devastating famine, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 271, ff.

important center of empire, where the intellectual and spiritual powerhouses of the realm were raised and acquired knowledge.

On this note, we recall from our earlier discussion that the Zoroastrian Pahlavī works' worst condemnation of "the Accursed" Iskandar centered on his destruction of institutions of knowledge and books and his scattering of knowledge to the wind. In that literature, the millennial savior, Ardashīr I righted Iskandar's era of injustice by painstakingly searching for and collecting the fragments of knowledge that had been lost. In the eyes of our local historians, because Fārs, and in particular, Yazd, housed the workshops where the knowledge—particularly the astrological knowledge—necessary for the maintenance and construction of empire was manufactured, then in order to make his realm flourish, the pādishāh needed to become the custodian of Yazd's knowledge. Relatedly, if the pādishāh was to rule his empire with prudence and justice, then it was equally important that he maintain a thorough knowledge of every corner of his realm, by manifesting a presence in all places. As we have said, he effected such a presence and garnered such local knowledge by installing military and bureaucratic officials in the provinces and by gathering intelligence through a variety of informal networks of informers.⁴⁵² But he also maintained this knowledge by inserting himself into local networks of people—intellectual/spiritual circles, craft circles, and mercantile networks—forging ties of patronage, political alliances, and business relations with the notables of his principalities.

Consequently, we must not only read the local histories of Yazd as repositories of local knowledge for local consumption; we must also read them as presentations of

⁴⁵² On such Empires' gathering of knowledge in Mughal India (and British Colonial India) see: C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

local knowledge for the benefit of the imperial court, particularly when these works were written for sovereigns (at least nominally), as Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd's were. In the case of Mufīd's work, I suggest that the author intends this first *maqālah* in his work of local knowledge to serve as an exemplary mirror, an admonition of the sovereign concerning his relations with his provinces, or as Mufīd himself puts it, "as a model for the masters of high rank." We began this chapter noting the irony in the fact that Mufīd praises Shāh Sulaymān so hyperbolically, calling him both the Iskandar of the Age and Ṣāhib-Qirān, titles that invoked the legacy of a true universal ruler, whose power and sacrality were held in common with kings of other ages, whose presence could be felt in the spaces of every locality in his realm, whose deeds had left tangible traces in every city, and whose knowledge penetrated every province, a knowledge that was informed by the local men of learning, whose work he had enabled. Though Mufīd bestows these titles upon his king, he himself has been forced to seek the patronage of other kings in other lands, having watched his own city atrophy, deprived of the sunshine of the pādishāh's gaze and having witnessed the subsequent dereliction and pillaging of the endowments that had previously sustained the city's institutions of learning. As we will examine in detail in the next chapter, the shāh had forgotten alliances with Yazd's most illustrious families,⁴⁵³ which in former years had strengthened both the city and the court. Since Yazd would no longer be able to produce scholars of the rank and skill of which Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī had been a model, the court could no longer benefit from the special knowledge Yazd had produced. Ignored by the imperial court, Mufīd was forced to seek his fortunes with

⁴⁵³ Such as alliances with the Ni'matullāhīs, a topic which will be discussed in chapter 4.

other princes in other lands. In sum, the Ṣafavid shāh had disrupted Yazd's prized networks of knowledge transmission and, having forced so many elites to emigrate, had strewn her formerly treasured knowledge across the cities of South Asia, not unlike the "Accursed" Iskandar had done in the Zoroastrian accounts.

Having read Mufīd's introductory chapter on Iskandar's story as an admonitory lesson on the proper relationship of the imperial realm to its provinces, as I have done in this chapter, Mufīd's curious praise of Shāh Sulaymān with which we began, now becomes less puzzling. Speaking in metaphor and allusion, Mufīd's words of acclamation for the Ṣafavī shāh, written from another prince's court, far away from home, were meant to be taken as a discreetly and respectfully framed admonition, exhorting the shāh to earn his birthright as the Ṣāhib-Qirān and as the inheritor of Tīmūr's and Iskandar's legacy, reminding him to preserve his court's ties with Yazd, ties that had helped build the imperial patrimony in the first place; it urged him to honor Yazd's noble families so that he might help cultivate its institutions of knowledge and, in turn, benefit from the knowledge and expertise its learned folk had to offer. In this first *maqālah* of his work, by reframing inherited stories of his city's past, Mufīd was sketching a model by which Shāh Sulaymān could redeem himself, reclaim his titles, and, following in Iskandar's footsteps, bring Yazd back into the fold of his empire and back to its former glory. But if this first *maqālah* in Mufīd's work introduced the model of kingship, the later chapters demonstrate by example the kinds of ties the emperor must pursue with Yazd's elites in order to secure his own stature and success.

Using the story of Yazd's founding at Iskandar's hands, the first chapter in each of the local histories of Yazd had theorized about the imperial sovereign's (or the *Ṣāhib-Qirān's*) place in the world (in fact, in the cosmos), and in particular, his role as an intermediary, who, by means of his simultaneously transcendent and immanent status, could be used by Yazdī historians to broker the relative position and status of the city of Yazd vis-à-vis the sovereign's realm as a whole. In the next chapter, we turn away from the ruins of the *Zindān-i Zū al-Qarnayn*, where we began our tour of Yazd, listening to echoes of the disputations that Yazd's historians had staged on the subject of imperial ideology and its applications. We now focus our gaze on the sites around the city where Yazd's notable scholars and spiritual leaders acquired the particular amalgam of knowledge that made them so valuable to the *pādishāh's* empire, and where these local notables forged relationships with fellow residents of Yazd, with their peers in other cities in other realms and with the elites at the imperial center. In so doing, we will explore the role these sites played in effecting the flow of resources, information, and people back and forth between the court, the various quarters of Yazd, and the cities around the world.

Chapter III

Mirroring the Heavens: The Ruknīyah Madrasah and the Rise of Yazd's Networks of Expertise

The wise men of subtlety and the subtle men of learned wisdom know that astrology is one of the miraculous wonders of the Prophet Idrīs (salutations and peace upon him and our Prophet). In all ages, the astrologers have been a necessity for amīrs and viziers, both young and old. In the region of increasing fortune of Yazd, a group became the cynosure of the great and the humble in that noble science and their rising stars began to shine.⁴⁵⁴

- Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī

1. Introduction

As we witnessed in the previous chapter, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī had tailored a style of kingship during the fifteenth century that proved both enduring and adaptable in the centuries after his death. While wearing Yazdī's suit of clothes, rulers wielded much power; indeed once manifested, the Ṣāhib-Qirānī mantle of Iskandar and Tīmūr, irrespective of the wearer, affected change among all those who beheld it, precipitating new waves of social formation that spiraled outward from the courts of Asia Minor, Iran, Central Asia, and Hindustan. But while the idea and regalia of such a ruler did very profoundly expand the scope of sovereigns' authority, the very appeal and currency of such a model of the kinship meant that the power to maintain and police that model

⁴⁵⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 3: 392.

remained largely out of the sovereigns' hands. Such power resided with those people who would craft the king's image for him, or with those who would manipulate such an idea of kinship for subversive purposes, in the interest of competitors, or simply adapt it to local movements far from the arena of the imperial court.

Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī's millenarian-style cloak of kingship remained charged and in play even in the last decades of the eleventh century A.H./seventeenth century C.E., so much so that in an admonitory and moralizing spirit of "The Emperor's New Clothes," Mufīd could dress his shāh in such finery, made lustrous by Yazdī silks, and in doing so, reveal how unworthy he was of wearing them. As we have already said, for Mufīd, a king seals his own legitimacy and increases both authority and power by bringing Yazdīs into his circle so that he may benefit from their unique skills—intellectual, literary, and technical; without Yazd, Mufīd would say to the shāh, the silken cloak of kingship is but a transparent fiction.⁴⁵⁵

Such was the signifying power of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's model of kingship centuries after its making. Of course, Yazdī's career was just one among those of a vast network of scholars that stretched far in both time and space; his voice was representative of a particular (albeit varied) perspective, shaped by the fields of knowledge that had been circulating among the loose networks of notable people in

⁴⁵⁵ Because of the powerfully millennial, presentation of Ṣāhib-Qirān Tīmūr in *his Zafar-Nāmah*, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī became reknowned for his sagacity and expertise in the esoteric sciences. In fact, outside of Fārs, in Central Asian oral tradition, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī became a legendary figure himself. As Ron Sela has shown, in the eighteenth-century Tīmūr-Nāmah tradition, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī actually enters Tīmūr's narrative, not simply as an author, but as a key actor in the plot, with extraordinary powers of perception. In that narrative, when Tīmūr receives a mysterious box from the Ottoman Sulṭān, Yıldırım Khān, which no one can open, it is Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī who discovers how to open it, and it is he who perceives that the box is actually the Ark of the Covenant (*tābūt-i sakīnah/shahādat/ahd*), which contains Iskandar's prognosticatory letter to Tīmūr, his heir, whom he calls "Iskandar the Second." Beside the letter are images of world conquerors from all times, past and future, and the tokens of all the prophets. Sela, *Legendary Biographies of Tamerlane*, 98-102. (See discussion in chapter 2, footnote 393, page 251).

Fārs, and had taken root in Yazd. Mufīd and his predecessors devoted their efforts to commemorating the wide net of actors that had inhabited the region all the way back to its origins, representing important people, places, and things and paying close attention to the relationships between them. The early years of the Tīmūrid age were prosperous and fertile ones for Yazd; although the deeds and influential writings of Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī and his contemporaries were among the choicest fruits of that age, the great works of the fifteenth century constituted but one—and according to Mufīd, the last— of many highpoints in the city’s history. Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī and his colleagues’ success had deep roots in the past. Each of Yazd’s historians sought to link these great men and great institutions to their predecessors, striving to show that Yazd’s greatness, significance, and influence had begun long ago.

In the previous chapter we explored the mythic origins of that greatness and that influence, which, for our authors, was the means toward attaining a central role for Yazd in the crafting of the empire’s mythology and signifying regalia; at the same time, it offered proof that such a role was not only legitimate, but inevitable. This was accomplished by means of a kind of *Uvaysī* connection, which found its power not by making any direct claim of contiguity between the ruling sovereign and those of the city’s mythical past, but by proposing a nonordinary link that transcended space and time and that was bound up with the turning of the cosmic wheels and the cycling of the ages. But neither Mufīd nor his forbearers wished to pin their city’s legacy upon such claims alone. Their countless biographical (and hagiographical) entries on notable persons, recounting their miraculous or heroic deeds, highlighting their influence at the court and their relationships with high officials there, their descriptions of the

buildings these folk constructed, and their accounts of great events that occurred in them, all do the work of building, brick by brick, an explanation of how men like Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī were made. With this explanation they proved beyond any doubt that Yazd was a fountainhead of empire. For this reason, in order to complement the work of the previous chapter, which mapped a claim of greatness that was based on a decidedly nonlinear, discontinuous vision of history, this chapter will follow a more linear, contiguous strategy of historical argumentation that was operative in the sources at the same time. In this chapter we will trace the relations of people and places, as well as the transmission of ideas that Yazd's historians present as representative of the city's greatness and more importantly, that allowed for the development of the particular kinds of expertise that made the elites of Yazd so important and influential at the empire's center.

Reconstructing the networks of actors in which Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and Yazd's local historians were active before, during, and after the Tīmūrid period and afterward will be a messy business. In part, it will involve charting marriage alliances between Yazd's families as well marriages with families from other cities. It will also involve tracking the affairs of local actors in the sea of bigger politics among the Atābayks, Īlkhāns, and Muẓaffarids, who preceded the Tīmūrids and, conversely, ferreting out high court officials' dealings and interests in Yazd. We might begin by assembling a neat narrative of Yazd's political history and then by presenting a genealogical diagram of each of Yazd's families. But this approach would obscure an important class of actors in these networks, around which Yazd's historians always center their narratives—the very monuments these people built, frequented, and had

themselves buried under. These places signified meaning and, as chronotopes, indexed history passively; people were motivated to act in response to these sites' semiotics. However, because they actively embodied history, these structures were actors in their own right, exerting a force upon other actors that is of the same kind as that which people exert upon them.⁴⁵⁶ Like our historians, we shall continue our tour of the city by visiting key monuments and letting these begin the narrative. We will eventually turn our sights to the people, events, and other places, but shall do so through the prism of these monuments.

The sites with which we will begin this chapter, the madrasah complexes of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 732/1331-2) and of his son Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (d. 733/1332-3)—called the Ruknīyah and the Shamsīyah respectively—are key not only because they hold a central place within the narratives of Yazd's history, but more importantly, because they represent great hubs of interaction between even the most distant actors along the chains of networks that pass through Yazd. To begin with, these madrasahs effected the mingling of architectural styles and the importation of alien building materials and techniques, drawing goods and technologies from elsewhere. Not only did these places affect the meeting of people, such as saints, rulers, scholars, calligraphers, and artisans from inside and outside the city, they also linked

⁴⁵⁶ This approach, which considers built structures as part of a network of interaction between historical actors, is informed by Bruno Latour's reformulation of sociological methodology, termed "Network-Actor Theory." Latour insists that a social explanation of a given phenomenon must encompass an exhaustive description of all of the chains of interactions between actors, where contact between such actors can be observed and contextualized, and where exchanges between actors are concrete. He intends such a project to replace the prevalent and defective one that seeks to discern "social forces" at work within a system and then invokes those reified "forces" to explain the nature of social interaction. Central to Latour's theory is that such a description of networks of actors must necessarily include inanimate objects along with animate ones. For him, objects are not simply media upon which human beings act, but must be considered as equally agentive actors that affect other actors in their own right. Latour lays out a methodology designed to integrate this theoretical orientation in Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, esp. 63-86.

all manner of things from different ontological classes across space and time. For example, they connected the outlying, agricultural fields of the city with the city proper, not just through waterways which make such connections literal, but also through the flow of goods and funds that nourished the endowments of such places. They also attracted investment from the court. They brought a stream of pilgrims who came from outside to make ritual visitations. Moreover, through those networks of canals and those movements of peoples, these sites came to be linked with other building complexes around the city, connections that were made not only by those who constructed those structures in the first place, but also by the historians who commemorated them in their works.⁴⁵⁷ They were also connected by the residents whose experiences of the city were structured in relation to particular constellations of buildings, ordered by itineraries of movement through the urban spaces, movements often characterized by ritualized visitation. Perhaps most importantly, as places where crucial bits of history are embodied and indexed, they actively linked actors of the past to those of the present. The story of Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī, our emissary of Yazdī influence after Tīmūr, with whom we started this chapter, meanders into these two sites as well; as I will contend, his ancestors and intellectual forbearers were connected to these places, but these sites were also constitutive for Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī himself since he frequented them and learned his trade there.

⁴⁵⁷ In his work on shrine complexes in early modern India, Nile Green characterizes the “memory space” of the Sufi shrine as a key sites of social formation migrant or diasporic communities. In the process, Green makes the important observation that the geographical relationships between shrine complexes mirror kinship relationships between shaykhs themselves. This “kinship” between spaces becomes reinforced and rearticulated in the textual, hagiographical traditions that surround the enshrined saints as well as in the ritualized activities that community members practice at the sites (such as the ‘urs ritual). Green, *Making Space*, 27-30.

In order to explain how a figure such as Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī could have risen to such a great height, this chapter will demonstrate that at the roots of the story is a major transformation Yazd's social hierarchy, a development that began during the Īlkhānid period, but whose consequences were still unfolding during the ninth/fifteenth century and continued even in the eleventh/seventeenth century. This transformation centers on the increasing authority, prestige, wealth, and power of the local sayyid families of Yazd over and against that of the local military families of the old Būyid and Saljūqid order, a competition that played out in patronage practices and was manifested in the very urban morphology of the city. These changes affected nearly every aspect of life in the city. Of relevance is Jean Aubin's important study on the sayyids of the city of Bam, which he composed in the mid-1950s. Aubin argued that local sayyid families in Bam began increasing their landholdings and political influence under the Mongols; they served as chief advocates of the local community, who were caught in the middle of the perpetual campaigning of the Turko-Mongol military elites. As savvy negotiators who controlled a considerable amount of wealth, the sayyids of Bam (and Mongol Iran more generally) played an active role in this military politics, albeit largely on the local level.⁴⁵⁸ But as, Aubin demonstrates, by the Tīmūrid period, these sayyids came to be depicted in the local historiography of Bam, not as wealthy, skillful local politicians, but rather as saintly figures whose power extended far outside of the local context and derived from otherworldly authority. Sayyids entered the narrative as sages who stood above the political fray, astounding and manipulating princes with their charisma and miraculuous deeds and protecting their communities,

⁴⁵⁸ Jean Aubin, *Deux sayyids de Bam au XVe siècle; contribution à l'histoire de l'Iran timouride*, vol. 7, *Abhandlungen der Geistes- Und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Klasse* (Wiesbaden: Verlag der Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur, 1956), 7-9.

not through political acuity, but through their piety, thaumaturgy, and access to heavenly knowledge.⁴⁵⁹ By the Tīmūrīd period, the sayyids resided in the realm of the saint, and their jurisdiction reached far beyond the local.

Aubin's work offers a provisional framework for understanding the rise of Yazd's sayyids as well, and his general observations about the changing socio-political role of Bam's sayyids—not to mention the changing strategies authors used to represent them—are corroborated by evidence about Yazd's sayyid families in the Yazdī local historiography. Nevertheless, in addition to telling us about the Yazdī sayyids' rise to power locally, the particular strategies and pathways along which Yazdī sayyids extended their power and accrued authority teach us much about the ways in which they were engaging with more universal ideological currents and were networking with other kinds of elites across the Islamo-Persianate world. Furthermore, the Yazdī sayyids' story teaches us much about the place that Yazd occupied in this world; the history and historiography concerning the rise (and fall) of Yazd's sayyids comprise a key strain in the narrative of empire in the late medieval and early modern Persianate world.

⁴⁵⁹ Aubin translates a long anecdote from the fifteenth-century compilation of *Bam-nāmah*, in which a certain sayyid (Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Ibrāhīm) protects the city from the ravages of war between two Tīmūrīd princes, the tyrannical Abā Bakr b. Mīrānshāh and Sulṭān Uvays in 811/1408. Abā Bakr attempts to pillage the city and take it over. He tries to strongarm the sayyid, but when the prince comes into the sayyid's presence, he is overwealmed by a numinous terror, which causes him to repent (*tawbah*) before the sayyid and to become his disciple. Later, the prince seeks permission from his master in order to force the population to help him prepare fortifications to defend against Sulṭān Uvays' inevitable attack. This burden on the population was to come at harvest time, when the people needed to gather the crops that would sustain them for the coming year. The sayyid simply replies, "*Vous connaissez mieux les affaires de ce monde. Moi je ne connais pas les affaires de ce monde.*" Yet, using his foresight (*dūrbīnī*) and miracles (*karāmāt*) the sayyid guides his disciple-prince to do right by appealing to his sense of faith, wisdom, and justice. Later, he even makes the prince pray for his enemies, Sulṭān Uvays and Sulṭān Husayn. *Ibid.*, 103-5.

As as this chapter will demonstrate, the sayyids achieved local predominance in Yazd, in part, because they were able to cement strong relationships with powerful *vazīrī* families at the imperial courts. As men of the pen, these men shared an intellectual and professional orientation as well as a common body of knowledge and skills. This particular intellectual orientation came to characterize the sayyid families' monumental building projects, madrasah complexes that overshadowed those of their local rivals. These complexes exemplified and promulgated the particular constellation of learning that would eventually come to characterize the blend of expertise that men like Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī brought to the Tīmūrid courts: the Islamic transmitted sciences, rhetoric, and the rational sciences— in particular, medicine and astronomy/astrology. On top of this, the sayyids were almost always interred on site. The corporeal remains of these descendents of the Prophet inevitably imbued these new complexes with a degree of blessedness that outshined that of their rivals who— no matter how pious— could not claim such a lineage. Moreover, a new thaumaturgical tradition of storytelling that was developing around these local sayyids invigorated the charismatic charge that relics of the Prophet's heirs naturally brought to those places with a compelling and immediately accessible mythology. Ultimately, the presence of these relics profoundly affected the rhythms of ritual life around the city. As the local sayyids' new complexes drew visitors away from older sites, they dramatically re-centered the ritual landscape of the city.

The sayyids continued to compete with other notable groups (and with one another) throughout the next four centuries both locally and globally, a rivalry that seeps into the ninth/fifteenth- and eleventh/seventeenth-century historiography of

Yazd. The significance of the story of the sayyids' rise was still very much "in play" for the historians of Yazd, who located the epicenter of this transformation of the city in the early fourteenth century, in a moment of conflict between Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, the local ruler. Yet, it is significant that none of Yazd's historians explicitly frames the transformation as a new social formation; for the Yazdī writers the events in question do not constitute a social conflict between two rival classes, but rather an episode of salvation history, a morality tale that witnesses the triumph of good over tyranny. This is a victory that produces a monumental change in the landscape of the city and sets in motion a chain of events that led to the good fortune of later sayyids, but does not create a new social order. In fact our historians' goal is to demonstrate the very opposite, that the sayyids had been preeminent since their arrival in the region. The Yazdī historians present the sayyids' victory as a return to order after a moment of *fitnah*, a renewal of divine justice, since their authority is, by definition, timeless. According to the Yazdī historians, the events in question confirm the perpetual saintliness of the sayyids, but when these later histories are examined critically, in juxtaposition with contemporary narratives and documentary evidence, we detect an attempt, beginning in the Tīmūrid era, to meld the archetype of the sayyid with that of the saint in historical writing, that is, to recast the story of the sayyids' political, social, and economic rise in an idiom that was borrowed from hagiographical writings on Sufi saints, which center on morality and miracles. In doing so, our three historians use these events to promote their own political agendas and to comment upon contemporary events, in particular, those events that concerned the relationship between Yazdī notables and those of the imperial court.

To recapitulate: our goal in this chapter is two fold. On the level of history, we seek to understand how and when the sayyids came to attain such success in Yazd and the empire at large and how they made Yazd into a real imperial center. On the historiographical level, we wish to comprehend how later historians understood these transformations and how the stories chosen to epitomize such transformations were made to inflect the master narratives of the ninth/fifteenth- and then eleventh/seventeenth-century accounts of the city, narratives that were tacitly engaged in contemporary politics. In short, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātīb marshal commemorations of local sayyids' saintly beneficence to hold on to Yazd's claim of greatness at a moment when Tīmūr's polity was disintegrating. On the other hand, Mufīd paints a picture of a lost golden age as a roadmap to recovery. In all cases, this is a story that is made to play out in the very topography of the city—a story that the monuments themselves tell.

Our exploration is organized into five sections. The first section begins with Mufīd's voice, laying out that author's treatment of the Ruknīyah complex and presenting his narrative of its founder's life. We then compare Mufīd's account with that of his predecessors. In so doing, we shall take stock of the interlinked anecdotes that comprise the historiography of the Ruknīyah complex and identify the rhetorical figures through which the Yazdī historians configured their accounts of this moment in the city's history. Moreover, by tracing the changes in these accounts' significance over time, we begin to explore how the authors used the stories about this madrasah complex to function in the greater narrative of the city's history. In section two, we disassemble the central narrative in each of the accounts of the Ruknīyah, i.e., the

rivalry between Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and the Atābayks, the contemporary rulers of Yazd. Here we make a tactical digression and focus our attention on the elements of the narrative dealing with the Atābayks. We relate the portrayals of the Atābayks in Ruknīyah story to their depiction elsewhere in the Yazdī historiography, calling attention to some major inconsistencies. Then, in order to make sense of these inconsistencies, we compare the Yazdī historiography to portrayals of the Atābayks in works that were composed contemporaneous with the events depicted in the Yazdī histories (i.e., during the fourteenth century). This will help us understand historiographically how the Yazdī authors intended the figures of the Atābayks to function within their emplotment of Yazd's history. Furthermore, with a view to clarifying Yazd's history outside of the local historiographical tradition, the comparison with these earlier texts will allow us to complicate the Yazdī historians' rather pat presentation of the Atābayks' relationship with the Īlkhāns, their viziers, and the Yazdī sayyids. This will put us in a better position to comprehend the sayyids' actual process of network building during the fourteenth century. Quitting this excursus into Atābayk history, in the third section we reconstruct the extended network of local sayyids and imperial men of the pen that was gradually coalescing around the new madrasah complexes of Yazd during Rukn al-Dīn's lifetime, paying special attention to marriage alliances, teaching relationships, and financial collaborations between Yazdī sayyids and the family of the Īlkhānid grand vizier and historian, Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh. Here we demonstrate the Yazdī authors' desire to cement the relationships between people to relationships between urban sites, i.e., the new madrasah complexes these people constructed. In this section we reread the

Yazdīs' problematic presentation of the conflict with the Atābayks against the backdrop of the rise of new networks of elites who were slowly shoring up novel modes of authority and expertise for themselves, which took root in their new madrasah complexes. The fourth section returns to the Yazdīs' detailed descriptions of the Ruknīyah complex itself. Here we consider the authors' accounts of the madrasah's function, which they emphasize had been designed to be a center for astronomical knowledge, the very field of expertise which would later make Rukn al-Dīn's descendent, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, so useful and potentially dangerous to the Tīmūrid court. The final section looks obliquely at the legacy of Rukn al-Dīn and the Ruknīyah in the Ṣafavid period and discusses the careers of famous Yazdī astrologers and imperial administrators in the first half of the dynasty's dispensation; it then compares Mufīd's own writings with contemporary chronicles and charts the degradation of Yazdī expert astrologers' influence and prestige within the imperial center during Mufīd's day.

2. Memories at the Madrasah Gate: The Ruknīyah and Yazdī Historiographical Tradition

A Picture in Mufīd's Words

Having left the Zindān-i Iskandar, we continue our tour of Mufīd's Yazd, zigzagging past other monuments in the old city. We stop at the Ruknīyah Madrasah complex inside the walls of the old city, in a plaza near the Masjid-i Jāmi' that had come to be known as Maydān-i Vaqt va Sā'at by the fifteenth century, an appellation that endures to this day. Today, only the dome structure of Rukn al-Dīn's tomb remains intact. However there are traces of portions of a wall one hundred and fifty kilometers north of the dome, covered in painted plaster with matching designs, a find that gives

some hint of the original complex's extent.⁴⁶⁰ It is worth noting that Irāj Afshār, the editor of the published editions of all three histories of Yazd, and a native of that city, records that even in the modern era supplicants still make entreaties at the sayyid's tomb.⁴⁶¹ This fact should offer some sense of perspective as we begin our study of this complex, for in the end, it is the sayyid's tomb, the source of his charismatic blessing, that survived the ages, not his madrasah or library. As we proceed, though Mufīd could not have known the fate of this building three hundred years after he wrote, he certainly knew which way the wind was blowing. Let us keep this fact in the back of our minds; at the risk of letting the present cloud our view of the past, it may add something to our understanding of where this building fit into Yazd's history.

As before, we shall begin with Mufīd's voice and work backward toward Aḥmad Kātīb and Ja'farī's accounts. Following in the footsteps of both his predecessors, Mufīd begins the entire chapter on Yazd's madrasahs with a notice on the Ruknīyah, followed by his son's Shamsīyah complex. Indeed their position at the very opening of the chapter should communicate the gravity these writers wished to attribute to these places. Just as the sites themselves, as chronotopes, proclaimed their own histories, i.e., their relationships with important people and significant places of the past, Mufīd's entries on the madrasahs are but highly adorned portals: they are hyperbolic paeans offering little concrete information about the structures themselves other than key but barebones bits of information, such as the date of construction, important graves present on site, and a bit of practical data about current ritual practice. Rather than

⁴⁶⁰ Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting", 25.

⁴⁶¹ Afshār presents this information about modern devotional practices at Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad's tomb in his editorial comments to TJ, which are located in the second half of his published edition of the work. Ja'farī, TY, 209.

offering accurate descriptions of the buildings, these entries serve as indexes that reference fuller narratives scattered about the text, facades opening onto hidden rooms, which—seen from the outside— seem magically more spacious than the walls around them are actually capable of containing; they are packed with figures of the past and accounts of distant places. This indexing is certainly operational in the earlier histories of Yazd, but those less encyclopedic works crowd much of those histories into the madrasah notices themselves. Mufīd’s entries are totally referential; as he would have it, the structures (and thus the notices that describe them) are composed almost entirely of historical narratives found elsewhere throughout the text:

The founder of that building heavenly loftiness, which became famous and well known as the Mother of Edifices (*Umm al-Biqāʿ*), is progeny of the Muṣṭavī house, the lush tree of the Murtaḏavī meadow, Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī. This building demonstrates the lofty ambition of his Excellency. Its high gateway is the envy of the inhabitable corners of the world. A pair (*juft*) of minarets, are unparalleled (*tāq*)⁴⁶² upon the surface of the earth for their stature and allure (*dil-ārāʿī*); its dome, *suffah*,⁴⁶³ and chambers are representative of the chambers and pinnacles of his Excellency. *Naẓm*:

Even though he saw its plan from afar,
impotent, he said, “O those endowed with true vision!”

*u ham chūn ʔarḥ-i ū bidīd az dūr
guft az ‘ajz k-ay ūlū al-abṣār*

“What a courtyard, of boundless amplitude!
What a roof— the sky of [the heavenly bodies’]
pathway!”⁴⁶⁴

*īn chih ṣaḥnī ast bī-karān u sa‘at
v-īn chih saḥqī ast āsmān-i hanjār*

⁴⁶² There is a clever play on the words *juft* and *tāq*. What is unique or singular (*tāq*) is bifurcated into a pair of minarets (*juft*). Although it has been reworded, Mufīd has lifted this figure directly from Aḥmad Kātīb’s description.

⁴⁶³ a large *ivān*.

⁴⁶⁴ *Hanjār* means road or by extension, the customary way. Dekhoda explains that the word comes from Sanskrit, *samkārā*, which means to walk about. The sky, is of course the customary pathway of the heavenly bodies. Because roads are often associated with flatness and straightness, at some point the term seems to have taken on another meaning, signifying the mason’s plumb, a tool used to makes sure roadways or walls are perfectly even and level. However, this latter definition is only found in Haim and Steingass (not Dekhoda) and it is unclear whether Mufīd or Aḥmad Kātīb knew this usage. Nevertheless, one can argue in favor of the authors intending the “mason’s plumb” meaning: In the following line, we find the word *paḡār*, which refers to an engineer’s compass for drawing circles. Hanjārs are used for drawing perfectly straight lines; panjārs are used for drawing perfect circles. The rhyme may be hinting at a relationship between the two. Mufīd is quoting this poem from *TJY*. However, in this verse, Mufīd has substituted “courtyard (*ṣaḥn*)” and “roof (*saḥq*)” for “(*rasm*)” and “(*naqsh*),” which are found in *TJY*.

<p>While the Universal Intellect is the architect⁴⁶⁵ of the firmament, on earth, no one has made such a perfect circle as this.⁴⁶⁶</p>	<p><i>'aql-i kull tā muhandis-i falak ast bar zamīn kas nazad chunīn parqār</i></p>
<p>Should someone give a description of this building, the rational mind would not believe what was said.</p>	<p><i>gar kasī vaṣf-i īn banā guftī 'aql bāvar nakardī īn guftār</i></p>
<p>Nevertheless, once the eye sees and the senses perceive, how can the rational mind deny the senses?</p>	<p><i>layk chūn dīdah dīd u ḥiss dar yāft 'aql ḥiss rā kujā kunad ankār</i></p>

The completion of this noble building, of whose rank the meaning of the phrase, “The garden of the gardens of paradise (*rawḍat al-riyāḍ al-jannah*),” is a sign (*āyat*), occurred in the year 725/1324-5.⁴⁶⁷ The reason for its construction has been written in the third article in this volume as part of the treatment of the circumstances of Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad. In the months of the year 732/1331-2, his Excellency, having hastened to the eternal world, was buried under the cupola of this building. Today, great and small, residents and travelers seek blessing and fortune at this blessed shrine; they come and go making entreaty and supplication. Praying for the desires of the two worlds, they find the honor of having them granted.

It has been written and mentioned in the *Tārīkh-i Jadīd-i Yazd* that Ḥaẓrat Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad built a library on the side of that madrasah and endowed three thousand volumes books for the seekers of knowledge. In fact he endowed so many villages, farms, gardens, shops, caravanserais, and mills that his accountant confessed his fear of inability and incompetence due to the number of those endowments.⁴⁶⁸

Immediately following up this entry, Mufīd inserts his notice on the Madrasah-i Shamsīyah complex of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the son of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, which he tells us is located in the quarter of the Chahār-Manār:

His Excellency, the virtuous sayyid and most knowing Murtaẓá, Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad built this edifice of heavenly loftiness in the year 727/1326-7 and was buried beneath the cupola of this building. The reason and description of its construction have been written in the third article of this volume as part of the treatment of the circumstances of this excellent man.

He is famous among people, and it is upon the tongues of both the elite and commoners that anyone who on Saturdays recites and intones the Sūrah of “Say: He is God, the One!” [*Sūrat al-Ikhlāṣ*] forty times at the tomb of the Ḥaẓrat

⁴⁶⁵ The word used is *muhandis*, which really means engineer.

⁴⁶⁶ *Parqār* is the engineer’s compass, which draws a perfect circle. It also means the perfect circle of heaven.

⁴⁶⁷ Here the word “*āyat*” means sign of God’s glory.

⁴⁶⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 654-5.

will find fulfillment of the desires of the two worlds. The inhabitants of Yazd (*dār-i 'ibādah-i tawfiq*) have chosen to pay a visitation to his Excellency on Tuesdays. They burn the oil of the yellow rose (*gul-i zard*) at the blessed tomb and pray; they achieve the object of their desire.⁴⁶⁹

Beyond the delectable language honoring these places, Mufīd provides little information about buildings themselves. Of course, he is sure to mention that the founders' blessed remains were interred on site and references supplicatory practices particular to each. This is in keeping with the popular shrine-book genre, which presented itineraries and ritual instructions for pilgrims visiting a given area.⁴⁷⁰ Other than this practical information, the entries themselves are rather spare; we must follow the pathways leading to stories found elsewhere in the text, which Mufīd has left for us in his references to the biographical entries on the founders, in the section on the lives of the Imāmzādigān of Yazd. It is in those stories that the real descriptions of these places can be found.

When we do turn to these pages, we find long entries on these two men, whose biographies Mufīd has laced together. As one would expect, the quantity of ink that Mufīd expended scribbling the names of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and his son Shams al-Dīn here and throughout the pages of his book was commensurate with the influence, wealth, and prestige these men held in the *mamālik* of Yazd and beyond. Rukn al-Dīn

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 3: 655-6. The ritual significance of the yellow rose is elusive. However, folklorists interested in Iranian lore have attempted to catalog the significances given to each plants; certain flowers have been thought to signify various meanings in Persianate folklore when given as gifts. For example, a lover who sends his beloved a yellow flower means to say, "Your absence makes me grow pale." See: Massé, *Persian Beliefs and Customs*. It is a stretch, but the use of yellow rose oil in visitation of the dead saint may have been meant to resonate with a sense of separation akin to the pallid color associated with lovesickness, so common a trope in mystical love poetry. In any case, the burning of aromatics at tombs was customary, and sometimes held divinatory value. See chapter in Massé on "Funeral Rites." Ibid., 84-95, esp. 90.

⁴⁷⁰ For a discussion of some examples of shrine-books or shrine-guides see Paul, "Histories of Herat.", DeWeese, "Sacred History for a Central Asian Town: Saints, Shrines, and Legends of Origin in Histories of Sayrām, 18th-19th Centuries."

Muḥammad's *tarjamah* opens with the indispensable words of encomium, together with a review of his noble lineage:

The jewelers of the string of shops of the bazaar of meanings, the money changers of the money-changing house of eloquence, the painters of the stories of wonders, the makeup artists of the marvels of narratives have adorned Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad thusly as the title of registers of reports of the progeny of the Ḥaẓrat-i Sayyid of virtues and lush tree of the meadow of the son of the prophet's chaste uncle [Abū Ṭālib].⁴⁷¹ And they adorned and ornamented the introductory pages of the circumstances of that man of lofty rank. The *silsilah* of the lineage of that Excellency connects, through several intermediaries, back to Ḥaẓrat Abī 'Abd Allāh, may God's greetings and peace be upon him. And as a consequence of that lofty lineage, that sayyid, is adorned with the ornaments of virtue and perfection (*faẓl va kamāl*), and has snatched up the ball of sainthood (*guy-i vilāyat*) in the field of miracles (*maydān-i karāmāt*) with the swiftness of the horsemen of the arena of sainthood (*ma'rikah-i vilāyat*). And the seat of judgeship of the Dar al-'Ibādah-i Yazd was adorned and ornamented through the bounty of his liberality.⁴⁷²

A bit of elucidation is necessary here. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad hailed from one of the illustrious Ḥusaynī sayyid families of Yazd and Abarqūh, known as the Āl-i Niẓām. (See Figure 1)⁴⁷³ While many key Ḥusaynī families of Fārs traced their lineage to Imām Mūsā al-Kāẓim, the Āl-i Niẓām, along with an important cousin clan, through Qāḍī 'Azūz, traced their line to the Imām's brother, 'Alī al-'Arīẓī bin Ja'far al-Sādiq. 'Alī al-'Arīẓī's descendent, Imāmzādah Abū Ja'far Muḥammad (known as Muḥammad bin 'Alī bin 'Abd

⁴⁷¹ "jawhariyān-i rastah-i bāzār-i ma'ānī va sarrāfān-i dār al-'iyār-i sukhandānī va chihrah-gushā'iyān-i gharā'ib-i hikāyāt va šurat-ārā'iyān-i 'ajā'ib-i rivāyāt 'unwān-i jarā'id-i akhbār-i sulālah-i ḥaẓrat-i sayyid-i abrār va dūhah-i chaman-i ibn-i 'amm-i payghambir-i aṭrār, Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad rā bi-īn gūnah ārā-sh dādah-and." In the text, the initial word, is misprinted as "jawhar-bān"; it should read "jawhariyān"—jewelers.

⁴⁷² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 543.

⁴⁷³ This table shows the lineages of the 'Arīẓī sayyids and their intermarriages. Because so many sayyids in these lineages share names or titles, in order to forestall any confusion, I have assigned an alphanumeric value to each figure on the chart. In this I am following the example of Binbaş who assigned a similar alphanumeric value to each person in his own genealogical table of the Āl-i Raẓī. Binbaş employed a capital Roman numeral to indicate generation, followed by a lowercase letter to indicate seniority within a generation. Because I am charting the Āl-i Raẓī family along with other important lineages, I have devised a slightly more complicated system of notation, which prefaces Binbaş's code with a capital letter designating the particular family line. For example, Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad is assigned the value "N.II". Throughout this chapter, I use this alphanumeric notation in parentheses after mentioning proper names. The reader should use these refer to Figure 1 for clarification.

Allāh in the earlier texts) later settled in Yazd and consequently plays a major role in all three histories of Yazd.⁴⁷⁴ In fact Aḥmad Kātib claims that there were thousands of Ḥusaynī sayyids descended from him.⁴⁷⁵ We will deal with Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad in full in the next chapter. For the time being, of all Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s descendents, we shall only concern ourselves with Rukn al-Dīn’s immediate forbearers, and these all found themselves honored with elevated positions in the local religious hierarchy. As for the line of succession, there is some confusion in the sources because, as we so often find, the various generations shared a very small pool of names and monikers. From what we can discern, the namesake of the Āl-i Niẓām, Niẓām al-Dīn-i Qavvām al-Dīn Sharaf-Shāh (N.α) was the Raīs of Yazd and *naqīb* of the sayyids. He is known for building a *khānqāh*, the Niẓāmīyah, in which he was buried, outside the city to the south, in the Dihuk neighborhood, beside the Mihrjard Gate, a site that later became a popular burial ground for sayyids. His son, Qavvām al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.I),

⁴⁷⁴ The sources are unanimous on Imāmzādah Muḥammad bin ‘Alī bin ‘Abd Allāh’s descent. “Imāmzādah-i Muḥammad bin ‘Alī bin ‘**Ubayd Allāh** (the later sources say ‘Abd Allāh) bin Aḥmad al-Shu‘arāī bin ‘Alī al-‘Arīzī bin Ja‘far-i Ṣādiq” in Ja‘farī, *TY*, 106. “Muḥammad bin ‘Alī bin ‘**Abd Allāh** bin Aḥmad bin ‘Alī al-‘Arīzī bin Ja‘far-i Ṣādiq” in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 151. Characteristically for Mufīd, the same lineage is laid out in a rather more verbose and florid manner in his treatment: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 520.

⁴⁷⁵ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 154. For a discussion and family trees of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad’s ancestry see: Jean Aubin, "Le patronage culturel en Iran sous les Ilkhans: une grande famille de Yazd," *Le monde iranien et l’Islam* 3 (1965): 108-11. Also see: Afshār, *Yādgar’hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 302-5 (especially 04). There, Afshār records the lineage from Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad as follows: 1. Imām Ja‘far al-Ṣādiq 2. Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī ‘Arīzī 3. Aḥmad Shu‘arāī 4. ‘Alī (apparently buried at Nā‘īn) 5. **Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad** 6. ‘Ubayd Allāh 7. Aḥmad 8. Abū Muḥammad Ḥasan 9. Abū al-Ṭayyib Zayd 10. Abū Muḥammad 11. Abū al-Mu‘ālī ‘Arabshāh 12. Abū Muḥammad Sharafshāh 13. Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī (Naqīb) 14. Sayyid Qavvām al-Dīn Muḥammad 15. **Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad** 16. Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad. This *silsilah* contradicts some of the information presented in Yazd’s local histories. For example, Afshār has Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad’s father as Qavvām al-Dīn rather than Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad. Afshār’s family tree diagram also includes a rough sketch of three cousin clans. The first was sired by ‘Alī the elder son of Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad. The second descends from ‘Ubayd Allāh bin Abū Ja‘far Muḥammad’s younger son, Fakhr al-Dīn Abū Ja‘far. The third descends from Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad’s younger brother, Jalāl al-Dīn Aḥmad, who became the origin of the ‘Arīzī sayyids of Nā‘īn, a major town between Yazd and Iṣfahān. Afshār also mentions Taj al-Dīn Ja‘far, known as Sayyid Panhān who also hailed from ‘Arīzī sayyids. We discuss him elsewhere.

known as Ibn al-Ra'is, who was Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.II)'s father, was also the *naqīb* in his day. Qavvām al-Dīn was buried in his father's *khānqāh*, a move that spurred the growth of the site as a prestigious burial ground for sayyids. The Yazdī texts incorrectly relate that Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad's father was named Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad Qāẓī (N.I.b), who was actually Qavvām al-Dīn's brother. The *vaqf-nāmah* of the family's endowments, *Jāmi'-i Khayrāt*, contradicts the Yazdī historians' lineage, stating that Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad was Qavvām al-Dīn's own son.⁴⁷⁶ In any case, on account of Niẓām al-Dīn and Qavvām al-Dīn's eminence, the site remained a popular cemetery long afterward;⁴⁷⁷ in fact Mufīd writes that the place (known, in his own era, as Maḥallah-i Mīr Chaqmāq, owing to the dominance of Mīr Chaqmāq's massive complex, built in the Tīmūrid period) was still a site of visitation at the time of his writing (1083/1672-3).⁴⁷⁸ Nonetheless, it seems that while the Niẓāmī sayyids of Yazd occupied elevated positions in the region of Yazd, they had not yet found (or sought) ministerial positions in the high *dīvān* or alliances that brought them close to the imperial courts; they were local authorities, occupied with the judiciary and affairs of the Prophet's descendants. This will begin to change at the turn of the eighth *Hijrī* century, with figures such as Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.b).⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁶ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 3. Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 305 (note 3).

⁴⁷⁷ As for example, Quṭb al-Dīn, and Khvājah Awjī and others, mentioned in Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's texts. Ja'farī, TY, 118. In the same place, Ja'farī also claims Rukn al-Dīn's father Niẓām al-Dīn Muḥammad also built a *khānqāh* there in addition to his *gunbad*. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, TJY, 172. For a discussion of this site and the figure of Qavvām al-Dīn, see: Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 332-3.

⁴⁷⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, JM, 3: 535.

⁴⁷⁹ Aubin cites references in Rashīd al-Dīn to another of Niẓām al-Dīn's other descendents (whose exact ancestry is unclear), Niẓām al-Dīn 'Alī b. Maḥmūd b. Maḥfūz b. Ra'īs Yazdī (known alternatively as Ibn al-Ra'īs, like his ancestor, or Niẓām Yazdī). Aubin, "Le patronage culturel en Iran sous les Ilkhans: une grande famille de Yazd," 111. There is no trace of this figure in the Yazdī histories or the *Jāmi'-i Khayrāt*. I suspect JT may actually be referring to Qavvām al-Dīn's brother, Niẓām al-Dīn, whom the Yazdī historians mistake for Rukn al-Dīn's father.

In short, although Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad had inherited prestige and wealth from his ancestors, Mufīd structures his *tarjamah* around thaumaturgical evidence of his saintly character rather than around simple pedestrian accounts of his wealth and status. At the same time, despite the fact that his story is strewn with miracles, we don't find many of the elements of the familiar hagiographical schemes of the late medieval period, which are so often used to describe Sufis in other texts. We find no summary of his youth, no mention of his coming of age, no discussion of his interaction with a master, no mention of his followers. Moreover, as I will show, despite the plethora of miracles that surround the saint, he doesn't "do" miracles the way Sufi saints do them. So, while Rukn al-Dīn is a sayyid and indeed, a saint (whose tomb becomes a font of blessing and a site of ritual visitation), his portrayal is not quite that of a Sufi. The narrative has the feel of being in between genres, as though the author is still not quite sure how to cast Rukn al-Dīn: The transformation that sayyids like Rukn al-Dīn were undergoing in the fourteenth century had marked them with the residue of ambiguity that remained even as Mufīd was penning his work centuries later. Unlike other hagiographical notices found elsewhere in the text, Rukn al-Dīn's account begins in the middle of things, once the sayyid's greatness had already been established. What's more, after invoking Rukn al-Dīn's lineage, Mufīd directly turns the narrative to the construction of the Ruknīyah Madrasah. In doing so, this building becomes the very anchor for Rukn al-Dīn's and his son's lives and the frame for the author's account of their deeds, both miraculous and mundane. In this way, the narrative begins with a conflict that, as we shall see, abounds with implications and, of course, with more wormholes to other narratives in the text:

In the days of [his] authority and the age of his power, in the quarter of “Time and Clock (*Vaqt va Sā‘at*)” beside the “Madrasah-i Şafavīyah,” which they called “Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāhī,”⁴⁸⁰ although he had designed a madrasah of lofty stature and a *gunbad* of elevated height, the skilled builders held back their hands from working (*banā’iyān-i chābuk dast rā bi-kār bāz dāsht*).

In those days, the governance of Yazd (city of tranquility) was under the dominion of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh [r. 673-696/1275-97]. He [Yūsuf Shāh] became troubled that the sayyid had planned his building in the neighborhood of that madrasah on account of the fact that the Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāhī was among the works (*aşār*) of his ancestors. An untamable grudge for revenge rose up, and he attacked the sayyid. Suddenly from the house of mysteries of the wheel of fortune (*nihān-khānah-i charkh*), the Juggler began to juggle and a strange affair came about. And for that reason, the villainous decree laid hold of that Excellency.⁴⁸¹

As Mufīd implies, the sayyid’s plan to build a new complex threatens to eclipse the prestige and fame of the Atābayk ruler’s ancestral madrasah complex. Now, in order to grasp the significance of this situation, the reader should recall that Rukn al-Dīn’s family cemetery had previously been located outside the old walls of the city, in the area where Mīr Chaqmāq would eventually build his complex. The sayyid’s choice to build a large madrasah complex and tomb inside the gates of the city, beside those of the ruling house was a bold move and may indicate that his family had already had already accrued a tremendous amount of power and prestige locally. The remaining coils of a rather tangled story then spring out from this tension between the sayyid and the sovereign, a competition, as Mufīd would have it, for mastery of the city’s skyline.

⁴⁸⁰ Atābayk Maḥmūd Shāh, who probably reigned from 626-39/1229-41.

⁴⁸¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 543-44. The figure of the juggler as a metaphor for Fate or the Divine destiny is common in Persian versification. In his chapter on jugglers in his fifteenth-century *Futuvvat-Nāmah-i Sulṭānī Vā’iz Ḥusayn Kāshifī* quotes the following two verses from a *qit‘ah* to this effect by the İlkhānid-era poet, Ḥakīm Aşīr al-Dīn Awmānī, who was a considered a model poet among litterateurs of Tīmūrid Herat, where Kāshifī himself wrote: “The juggler of the firmament, with the multi-colored firmament in his breast, makes a turn and passes above us. / In this square, every moment, he whisks into concealment one of the children of Adam, and brings forth another. (*ṭās-bāz-i charkh bayn charkh-i mulamma‘ dar barash / mī zanad kharkhī va bar bālā-yi mā mī guzarad / va andar īn maydān zi-farzandān-i Ādām dam bih dam / mī kunad panhān yakī va dīgārī mī āvārad.*)” Kāshifī, *FNS*, 338.

But as we will soon discover, both men have a lot more at stake in this conflict than pride. The Atābayk soon gets nasty:

The explanation of this discourse and the particulars of this synopsis are as follows: In that time, a Christian came with all his wealth out from the region of the unbelief, into the realm of piety of Yazd and took up his residence. He built a treed garden in the Quarter of Fahādān, and in Ahristān he constructed a garden, known as Bāgh-i Tarsā (The Garden of the Christian), and a mill. When rumor of his wealth fell upon tongues and in mouths, burgling swindlers (*tarrārān-i khānah-bar andāz*) entered his house one night by a ruse. Mercilessly, they separated his head from his torso with a knife, snatched up whatever jewels and cash he had, and carried it off. Now, Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, who had planted the sapling of rancor for the sayyid in the field of his breast, nourished it with the water of villainy and enviousness; he did not bear in mind [the following] sentiment. *Bayt*:

Wherever jealous rancor lights the fire, first of all, it burns the rancorous ones too.	<i>ḥasad har jā ātish bar farvarad ham az avval ḥasūdān rā bisūzad</i>
--	--

He implicated (*nasbat dād*) the Sayyid in this heinous affair and caused the purity (*ṭahārat*) of the vestments of that Excellency to be polluted with the stain of treachery. Without establishing any sin on the part of that dear one, he humiliated him and put him under torture. He struck his body with nearly a thousand [lashes of] whips and canes, and after many humiliations and countless torments, which no eye has the fortitude to witness and no ear has the strength to hear, he shackled him with chains and bonds and imprisoned him in the Chāh-i Qal‘ah- i Khurmīz⁴⁸² ... *shī‘r*:

Anyone who establishes the practice of oppression, places bonds upon his own hand and foot.	<i>har kih āyīn-i zulm pīsh nahād band bar dast u pā-yi khvīsh nahād</i>
If, for some days, he raises his head, in the end, his fate knocks him off his feet.	<i>chand rūzī agar sar afrāzad dahrash ākhar zi-pā dar andāzad⁴⁸³</i>

After a series of similar verses on oppression, Mufīd continues by explaining that the tyrant, still hungry for vengeance, then probed the city for the sayyid’s fourteen-year-old son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.b), but the boy had been safely hidden in the

⁴⁸² Khurmīz is near Mihrīz (formerly Mihrījard) southeast of the city, and according to the Yazdī tradition, was built by the Sasanian king Hurmūz, son of Anūshīrvān, and was named after him. (He built a village that was originally called Hurmūz and, of course, a *qanāt*.) Anūshīrvān also granted the area of Mihrījard to Hurmūz’s sister, Mihr-nigār, from whose name came the name for the town, Mihrījard (or Mihrigard). Both figures built many buildings in Yazd. See Ja‘farī, TY, 14, Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, TJY, 41-42, Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfāqī, JM, 1: 25-26.

⁴⁸³ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfāqī, JM, 3: 544.

house of a loyal friend, Ḥajjī ‘Alī Astarābādī in Kūshk-i Naw. The author then reports that another devotee, Khvājah ‘Alīshāh, who lived in that same neighborhood, had a dream:

One Friday night he went to sleep and the horseman of sleep took possession of the fore-court of the courtyard of his mind: In the realm of dream (*‘alām-i ru’yā*) he approached the Ḥaẓrat who has the sublimity of the Prophet of the End of Time (upon him the blessing of God), the king of beneficence. And from that Ḥaẓrat, there came a sigh: “My son, Shams al-Dīn is hiding in the house of Ḥajjī ‘Alī, withdrawn into concealment from the gaze of his rivals. Go there and give him a mule to ride and a thousand dīnārs for travel expenses so that he may direct himself to the Dār al-Sulṭānah-i Tabrīz. Call me to account for its recompense on the Day of Retribution (*va ajr-i ān dar rūz-i jazā’ az man bāz khvāh*).”⁴⁸⁴

The Khvājah does as the Prophet Muḥammad instructs him in the dream, and the young Shams al-Dīn sets off clandestinely for Tabrīz. But the journey is arduous.

Overcome with thirst in the desert, he is about to give himself up for dead when

“suddenly rain poured down from the clouds, and the mouth of hope of that Excellency became full of water (*sīr āb gardīd*).”⁴⁸⁵ At that the youth swears an oath that:

when he obtained means and worldly property, he would erect a fortress (*qal‘ah*) there and would make flow a spring of water. Long afterward, he did acquire what he had sought and he fulfilled (*vafā nimūdah*) the oath that he had sworn. In that very desert he drew up the building plans for a lofty fortress containing a *chihīl-khānah*, public bath, mosque, market, shops, cisterns (*maṣna‘ah*), high towers, and an iron door. This was named “Nuh Gunbād (Nine Domes)”... And there was a village four leagues away named Ahrikān,⁴⁸⁶ having purchased this, he made the water from it flow into the middle of the fortress. And having planted orchards and gardens, he commanded forty people to make their home (*tawaṭṭun*) there. And on behalf of every one who had settled there, he

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid., 3: 545-6.

⁴⁸⁵ Ibid., 3: 548-9.

⁴⁸⁶ This village is only mentioned in this one point in the work. I have been unable to identify it from other sources. The village of Ahrikān is also mentioned in *JK*, in connection with the *qanavāt* of Nuh Gunbad. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 125. Mufīd does not mention a place called Ahrikān anywhere in his geographical work, *Mukhtaṣar-i Mufīd*, but does mention in passing an “Ahrīstān” in the course of his entry on Yazd. I suspect a copyist’s error. Muḥammad Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *Mukhtaṣar-i Mufīd*, ed. Seyfeddin Najmabadi, 2 vols. (Wiesbaden: Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989), 160.

purchased villages, farms, and gardens and converted them into endowments (*bar ān vaqf sākht*) and stipulated (*muqarrār kard*) that the yield of those was to be spent (*şarf gardad*) on food for the renunciate dervishes and the children of the path [of God] (*fuqarā va abnā' al-sabīl*).⁴⁸⁷ And the endowments he established were written and recorded in the registers.⁴⁸⁸

The narrative then returns to current time. Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad arrives in Ūjān-i Tabrīz, Āzarbāyjān, capital of the Īlkhānid pādishāh, Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd. The scene changes abruptly, and we are taken into the bedchamber of Abū Sa'īd's Grand Vizier, Ghīyāş al-Dīn Muḥammad (H.III.b), the son of Khvājah Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh (H.ii), who had been grand vizier of Ghāzān Khān and author of the renowned world history, *Jāmi' al-Tavārīkh*. After performing devotional rituals, the vizier retires for sleep, and the Prophet Muḥammad appears to him in a dream:

He laid his head upon the pillow of repose (*bālīn-i farāghat*). In the world of sleep (*ālam-i nawm*), his eye found illumination (*rūshanāyī*) before the beauty of the world-adorning Sulṭān of the throne of prophecy (*jamāl-i Jahān-ārā-yi sulṭān-i sarīr-i risālat*) and the Şāhib-Qirān⁴⁸⁹ of the principalities of majesty (*mamālik-i jalālat*), upon him the most virtuous greetings and the most perfect blessings.⁴⁹⁰

In the language of miraculous inimitability (*zabān-i mu'jiz*), the Prophet introduces Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, whom he calls “my son” (*farzand-i man*) a second time and requests that Ghīyāş al-Dīn bring him before the pādishāh to tell his story and ask for assistance. The vizier wakes up, locates Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, and brings him to Abū Sa'īd.⁴⁹¹ The boy convinces the sovereign of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh's villainy and of the innocence of his own father. The king dispatches his *īlchī* to Yazd to admonish the Atābayk and to free the sayyid. Before giving us this segment of the story in detail,

⁴⁸⁷ With this phrase, the author may simply mean “food for the poor and for travelers.”

⁴⁸⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 548-9.

⁴⁸⁹ Mufīd is the only one of the three Yazdī historians to use this term Şāhib-Qirān as a moniker of the Prophet Muḥammad.

⁴⁹⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 550.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 3: 549-51.

however, Mufīd makes a detour to explain the close relationship that developed between the *vazīr*, Ghīyāṣ al-Dīn Muḥammad and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad:

He devoted his complete ambition to the education of Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad and adorned that cypress of the garden of the sayyids with a robe of honor and entrusted him [Shams al-Dīn] with the post of glorious rank of the Ṣadārat-i Mamālik of the entire realm... And by the intercession of the vizier... everyday the dignity and elevated rank and magnificence of that Excellency increased and, hour by hour, his honor and station increased in the eyes of the Royal Excellency. It reached the point that august princes, high-ranking commanders, efficient viziers, noblemen and notables of the various regions and cities put the ring of obedience in their ears and drew the mantle of obedience over their shoulders. Also, to that Excellency [Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad], the vizier (*dastūr-i a‘zam*) married his honored daughter (*ṣabīyah*),⁴⁹² who was the Bilqīs⁴⁹³ of the veil of chastity and honor and was the cypress of the garden of the vizierate and pomp.⁴⁹⁴

The narrative then returns to Yazd, where the father, Rukn al-Dīn, still in the dungeon at Khūrmīz, pronounces the following verse:

O heart, be patient about the calamities of fate; *ay dil ṣubūr bāsh bar āfāt-i rūzgār*
through patience, the end of your affair will *nīkū shavad bih ṣabr sarānjām-i kār-i tū*⁴⁹⁵
turn out well.

Thereupon we are told, “Suddenly the breeze of divine favor came blowing in... The *īlchī*, having been sent from the foot of the throne of *khilāfat* to the region of Yazd, issued an order for the release of the sayyid.”⁴⁹⁶ Upon arriving in the city, Abū Sa‘īd’s *īlchī* dispatches a band of men to free sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (here called the Second Joseph—Yūsuf-i Ṣānī)⁴⁹⁷ from the dungeon. There, they find a viperous (*tīrah-*

⁴⁹² One of the manuscripts (*naskhah-i vazīrī*) says that Ghīyāṣ al-Dīn gave Shams al-Dīn his “sister (*hamshīrah*)” in marriage rather than his daughter. This is consistent with all the other texts, which state that the bride was Ghīyāṣ al-Dīn’s sister. This is perhaps a scribal error in Mufīd’s text; a few pages later in this very same text, the author makes clear that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad was married to Rashīd al-Dīn’s own daughter (*ṣabīyah-i ṣulbīyah*). In figure 1, I give this woman the designation H.III.a.

⁴⁹³ Queen of Sheba.

⁴⁹⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 551-2.

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 3: 552.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 3: 553. The comparison refers to the sayyid’s having been thrown in a dungeon unjustly, like the Prophet Joseph. Of course, by calling Rukn al-Dīn the second Yūsuf, Mufīd has the effect of demonstrating how unworthy Yūsuf Shāh is of that name. Julie Scott Meisami studies the wealth of

şifat) snake curled up at the sayyid's feet, eyes keen with vengefulness (*tīz-chashm-i kīnah-kūsh*):

In the presence of that progeny of the Attacking Lion (Ḥaydar-Karrār),⁴⁹⁸ when the eye of the serpent—curled up in a circle (*ḥalqah kardeh*), with his head placed at the fringe of that Excellency's skirt—fell upon that group of people, he went off and vanished from the sight of those onlookers. Thus, they drew Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn out from the dungeon and went to Yazd.⁴⁹⁹

Thanks to the revolving of the firmament and the turning of the moon,
our Yūsuf appeared from the well. *shukr k-az dawr-i charkh u gardish-i māh,*
Yūsuf-i mā namūd jilvah az chāh

The auspiciousness of good fortune of the shāh came to his aid;
the goblet of desire was filled with jewels. *yomn-i iqbal-i shāh yāvar shud*
sāghir-i kām pur az gawhar shud

The turning of the firmament is effective;
having left, water returns to the stream. *gardish-i charkh kār-sāz āmād*
*āb raftah bi-jūy bāz āmād*⁵⁰⁰

All the sayyids and dignitaries of the city come to welcome Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad back to the city with verses of praise and jubilation, including a selection from one *maṣnavī* that explicitly compares his emergence from the dungeon with that of the Prophet Yūsuf (Joseph), who famously went on to become the Pharaoh's grand vizier, bringing prosperity to the land.

Mufīd then relates that:

In the Madrasah-i Ruknīyah, by the order of the Pādishāh of the Age, a lofty *majlis* was assembled, and he [Rukn al-Dīn] sat upon the seat of judgment (*bar masnad-i qazā nishast*). One by one, the *īlchī* of Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd Khān summoned the enemies, inimical people, and envious ones who had whipped up the dust of this disturbance (*fitnah*) and ascribed that heinous business to the sayyid. He [the *īlchī*] went to great lengths to uncover the secrets and extract [the answers]

motifs, tropes, and metaphors surrounding the figure of Yūsuf in Ḥāfiz's *ghazals*. In particular, she studies Ḥāfiz's verses about Yūsuf as a critique and commentary on the rule of the Muẓaffarid Shāh Shujā'. Mufīd was well aware of these verses when he composed these passages. See: Julie Scott Meisami, "Allusion in Ḥāfiz: Joseph and His Brothers," in *History and Literature in Iran: Persian and Islamic Studies in Honor of P.Q. Avery*, ed. Charles Melville (London: British Academic Press, in association with the Centre of Middle East Studies, University of Cambridge, 1998).

⁴⁹⁸ An epithet of Imām 'Alī bin Abī Ṭālib

⁴⁹⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 553.

⁵⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 3: 553-4. I have not been able to determine whether this is a quote from another author's work.

to abstruse questions concerning that momentous conspiracy. Due to [Rukn al-Dīn's] pledge that if the explanation of the incident should be opened up, the pages of their punishments would be washed away with the water of erasure (and placed great emphasis on this.) In the end, some of them confessed, and then out of necessity, the others admitted it too, bringing an accurate picture of what had happened out into the open. Thus, the sunshine of purity of His Excellency of the sayyid-ship of the heavens emerged from under coal-black clouds, and the mists of doubt were removed from before the eyes of those who are certain. *Misrā'*:

We tested them, and the inner state of each person became known. *imtiḥān kardīm o ḥāl-i har kasī ma'lūm shud.*⁵⁰¹

With this verse, the story of the Rukn al-Dīn's "passion" comes to a close. With the aid of the imperial agents, the Sayyid mercifully adjudicates the case against the villains who, in slandering him, had disturbed the city's peace and justice. In doing so, he returns Yazd to its proper order. There is a hiccup in the narrative here: The fate of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, who was supposedly the ringleader of the whole conspiracy, is conspicuously absent from this passage. This is a suspicious omission, and it is important to signpost it here, but it will take on more significance after we have looked more systematically at the earlier versions of the story in the next sections. Therefore we must bracket that issue for now and continue to follow Mufīd's presentation on Rukn al-Dīn's deeds after his conflict with the Atābayk.

After his establishment as Chief Judge, the Sayyid makes the *Ḥajj*. Upon returning home he begins an incredible number of construction projects,⁵⁰² and what follows is a lengthy account of some of them.⁵⁰³ This begins with the *qanāts* and traces the source of the waters, where they converge and enter the city, and eventually where

⁵⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 3: 554.

⁵⁰² *Ibid.*, 3: 555-6.

⁵⁰³ Curiously, Mufīd does not mention here any of the mosques that this sayyid constructed or any of his *ribāṭs*. Nor does he mention the library he built beside the Ruknīyah. These projects are mentioned elsewhere however.

they terminate. Along the way we learn of some of the new cisterns, public baths, markets, and *khānqāhs* watered by these canals. Among these descriptions, the most notable is the following:

Having made a *qanāt* flow in Farāshāh, he purchased the deed of ownership of other *qanāts* of several waters from Sahām; he connected them up, and from the middle of the city and neighborhoods, he brought them together in the Masjid-i Jāmi'. From there, he made them pass through the Madrasah-i Ruknīyah and the Maydān-i Vaqt va Sā'at, and he brought it outside the city through Darb-i Kūshk-i Naw and made it flow to the house of his teacher, Muḥammad Ya'qūb and named it "Āb-i Vaqfābād."⁵⁰⁴

Farāshāh is a hamlet just twelve kilometers west of Taft, which held special significance for Mufīd because it featured the famous Ni'matullāhī shrine, built there in the fifteenth century. In addition to its plentiful water from Mount Shīr Kūh, the village is famous today for its older shrine, the Qadamgāh-i 'Alī al-Riḏā, which marks a spot where the Eighth Imām, 'Alī al-Riḏā stood on his way through Yazd to Khurāsān.⁵⁰⁵ Mufīd's interpretation of the sayyid's logic is clear: by connecting the waters of this well-watered mountain village, blessed by the Eighth Imām (and later by the Ni'matullāhī Sufi Shaykh), to sites around the city that Rukn al-Dīn himself constructed or heavily invested in, he is redistributing the resources of the region (both physical and immaterial), redirecting the flow of benefit and Ḥusaynī blessing in the city into

⁵⁰⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3:556. This *qanāt* is mentioned in Rukn al-Dīn's *vaqf-nāmah*: Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 31-2. See below for this *qanāt*'s description in the earlier histories of Yazd.

⁵⁰⁵ See Afshār's treatment of Farāshāh, and in particular, the epigraphy on this qadamgāh, in Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 381-8. The Qadamgāh-i 'Alī al-Riḏā itself is only mentioned in Ja'farī's text, where the author attributes the construction of the shrine to Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn. See Ja'farī, *TY*, 25. Elsewhere, Mufīd calls this *qanāt* from Farāshāh "Qanāt-i Taft," because it passed through Taft, where it met up with other local *qanāts* before flowing toward the city. See Mufīd's discussion this network of canals in the vicinity of Taft and Naṣīrī: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 685. However, Rukn al-Dīn himself referred to this canal as Qanāt-i Vaqfābād in *JK*. Also see Aḥmad Kātib's discussion of the network of *qanāts* around Taft: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 215. Farāshāh is also famous nowadays for its very ancient and blessed plane tree (*chinār*), which is mention in Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 388. We shall deal with the qadamgāhs of Yazd more systematically in chapter 4.

conduits that lead toward monuments of his own family's benevolence, new reservoirs of knowledge and blessing for Yazdīs.⁵⁰⁶ Moreover, the canal terminates at the home of Rukn al-Dīn's own teacher; the line of the water's flow through the geography of the city invokes the genealogy of the sayyid's intellectual lineage. Yet, the passage is terse and offers only hints about the story of Mufīd's training under this man. Interestingly, this is the first and only mention of Rukn al-Dīn's relationship with a teacher, at whose door the *qanāt* terminates. As we noted earlier, unlike the tales of other saints and great scholars, Rukn al-Dīn's story begins when he has already achieved a certain success. As I will explore in the next part, this relationship was more explicitly discussed in the earlier histories.

Next, Mufīd describes the garden that the sayyid constructs at the tomb of the illustrious imānzādah Sulṭān Taqī al-Dīn Dādā Muḥammad (d. 700)⁵⁰⁷ and lists seven *khānqāhs* he built and endowed outside the city.⁵⁰⁸ (This garden is not mentioned in the earlier histories of Yazd.) Finally, after a description of a hospital (*dār al-shifā'*)⁵⁰⁹ that he

⁵⁰⁶ While Yazdī historians all state the Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad began the new Jāmi' mosque, based on evidence from *JK*, Renata Holod-Tretiak argues that it was actually his son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad who began that project. See Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting", 66-8.

⁵⁰⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 557. Sulṭān Taqī al-Dīn Dādā Muḥammad's biography is found in Volume 3, pages 561-8.

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.* These are: Khānqāh-i Abrandābād, Khānqāh-i Majūmard, Khānqāh-i Ashkazar, Khānqāh-i 'Aqadā, Khānqāh-i Haftādar, Khānqāh-i Chaftah, and Khānqāh-i Nīstānah. Mufīd states regretfully that the endowments for each of these have vanished.

⁵⁰⁹ The claim that Rukn al-Dīn built this *Dār al-Shifā'* is puzzling since it is well attested among the other sources that the famous *Dār al-Shifā'* of Yazd was constructed by Ṣāhib-i Dīvān Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī, the famous Īkhānid vizier of the previous generation, whose family butted heads with Majd al-Mulk Yazdī (as we will discuss below). Juvaynī never went to Yazd himself, but the sources related that he had an agent in Yazd, a wealthy merchant named Shams al-Dīn Tāzīgū, who realized the plan on his behalf. See the entries for this structure in the sections on madrasahs in: Ja'farī, *TY*, 89.; Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 131-3. This incident is also discussed in George Lane, *Early Mongol Rule in Thirteenth-Century Iran: A Persian Renaissance* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 196-7. What's more confusing is that elsewhere in the book, Mufīd himself relates the story of Juvaynī's hospital too! Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 142-3. Either Mufīd meant that Rukn al-Dīn simply augmented and made new endowments for Juvaynī's *Dār al-Shifā'* or that he built an entirely new one as part of his complex. I find the latter possibility unlikely. In any case, Rukn al-Dīn's endowment deed (*JK*) does enumerate his endowments for this hospital. (Rukn al-Dīn

constructed beside the Ruknīyah, Mufīd neatly brings the narrative to a close with the sayyid's death in 732/1331-2 and subsequent burial in his beloved Madrasah-i Ruknīyah, the very place where the tale began.⁵¹⁰

Immediately after Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad's entry, appears the biographical notice for his son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, who, as we mentioned above, had risen to the office of Ṣadr of the Īlkhānid realm and had married the vizier's sister (the text erroneously says daughter). Since the bulk of this sayyid's biography was actually given in his father's notice, this second one is relatively brief and remains focused on his many building projects and endowments in Yazd as well as in other major urban centers of the Īlkhānid realm. Here Mufīd makes two notable augmentations to the material he presents on the Shamsīyah in his section on Madrasahs. In addition to his summary description of the madrasah itself, he mentions a structure in the complex called Dār al-Siyādah, which would have been a hospice reserved for sayyids.⁵¹¹ This appears to be the first such structure in Yazd and indicates not simply that the authority and prestige of the sayyids was on the rise, but more importantly that Shams al-Dīn recognized or was attempting to further a sense of solidarity and possibly elitism among the sayyids in his city vis-à-vis other classes of notables.

In fact the Dār-i Siyādah receives only cursory mention. Mufīd reserves greater space for Shams al-Dīn's tomb, which was placed in the Madrasah-i Shamsīyah, also

Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 27-8.) *TJY* reports that the structure was completed in 666/1267-8. However the confusion is compounded by the fact that all *TJY* gives a very late date for the buildings completion, 766/1364-5, which must be a scribal error since it is almost a century too late for Juvaynī, and over thirty years too late for Rukn al-Dīn or his son. In any case, Mufīd laments that the endowment for this building has fallen into ruin by his time: "Now that building has the same fate as the rest of the buildings. And on account of its alienation (*mufārāqat*), the bird puts its head in the sand of disappointment (*khāk-i nākāmī*)." Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 558.

⁵¹⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 558.

⁵¹¹ *Ibid.*, 3: 559. Mufīd, following his predecessors, specifies that the Dār al-Siyādah was watered by a *qanāt* from Narsūbād, near Taft. Mufīd's entry on Narsūbād is found on page 3:694-6.

known (later) as the Madrasah-i Chahār Manār (Madrasah of the Four Minarets). The author stresses that because Shams al-Dīn had been living in the Īlkhānid capital of Tabrīz where he had taken up his post, his wife (the daughter of Rashīd al-Dīn) ordered his body to be transported from that city to Yazd for interment after he died in 733 A.H.⁵¹² Here Mufīd repeats the description of the supplicatory rituals that were performed on Saturdays at his tomb, which he had also mentioned in his description of the Shamsīyah Madrasah in the chapter on madrasahs quoted above (page 300). The account closes with mention of ‘Iṣmat al-Dīn (or Ṣafvat al-Dīn) Arslān Khātūn (N.IV), who was born to Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.b) and the unnamed sister (H.III.a) of Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn b. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh (H.III.b). The author finishes with the marriage of ‘Iṣmat al-Dīn Arslān Khātūn to the illustrious sayyid, Mu‘īn al-Dīn Ashraf (A.IV), who was descended from another branch of the ‘Arīzī sayyids of Yazd.⁵¹³ This sayyid will play a larger role in the narrative later.

Mufīd’s account presents a fascinating and very tidy story about these figures, whose saintliness seems well established by the eleventh/seventeenth century. As the earlier Yazdī histories demonstrate, that saintly narrative had already become solid by the fifteenth century as well. But when we hold Mufīd’s narrative up to those of his predecessors and place all three of them into dialogue with works roughly contemporaneous with the two sayyids’ lives, we find that Mufīd’s rather moralistic story rests on top of a host of complicated transformations in the nature of the relationships between the notable sayyid families of Yazd and their ruling governors and with their imperial overlords

⁵¹² Ibid.

⁵¹³ The daughter’s name is not given in the Yazdī histories, but is mentioned many times in *JK*. See in particular, Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 70.

The earlier accounts of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, presented in Jaʿfarī and Aḥmad Kātib’s histories of Yazd clearly served as Mufīd’s model. However, before we turn those renditions, let us enumerate the key schematic elements that we have identified in Mufīd’s account, for these were all present in the works of his predecessors, albeit some in variant form.

1. Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad plans a new madrasah complex and tomb beside Atābayk’s center.
2. Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh is displeased about Rukn al-Dīn’s edifice so near his ancestral complex
3. Incidental murder of a wealthy Christian
4. Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh seizes opportunity to frame Rukn al-Dīn for murder
5. Rukn al-Dīn tortured and imprisoned
6. Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh searches for Rukn al-Dīn’s son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, but the young sayyid goes into hiding at home of a loyal friend
7. Prophet Muḥammad appears in a dream to another devotee of the sayyid’s family telling him where Shams al-Dīn is hiding and commands him to facilitate the youth’s escape to Tabrīz.
8. Shams al-Dīn nearly dies in the wilderness but for a miraculous rainstorm.
9. Shams al-Dīn vows to build a fortified village (Nuh Gunbad) on that spot for the benefit of dervishes, a vow that he later fulfills.
10. Shams al-Dīn safely arrives in the Īlkhānid capital in miraculous time.
11. The Prophet Muḥammad appears to the Grand Vizier, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Rashīd al-Dīn in a dream, introducing Shams al-Dīn and requesting that he secure for him an audience with the pādishāh.
12. Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn finds Shams al-Dīn and brings him before pādishāh (Abū Saʿīd), who sends an emissary to free Rukn al-Dīn
13. Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn makes Shams al-Dīn his protégé, eventually promoting him to high rank in the Īlkhānid bureaucracy.

14. Ghiyās al-Dīn marries his daughter (actually, sister—H.III.a) to Shams al-Dīn
15. Rukn al-Dīn's liberators find that the sayyid had been protected in the dungeon by a viper, which miraculously vanishes upon their arrival.
16. Rukn al-Dīn is made Qāzī and pronounces merciful justice over those who wronged him and who disturbed Yazd's peace in the process. No mention of Atābayk's fate.
17. Rukn al-Dīn performs the Ḥajj
18. Rukn al-Dīn returns from Ḥajj, begins elaborate building projects
19. Rukn al-Dīn builds new *qanāt* from Taft, which stops at Ruknīyah madrasah and ends at home of his teacher, Muḥammad Ya'qūb.
20. Rukn al-Dīn dies and is buried at Ruknīyah.
21. Shams al-Dīn's building projects in Yazd and in other cities of the Īlkhānid realm, particularly, Dār al-Siyādah.
22. Shams al-Dīn dies and his wife (H.III.a) (sister of Ghiyās al-Dīn) has body transported to Yazd for burial in his own madrasah complex, the Shamsīyah.
23. Mention of supplicatory rituals performed at the Shamsīyah. (Mentioned in chapter on madrasahs as well.)
24. Marriage alliance between Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad's daughter (Iṣmat al-Dīn Arslān Khātūn) (N.IV) and another 'Arīzī sayyid of Yazd, Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf (A.IV).

The Models of Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib

As was his habit in his chapter on Iskandar in Yazd, Mufīd occasionally lifts some passages from his predecessors' works; elsewhere he finds the prose lacking and drapes it with further ornaments. On other occasions, he omits information the other historians had been careful to include. With regard to organization, the earlier writers set the example, which Mufīd followed; both Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib open their madrasah chapters with an entry on the Ruknīyah, signaling the importance they wished to ascribe to it. One key difference between Mufīd's presentation and the earlier

ones concerns the way in which he frames the entire set of narratives on Rukn al-Dīn and his monuments. Whereas Mufīd splits the narratives between the chapters on madrasahs and imāmzādahs' biographies, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib both pack all the information into entries on madrasahs. For now we observe that both start with the physical descriptions of the sites and then launch directly into accounts of the lives of the saints who built them. As it turns out, the most important differences between the earlier texts and Mufīd's are found in the content of buildings' descriptions, but before the full significance of those variations can be appreciated, we will need to explore some of the more subtle differences in the hagiographical material.

Like Mufīd, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib open their accounts of Rukn al-Dīn's life with the contention that results from his construction of the Madrasah beside the Atābayk family's own complex, a move which raises the ire of the contemporary Atābayk ruler, Yūsuf Shāh. From the outset, both authors' sympathies are obvious. They characterize that ruler as fractious and vindictive by nature. Ja'farī even refers to the Atābayks' madrasah, Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh or Şafvatīyah,⁵¹⁴ as a “meager little madrasah (*madrasah-i ḥaqīr*),”⁵¹⁵ implying that the deficiencies of Yūsuf Shāh had their roots in the earlier Atābayks, whose pious endowments were inadequate. This is actually in contradiction to Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's own accounts of the Atābayks in the earlier part of his book; I will return to this point later. For now we should observe that on the whole, Aḥmad Kātib is a bit slower to dismiss the entire line of Atābayks, whom he has also praised in the earlier part of his work, particularly Atābayk Maḥmūd

⁵¹⁴ Aḥmad Kātib explains that the “Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh” is in his own era called “Şafvatīyah.” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 125. Ja'farī makes no mention of this latter appellation.

⁵¹⁵ Ja'farī, *TY*, 83. Aḥmad Kātib, on the other hand, implies that the building had once been elegant, but that it had lost its luster by Yūsuf Shāh's time, saying “*va 'imārat-i Şafvatīyah rā ḥīch rawnaq na-mānad.*” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 125.

Shāh, the founder of this madrasah. Aḥmad Kātib adds a motive for the Atābayk's discontent, explaining that Yūsuf Shāh had "renewed the building of the Şafvatīyah himself, [and thus] he wished to bring harm upon Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn..."⁵¹⁶ Nonetheless, the blame sits squarely with Yūsuf Shāh, who had personally invested in the old madrasah; there is no implied condemnation of the shortcomings of that building's founders.

In any case, both authors then relate the familiar story about the murder of the Christian merchant and the Atābayk's plot to frame Rukn al-Dīn for it. Of all three authors, Aḥmad Kātib is most careful to explain the accusers' logic:

The next day, the enemies of Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn harangued him and his household (*kasān*). They were saying that this [murder] had been at his instigation (*angīz*), and they set up a court of oppressions (*dīvān-i muẓālim*), but no shred of evidence of the murder of the Christian came to light about the members of his household. Then they said that such a high building necessitated a lot of gold! No doubt he made this building from the Christian's money.⁵¹⁷

In other words, according to his detractors, the sayyid did it to raise money for his own madrasah!

The story then parallels Mufīd's, including a few unsavory bits describing the specific tortures that the Atābayks forced the saint to endure, details that Mufīd left out. Aḥmad Kātib's account is the most graphic:

Finally, they just started torturing him on the rack (*shikanjah*) and beating him with sticks (*chūb*). For two days they hit him with nearly a thousand blows of the stick, and the skin separated from his body such that a pouch (*khalīṭah*) of skin from his body was collected. And they tortured him and sat him naked on a camel and led him around the city. They dumped sheep and camel dung on his head. One day he was thirsty and requested water from a *ghulām* of the Atābayk.

⁵¹⁶ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 125-6.

⁵¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

They pissed in a jug and gave it to him. Finally, they brought him to Khūrmīz and imprisoned him in the dungeon-pit (*chāh*) in the fortress.⁵¹⁸

As in Mufīd's later text, both Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib then turn to Shams al-Dīn's story. Both include accounts of his concealment and of the Prophet Muḥammad's dream-visitation to Khvājah Astarābādī, who enables the young saint's escape to the Īlkhānid court.⁵¹⁹ Likewise, both authors then present the anecdote in which Shams al-Dīn prays for water and makes a vow just as he is about to die from thirst. As in Mufīd's version, God himself provides rain, a miracle that prompts both writers to jump ahead in time, giving a prelude to an account of Shams al-Dīn's future building projects on that spot, called Nuh Gunbad, in fulfillment of his vow.⁵²⁰ The full description of that site appears slightly later in the same chapter of both early works; Mufīd's account includes more details about that site at this point in the narrative. Next, the saint makes it to the Īlkhānid court in superhuman time (in *TJ*, ten days; in *TJY* and *JM*, six days!). Aḥmad Kātib adds that upon arrival, he "sets himself up in a corner (*dar gūshah-ī maqām kard*)," an expression indicating that he had assumed the guise of a renunciate, non-wandering dervish, known as a corner sitter (*gūshah-nishīn*), in the parlance of the

⁵¹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵¹⁹ Ja'farī does not name the owner of the house, but explains that the man who saw the Prophet lived in the same neighborhood, and was named Hājji 'Alī Astarābādī. Ja'farī, *TY*, 84. However, Aḥmad Kātib, gives the owner of the house's name as Hājji 'Alī Astarābādī, and the name of the man who dreamed of the Prophet as Khvājah 'Alīshāh. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 126-7. Mufīd follows Aḥmad Kātib's rendering. In the same place, Aḥmad Kātib also adds that Khvaja 'Alī Astarābādī's house was in Kūchah-i Nā'ibān (also called Kūchah-i Naw), but was destroyed in the flood (of 673 A.H.).

⁵²⁰ Both Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib mention that Shams al-Dīn came upon a ruin with several gunbads. Ja'farī has it that there was a canal filled with bitter and fetid (*talkh va gandah*) water. Aḥmad Kātib, on the other hand, explains that there was a spring with brackish water in it. Ja'farī says that God sent rain so that the mountains and valleys would become saturated with water. Shams al-Dīn later builds a caravanserai, a village, a ḥammām, and a masjid there and brought sweet water to that place. Ja'farī, *TY*, 85. In Aḥmad Kātib, the rain falls directly in the desert, and Shams al-Dīn vows to build a loft building, a village, and a farm, having brought sweet water to the area. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 127.

day.⁵²¹ The Prophet Muḥammad then visits the vizier, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn bin Rashīd al-Dīn (H.III.b) in both accounts, who then finds Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad in the city and brings him before Abū Saʿīd to present his case. The Īlkhān dresses him in a robe of honor and assigns him high offices, the specific titles of which vary in each of the three works.⁵²²

Whereas Mufīd mentions Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad’s marriage to Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn’s daughter (actually sister—H.III.a) here, both Jaʿfarī and Aḥmad Kātib reserve that information for later on.⁵²³ All then leave Shams al-Dīn and pick up the narrative with the mission of Abū Saʿīd’s *īlchī* to Yazd, where he has been ordered to chide Yūsuf Shāh, free Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, and set him up as judge and overseer of Yazd’s *awqāf*.⁵²⁴ The two earlier accounts of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad’s liberation are in close agreement, and Mufīd’s account, which we looked at above, includes no substantial additions. All three center the story of liberation on the presence of the viper that magically guards the saint. However, Mufīd leaves out some details, in the latter part of the story, which are important in the earlier accounts. Whereas Mufīd proceeds directly to Rukn al-Dīn’s pilgrimage to Mecca after only a brief and slightly underwhelming description of his acts of clemency, both Jaʿfarī and Aḥmad Kātib include a more detailed discussion of his deeds as Qāẓī of Yazd. The following passage is Aḥmad Kātib’s telling:

⁵²¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 127. The endowment deeds for the Nuh Gunbad complex can be found in: Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 25, 27, 28.

⁵²² In *TY*, Abū Saʿīd “entrusts him with the vice-regency (*nīyābat-i vizārat*) of all the principalities of of Sulṭān Abū Saʿīd and he bestowed (*arzānī dasht*) upon him a judgeship over the judges and endowments (*qāẓī-i quẓātī va awqāf*) of all the principalities.” Jaʿfarī, *TY*, 85. In *TJY*, he was appointed to “the vice-regency of the principalities (*nīyābat-i ʿāmmah-i mamālik*), the judgeship (*qāẓā*), and the *ṣadārat*.” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 127-8.

⁵²³ Both Jaʿfarī and Aḥmad Kātib wait until their description of Shams al-Dīn’s burial in his Shamsīyah to speak about this marriage: Jaʿfarī, *TY*, 88-9.; Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 131.

⁵²⁴ Jaʿfarī, *TY*, 85-6.; Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 128.

They brought Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn out and brought him into the city, mounted. They sat him on the seat of *qazā* in his own madrasah. The Īlchī spoke harsh words to the Atābayk, and Qāzī Rukn al-Dīn summoned the people who had beaten him with sticks and gave each one of them a florin (*falūrī*) for each [blow of the stick]. Into the mouth of the one who had pissed in the jug, he placed a fine sweet (*ḥalvā-yi nābat*) on a golden spoon.⁵²⁵ [Ja‘farī includes one further line here, which Aḥmad Kātib apparently omits: “He [Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad] poured gold over the head of the one who had dumped sheep dung on his head.”⁵²⁶] He made a sublime feast (*tuy*), and he clothed (*jāmah pūshānīd*) the population of Yazd.⁵²⁷

Intended to showcase Rukn al-Dīn’s saintly clemency, this scene elegantly parallels the torture scene from earlier. Mounted honorably this time, the saint emerges from the dungeon pit and rides back to the city. Sitting in judgment there, he heals the harms the Atābayk had inflicted upon him and the people of the city by turning the other cheek; he forgives his foes and by transmuting the scatological implements of torture and humiliation into blessings, riches, and sweets, he purges the city of depravity and divisiveness. It is unclear why Mufīd would have omitted these parallel scenes of torture and compassion. One might conjecture that the particular manuscripts he was using of *TY* and *TJY* (now lost) did not include these passages. Alternatively, Mufīd may not have been able to live with the stain that words like “piss” and “dung” would have left upon his sublime prose, saying only that the torments were too horrible to describe. In any case Mufīd’s emphasis is on Rukn al-Dīn’s capability as judge and, toward that end, his effective collaboration with the Mongol *īlchī*. Just as we observed in Mufīd’s text, unexpectedly, neither Ja‘farī nor Aḥmad Kātib mentions anything here about Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh’s fate. The arch villain of the story simply seems to evaporate. In fact, Yūsuf Shāh’s demise does appear in all three works, but comes in the

⁵²⁵ Ja‘farī’s phrase is slightly different: *pālūdah-i nābat*. Ja‘farī, *TY*, 86.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵²⁷ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 128.

course of another, unrelated set of anecdotes found elsewhere in the works. The relationship between that tale to this affair with Rukn al-Dīn will form the crux of our discussion in the next section.

Meanwhile, after mentioning Rukn al-Dīn's pilgrimage, all the historians discuss his building projects next. Like Mufīd, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib describe the *qanāt* he built. With those descriptions, they bring key sites around the city into Rukn al-Dīn's orbit. The earlier works are less elliptical than Mufīd's and offer a more coherent explanation of why Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad brought the canal to his teacher's house. Ja'farī provides the fullest account:

At that time there was a Qur'ān teacher (*ustād-i Qur'ān*), Shaykh Muḥammad Ya'qūb, mercy upon him. He was the Qur'ān teacher of Amīr Rukn al-Dīn and had recited Qur'ān to him. He went to look in on him (*pursish-i ū*); he saw him come out from the bottom of the water (*az pāyābī*), and having made *vuzū*, was gasping for breath (*naḥs mī'zanad*). Amīr Rukn al-Dīn vowed that he would bring Āb-i Taft to the door of his house in order to make performing *vuzū* easy for him. So he purchased a certain share of the Āb-i Taft and he dug a *qanāt* from Farāshāh and brought the water to the Dār al-Shifā', and after that, he brought it to the door of Madrasah-i Vardānrūz and to the Masjid-i Jum'ah and to his own madrasah [Madrasah-i Ruknīyah] from the Madrasah-i Rashīdīyah, and from there they made it flow to the Bāb al-Siyādah and the Ḥammām-i Rayḥānān, and they brought it along the road of the Bāzār-i Sulṭān Ibrāhīm to Madrasah-i Mavlānā Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan [sic]⁵²⁸ and to the door of the house of Ustād Muḥammad Ya'qūb and to the Khānqāh-i Kushk-i Naw.⁵²⁹

From this list of stations in Ja'farī's itinerary of the canal's progress, Aḥmad Kātib subtracts the Ḥammām-i Rayḥānān and the Bāzār-i Sulṭān Ibrāhīm, whose locations are now obscure. Although it is not mentioned in this place in the texts, the two authors' accounts of Shams al-Dīn's Shamsīyah madrasah complex explain that the complex was

⁵²⁸ The author must mean the Madrasah-i Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn rather than Ḥasan. Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan, Rukn al-Dīn's grandson (by his daughter) would not yet have been born. This Madrasah is no longer extant; it is difficult to pin point its exact location, but must have been in the vicinity of the Darb-i Kushk-i Naw. It is not mentioned anywhere else in the Yazdī texts.

⁵²⁹ Ja'farī, *TY*, 86-7. Corresponding passage in *TJY* is: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 128-9.

also on the canal circuit of Taft's waters, despite the fact that it was not in the immediate vicinity of the Ruknīyah complex.⁵³⁰ Ja'farī also indicates that the canal brought water to the Bāb al-Siyādah. There is no mention of a city gate with this name; he must have meant the gate of the Dār al-Siyādah, which all three writers say was part of the Shamsīyah complex. Overall, Mufīd's list is much more distilled than Aḥmad Kātīb's and Ja'farī's, most likely because many of the canal's stops listed in the earlier accounts were gone by Mufīd's day and had lost their ability to signify any meaning to readers. Of these, surprising is Mufīd's exclusion of the Rashīdīyah, the construction of which is crucial in the narratives of the earlier histories, as we shall see in the next section of this chapter. Mufīd's intention seems to be to commemorate only those sites immediately associated with Rukn al-Dīn here. This is in line with his general tendency, when writing of the remote past, to collapse the complex interactions and rivalries between many families into a simple, moralistic narrative, designed to sanctify the deeds of a single figure over and against those of a villain. To one degree or another, all the Yazdī historians foreground these saintly stories about Rukn al-Dīn and his son, and thereby transform their rather mundane benevolences into the deeds of saints. We will continue to develop this idea throughout this chapter.

In conclusion, both Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātīb follow their account of Rukn al-Dīn's *qanāt* with a summary of Shams al-Dīn's construction projects. Both authors focus on the Shamsīyah complex, mentioning the Dār-i Siyādah along the way. Just as in Mufīd's later rendition, the story of Shams al-Dīn's burial occupies the bulk of these accounts. It

⁵³⁰ Ja'farī, *TY*, 88. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 130. Mufīd actually leaves out this information about a canal coming from Taft to the Shamsīyah. He does mention that the pool in the Dār al-Siyādah was filled water from Āb-i Narsūbād: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 559. Narsūbād was located due west of Taft and was higher up in the mountains.

is important to note that although Mufīd provided only a short presentation on the buildings inside the complexes themselves, his predecessors had actually written detailed discussions of those buildings, particularly of those buildings inside the Ruknīyah complex. However, the descriptions of those structures in *TJ* and *TJY* must be postponed until section V; their significance will only be apparent once the narratives surrounding their construction have been explored exhaustively.

Each of the authors of Yazd's history placed the narrative about Rukn al-Dīn and Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh at the crux of their text. They used that conflict to tacitly explain a major reorientation in their city's urban morphology and, simultaneously, to account for the rising fortunes of the sayyids connected with the Āl-i Niẓām. These sayyids had benefitted from the attention of ranking men in the imperial administration, had risen to high posts, and had built monumental complexes in Yazd and in other cities as well. But in the Yazdī historiography, their life stories were presented in a near-hagiographical idiom, through characterizations that were oriented toward piety and morality and through narratives that were punctuated with miracles.

Requisite to the story of the sayyids' sanctification was the vilification and fall of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh and the demotion of his noble ancestors' monumental edifices. But this exploration needs context if it is to tell us something about the Yazdī historian's project. How does Yūsuf Shāh's story fit in with other narratives in these histories? How does it engage in dialogue with the larger narratives about the Īlkhānid realm, which were composed by historians outside of Yazd, who lived contemporaneously with the events in question? These are important questions, because all of the Yazdī historians point to Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad's victory

over Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh as the origin of later sayyids' success during the Tīmūrid period, men like Sayyid Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a).

In order to build the context necessary for answering these questions, the next section picks up with the villain's story, which was only partially presented in the Ruknīyah's tale. All three Yazdī historians give a fuller treatment of Yūsuf Shāh's tale elsewhere in their books. In addition to his appearance in the histories of Yazd, Yūsuf Shāh plays a role in a variety of Īlkhānid-era histories, which narrate the last Atābayk's dealings with the Īlkhāns and other local dynasties in Fārs and Kirmān. An investigation of this tangle of stories reveals that the last Atābayk of Yazd was a controversial figure whose characterization was very much in flux; the narratives about him are rife with ambiguities and inconsistencies that can be observed not only by comparing different texts, but also internally, within individual texts themselves. Tracking the variations in the last Atābayk's story reveals much about how later authors brought old, unresolved, controversies about that ambiguous figure's role in local and imperial history to bear upon their renditions of contemporary events. The next section takes stock of the change in various authors' representations of Yūsuf Shāh's interaction with his contemporaries and, thereby, uncovers the ways in which the authors of Yazd's local histories made use of those stories to comment upon the standing of Yazd's sayyids in the imperial order during the ninth/fifteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries.

3. Of Saints and Villains: Who are the Atābayks?

The end of the Atābayks in Yazd's historiography

In the Yazdī histories, Yūsuf Shāh's tyranny extends beyond in the story of the assault on Rukn al-Dīn and his madrasah. Indeed, elsewhere in the text, Yūsuf Shāh is cast as playing a larger role in the imperial-local politics of the day, and the Rukn al-Dīn story should be placed in the context of that larger narrative. In each of these accounts of Rukn al-Dīn's tale, the authors have included references to the deeds of previous Atābayks and their monuments. One of these Atābayks, Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, we have already discussed extensively in chapter 1.⁵³¹ The reports on this last Atābayk's rather benevolent predecessors are meant to guide our reading of Yūsuf Shāh's story; despite the fact that the various anecdotes are scattered throughout the works, we must read the entire account of the dynasty as a whole. Conversely, our reading of the collection of Yūsuf Shāh's stories is meant to shape our reading of the earlier Atābayks too, for, as we will discover, part of Yūsuf Shāh's function in each of the texts is to account for the fading of the authority and magnificence of Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn's line. So, jumping now through the portals the Yazdī historians have left in this story of Yūsuf Shāh and Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, we turn to the full accounts of the Atābayk rulers, which each author has placed at the beginning of their works, i.e., in the chronicle sections.⁵³²

According to all three histories, Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh was descended from a line of magnanimous rulers of Yazd who were descended from the Lālā (or Atābayk) of the

⁵³¹ This discussion begins on page 126.

⁵³² The reader should recall that the entirety of volume one of the *JM* serves as the chronicle of Yazd. The history of the Atābayks appears in this volume.

four daughters of the last Kākūyid ruler of Fārs, Amīr Farāmūrz.⁵³³ (Refer to Figure 2.) A bit of background on the Kākūyids is necessary: As each of the Yazdī authors tells it, the Kākūyids were a Daylamī family who had ruled Fārs from Iṣfahān under the Būyids; when the Saljūq Sulṭān, Ṭughril Bayk, took Iṣfahān from them, the Kākūyids offered him their loyalty in 438/1046-7.⁵³⁴ In order to reaffirm this alliance later on, under the Saljūq Sulṭān Malik-Shāh, the current Kākūyid ruler, named Abū Manṣūr ‘Alī ibn Farāmūrz (‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah),⁵³⁵ was married to the Saljūq princess, Arslān Khātūn, daughter of Chagrī Bayk,⁵³⁶ who had formerly been married to the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph, al-Qā’im.⁵³⁷ The Kākūyid sovereign received Yazd and Abarqūh from the Saljūqs, and he and his wife began extensive building projects in Yazd. According to the Yazdī sources, a few generations of just rule followed before Abū Manṣūr ‘Alī ibn Farāmūrz’s descendant, Amīr Farāmūrz (Garshasp II), died in battle in Khaṭā [really Qaṭwān],

⁵³³ The name “Amīr Farāmūrz” is not correct and should properly be “Abū Kālījār ‘Alā’ al-Dawlah Garshāsp II.” The names and sequence of Kākūyid rulers is extremely difficult to piece together because the names and titles are recycled in each generation. The Yazdī historians are confused themselves, and often conflate generations. Bosworth has unraveled the mess as best he could in a very important article: Bosworth, “Dailamīs.”

⁵³⁴ The name of the dynasty derives from the Daylamī Persian word “*kākū*,” meaning maternal uncle. The eponymous founder of the dynasty, Dushmanziyār was the *kākū* of Sayyidah (d. 419/1028), who was the mother and regent of the Buyid Amīr of Rayy, Majd al-Dawlah Rustam (d. 420/1029). It was Dushmanziyār’s son, ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah Abū Ja’far Muḥammad who was assigned to Iṣfahān in 398/1007.

⁵³⁵ Ja’farī calls the Kākūyid who married Arslān Khātūn and relocated to Yazd, “Abū Manṣūr.” Mufīd refers to him as “‘Ālā’ Al-Dawlah.” The name I have used in the text is Bosworth’s delineation.

⁵³⁶ *TJ*, agreeing more with Ibn Al-Athīr, says that Arslān Khātūn was the niece of Ṭughril (and thus the daughter of Chagrī Bayk, Ṭughril’s brother), 19. *TJY* and *JM* both mistakenly say that she was the daughter of Sulaymān Shāh: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 59, Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfī, *JM*, 1: 44. However, Sulaymān Shāh was the son of Chagrī Bayk, and the brother of Arslān Khātūn and the Sulṭān, Alp Arslān. See discussion in Bosworth, “Dailamīs,” 91-2.

⁵³⁷ See discussion in Bosworth, “Dailamīs,” 86. Ja’farī reproduces letters exchanged between Malikshāh and ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah concerning the handing over of Iṣfahān: Ja’farī, *TY*, 43-44. In another very informative article, George Makdisi demonstrates that while she was still married to Caliph al-Qā’im, Arslān Khātūn was instrumental in Ṭughril Bayk’s plot to secure a marriage alliance between himself and the Caliph’s daughter. George Makdisi, “The Marriage of Ṭughril Beg,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 1, no. 3 (1970): especially 263. Again there are certain problems with the chronology, due largely to the fact that many of the people across generations share the same names and titles. Makdisi claims (p. 265) that Arslān Khātūn predeceased her husband, al-Qā’im in 453 A.H. If accurate, this would have made Bosworth’s claim that she remarried into the Kākūyid family impossible. However, Bosworth’s evidence is drawn from a far greater pool of sources. Makdisi’s evidence for Arslān Khātūn’s early death comes from just a single source (al-Bundarī’s *Zubdat al-Nuṣra*)

fighting on behalf of the Saljūq Sulṭān, Sanjar.⁵³⁸ This Amīr Farāmūrz is the last of the Kākūyids and is the man whom we started with above. Although he had no male heir, he had four daughters by Sulṭān Sanjar’s sister. Sanjar confirmed Yazd as these daughters’ joint-*iqṭā’* and appointed one of his commanders, called Sām (Sām b. Vardānrūz, Rukn al-Dīn) as their Lālā or Atābayk because, the histories say, despite their generous and noble building projects, the young women were poor governors.⁵³⁹ After some time, the texts related that Sulṭān Sanjar was apparently unhappy with Sām’s performance and replaced him with his brother, ‘Izz al-Dīn Langar, who had been serving the Saljūqs honorably in Iṣfahān.⁵⁴⁰ The Yazdī historians provide no further information about the Atābayk family’s background; however, Rashīd al-Dīn claims that this line was descended from a parallel branch of the Kākūyids.⁵⁴¹

Now, the line of the Atābayk’s succession is also difficult to decipher, and the names and titles of each of the rulers vary from text to text; the stories about them, at least in the Yazdī tradition, abound with anachronisms, a point that will prove

⁵³⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 82. Sanjar famously lost this battle (Battle of Qaṭwān) against the Buddhist Qarā Khitay (Wester Laiao) from Northern China in 536/1141, near Samarqand. The Saljūqs never again regained the Oxus basin; their vassals in that region, the Qarā Khāns, thereafter became the vassals of the Qarā Khitay. See: Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization- The Expansion of Islam in the Middle Periods*, vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 256.

⁵³⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 83.

⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 1: 84.

⁵⁴¹ This comes up in the context of Rashīd al-Dīn’s presentation on Chīngīz Khān’s relationship with a figure from Fārs called Atābayk ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah b. Atābayk Sām, whom he tells us was the grandson of ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah Garshasp b. ‘Alī b. Farāmūrz b. ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah. We are told that Chīngīz Khān gave the governorship of Iṣfahān to this ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah b. Sām. He also says that this man’s father’s brother and nephews were made the Atābayk of Yazd. This brother must have been ‘Izz al-Dīn Langar, whom the Yazdī historians all discuss. In any case, I have found no mention elsewhere of anyone in the Kākūyid line with the name Sām. Furthermore, in the Yazdī texts, the father of these two brothers had the title Vardānrūz, which does not appear in Rashīd al-Dīn’s *JT*. Rashīd al-Dīn also mentions that Chīngīz Khān gave this Atābayk Sām a *laqab*; however the various published editions disagree about this title. Dr. Bahman Karīmī’s edition of *JT* says that the title was “Āqā” Khān. Thackston’s English translation reports that it was “Aṭā Khān.” Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 1: 292-3. Also see English translation: Faḡl Allāh Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Jami’ u’ t-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles- A History of the Mongols*, ed. W.M. Thackston, trans. W.M. Thackston, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998), 2: 267-8.

important as we construct our own narrative. For now, let us note that the Yazdī historians offer a glowing presentation of most of these kings. One of them, whom we examined in chapter 1, Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn (d. 626/1229), is made to attain a saintly status in all three works.⁵⁴² The reader will recall that Quṭb al-Dīn was a thaumaturge who evidenced otherworldly powers of perception, extraordinary wisdom, built a shrine for the Eighth Imām, and established a new center in the city, which included a *dawlat-khānah* and a new madrasah complex adjoining the site, where the rivalry between his descendent, Yūsuf Shāh and Rukn al-Dīn would play out. In fact, it was Quṭb al-Dīn’s son, also a just and providential ruler, but perhaps not quite as saintly as his father, called Maḥmūd Shāh (in some sources Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh), who built (or more likely, began) the Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh or Madrasah-i Ṣafvatīyah, near his father’s tomb.⁵⁴³ This building, which housed the tombs of subsequent Atābayk rulers, is the very same building that, as the reader will remember, triggered the hostilities between Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh and Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad in the Yazdī historiography.⁵⁴⁴ A critical moment during the rule of the Atābayks was the great flood

⁵⁴² Ja‘farī, *TY*, 24-26.; Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 69-71. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 86-8.

⁵⁴³ In contrast to the Yazdī historians’ praiseful depiction of the earlier Atabayks, a source contemporaneous to Atābayk Maḥmūd Shāh’s period that chronicles the history of history of Kirmān, the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Kirmān*, paints a less rosy portrait of this sulṭān: After describing how the last Khvārazm Shāhī ruler had hidden a stash of treasure in the home of a pious man called Shaykh Muvaḥiq Mu‘ammar, the author reports that “a devilish temptation compelled” Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh (i.e. Maḥmūd Shāh), who took advantage of the Khvārazm Shāhī’s absence—while he was off battling the Mongols in Azarbāyjān—to tunnel into the Shaykh’s treasury and steal the treasure. Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh’s wife, Yāqūt Tarkān, mother of ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah, immediately summoned her father, the Qutlugh Khān of Kirmān, who appears with an army to stop the greedy Atābayk from this villainy. With the Qutlugh Khān’s army outside Yazd’s gates, the notables of the city banded together and went before the Atābayk to reprimand him for his folly: *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā’iyān*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Bāstānī Pārīzī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bunyād-i Farhang-i Irān, 1976), 97-99. Note, this edition prints *Tārīkh-i Kirmān* together with a roughly contemporary text on the Qutlugh Khāns of Kirmān, known as *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā’iyān*.

⁵⁴⁴ The Yazdī sources tell us that this madrasah was named for his wife who completed it, Ṣafvah al-Dīn Ādam Yāqūt Tarkān, daughter of Kirmān’s Qara Khitan princess, Qutlugh Tarkān, and the first Qutlugh Khān or Kirmān, Barāq Ḥājīb (or possibly his nephew, Abū Faṭḥ Quṭb al-Dīn). See treatment of the

of 673/1274, which destroyed a huge swath of the city. The Yazdī historians report that the devastation was so terrifying, that the current Atābayk ruler, ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah,⁵⁴⁵ rather ingloriously, took ill and died.⁵⁴⁶ Even before Yūsuf Shāh’s tyranny, the majesty of the line had begun to erode.

The last section in the chapter on the Atābayks concerns the last Atābayk ruler, Yūsuf Shāh, who was the brother of Atābayk ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah and the villain from the Rukn al-Dīn story.⁵⁴⁷ Mufīd entitled this section, “Commemoration of the *sulṭānat* of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh and his ruin (*ma’āl-i ḥāl-i ū*).”⁵⁴⁸ He took over the province of Yazd in the wake of the flood that had caused his brother’s death. It is notable that Mufīd calls him *vālī* (governor) rather than *Sulṭān* or Atābayk, a departure from the earlier Yazdī reports.

The account that follows in each work elucidates the different ways in which the Yazdī historians remembered how the Mongol Īlkhāns came to take direct administration of the province from the Atābayks. As I will argue, to varying degrees at the center of the three Yazdī writers’ narratives is a moral lesson that attributes the Mongol take over of Yazd to the languishing of the Atābayks’ wisdom, honor, and piety. While Yūsuf Shāh’s mistreatment of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad does not come up in this

Kirmānī rulers in *Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, JT, 1: 481-82*. Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium, 2: 331*. Also see Michal Biran, *The empire of the Qara Khitai in Eurasian history: between China and the Islamic World*, Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization (Cambridge, UK ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Also see: Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, 210. Because Qutlugh Tarkān married Barāq Ḥājīb’s successor and nephew, Abū Faḥ Quṭb al-Dīn, after her first husband’s death. It is not clear that Yaquṭ Tarkān was the daughter of Barāq Ḥājīb or Quṭb al-Dīn. Aigle maintains that it was the latter, Quṭb al-Dīn. Denise Aigle, *Le Fārs sous la Domination Mongole: Politique et Fiscalité (XIIIe-XIVe S.)* (Paris: Association pour l’Avancement des Études Iraniennes, 2005), 124. Also see discussion in *Tārīkh-i Kirmān: Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā’iyān*, 96-97.

⁵⁴⁵ This figure is variously known as ‘Ālā al-Dawlah, ‘Ālā’ al-Dīn, or ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah va al-Dīn.

⁵⁴⁶ Whether he died of fright or disease is left ambiguous. Rashīd al-Dīn offers a completely different and more heroic account of ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah’s death. See below.

⁵⁴⁷ In *TY*, Yūsuf Shāh is sometimes the son of ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah, not his brother. Ja‘farī, *TY*, 26.

⁵⁴⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfḡī, *JM*, 1: 90.

section of the works—a critical point that we will deal with below—there is no question that this account of the Atābayks’ fall is meant to be read alongside that other story. By highlighting Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and his son’s connections with the Mongol court and by raising them to the rank of sainthood, the Yazdī historians clearly intend those sayyids to stand as the heirs of Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn’s saintly authority in place of the corrupted Yūsuf Shāh.

But to make sense of this story, we must trace its lineage. How did Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh come to bear this load in Yazd’s historiography? We turn now to compare all three historians accounts of Yūsuf Shāh’s miserable career. The latter two histories of Yazd, *TJY* and *JM* begin by saying that Yūsuf Shāh repaired the walls destroyed by the flood and (at least according to Aḥmad Kātib) began by behaving appropriately toward his people, but shortly thereafter began to show his true colors. He became libidinous and began to misappropriate the income of Yazd (*dakhl-i Yazd*) for his own expenses.⁵⁴⁹ Aḥmad Kātib adds that Yūsuf Shāh’s attendant, who turns out to be Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥaffar, father of Muḥammad Muḥaffar, the eventual founder of the future Muḥaffarid dynasty of Fārs, advised him against this activity, saying that his embezzlement was of no benefit (*fā’idah nabūd*). But this was to no avail.⁵⁵⁰

At this point, in all three histories of Yazd, the Mongols enter the stage and, under Ghāzān Khān’s command, will ultimately bring Atābaykid rule to a close. For the most part, the chronologies of these events are in agreement, but the three accounts of the Yūsuf Shāh’s fall diverge—at least, at first—on the issue of blame. Mufīd explains

⁵⁴⁹ The expression in Mufīd’s text is, “*va māl va kharāj-i Yazd bi-kharj-i ū vafā nimīkard*”: Ibid. See also Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 74.

⁵⁵⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 74. In his chapter on the Muzaffarids, Mufīd gives a longer account of the estrangement between Yūsuf Shāh and Sharaf al-Dīn Muḥammad. He sets these events in Arghūn Khān’s reign in 685 A.H.: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 96.

that the Atābayks had been paying a certain sum as tribute to Ghāzān, but that in accordance with his nature Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh,

having become haughty in his governance of Yazd, decided not to send the tribute. He didn't stay obedient to Sulṭān Ghāzān. Of the implications of this, he was unaware (*ghāfil*). *Shi'r*:

Anyone small who quarrels with someone bigger
falls – never to stand up again.

*har ān kihtar kih bi mihtar sitazad
chunān uftad kih hargiz bar nakhīzad*⁵⁵¹

However, despite his negative portrayal of Yūsuf Shāh's character, Aḥmad Kātib places equal blame upon Ghāzān and his greedy commanders:

Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh sent tribute and an envoy (*rasūl*) to him [Ghāzān Khān], but forgot gifts for his commanders. When Ghāzān Khān bin Arghūn Khān came to dominate Tabrīz, the two Iraqs, and Khurāsān, the commanders of Ghāzān Khān coveted [the possessions] of Yūsuf Shāh. They appointed Amīr Yesüder [one of Hülegü's sons]⁵⁵² to Yazd, relaying that Aṭābayk Yūsuf Shāh should either give over three years' worth of Yazd's taxes or that he should relinquish Yazd to Amīr Yesüder himself, before appearing before the throne.⁵⁵³

Ja'farī's telling, the earliest of the three, mentions nothing of Yūsuf Shāh's corruption, indicting only the greedy commanders of Ghāzān Khān:

When the realm of Yazd fell to Yūsuf Shāh bin 'Ālā' al-Dawlah⁵⁵⁴ after his father, the commanders of Sulṭān Ghāzān coveted his position and desired tribute. Yūsuf Shāh ignored this (*muhmal mī'guzasht*), never consenting in his mind. They convinced the Sulṭān that Yazd had been taken from him. So they sent the Darūghah⁵⁵⁵ Yesüder to Yazd along with two hundred horsemen.⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 90-1.

⁵⁵² The Yazdī histories don't say anything about his lineage, but Yesüder was Hülegü's tenth son by a concubine. Yesüder's brief biography is given in Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 681-2. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 2: 475. Rashīd al-Dīn reports that Yesüder had a son named Taghai, who was made *Shahnah* (*Basqaq*) of Yazd (i.e., an official stationed in a territory that submits willingly), but ruled unjustly, commandeering hundreds of the best houses for his own use. Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 759. However, in the biography Rashīd al-Dīn provides for Yesüder, he had only one son (named "Jaysh" in Karīmī's edition, but "Ḥabash" in Thackston's edition), who was born shortly after his death. The discrepancy in name obviously results from misplacement of dots beneath the first two letters of the name.

⁵⁵³ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 74-5.

⁵⁵⁴ As was mentioned earlier, Yūsuf is the son of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah, not his brother in *TY*. 'Ālā' al-Dawlah's reign is actually not mentioned here, nor the flood, which in later works supposedly occurred during his reign.

⁵⁵⁵ Aḥmad Kātib and Mufīd simply call him an amīr.

⁵⁵⁶ Ja'farī, *TY*, 26.

So, in Ja‘farī’s version, the jealous Mongol commanders catch the entirety of the blame. In Muḥīd’s version, Yūsuf Shāh is the culprit. In Aḥmad Kātib, Yūsuf Shāh, the Mongol commanders, and even the emperor Ghāzān Khān all share some responsibility: Yūsuf Shāh for his negligence, (and later) bad character and stubborn lack of foresight, the commanders for their greed, and Ghāzān for his manipulability. Openings aside, as I will suggest momentarily, Ja‘farī’s initial portrayal of Yūsuf Shāh as a partially innocent victim of courtly intrigue falls away as the narrative wears on. Throughout the rest of all three accounts, in my view the Atābayk comes off as an odious coward.

In each version, what follows is an account of Yūsuf Khān’s conflict with the Mongol high *amīr*, Yesüder. He marches to the outskirts of Yazd⁵⁵⁷ and presents the Khān’s *farmān*. Essentially, the Atābayk control of Yazd is to be confirmed (*musallam*) as long as he surrenders the tribute (*kharāj*); if not, Yūsuf Shāh is to be bound and sent to the “throne of the caliphate” and Yazd is to be given to Yesüder in his place.⁵⁵⁸ Yūsuf Shāh garrisons himself in the city and then, rather than come out to meet Yesüder himself, sends his mother, Khurram Tarkān,⁵⁵⁹ whom Muḥīd calls a lady of pious rectitude (*khātunī-i ṣālihah-i ‘ābidah*), with gifts for the emissary of Ghāzān. Ja‘farī provides no explanation for this move, but Aḥmad Kātib explains that the Atābayk sends her because he was actually too busy drinking wine at the time. For once, Muḥīd

⁵⁵⁷ Aḥmad Kātib specifies that Yesüder camps in the Bāgh-i Ḥājibī, which had been constructed by an earlier Atābayk, ‘Izz al-Dīn Langar for the pleasure of the people of the city. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 75.

⁵⁵⁸ This wording comes from JM. Calling the Mongol house the “caliphate” shows, without a doubt, where Muḥīd’s sympathies lay. Muḥīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 91.

⁵⁵⁹ It is likely that this woman is actually supposed to be Yāqūt Tarkān (Bībī Tarkān?), the illustrious and powerful wife of Maḥmūd Shāh, and daughter of the Qutlugh Khān of Kirmān. However, the Mongol-era sources on the Qutlugh Khāns throw into confusion the Yazdī sources’ periodization. See footnotes 544, 582, and 603.

is the one to cut Yūsuf Shāh some slack. He explains that Yūsuf Shāh sent his mother to

Yesüder

with rare gifts (*tuhuf*) and presents (*hidāyā*), because, by a custom that is the law of the Turks, in grave circumstances (*vaqā'i-i 'azamī*), they send a capable mother (*wālidah-i khūrā*) into the presence of khāns and amīrs to intercede. His mother brought a reasonable and prudent deal for him in reconciliation (*iṣlāḥ*).⁵⁶⁰

No matter how incompetent or corrupt Yūsuf Shāh may have appeared in any of the Yazdī texts, in all versions, the queen mother, Khurram Tarkān, is an honorable and noble woman who does the most wise and expedient thing she can do; she brings gifts, signifying the willingness of her household to open amicable negotiations. At this point, it is Yesüder's turn to act rashly and ignobly. He speaks abusively to Khurram Tarkān, refuses her gifts, and deliberately spills wine on her robes. She returns to the citadel and reports to her son what has transpired. Enraged, Yūsuf Shāh, makes a sortie under cover of night and, taking Yesüder and his army by surprise, massacres them. What's more, he pillages Yesüder's *āghruq*, captures Yesüder's wives and children, and takes them back to the city. The term *āghruq*, a word that all three Yazdī historians employ, is a Mongol word signifying a camp for the old, young, womenfolk, and heavy baggage; during a military campaign, these folk and their equipment were kept separate from the camp of the *urdū*. The use of this word is highly charged, for attacking the *āghruq* was considered unchivalrous.⁵⁶¹ All the versions tell this same tale;

⁵⁶⁰ Mufid Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 91. The reader should notice here that Mufid characterizes both the Atābayks and the Mongols as "Turks." As we have seen, despite intermarriage with Turkic women, the Atābayks hailed from a Daylamī lineage. The Mongols were not truly Turks either. Mufid is employing the term to signify the men of the military political system rather than a particular ethnic delineation.

⁵⁶¹ See Thackston's explanation of the term "āghluq" in his glossary of Mongol terms in Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 765.

Mufīd, however, adds that Yūsuf’s rage had been piqued because he “was extremely daring and haughty (*shujā‘ va maghrūr*)”⁵⁶²—one more jab at the Atābayk’s character.

When this news reaches Ghāzān Khān, he orders the *vālī* of Iṣfahān, Amīr Muḥammad Īdājī,⁵⁶³ to attack Yazd with a massive force.⁵⁶⁴ The Atābayk has no choice but to flee. He takes own family and the wives and children of his vanquished enemy, Yesüder, and absconds to Sīstān, a province that had already been in rebellion against the Īlkhāns. Amīr Muḥammad Īdājī enters Yazd and is welcomed by the sayyids, judges, and the rest of the population. The Amīr treats the Yazdīs with kindness and appoints a new governor⁵⁶⁵ over them, one of his own lieutenants, named Bulghadar and returns to Iṣfahān. Mufīd wraps-up the tale, saying, “Through foolishness and haughtiness (*bi-nādānī va gardan-kishī*), the two hundred year old sultanate of the Atābayks passed into oblivion (*bīgānah*).”⁵⁶⁶

The accounts of Yūsuf Shāh’s actual demise are quite different in each of the Yazdī histories and are somewhat confused. In both *TY* and *JM*, the tale of the last Atābayk simply trails off after his flight to Sīstān; the story proceeds directly to the rise of the Muẓaffarid dynasty. Aḥmad Kātīb’s narrative is more coherent and deliberately integrated into the larger narrative of politics outside of Yazd. In that work, after the

⁵⁶² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 91.

⁵⁶³ I have not been able to discover the lineage or identity of this Amīr Muḥammad Īdājī. Rashīd al-Dīn says only that he was named Amīr of Iṣfahān and went to meet Ghāzān during his conflict with Gaikhatu. Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 868-9. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 605. We don’t know who gave him this post or when. The title “*Idāchī*” signifies a keeper of provisions. The title was given to certain princes of the Īlkhāns, but there is no indication in Rashīd al-Dīn’s text that this Amīr was one of those princes.

⁵⁶⁴ In *TY*, a band of donkey drivers survived Yesüder’s butchery and reported the events to Ghāzān, who issued a *yarlīgh* to Muḥammad Īdājī, ordering him to attack Yazd with thirty-thousand men: Ja’farī, *TY*, 27.

⁵⁶⁵ Mufīd does not provide a specific title, offering the generic expression, “*bi-ḥukmat-i Yazd*.” Ja’farī and Aḥmad Kātīb say calls him the *dārūghah*.

⁵⁶⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 92.

story of the Atābayk's flight to Sīstān, the author gives accounts of Ghāzān Khān's conversion and subsequent conquest of Syria, and then a quick report on the succession of the Īlkhān Muḥammad Khudābandah (Uljaytū)'s succession. Then, Aḥmad Kātib has Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar track the treacherous Atābayk down and execute him. This Sharaf al-Dīn, we should recall, is the former boon companion of Yūsuf Shāh, who had earlier advised his impudent liege to stop his embezzlement. Sharaf al-Dīn's son, Muḥammad, would later found the Muẓaffarid dynasty. In Aḥmad Kātib's words:

When rule had settled on Muḥammad Khudābandah [Uljaytū], in Sīstān, Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar saw to it that Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh would not have an opportunity for escape (*furṣatī nadārad*), and he cheated him out of his territory. He plotted (*ma'ālī andīshī kard*). Suddenly, one night he struck the women's camp (*āghluq*) of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh and plundered it. They snatched up Yesüder's wives and children and carried off the captives. He returned to the Grand *Urdū* and went before Sulṭān Muḥammad [Khudābandah].⁵⁶⁷

In retribution for Yūsuf Shāh's cowardly attack on Yesüder's *āghluq*, by looting Yūsuf Shāh's *āghluq* and liberating Yesüder's family, Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar comes out as the avenger of both the Īlkhānid sulṭān and Yesüder in this version. This is the perfect setup for Aḥmad Kātib's subsequent treatment of the Muẓaffarid kings— wise, godly figures who patronized local sayyids, but who did not perform miracles themselves, as the early Atābayk, Quṭb Shāh had done. All the Yazdī historians count the Muẓaffarids as some of Yazd's greatest royal benefactors. In actuality, Ja'farī does include a very similar story about Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar in *TY*; however, he sets the events somewhat earlier and does not associate them with Yūsuf Shāh's actual demise. Like his successor, Ja'farī includes an account of Ghāzān's conversion to Islam and conquest of al-Shām. He

⁵⁶⁷ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 79.

then goes on to present Uljaytū's succession, conversion to Islam, and acceptance of the Shī'ī *mazhab*, explaining that during this time:

Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar took up the sons of Yesüder,⁵⁶⁸ turned away from the Atābayk, and came to Tabrīz. Sulṭān Muḥammad [Khudābandah] brought him into the fold and gave him troops. And he accompanied the Sulṭān on a *zīyārat* to the holy stopping place (*mashhad-i muqaddas*) of the Murtaẓá [‘Alī]. When he returned from Baghdad, he sent the army to Gīlān to take care of the rebellion of the pādishāh of Gīlān under the command of the Qutlugh Shāh [title for rulers of Kirmān, the Qutlugh Khāns], and Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar behaved like a man. When they came before the Sulṭān, he raised his rank and gave him favors, and he entered the commanders of the *ḥaẓrat* and was glorified with royal blandishment and royal greetings.⁵⁶⁹

In Ja‘farī’s account, the Muẓaffarid’s rise is bound up with his battle-honor, his loyalty to the Īlkhānid Sulṭān, and through him, his devotion to ‘Alī. As such, this account sets the stage for Ja‘farī’s notices on the works of Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar’s descendents; as I will contend in the next chapter, the Muẓaffarids were well remembered for their patronage of ‘Alid shrines in Yazd. In fact, there are many problems with the chronology; still the rhetorical effects that each author is able to realize through their arrangements of these events are powerful. Yūsuf Shāh turns out to be a convenient villain.

Will the Real Yūsuf Shāh Please Stand Up?: A Look at Īlkhānid Era Sources, Shabānkārah’ī and Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh

Part of the reason the historians of Yazd found Yūsuf Shāh such a useful villain derives, paradoxically, from the fact that the chronology surrounding the lives of the Atābayks’ lives is so hazy and moot, a point that is evidenced by the many

⁵⁶⁸ As noted above, Rashīd al-Dīn equivocates on the question of how many sons Yesüder had. In one place he says that his one son, Habash (Jaysh), was born after he died. Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 681-2. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 475, 77. In other words, it is possible that Yesüder may not have really had any sons at the time of his death.

⁵⁶⁹ Ja‘farī, *TY*, 29.

inconsistencies in character and discrepancies in chronology that come up within each of the three texts as well as between them. These ambiguities are compounded when we compare the Yazdī histories to accounts of the Atābayks of Yazd in Īlkhānid era sources. In the end, we will discover that these ambiguities give the authors a great deal of flexibility in their presentation of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh and therefore allow them to more easily mold him for their purpose. However, in order to demonstrate how this is the case, we must first take stock of some of the key inconsistencies concerning the Atābayks, and particularly, Yūsuf Shāh, in the Yazdī histories, for this will give us some clues about what to look for in the older works, produced outside of Yazd. We have already noted the discrepancies in the characterization of Yūsuf Shāh: at times he appears corrupt and greedy, at other times, simply reckless; at moments he even appears to be the victim. These are suspicious variations, particularly when this ruler's character appears to change abruptly in the text, as we observed in Ja'farī's account. These are hiccups that suggest the author was piecing together conflicting accounts, both written and oral. In addition to these variances in characterization and motive, there are also some discrepancies pertaining to Yūsuf Shāh's genealogy and the line of Atābayk rulers, some of which we have touched on. For example, Ja'farī says that Yūsuf Shāh is the son of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah. In Aḥmad Kātīb and Mufīd's works, Yūsuf Shāh is consistently the brother of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah; both are the sons of Tuqá (Tughá) Shāh⁵⁷⁰ and the grandsons of Sulṭān Salghur Shāh. There is also some question about whether Yūsuf Shāh and his brother were actually the offspring of Tuqá Shāh, or rather, of Maḥmūd Shāh (see below). There are also discrepancies about what actually happened

⁵⁷⁰ In Kutubī's *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Muẓaffar*, Yūsuf Shāh is son of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah. See: Maḥmūd Kutubī, *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Muẓaffar*, ed. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'ī (Tehran: Mu'assasah-'i Intishārāt-i Amīr Kabīr, 1364/1985-6), 31.

to Yūsuf Shāh.⁵⁷¹ A more problematic and suggestive set of inconsistencies concerns the dating of Yūsuf Shāh's reign. The entirety of the narrative about Yūsuf Shāh takes place during Ghāzān Khān's reign. We note that all three historians relate that the Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh came to power just after the Great Flood of 673/1274, long before Ghāzān's reign began in 694/1295. While conceivably, Yūsuf Shāh could have already ruled for twenty years before his problems with Ghāzān, the Yazdī sources make it appear that the events occurred toward the beginning of his rule. In line with this, as we noted earlier,⁵⁷² Mufid places the estrangement between Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar and Yūsuf Shāh sometime during Arghūn Khān's reign (r. 683-690 / 1284-1291), before Ghāzān came to power. On the other hand, Ja'farī places it long after Ghāzān's reign, during Uljaytū's reign (r. 703-716/ 1304-1316). Finally, there is a fundamental inconsistency that all three historians of Yazd reproduce in their works: While each of the stories about the end of the Atābayks' line takes place during the time of Ghāzān Khān (r. 694-703/1295-1304), the affair with Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and his son is set during Abū Sa'īd's reign (r. 716-736/1316-1335), a major discrepancy that the secondary literature has overlooked. It is clear that this contemptible Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, who all three Yazdīs claim is the last Atābayk, cannot be the same contemptible Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh who gave Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad so much trouble during Abū Sa'īd's reign. We are dealing with two different figures!

⁵⁷¹ To make the mix of fate's more complicated, it is worth mentioning that Ḥāfiẓ Abrū's fifteenth-century geography relates that Yūsuf Shāh was assassinated by the Mongol envoys. He also states that this event coincided with the death of Arghūn Khān. Ḥāfiẓ-Abrū, *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiẓ-i Abrū*, ed. Šādiq Sajjād (Tehran 1977), 2: 198. Denise Aigle cites this information as authoritative, but does not consider any other explanation. Aigle, *Le Fārs*, 130, note 450.

⁵⁷² See above, footnote 550.

Who is the Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh of the Rukn al-Dīn story then? Some sources report that after the Mongols took direct control of Yazd following Yūsuf Shāh's flight, for a short time around 715/1315, under Abū Sa'īd, they installed another Atābayk as governor of Yazd; one of Yūsuf Shāh's sons, called Ḥājjī Shāh b. Yūsuf Shāh, was appointed and then quickly overthrown by local leaders.⁵⁷³ Assuming that the story of this conflict between Rukn al-Dīn and the Atābayk ruler actually occurred—and we cannot be sure that it did—it is likely that it was this figure, Ḥājjī Shāh b. Yūsuf Shāh, who was intended in the Yazdī tradition, and not his father, Yūsuf Shāh. The timing is perfect. Suspiciously, the Yazdī historians do not ever mention this Ḥājjī Shāh. Whether it be out of ignorance or subterfuge, they seem determined to present the villains of the Ghāzān/Yesüder story and the villain of the Abū Sa'īd/Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad story as one and the same person. Why should they have chosen to conflate these two figures, or if they did so unwittingly, what led them down that path of error? These questions are difficult to answer and will require that we bring earlier sources from outside the Yazdī tradition into our study. As we will discover, the solution to the Yūsuf Shāh mystery speaks directly to the foundational questions of this chapter, which concern how networks of local sayyid notables, came to predominance in Yazd and in the empire at large. In the middle of this murkiness that engulfs the figure of the last Atābayk in earlier histories from the fourteenth century, we can discern narrative strategies that seek to legitimize and fortify these networks. These are strategies that the Yazdī historians inherit, reinforce, and utilize for their own ends later.

⁵⁷³ In his history of the Muzaffarid dynasty, Kutubī discusses this Ḥājjī Shāh and places him in Abū Sa'īd's reign. Kutubī, *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Muzaffar*, 35. See also Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, 209.

The Atābayks are given a lengthy treatment in Muḥammad ‘Alī bin Muḥammad Shabānkārahī’s history, *Majma‘ al-Ansāb*, composed in 733/1332-3, the same year in which Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad died and one year after the death of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad. Moreover, this work includes an early rendition of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh’s trouble with Ghāzān Khān and Yesüder. This is a fascinating chapter, in part because it is very difficult to square Shabānkārahī’s chronology with any of the Yazdī histories. First of all, this author’s introduction to the Atābayks is presented along with an account of Yazd’s origins that is wildly different from the one we observed in the Yazdī tradition. Despite his apparently firsthand knowledge of Fārs and the wealth of geographical literature that was available to him,⁵⁷⁴ he opens the chapter stating, “We have not seen reports and evidence about the kings of Yazd in any book, nor has anyone spoken of its history; no book has come into view. In all, what has been heard about the ancients and inhabitants of Yazd is this: The origin of these Atābayks is from Turks.”⁵⁷⁵ His sources appear to have been exclusively oral. Moreover, whoever he received his information about Yazd’s origins from had no knowledge of the Iskandar legend that the Yazdī historians presented later and offered a totally different tale. As Shabānkārahī summarizes it:

They say the founding of the Mamlakat-i Yazd of ancient times was three sites: The first was a village, which they called Tūrā-Pusht. The second is a solid fortress (*dizh*) they call Dizhdālān. The presumption (*za‘m*) of Yazd’s people is this: The Dizh-i Safīd, which they link to the Qal‘ah-i Safīd, which is on the limits of Kāzarūn. It is mentioned in the *Shāh-Nāmāh* that it is where Surkhāb (Suhrāb) bin Rustam overthrew Hajr bin Gūdarz and seized him. Dizhdālān is this very place. The third is the place they call Dīh,⁵⁷⁶ where today’s city-center of Yazd is located.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷⁴ The author’s own origins were among the Shabānkārahī Kurds in neighboring Kurdistan.

⁵⁷⁵ Shabānkārahī, *Majma‘ al-Ansāb*, 2: 210.

⁵⁷⁶ Perhaps a reference to Dihābād, the source of Iskandar’s qanāt.

⁵⁷⁷ Shabānkārahī, *Majma‘ al-Ansāb*, 2: 210.

If Shabānkārahī's sources were indeed oral accounts provided by inhabitants of Yazd, he might actually be offering us a storytelling tradition that was defunct by the fifteenth century, one that the Iskandar tradition had completely replaced, as the appeal of such a tale went viral. In any case, moving on to more recent history, Shabānkārahī discusses the origin of the Atābayks, whom he claims are the founders of the current settlement of Yazd. Shabānkārahī's list of the Atābayk rulers and his account of their rise is almost totally at odds with that of later historians. There is a little overlap among the later rulers, but very little. To start with, without providing any dates, Shabānkārahī reports, "They say their forbearer (*muqaddam*) had been a Turk, whose name was 'Aṭā Khān, who had been in Miṣr, a leader among the commanders and successors (*khulafā'*) of Miṣr, with descent from the Khānān-i Turkistān."⁵⁷⁸ This Aṭā Khān establishes his power in Yazd and, after fending off a rebellion from his son Muẓaffar al-Dīn, abdicates, leaving the throne to this same, rather ambitious son, who is in turn succeeded by Aṭā Khān's nephew, Naṣr al-Dīn.⁵⁷⁹ We are told that Naṣr al-Dīn leaves the throne to Atābayk Sa'd. So far, none of these names match any of the Atābayks of Yazd familiar to us. We recall that the earliest of the Atābayks of Yazd, recounted in the Yazdī histories were of the Daylamī line of the Kākūyids, and bore distinctive Persian names, which these are not. The succession he gives is vaguely reminiscent of another Atābayk line, the Salghurids of Fārs, where

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2: 211. See footnote 541 on Rashīd al-Dīn's reference to Aṭā Khān as one of the early Atābayks of the Kākūyid line, favored by Chingīz Khān. The name Aṭā Khān does come into play in the Yazd histories, but is the name of a Saljūq prince, son of Sulṭān Maḥmūd bin Malikshāh and the Kākūyid princess, (Malikah) Aṭā Khātūn. Aṭā Khān built a madrasah in Yazd called the Madrasah-i Aṭā Khān and was buried there. Aṭā Khān's mother, Aṭā Khātūn was the daughter of the Kākūyid Sulṭān 'Ālā' al-Dawlah and the Saljūq, Arslān Khātūn. It is possible that Shabānkārahī was confusing this figure for the first Atābayk; however, his story bears no likeness to the familiar Aṭā Khān story. Aṭā Khān's story in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 63-5. It is also found in Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfāqī, *JM*, 1: 80-1.

“Muẓaffar al-Dīn” is a frequent title; in fact, one king with that title is succeeded by his son Sa’d, a name that is also mentioned in Shabānkārahī’s line of succession.⁵⁸⁰ Still, the rest of the names do not match the any of the other Salghurids, and anyway, elsewhere Shabānkārahī devotes entire chapter to that dynasty, which he represents accurately.⁵⁸¹

Shabānkārahī then moves on to a discussion of the next two Atābayks, who in his view were exceedingly just and benevolent. The first is called Atābayk Rukn al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh, and the second is called Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh. Finally, with this latter figure, we find a familiar name; in the Yazdī tradition, Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn was the near-saintly Atābayk we discussed earlier, whose son, Maḥmūd Shāh, built the madrasah (Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh/ Madrasah-i Ṣafvatīyah), which the contentious Ruknīyah Madrasah would overshadow generations later. In Shabānkārahī’s reckoning, however, Quṭb al-Dīn’s son is called Atābayk Rukn al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh, not Maḥmūd Shāh. Also, Shabānkārahī has Quṭb al-Dīn marry the daughter of the first Qutlugh Khānid ruler of Kirmān, Barāq Sulṭān (Ḥājib) (r. 619-632/ 1222-1235), named Ṣafvah al-Dīn Ādam Yaqūt Tarkān (or in some sources, Bībī Tarkān— she remains unnamed here, but is named elsewhere in the work);⁵⁸² in the Yazdī tradition, which agrees with the Qarā-Khitā’id sources, this marriage was contracted for Quṭb al-Dīn’s son, Maḥmūd

⁵⁸⁰ The Salghurids were often campaigning against the Shabānkārahī Kurds and one would expect the author to be familiar with their succession. On the Salghurid Atābayks see Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, 207. As side note, the poet Sa’dī’s *takhalluṣ* was derived from his patron, one of the Salghurid Atābayks, Sa’d I.

⁵⁸¹ Shabānkārahī, *Majma’ al-Ansāb*, 2: 182-7.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*, 2: 212. Sometimes her name is spelled “Yāqūt.” Like many of these figures, there are discrepancies in the sources on this woman’s name. (See below.) On the Qutlugh Khāns, descended from the Qara Khitay, see Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, 210. On the relationship between the Chingīzids and the Qara Khitay see: Biran, “The Mongol Transformation from the Steppe to Eurasian Empire,” 344-45. On the female ruler under the Qara Khitay and the Qutlugh Khāns see Biran, *Qara Khitai*, especially 167.

Shāh.⁵⁸³ In fact, it is in the notice on this Atābayk Rukn al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh that Shabānkārahī situates the story of the Atābayk’s confrontation with Ghāzān Khān. Before we turn to that however, we should note that by now, a conspicuous pattern is becoming evident: All the later Atābayks in Shabānkārahī’s work have the name “Yūsuf Shāh” as their title. Moreover, the Atābayk’s use of the name as a title may possibly be corroborated in *Jāmi‘-i Tavārikh*, the monumental world history of Rashīd al-Dīn, the famous Īlkhānid Grand Vizier.⁵⁸⁴ So, even if Shabānkārahī was wrong about who the Atābayks were and about their lineage (indeed we should not reject his order outright just because other, mostly later, sources present an entirely different picture), he might still have been accurately representing their use of this name, Yūsuf Shāh, as their title, a practice the later historians from Yazd do not mention and could have easily forgotten.⁵⁸⁵

The issue of names and succession aside, the plotline of Shabānkārahī’s Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh (Atābayk Rukn al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh) story is much like that of the Yazdī histories. However, his framing of the story differs significantly from the Yazdī historians’ presentation. Shabānkārahī begins:

The purpose of these preliminaries (as it were) is [to present] his circumstances. He sat upon the throne and he was a pādishāh of high ambition and majesty. In his period, the governance of Yazd found perfection of dignity and rank, and his

⁵⁸³ The thirteenth-century sources on the Qarā-Khitā’iyān are clear that Yaqūt married Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh and not the father, Quṭb al-Dīn. See *Tārīkh-i Kirmān* in: *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā’iyān*, 98.

⁵⁸⁴ For example, in his account of Majd al-Mulk Yazdī’s story, Rashīd al-Dīn claims that a ruler of Yazd, called Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh, had offered Majd al-Mulk the vizierate of Yazd, but he refused. (This information is not included in the account of Majd al-Mulk in Karīmī’s edition but included as a footnote in Thackston’s edition. It comes from one particular manuscript of *JT*. See Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 541, note 1.) The title Rukn al-Dīn seems to have been a popular one among the Atābayks in these earlier works, too, and is completely absent from the Yazdī histories. The comparable section of Karīmī’s edition where this report would have been found is: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḥr Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 774.

⁵⁸⁵ The situation is rendered even more confusing when we consider the fact that still another Atābayk dynasty, the Hazāraspids of Luristān, frequently took the name Yūsuf Shāh around this time.

standing was elevated. Pādishāhs of the time from Hūlakū Khān [r. 654-663/1256-1265] to Ābāqā [r. 663-681/1265-1282] and Arghūn [r. 683-690/1256-1291], all looked after his every need (*mu'tanī-i ū shud-and*).⁵⁸⁶ He, too, in submission and allegiance, would offer the white hand [of Moses] (*yad-i bayẓā*).⁵⁸⁷ Then, when the throne of the realm was illuminated by the nimbus of the preeminent fortune (*farr-i dawlat*) of the Pādishāh of Islam, Ghāzān Khān, everyone among *salātīn* and *mulūk* on the face of the earth turned the dust at his threshold into the collyrium of sight (*tūtīyā-yi baṣar*). And they fulfilled the customs of offering congratulations at his blessed enthronement. Out of bad judgment, Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh,⁵⁸⁸ really got in his own way (*qazā-yi bad rā Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh māni'ī hamānā budah*); he did not go to the *urdū* that year. Envious made this fact a pretext (*bahānah*) and presented a most hideous picture [of Yūsuf Shāh's motives] to Ḥaẓrat Ghāzān Khān, saying that Yūsuf Shāh of Yazd had grown so big that he was not attending to the pillars and grandees of the Ḥaẓrat. When Ghāzān Khān heard this story, he sent an emissary to summon Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh. The Atābayk was apprehensive (*mustash'ir būd*). For the present, he didn't go. Emissaries after emissary arrived in succession. The Atābayk spent his wealth and was delaying and disobeying the order, until after a period of one year, eleven emissaries had gathered in Yazd. The enemies [of Yūsuf Shāh] presented to Ghāzān Khān that he is a rebel (*yāghī*).⁵⁸⁹

What stands out in this initial paragraph is that Shabānkārahī's Yūsuf Shāh is an honorable king who has nobly and diligently served all of the Īlkhāns all the way back to Hülegü. He neither embezzles funds, nor lives wantonly. In fact, he is so upright that he becomes a favorite of the Mongols, but thus becomes the target of jealous plotting at court. He makes a mistake in judgment, which causes his downfall. Still, even in his rejection of Ghāzān's demand that he come to court, Shabānkārahī's portrayal of Yūsuf Khān is generous: while his delay in following orders was ultimately a mistake, it was an error brought about by miscalculation, rather than by malice, rebelliousness, or vanity. There are traces of this characterization of Yūsuf Shāh in Ja'farī's rendition,

⁵⁸⁶ As a vassal of Chingīz Khān's grandson, Hülegü (d. 663/1265), Shabānkārahī's Yūsuf Shāh comes to power long before 673 A.H., the date given in the Yazdī histories for his accession just after the flood that killed his brother!

⁵⁸⁷ I.e., the hand of generosity. The white hand appears in the Qur'ān as one of the signs God gives to Moses as a sign of his prophecy. See Brannon M. Wheeler, "Moses," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Andrew Rippin (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 250.

⁵⁸⁸ While he is named "Atābayk Rukn al-Dīn Yūsuf Shāh" in the title of the section, throughout the rest of the text, Shabānkārahī simply calls him "Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh."

⁵⁸⁹ Shabānkārahī, *Majma' al-Ansāb*, 2: 212.

which, as we recall, opens by absolving the Atābayk of blame, although Ja‘farī contradicts this depiction later on.

Later in Shabānkārahī’s narrative, the familiar encounter between Yesüder and the Atābayk’s mother ensues, and the story unfolds much like the Yazdī tradition.⁵⁹⁰ However, in Shabānkārahī’s rendering, the Atābayk’s assault on Yesüder that follows the insult against his mother is nothing short of holy war. The Atābayk raises a great army and massive funds from among the locals, crying, “Make haste O Muslims! Today is the day of *ghazā*; either become martyred or we will give this *kāfir* [Yesüder] his due!”⁵⁹¹ There is no night-time ambush here and no cowardly attack on Yesüder’s *āghluq* in this account:

When the people of the city were given this leave, they supposed that they acted for the sake of Islam (*musulmānī rā kār farmāyand*). Each one rallied toward the Atābayk’s court with his arms. Nearly ten thousand men came forward and charged Yesüder’s cavalry and encampment. Along with his deputy and retinue, they put him to the sword, and in the twinkling of an eye they cut them to bits (*qit‘ah qit‘ah kardand*) and brought ruin upon them.⁵⁹²

Shabānkārahī presents nothing of the story in the Yazd histories in which Ghāzān sends Amīr Muḥammad Idājī to march on Yazd, but clearly the Atābayk expects that a Mongol retaliatory expedition is imminent and plans his escape. Then, from out of nowhere, Shabānkārahī solders in a differently colored fragment of the story here, one that appears to have come from another source; for a moment the more familiar Yūsuf Shāh, the embezzler, pops up: Just before he bolts from Yazd, Yūsuf Shāh gathers

⁵⁹⁰ One minor variation is that Shabānkārahī includes the obscenities that Yesüder barks at the Atābayk’s mother before her clothes get stained with wine, saying, “I will put a rope around his neck like a dog and having plundered his house and property, I will carry him off to the Ḥazrat.” *Ibid.*, 2: 213.

⁵⁹¹ It appears that in this version, these events are supposed to have predated Ghāzān Khān’s conversion to Islam, which (according to tradition) precipitated the conversion of most of his generals also. Alternatively, the text may be implying that Yesüder failed to accept Islam even after Ghāzān converted.

⁵⁹² Here I am following the editor’s suggestion to read *qit‘ah qit‘ah* (piece by piece) rather than *qaṭrah qaṭrah* (drop by drop), as it reads in the manuscripts. Shabānkārahī, *Majma‘ al-Ansāb*, 2: 213.

up the treasures he has collected, apparently on loan from his subjects and forcibly seizes the affidavits (*ḥujjat-hā*) documenting loans from his creditors and makes for Khurāsān (not Sīstān, as in the later versions).⁵⁹³ Then, before fleeing, he entrusts Yesüder's sons to a man named Muḏaffar Yazdi, his *Işfahsalār*. This is in fact the first we hear of the capture of Yesüder's sons in this text; Shabānkārahī said nothing of this earlier—one further indication that this stretch of the narrative probably comes from another source.⁵⁹⁴ Muḏaffar Yazdī is supposed to return the hostages to the *urdū*, but only after their usefulness in securing favorable terms has been exploited. As it turns out, Muḏaffar Yazdī remains loyal to the Mongols and sends the captives back to the *urdū* right away, against Yūsuf Shāh's orders. Now, this Muḏaffar Yazdī is probably Sharaf al-Dīn Muḏaffar, namesake of the Muḏaffarid dynasty, and the attendant of Yūsuf Shāh in the later, Yazdī histories, who defects in those works. Of course, when Shabānkārahī was penning his history, the Muḏaffarid house had not yet consolidated its power and so this Muḏaffar would still have been a minor player at that time of writing. But as we already witnessed, in the later works composed in Yazd that go on to celebrate the powerful dynasty the Muḏaffarids eventually became, Sharaf al-Dīn Muḏaffar's defection is depicted as an honorable deed because Yūsuf Shāh had been such a corrupt king. Here, however, aside from the one rather incongruous incident in which the Yūsuf Shāh takes advantage of his creditors, the Atābayk comes off as fairly even-handed and decent—a *ghazī*-king, even; in Shabānkārahī's work, Muḏaffar's defection smacks of betrayal. Ultimately, Yesüder's sons are able to reveal where Yūsuf

⁵⁹³ *Ibid.*, 2: 214.

⁵⁹⁴ Does this thread represent another version in which the boys were taken from the *āghluq*, along with their mothers? It is difficult to know, since we don't learn if these captives were of fighting age or if they were just young boys in their mothers' camp.

Shāh is heading. He is captured at the border of Khurāsān and brought before Ghāzān Khān. A tribunal (*yārghū*) is held, which “returned a ruling upon him and Ghāzān enacted it (*ibqā kard*) upon him, pardoning him his life.”⁵⁹⁵ Afterward, the Atābayk spends some time at court. Henceforth, Shabānkārahī’s sympathies return to the Atābayk, and he portrays him as the victim of courtly plotting once again. He runs into trouble because he is not able to summon an army to accompany Ghāzān Khān on his invasion of Syria. Once again, envious people (*hussād*) take advantage of the moment and slander him. In what follows we finally get some clues that help us get ourselves oriented in time:

They brought him before the Yāsā on Ghāzān Khān’s order. One son remained to him, whose name was ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah. ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah also had a son, named Salghur Shāh. Ghāzān’s ruling on this matter was penetrating (*nafāz*) to the effect that his sons be seated in Yazd. His [Yūsuf Shāh’s] son and his son’s son were to be moved from Yazd with their people and their followers to Abarqūh. Their circumstances there are unknown. We seek refuge in God from the downfall of the *dawlah*!⁵⁹⁶

With the appearance of these names, ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah and Salghur Shāh, some more familiar names turn up. We recall once again that in the Yazdī tradition, Salghur is the son of Maḥmūd Shāh, who had built the all-important Madrasah. Salghur’s son is Tughá; Tughá’s two sons are ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah (who dies from the shock of the flood of 673 A.H.) and Yūsuf Shāh, the supposed last Atābayk. Our first observation is that Shabānkārahī’s version has the generations inverted. Moreover, while Shabānkārahī, like the Yazdī authors, has the rule of the Atābayks end in Yazd with Yūsuf Shāh, he claims that they continue their rule in Abarqūh, roughly eighty miles south-west of

⁵⁹⁵ Shabānkārahī, *Majma‘ al-Ansāb*, 2: 213.

⁵⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 2: 214.

Yazd; nonetheless, beyond knowledge of their the names, he admits that he is ignorant of their fate.

Whether or not Shabānkārahī's account of the Atābayks is more or less accurate than the later Yazdī histories is not perfectly clear. Because the Atābayks of Yazd rarely come up in other contemporary accounts, we have little evidence to corroborate his presentation. In fact, as we have mentioned, they appear in Rashīd al-Dīn's history, merely in passing. Nevertheless, on the whole, where Rashīd al-Dīn does mention Atābayk rulers, his chronology and succession of Atābayk rulers—at least up to the time of Ghāzān Khān's rein—corresponds reasonably well to that of the Yazdī histories and casts serious doubt on the reliability Shabānkārahī's report. Like the Yazdīs and the thirteen-century Qarā-Khitā'id sources, Rashīd al-Dīn reports that Maḥmūd Shāh (sometimes called Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd) was the son of Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn and that he married the Qutlugh Sulṭān of Kirmān's daughter, Yāqūt Tarkān (sometimes called Bībī Tarkān).⁵⁹⁷ However, there are also some significant bumps; for example, Rashīd al-Dīn makes 'Ālā' al-Dawlah and Yūsuf Shāh the sons of Maḥmūd Shāh, skipping the two intermediate generations, represented in the Yazdī texts by Atābayks Salghur and Tuqá.⁵⁹⁸ Furthermore, Rashīd al-Dīn says nothing about Atābayk 'Ālā' al-Dawlah's dying

⁵⁹⁷ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḥr al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT*, 1: 664. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḥr al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Jamī' u't-tawārikh: Compendium of Chronicles- A History of the Mongols*, ed. W.M. Thackston, trans. W.M. Thackston, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Harvard University, Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, 1998), 2: 459. The confusion in the Yazdī sources concerning the Atābayks' names and periodization, is only complicated by confusion about which of the daughters of the Qutlugh Sulṭāns' daughters married which Atābayks. See footnote 603.

⁵⁹⁸ This genealogy is implied in a number of places, but stated explicitly in a discussion of 'Ālā' al-Dawlah's relationship with Nawrūz. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḥr al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 899-90. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 618. In another document, discussed below, Rashīd al-Dīn mentions that 'Ālā' al-Dawlah's father was Tughānshāh rather than Maḥmūd Shāh. It is possible that Salghur and Tuqá were descended from a cousin clan and not directly from Maḥmūd Shāh; after their deaths, rule passed back to the branch of the family descended directly from Maḥmūd Shāh, i.e., to 'Ālā' al-Dawlah and Yūsuf Shāh. Rashīd al-Dīn is in agreement with the author of *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā'īān*, which also states

on account of the flood; rather, he dies from wounds incurred in battle, an important moment in Rashīd al-Dīn's narrative, which we will examine momentarily. In addition to these discrepancies, while the author of *JT* confirms that Yesüder died in Yazd as he was attempting to arrest Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, he sets the event in the summer of 688/1289, which was during Arghūn's reign, not Ghāzān's.⁵⁹⁹

In the end, however, the question of accuracy is not so important for our historiographical project. What we have established is that Atābayks' line of succession and sequence of events is foggy and that the stories associated with each ruler are very much in play. More importantly, we have found that there are certain bits of narrative about the lives of some of these kings that historians inherited, hung on to, and manipulated in ways that suited their projects. In fact, getting to the bottom of the real order of the Atābayk succession or determining which Yūsuf Shāh did what is not our project; rather, our objectives require that we trace the misunderstandings and deliberate interpretations that have left that positive history in shadow. The concluding passage in Shabānkārahī's story of the Atābayks opens the way for a very productive discussion in this regard. So, as a long segue back to the Yazdī corpus, we must stick with this account a little longer. After sending the Atābayks off to oblivion in Abarqūh, Shabānkārahī winds up his chapter with the following passage:

And thereafter, by the order of the Pādishāh of the World [Ghāzān Khān], they gave Yazd to Şāhib-i Maghfūr, Khvājah Rashīd al-Dīn [i.e., the Īlkhānid Grand Vizier and author of *Jāmi' al-Tavārīkh*]. On account of the increase of the Atābayks' insurgence and the struggle and the domination of the *ilchīyān*, Yazd had become ruined. In a short while, thanks to the *dawlah* and the

that Yāqūt Tarkān married Maḥmūd Shāh (Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh) and gave birth to 'Ālā' al-Dawlah. *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā'īyān*, 98.

⁵⁹⁹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 820. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 572. This event is only mentioned in passing, in the context of another story: the arrest of Şāhib-i Dīvān Bahā' al-Dīn Muḥammad's two sons, Muḥammad and 'Alī in Işfahān.

administration of that magnificent *pīr* [Rashid al-Dīn], he made it the equal of the lands of Nīshābūr and he impelled justice such that in the land and cities they still imitate the justice of Khvājah Rashīd al-Dīn. Since Muẓaffar Yazdī was a man of perfect chivalry (*mardānah*), the khvājah [Rashīd al-Dīn] entrusted the governance (*bāsqāqī*)⁶⁰⁰ of that *mamlakat* to him. And likewise, he controlled the roads of Yazd, Kirmān, Abarqūh, and Iṣfahān. . . After the Khvājah passed away and so did Muẓaffar, in latter days, Yazd entered into the districts of Amīr Sayyid al-Sādat, Mavlānā Shams al-Dīn Yazdī, may God make his resting-place fresh, since he was a good, angel-tempered man, with the manners of a prophet. The evidence of his deeds and blessings upon the surface of the earth are so famous that there is no need of any explication. Then it [Yazd] fell under the diligent gaze of the brother of the Vazīr-i Buzurg, Ghiyāsh al-Dīn Muḥammad bin Rashīd, whom they called Amīr Shaykhī. Since they martyred the *vazīr*, as this is being written today, it is under the gaze and administration (*naẓar va tarbīyat*) of the family of the Khusraw of the Amīrs of the World, Anūshirvān of the Age, Succor of the World and the Religion, Kay Khusraw [Abū Saʿīd]. His deputy has possession there.⁶⁰¹

Finally, we end up back roughly where we started, with one of our local sayyids, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.b), son of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad. But first, Shabānkārahī leaves the Atābayks to get lost in Abarqūh and has the great vizier, Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh, assign the administration of Yazd to Muẓaffar Yazdī (Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar), who at this point in the text is characterized as a chivalrous person, despite his earlier betrayal. The story then skips ahead a few years and lingers on the magnanimity of Shams al-Dīn [Muḥammad] Yazdī, i.e., the son of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad.

Shabānkārahī makes no mention of Shams al-Dīn's father, Rukn al-Dīn. Although he speaks of Shams al-Dīn [Muḥammad] Yazdī superlatively, he does so in somewhat vague terms. He does not specify which office he holds, but implies that he is actually

⁶⁰⁰ *Bāsqāq* is a term signifying a military official appointed by the Mongol administration to bring a local district into subordination and collect tax revenues. Lambton discusses the Mongol *bāsqāqs* throughout her two important articles on Mongol fiscal Administration in Persia: Ann K. Lambton, "Mongol Fiscal Administration in Persia," *Studia Islamica* 64 (1986), Ann K. Lambton, "Mongol Fiscal Administration in Persia (Part II)," *Studia Islamica* 65 (1987). Also see Thackston's definition in his glossary at the end of Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 766.

⁶⁰¹ Shabānkārahī, *Majma' al-Ansāb*, 2: 214.

governing or administering Yazd, rather than working for the central vizierate in Tabrīz, as it is reported in the Yazdī texts. Shabānkārahī also mentions Rashīd al-Dīn's son, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn (H.III.b), right after Shams al-Dīn, but does not allude to any association between the two. In fact, he seems to intend that Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn's brother, this Amīr Shaykhī, actually succeeded Shams al-Dīn, another enigmatic assertion. Most importantly, Shabānkārahī does not mention any conflict between the Niẓām family of Rukn al-Dīn or Shams al-Dīn and Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh. Nor does he offer an indication that the collapse of the local dynasty had anything to do with a rivalry with local notable families. In other words, despite the fact that he recognizes Shams al-Dīn as an important figure, Shabānkārahī does not acknowledge any of the key elements from that figure's story, which later comes to form the backbone of the Yazdī tradition. In this source, the fall of the Atābayks of Yazd was caused entirely by pressures that came from outside the territory of Yazd. As we have said, while Shabānkārahī does relate the fall of the Atābayks to some bad judgment on Yūsuf Shāh's part, the real blame falls with Ghāzān's envious attendants, whom he considers to be infidels. Overall, Shabānkārahī is not as invested in branding the last Atābayk with villainy as he is in playing up the capability of later administrators of Yazd, Rashīd al-Dīn, his sons, and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad.

So much for the voice of an outsider with no investment in Yazd! On the other hand, Rashīd al-Dīn, Faẓl Allāh, the Īlkhān's Grand Vizier was an outsider who was enthusiastically invested in the city of Yazd. As we have seen, in Rashīd al-Dīn's own history, even though the references to Yazd's affairs may be sparse, they are fairly well in line with the accounts in later histories. What's more, Rashīd al-Dīn makes some

important observations about the Atābayks' network of alliances with the Mongols and other Atābayk families that are not mentioned elsewhere. For example, he relates that Tarkān Khātūn, the daughter of Atābayk Maḥmūd Shāh and Yāqūt Tarkān (daughter of Barāq Ḥājib of Kirmān),⁶⁰² and sister of Atābayks 'Ālā' al-Dawlah and Yūsuf Shāh, was married to Atābayk Sa'd II, one of the Atābayks of Shīrāz. When her husband died, Rashīd al-Dīn reports that Tarkān Khātūn ruled as regent in Shīrāz for her son, Muḥammad 'Azud al-Dīn. In fact, upon her son's early death, she became the ruler in earnest. Some time afterward, Tarkān Khātūn married Saljūqshāh, her first husband's second cousin, who imprisoned her in the Qal'ah-i Sapīd along with her two daughters by her first husband, Atābayk Sa'd II. When Saljūqshāh eventually ordered Tarkān Khatūn's murder, the Mongol court dispatched the Amīr Altāchū to Fārs to confront him. As it turns out, the Mongol Amīr Altāchū marched out in the company of the Atābayk of Yazd, 'Ālā' al-Dawlah, who was the victim's brother. A battle ensued; Saljūqshāh was killed and the two daughters were rescued. Rashīd al-Dīn then informs us that Atābayk 'Ālā' al-Dīn was wounded in this battle and died a few days afterward, a point that, as we alluded to above, contradicts the Yazdīs' claim that he died of an illness brought on by the flood of 673 A.H. After this fiasco, the girls' grandmother, Yāqūt Tarkān (Bībī Tarkān?),⁶⁰³ brought Tarkān Khātūn's two daughters to the Grand

⁶⁰² The reader should recall that Yāqūt Khātūn was the person who actually completed the Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh. That building was also named Madrasah-i Ṣafvatīyah because Yāqūt Khātūn's title was Ṣafvah al-Dīn. (Her sister, Pādishāh Khātūn, who married Abaq, also bore this title.) As mentioned above, the *Shīrāz-Nāmah* has it that this women (simply called "Tarkān") married Shams al-Dīn Tāzīgū, not the Atābayk of Yazd. This is not mentioned in any other source.

⁶⁰³ It is not clear which daughter of Qutlugh Tarkān and Barāq Ḥājib (or Abū Faṭḥ Quṭb al-Dīn) this really was. It would seem that Yāqūt Tarkān and Bībī Tarkān were the same person—sister of Pādishāh Khātūn, who was married to Abāqā Khān. But another source, *Qarākhita'īyān-i Kirmān*, composed in 716/1316-17 by Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī Kirmānī—himself a Yazdī, but who resettled in Kirmān to serve the Qutlugh Khāns and who achieved the post of chief Munshī under Pādishāh Khātūn in 693/1294—complicates the picture, explaining that Barāq Ḥājib had four daughters: the eldest, Sevinj Tarkān, married Chaghatay

Urdū and saw to it that the elder of the two, Bībī Salghum, was married to Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh, an alliance which was designed to reconsolidate the Yazdī Atābaykid line. The younger daughter, Abish Khātūn, was very favorably married to Mānggū Temür, another of Hülegü's sons.⁶⁰⁴ Left unsaid is that the latter couple ruled Fārs jointly until Mānggū Temür's death in 681, at which time the Īlkhāns took direct control and brushed aside the Atābayks all together.⁶⁰⁵

All told, Rashīd al-Dīn reveals much positive information about the Atābayks that the Yazdī historians failed to relate. In his rendering, the Atābayks of Yazd were actually well connected in the Mongol system and served their overlords loyally. In connection with this, we learn about the influence and power Yāqūt Tarkān, Maḥmūd Shāh's wife, wielded at the imperial court, securing positions of power for her grandchildren and strengthening their lines in Yazd and Shīrāz. In fact, two generations of Yazdī Atābayk princesses descended from Yāqūt Khātūn sat upon the

Khān; Yāqūt Tarkān, married to Maḥmūd Shāh; Maryam Tarkān, married to Muḥyā al-Dīn Sam; Khān Tarkān, married to her cousin, Quṭb al-Dīn Muḥammad, the Qutlugh Khān of Kirmān and successor to Barāq Ḥājib: Nāṣir al-Dīn Munshī Kirmānī, *Simṭ al-'Ulā li al-Ḥaẓrat al-'Ulīyā dar Tārīkh-i Qarākhitā'iyān-i Kirmān*, ed. 'Abbās Iqbāl (Iran: Sharkat-i Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 1983/1328), 25-6. If Maryām Tarkān married Sām, it means that she married the grandfather of her sister's (i.e. Yāqūt Tarkān's) husband, Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh. However, generational confusion seems to be a problem in the Yazdī works too. For what it's worth, the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Kirmān* as printed in the *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā'iyān* agrees that Yāqūt Tarkān married Maḥmūd Shāh (called Quṭb al-Dīn Maḥmūd Shāh) and gave birth to 'Ālā' al-Dawlah: *Tārīkh-i Shāhī-i Qarā-Khitā'iyān*, 98. Also see discussion in Lane, *Early Mongol Rule*, 104-5. Bībī Tarkān comes up in another context and is clearly not the same person as Yāqūt Tarkān in Munshī Kirmānī; she is daughter of Rukn al-Dīn, son of Barāq Ḥājib, and marries Mānggū Temür (the Mongol prince who also marries Abish Tarkān in Rashīd al-Dīn). Ultimately, it appears that the Yazdī historians were probably conflating a number of Qarā Khitā'ī princes, each of whom was considered to be an honorable and powerful figure.

⁶⁰⁴ Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 1: 264. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 2: 458-9. See extended discussion of these two marriage alliances in Erdoġan Merçil, "Fars Atabegleri: Salgurlular," (1975): 110-11. For the entire affair with Saljūqshāh and the end of the Salghurids, see the third chapter of this work, entitled "Salgurlu Devleti'nin İnkirazı ve Fars'da Moġol Hākimiyyet Devresi" (pp. 99-111).

⁶⁰⁵ The rest of the story of Abish-Khātūn's reign in Fārs has been assembled by Aigle, mostly from Vaṣṣāf and Zarqūb-Shīrāzī. See: Aigle, *Le Fārs*, 131-41. A good summary of the affairs in Fārs and Kirmān under the early Īlkhāns can be found in Lane, *Early Mongol Rule*, 96-152. Also see Bosworth, *New Islamic Dynasties*, 207.

throne in Shīrāz, due to that powerful woman's influence with the Mongols.⁶⁰⁶

Moreover, considering the possibility that Rashīd al-Dīn is correct in his portrayal of Yūsuf Shāh and 'Ālā' al-Dawlah as the sons of Maḥmūd Shāh, then Yāqūt Tarkān is the same person as Khurram Tarkān, the noble mother of Yūsuf Shāh who negotiated honorably with Yesüder in the Yazdī historiography. This was a powerful woman, who was trusted as a capable intermediary between the Mongols and their vassals in the provinces.

Rashīd al-Dīn does not speak of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh's conflict with Yesüder and the Īlkhāns, which is a curious omission. In fact the only other occasion in which he mentions Yūsuf Shāh at all is to say that he served valiantly in Ābāqā Khān's division in the war against the Chaghatāyid prince, Barāq.⁶⁰⁷ At the same time, Rashīd al-Dīn's portrayal of the circumstances in Yazd are not exclusively positive. In his efforts to portray Ghāzān Khān as a great reformer and bringer of justice, he scathingly singles Yazd out, providing anecdotes that show how it had become a place of ruin, destitution, and miscreant governance, and then details the reforms that Ghāzān made in order to

⁶⁰⁶ This is consistent with Michal Biran's work, which demonstrates that the princesses of the Qara Khitay frequently wielded power independently. Biran, *Qara Khitay*, 160-68. Princesses of the Turko-Mongol Steppe in general (whether Chingizid or otherwise) commanded a great deal of power both at court and in their domestic households, much more so than their sedentary Tājīk counterparts. In addition to their political skill and place of importance, some of these women remembered for their prowess as warriors and hunters—their horsemanship, archery, fencing, spear-work, and the like. For the fascinating case of Ābāqā Khān's daughter, El Qutlugh Khātūn, as she was depicted in Arabic Mamluk sources, see: Yoni Brack, "A Mongol Princess Making hajj: The Biography of El Qutlugh Daughter of Abagha Ilkhan (r. 1265-82)," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, no. 3 (2011). For a more general discussion of Mongol women and women of Central Asian steppe cultures, see: Denis Sinor, "Some Observations on Women in Early and Medieval Inner Asian History," in *The role of women in the Altaic world: Permanent International Altaistic Conference, 44th meeting, Walberberg, 26-31 August 2001*, ed. Veronika Veit (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2007). For a comparison of Turkic and Mongol steppe women in China (Khitan, Jurchen, Mongol, and Tangut), see: Herbert Franke, "Women Under the Dynasties of Conquest," in *La Donna nella Cina Imperiale e nella Cina Repubblicana*, ed. Leo S. Olschki, *Civiltà Veneziana* (Venezia: San Giorgio Maggiore, 1980).

⁶⁰⁷ It is possible that Yūsuf Shāh was not yet the ruling Atābayk of Yazd when he accompanied Ābāqā Khān on this mission. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 530. The passage containing this information on Yūsuf Shāh only appears in some manuscripts. Thackston had decided to include these passages in his edition. It is excluded from Karīmī's account of this war between Ābāqā and Barāq, which can be found in: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 746-59.

bring ruined towns like Yazd back to prosperity and back into the tax stream.⁶⁰⁸ Rashīd al-Dīn does not provide a timeline for these reforms and does not directly implicate Yūsuf Shāh as having brought his city to ruin. In this portion of *JT*, Rashīd al-Dīn is not interested in providing a chronological account of Ghāzān's reforms; rather, he treats them synchronously. For this reason it is difficult to pinpoint when he intends that this corruption and devastation occurred in Yazd. Nevertheless, from what we can glean from this portion of the work, Rashīd al-Dīn appears to imply that the ruin came about after the Atābayks were gone and were replaced by direct Īlkhānid administrators, the *Shahnah* or *Basqaq*. One of these appointments, made sometime in 694 A.H., the first year of Ghāzān's reign, was given to Sulṭān Shāh, the son of the famous Amīr, Nawrūz, who helped Ghāzān onto the throne.⁶⁰⁹ In connection with that appointment, Rashīd al-Dīn tells us that Sulṭān Shāh was in fact the product of a union between Nawrūz and Sulṭān-Nasab Khātūn, a daughter of Atābayk 'Ālā' al-Dawlah.⁶¹⁰ This was a union that was not mentioned in the Yazdī histories. Another of these offices was given to a man named Taghāy, son of Yesüder. The latter *shahnah*, we are told, snatched up seven hundred of the best houses for himself and his retainers and brought Yazdīs to desperation.⁶¹¹ While Rashīd al-Dīn is obviously determined to depict Yazd as a place of ruin by his time, it would seem that he wished to shield the Atābayks from culpability.

⁶⁰⁸ This criticism comes in the context of a long section of Rashīd al-Dīn's work in which he details each of Ghāzān Khān's administrative reforms. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 1004-113. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 689-762. Yazd's abysmal circumstances come up in a section dealing with Ghāzān's abolition of extraordinary tax appraisals, called *muqasamahs*, and other predatory types of taxation. This can be found on Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 1029-31. (And in the English edition: 3: 703-705.)

⁶⁰⁹ Ghāzān Khān later eliminated him.

⁶¹⁰ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 899-90. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 618.

⁶¹¹ Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 1109. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 759. This is likely not the Yesüder, son of Hülegü, who only had one son, Habash (Jaysh).

Alongside these lengthy criticisms of the Mongol agents' practices before Ghāzān's reforms, Rashīd al-Dīn recounts the well-known story of Majd al-Mulk, the viciously ambitious and vindictive minister from Yazd who, somewhat earlier, under Ābāqā Khān's reign, relentlessly worked to defame and bring to ruin his superior, Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī, the Ṣāhib-i Dīvān, his son, Bahā' al-Dīn Juvaynī, and his brother 'Ālā' al-Dīn Juvaynī, author of *Tārīkh-i Jahān-Gūshāy*.⁶¹² Majd al-Mulk came from a family of local Yazdī viziers, and Rashīd al-Dīn possibly intends his story to resonate with his claims that before Ghāzān, Yazd had become a depraved place and a breeding ground for nefarious men such as Majd al-Mulk.⁶¹³ It is suggestive that Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī went to the trouble to have a *khānqāh* and hospital built in the city-center of Yazd, the Dār al-Shifā'-i Ṣāhibī, celebrated in all the histories of Yazd.⁶¹⁴ Although we can only speculate at this time, one might guess that the rivalry between the Juvaynīs and Majd al-Mulk may have had something to do with an interest in real estate in Yazd. Perhaps Ṣāhib-i Dīvān just wished to trounce his opponent by building a monument to his own prestige on Majd al-Mulk's home turf. In any case, this would be a fascinating twist, because it would mean the skylines of provincial cities like Yazd, served as key battlegrounds for prestige in the political battles of the imperial center.

In spite of all this, Rashīd al-Dīn's interest in Yazd went beyond rhetoric. No matter how well those stories about Yazd might have helped his depiction of his sovereign, Ghāzān Khān, the vizier had deep financial (and human) investment in that

⁶¹² Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *JT*, 2: 774-7, 85-6. English edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *JT: Compendium*, 3: 541-4, 49-50.

⁶¹³ It should be noted that Mufīd produces a long recollection of Majd al-Mulk's villainy too. In his story, as in Rashīd al-Dīn's version, Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī is the hero: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 122-44. The story of Majd al-Mulk and the Juvaynīs is summarized nicely in Lane, *Early Mongol Rule*, 203-12.

⁶¹⁴ We have mentioned this hospital above on page 314. Mufīd relates that it was constructed by Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad; however, he contradicts that information elsewhere. He must have meant that Rukn al-Dīn added to a preexisting structure and made further endowments for it.

city. A look at his *vaqf-nāmah* (endowment deed), *Rabʿ-i Rashīdī* shows that Rashīd al-Dīn owned massive properties in Yazd. In fact, the section which registers five hundred and sixty-four properties he endowed in Yazd for his complex in Tabrīz is seventy pages long, far longer than those for any other town, including Tabrīz, Shīrāz, or Hamadān.⁶¹⁵ Moreover, Rashīd al-Dīn had formed lasting intellectual and personal relationships, including marriage alliances with the local sayyid notables there, such as with the family of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad. As a matter of fact, such exchanges between local notable families of Yazd and the High Vizierate of the Īlkhānid *dawlah* would mature over generations and would eventually pave the way for the success of figures such as Sharaf al-Dīn ʿAlī Yazdī (R.VI.a) and the great Yazdī astrologer-historians who had the emperors' ears in latter days and whose lineages and intellectual genealogies reflected the alliances that bound Rashīd al-Dīn's family with the families of the Yazdī sayyid notables. We will look more systematically and these alliances in the next section, Section III.

According to Rashīd al-Dīn, Ghāzān Khān was able to bring the rule of law back to Yazd through his comprehensive program of reforms. The Yazdī histories and *vaqf-nāmahs* demonstrate that the real work of reviving and reshaping of Yazd's economy was accomplished by Rashīd al-Dīn himself, in collaboration with local sayyids.⁶¹⁶ These

⁶¹⁵ Faḡl Allāh Rashīd al-Dīn Hamadānī, *Vaqf-Nāmah-i Rabʿ-i Rashīdī*, ed. Mujtabā Mīnovī and Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Anjuman-i Āthār-i Millī, 1972), 61-132. The majority of these properties were shares of canals, which Rashīd al-Dīn wrote a chapter about in his work on agriculture, *Āthār va Aḡyāʾ*. There is a published edition: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *Āṣār va Aḡyāʾ*, ed. Manoochehr Sotoodeh and Iraj Afshār (Tehran: Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University and Tehran University Press, 1368/1989). Unfortunately, the chapter on canals is not extant. See discussion in Ann K. Lambton, "The Āthār wa Aḡyāʾ of Rashīd Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī and Rashīd al-Dīn's contribution as an agronomist, arboriculturist and horticulturalist," in *The Mongol Empire and its legacy* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

⁶¹⁶In addition to Rashīd al-Dīn's purchase of property in Yazd, he also held administrative authority, as was mentioned above in the discussion of Shabānkārahī's text. Although Shabānkārahī seems to have overstated the degree of political status Rashīd al-Dīn held over Yazd, Ghāzān Khān did place Rashīd al-

figures constructed a series of madrasah complexes in the center of Yazd for the first time and purchased huge amounts of agricultural land, workshops, markets, and shares of water works, in order to endow their complexes in Yazd and elsewhere. This new alliance between the high ministers of the imperial court and local sayyid notables came to push the old local ruling elites aside; their wealth and reach allowed them to take on massive building projects, which publically demonstrated their piety, manifested their solidarity as a authoritative group of the Prophet's descendants, and raised them to higher status. Their prestige, wealth, skills, and learning made them invaluable to imperial administration. Although in the past the Atābayks and earlier local rulers may have also built mosques, madrasahs, and public works, they had not done so on a scale as large as these sayyids' projects. Furthermore, as I will assert in the next section, according to the Yazdī historians, because of their common intellectual interests, the Yazdī sayyid families developed a camaraderie and solidarity with officials of the imperial vizierate, which the Atābayks could never have hoped to achieve. In time, thanks to their connections with such figures as Rashīd al-Dīn, the sayyids were able to leave enormous benefits to the city. These building projects had transformed the urban morphology of the city and reset the rhythms of its ritual tomb visitations. Moreover, as these new tomb complexes became centers of learning and hubs of ritual visitation, miracle stories and morality tales about their lives came into circulation. In the collective memory of Yazdīs, the sayyids were transformed from

Dīn in charge of repairing Yazd's water works. See also, the discussion in Birgitt Hoffmann, "The Gates of Piety and Charity: Ras'īd al-Dīn Fadl Allāh as Founder of Pious Endowments," in *L'Iran Face à la Domination Mongole*, ed. Denise Aigle (Tehran: Institut Français de Recherche en Iran, 1997), 199. Aigle mentions that Tāzīgū married Bībī Tarkān, daughter of Barāq Hājib Qutlugh Khān of Kirmān, citing the *Shīrāz-Nāmah* of Zarkūb Shīrāzī (p. 124). That text simply names the bride as "Tarkān, sister of Pādishāh Khātūn," who became independent ruler of Kirmān, and eventually married Abāqā Khān. Zarkūb Shīrāzī, *Shīrāz-Nāmah*, 91. As we discuss elsewhere, the Yazdī texts, along with Rashīd al-Dīn, have a daughter by the same name marry the Atābayk of Yazd, and do not mention a marriage with Tāzīgū.

important, local elites into true saints. Compared with the sayyids, the Atābayks did not have the prestige (by birth or vocation) to make their pious building activities sustain their earlier, somewhat tenuous transformations into saintly rulers. Even the complex of the most saintly of the Atābayks, that of Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn, could not compete with the signifying power unleashed by the bundle of structures that comprised Rukn al-Dīn's Ruknīyah or Shams al-Dīn's Shamsīyah. The various components of the Shamsīyah complex, for example, manifested the particular fusion of eminent distinctions that the founder himself had embodied: prophetic lineage, intellectual athleticism, justice, and high imperial office. On top of all this, after death the sayyids accrued hagiographical life-narratives, and their bones rested inside tombs found to impart charismatic blessings. Each of these faculties was realized in a series of interlinked physical structures, which all Yazdīs could view and patronize: a madrasah, *khānqāh*, a hospice for sayyids (Dār al-Siyādah), and a tomb. The Atābayks might have constructed madrasahs and edifices to commemorate the stopping places of the eighth Imām; however, they could never claim descent from the prophet, no matter how many miracles they could boast. Ultimately, the strength of the sayyids' building projects resided in their ability to combine and compound the signifying powers of the various structures they built: mausoleums, madrasahs, *khānqāhs*, hospitals, and (in one case) an astronomical observatory. Moreover, by compelling the city's population to frequent these places—making *ziyārāt*, studying, seeking medical attention, marveling—the sayyids made the constellation of charismatic powers that inhabited their bodies and buildings uniquely real. At the same time, the complexes, which were monumental displays of power, knowledge, and authority, stood as the axes around which a strong

network of sayyid families coalesced at the city-center and ensured that their hold on that power was incontestable and proprietary.

Of course, such explanations of the Atābayks' failure never surfaces in the historiography; for Yazd's historians, the cause had to be moral and the proof had to be thaumaturgical. The obloquy with which the Yazdī authors lambasted Yūsuf Shāh had the literary effect of clouding the images of all of the Atābayks with a tarnish that colored even of those who were so positively depicted elsewhere in those books. The last Atābayk's narrative of disgrace was intended to seal off the font of charismatic blessing that might still have emanated from the bones of Atābayk Quṭb al-Dīn, Atābayk Maḥmūd Shāh, or their mothers and wives at the tomb complexes of the Madrasah-i Maḥmūd. Doing so would also plug the site's chronotopic effect, making way for that of the new complexes of the local elites who were only newly raised to power outside of Yazd. The saintly deeds and building projects of the sayyids totally reconfigured the very topography of the city around their own new complexes, which they knitted together with new canals of fresh water from the mountains, new flows of capital, new rhythms of ritual visitation, and, as we will examine in the penultimate section of this chapter, new routines of learning.

In reality, it is not clear that the relationship between the learned elites and the Atābayks was quite so adversarial as it appears in the Yazdī histories and even in Rashīd al-Dīn's *Jāmi' al-Tavārikh*. Parallel with Rashīd al-Dīn's not unfavorable treatment of the Atābayks, we find other hints that Rashīd al-Dīn may not have had any problems with them. In a document that lists the marriages of Rashīd al-Dīn's sons to the daughters of princes around the world, we find that Rashīd al-Dīn set up a marriage alliance with the

Atābayks for his own family. One of his sons, ‘Abd al-Laṭīf, married a daughter of Atābayk ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah bin Tughānshāh,⁶¹⁷ apparently named Tarkān Khātūn.⁶¹⁸ This is the same name that Rashīd al-Dīn gives for Yūsuf Shāh and ‘Ālā’ al-Dawlah’s own sister, so it is likely that there is yet another discrepancy in the sources. Nevertheless, regardless of her name, if such a marriage did occur, it would mean that Rashīd al-Dīn had forged a union with Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh’s niece. Moreover, as is recorded in his *vaqf-nāmah*, *Rab’-i Rashīdī*, Rashīd al-Dīn purchased shares of irrigation water from Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh in 675-6/1277-8, which he converted into *vaqf*. This is evidence that at the very least, the last Atābayks were not blocking all the activities of affiliates of the Rashīd al-Dīn/Rukn al-Dīn network.⁶¹⁹ The Yazdī historians set up their narrative in such a way that Rashīd al-Dīn and the local sayyids appear to be in league with one another, struggling against the tyranny and recklessness of Yūsuf Shah; Rashīd al-Dīn’s own, much earlier text does not support such a perspective. No doubt, Rashīd al-Dīn was indeed forging alliances with the local sayyids. What is less certain is that these alliances were forged in opposition to the Atābayks. Clearly, the Yazdī historians meant their celebration of Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn b. Rashīd al-Dīn’s support for the sayyids against Yūsuf Shāh to imply that such an opposition had indeed compelled both parties to

⁶¹⁷ The reader should note that here Rashīd al-Dīn is saying that ‘Ālā’ al-Dīn is the son of Tughānshāh (Tughā). We recall that in *JT*, he stated that ‘Ālā’ al-Dīn and Yūsuf Shāh were the sons of Maḥmūd Shāh. Rashīd al-Dīn is also not perfectly clear on the Atābayks’ succession either.

⁶¹⁸ This document is has been given the title “Maktūb kih bar Mavlānā’-i A’zam Majd al-Dīn Isma’īl Fālī, quddisa sirru-hu az buldah-i Tabrīz navishtah ast” and is published in a collection of documents written by or pertaining to Rashīd al-Dīn: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh Hamadānī, *Mukātibāt-i Rashīdī: rasā’il kih vazīr-i dānishmand, Khvājah Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh Ṭabīb bi-pisarān va ‘ummāl va dūstān va dīgarān sū-yi īshān navashtah*, ed. Muḥammad Shafī’ (Lahore: University of Panjab, 1945), 128. Rashīd al-Dīn married his sons to the daughters of important rulers in Iran, Hind, and elsewhere. Also see Afshār’s mention of this document in Īraj Afshār, “Rashīd al-Dīn va Yazd,” *Īrānshināsī: Majallah-i Taḥqīqāt-i Īrānī-i Dānishkadah-i Adabīyat va ‘Ulūm-i Insānī-i Dānishgāh-i Tihrān* II, no. 1 (1970): 29.

⁶¹⁹ See discussion in Hoffmann, “The Gates of Piety and Charity: Ras’īd al-Dīn Fadl Allāh as Founder of Pious Endowments,” 198.

consolidate their interests against those of a common foe. What's more, while it is certain that the Mongols brushed aside the Atābayks political power fairly rapidly, it is not clear how quickly the Atābayks' monumental complexes retained their place in the city's ritual life. How long did scholars continue to study in those complexes? How long did residents continue to make supplications at Quṭb al-Dīn's tomb? How long did the stories of his miracles keep his bones charged with *barakah*? In the Yazdī histories the discrete set of events that proved Rukn al-Dīn's and Shams al-Dīn's moral authority over the thuggish ruler effected this transition immediately and completely. But surely, the city's social and topographical transformation must have unfolded only gradually. The sayyids' new complexes and their new ruling partners could only draw local patrons into their orbit slowly, and the stories about the sayyids' piety and blessedness could only take hold over generations.

The Yazdī historians were relating these events in their city's history centuries after they occurred. They were working to promote the authority and expertise of this learned class of local notables precisely because the status of their descendents was still very much in play at the time when these works were being composed. Contemporary struggles for status and authority during the ninth/fifteenth, tenth/sixteenth, and eleventh/seventeenth centuries obliged the Yazdī authors present the rise of the forefathers of such men as Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a) as a saintly battle against tyranny and villainy, a decisive contest that immediately and completely transformed the city. But, as we have seen, there were indeed thaumaturgical stories about pious Atābayks in circulation earlier; the Atābayks had been saintly benefactors of the city in the local memory. The Yazdī historians could not brush these stories aside. In fact, they

needed such tales in their works in order to demonstrate that Yazd had been blessed in every era since its founding. At the same time, however, they needed miracles of the local sayyids to overshadow those of these local rulers. So, the Yazdī historians picked up well-known stories about the last Atābayk, some of which featured Yūsuf Shāh’s embezzlement and rebellion against the Īlkhānid state, made them more sensational, turning the erring Yūsuf Shāh, familiar in Shabānkārahī’s work, into a debauched traitor (at least in *TJY* and *JM*). What’s more, they resurrected this “last Atābayk” and transplanted the villain from those stories into the story of Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad’s *tarjamah*, making him into a despicable fiend. It is crucial that we recognize that in the Yazdī recasting of this story, the Ruknīyah madrasah triggers the last Atābayk’s wrath and savagery, for the Ruknīyah threatens to overshadow the very symbol of his household’s power and authority over the city. This site references not only the torture of the sayyid family, but also the treachery against the Īlkhāns, the predecessors of the Tīmūrid and Ṣafavid emperors. Thus, the miracle-tales surrounding Rukn al-Dīn and his son’s triumph over treasonous tyrants and the successful construction of their megamadrakah complexes also served to legitimize the authority of sayyid class of elites, while simultaneously portraying them as trusty servants of the imperial order. As I will contend in the next chapter, the saintly authority of these local sayyid houses themselves will eventually be challenged on two fronts: first, by the rise of sayyid families that became institutionalized as Sufi *tarīqahs*, such as the Ni‘matullāhīs and even the Ṣafavīs themselves, and second, during the Ṣafavid era, by the Twelver Shī‘ī ‘*ulamā*’ who were able to subsume the power and authority of both local notables and Sufi *pīrs* of global networks.

That story will have to wait until the next chapter. For now, it remains for us to reconstruct the network of local sayyids and their building projects in Yazd, which were changing the face of the city during fourteenth century. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad was at the top of a much larger network of local sayyids who also were consolidating their positions in the city and who were forging connections with powerful figures at the imperial court, figures such as Rashīd al-Dīn Faḫr Allāh and his son.

4. “Because they were cut from the same cloth, they drew close”: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḫr Allāh al-Ṭabīb, Medical Knowledge, and the Expansion of Local Networks

The Yazdīs nest the Ruknīyah story into a larger web of material on the sites around the city. This web is designed to demonstrate implicitly the “networking” of other local sayyid families and their complexes, both in the territory of Yazd and at the imperial court. As always, these accounts come primarily through a tour of the sites these elites constructed. Like the Yazdī historians themselves, our project is to trace human networks by mapping networks of places and spaces. For this reason, once again we will be following the Yazdī historians’ lead as we reconstruct these networks of local sayyids. These newly consolidated human networks were manifested in and reinforced by new clusters of madrasah complexes, shrines, and *qanāts*, built on top of and up against the old centers of Atābayk power, prestige, and charisma. These networks of human and non-human actors not only enabled new patterns of urban growth, communal activities, and flows of capital, but according to the Yazdī historians, also engendered the development of the very configurations of intellectual expertise among Yazdī elites that would propel them to such heights in the fifteenth century and after.

At this point, following our historians' example, we step away from the Ruknīyah complex temporarily. In the next section, we will return to its description one last time in order to examine its function within the city and the empire at large. Ultimately, that investigation will work out how the sayyids' particular constellation of interests in medicine, astronomy, and the Islamic became manifest in the topography of the city. From there, in the last section of this chapter, we will be in a position to consider the legacy of those local notables in Mufīd's day. For now, as we widen our focus to include a cluster of madrasah complexes near the Ruknīyah, we will reconstruct the specific relationships between people and places both inside and outside the city and map them onto the topography of the city and places beyond. As we do so, we will trace the origins of the human and topographical network that the historians present in their works as being the conduit for material resources, knowledge, charismatic blessing, and history itself. It was these "benefits" that allowed for the city's prominent role in the narrative of imperial history that circumscribes Yazd's own, internal story.

Madrasah-i Rashīdīyah: Dr. Rashīd does his residency with the Āl-i Raḡī

After the Ruknīyah and Shamsīyah complexes, the Yazdī historians all proceed to describe a series of neighboring madrasahs. Although there is much overlap, each of the three writers selects a slightly different group of madrasahs and varies the ordering of the narrative elements within the presentations. This variation bears some significance; an explanation of those variations will unfold in the course of the discussion. Ja'farī and Aḡmad Kātib both move to the Dār al-Shifā' madrasah and

hospital, which, as we have mentioned earlier, was constructed by a wealthy Yazdī merchant, Shams al-Dīn Tāzīgū, on behalf of Shams al-Dīn Ṣāhib-i Dīvān Juvaynī.⁶²⁰ As stated earlier, Mufīd excludes this entry, preferring to place its description under the entry for Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn, as though it were one of that sayyid's accomplishments. Each author then presents a cluster of madrasahs in close proximity to one another, all built by folk with ties to the Āl-i Niẓām.

In this next set of complexes, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib first move to an entry on the nearby Rashīdīyah Madrasah complex, built by Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh Hamdānī (H.II), the Grand Vizier of the Īlkhāns. Before going further, it is noteworthy that Mufīd excludes the Rashīdīyah from his work. This is an important omission; however, we will bracket an explanation of that for a moment and return to it after exploring the significance of its inclusion in the earlier two works. As discussed above, Yazdī sources report that Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn had linked this complex with his own madrasah via his new *qanāt*. That watercourse conveyed the waters of Taft (Farāshāh) to the city center, causing it to pass through the Rashīdīyah before entering his own complex, on its way to his old teacher's house. The Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's entries on the Rashīdīyah illustrate that this connectivity on the level of water-works and urban planning mirrored social relationships between the sayyid families of Yazd and the family of Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh. Along these lines, one of the most important elements of narrative in the Rukn al-Dīn/Shams al-Dīn story was the union of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.b) with Rashīd al-Dīn Faẓl Allāh's daughter (H.III.a). In that story, this union was, of course, integral to Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn b. Rashīd al-Dīn's intercession on Shams

⁶²⁰ In a recent study on Fārs under the Mongols, Denise Aigle devotes a short section to this Yazdī merchant, Shams al-Dīn Tāzīgū, who became so important to the Mongol administration, as the Ṣāhib-Dīvān's *na'ib* in Yazd. Aigle, *Le Fārs*, 123-26.

al-Dīn's behalf, a move that raised the sayyid to a high post within the imperial vizierate. These were connections that went beyond political marriage alliances: The sayyid families of Yazd who rose to prominence in the late seventh/thirteenth and eighth/fourteenth centuries all stood to benefit by gaining control of local property, and they were aided in this by securing partnerships with powerful viziers such as Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh, who also invested heavily in Yazdī properties.

At the same time, the local sayyids of Yazd and the powerful families serving in the Īlkhāns' *dīvān* forged connections with one another through their common intellectual and professional pursuits. In their notices on the Rashīdīyah complex, the Yazdī historians single out an interest in medicine, which the local sayyids shared with Rashīd al-Dīn. After introducing Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh as one of the most knowledgeable and illustrious viziers and littérateurs of the era,⁶²¹ the Yazdī writers then plunge into the story of Rashīd al-Dīn's earlier life, before his distinguished career in the Mongol vizierate as the *Ṣadr-i Vuzarā'*.⁶²² As his well-known sobriquet, al-Ṭabīb, indicates, Rashīd al-Dīn was a physician in his earlier life. He continued to take an interest in medicine after he became vizier: His massive, endowed complex at Tabrīz, Rab'-i Rashīdī, featured a hospital (Dār al-Shifā'), which occupied sixteen percent of the complex's total budget.⁶²³ Toward the end of his life, Rashīd al-Dīn also ordered the very first translation of a corpus of texts on Chinese medicine, which he had compiled

⁶²¹ Aḡmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 134.

⁶²² The events apparently occur after Rashīd al-Dīn's conversion to Islam from Judaism, a detail that none of the Yazdīs care to mention.

⁶²³ In the complex, the number of salaried staff at the hospital was surpassed only by the number of employees of mosque. See Hani Khafipour's recent article on this hospital in Hani Khafipour, "A Hospital in ilkhānid Iran: Toward a Socio-economic Reconstruction of the Rab'-i Rashīdī," *Iranian Studies* 45, no. 1 (2012): 103.

in a work known as *Tansūq-Nāmah*.⁶²⁴ In his opening sentence, Ja‘farī calls him, “the Hippocrates (Buqrāṭ) and Galen (Jālīnūs) of his era.”⁶²⁵ Aḥmad Kātib takes this epithet one step further, calling him the *masīḥ-i zamān* (the messiah of the age).⁶²⁶ Here, let us pick up with Ja‘farī’s account, to which Aḥmad Kātib makes very few changes:

In the beginning, he was traveling about and busying himself in the pursuit of medical knowledge (*‘ilm-i ṭibb*). When he reached Yazd, he was able to get together with one of the greats of Yazd, who was peerless in *‘ilm-i ṭibb* since they were of cut of the same cloth.⁶²⁷ The children of Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī [R.II] and Mavlānā Shams al-Dīn Razī [R.I],⁶²⁸ who were famous for this knowledge for generations⁶²⁹ and who were the greats of their age, stopped at his [Rashīd al-Dīn’s] house and regarded the *khvājah* with all sorts of attention. [Here, Aḥmad Kātib adds: “Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī, who was the Galen (Jālīnūs) of the age and who had risen to the top of the nobles of Yazd, sought him out, behaved warmly to him, and gave him any book he sought.”⁶³⁰] When Khvājah Rashīd went from Yazd to the Īlkhānid court [*Urdū-yi ‘Alamī*], Sulṭān Muḥammad [Khudābandah] commanded his appointment. He wanted to return the favors of Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī. He sent lofty decrees on his behalf, and he requested that they construct an edifice on his behalf in Yazd so that after him, the traces of his munificence would remain. [However] when his decrees arrived, Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī had already died.⁶³¹

This family, from whom Rashīd al-Dīn learns *‘ilm-i ṭibb*, is the Razī family of ‘Arīzī sayyids, the paternal ancestors of the famous Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a) of the

⁶²⁴ F. and Ming Klein-Franke, Zhu, "Rashīd al-Dīn as a Transmitter of Chinese Medicine to the West," *Le Muséon* 109, no. 3-4 (1996), F. and Ming Klein-Franke, Zhu, "Rashid al-Din and the Tansuqnamah: The Earliest Translation of Chinese Medical Literature in the West," *Le Muséon* 111, no. 3 (1998).

⁶²⁵ Ja‘farī, TY, 92.

⁶²⁶ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, TJY, 134.

⁶²⁷ This is a problematic sentence in both TJ and TJY. TJ reads, “*chūn bi-Yazd rasīd az akābir-i Yazd kih dar ‘ilm-i ṭibb bī-naẓīr būd bi-‘illat-i jinsīyat zamm bidū natavānast shud.*” In actuality, the text says “...they were not able to get together...” However, the context makes it clear that this must be a copyist’s error. In support of this, the passage in TJY, although a bit muddled, phrases this statement in the positive, saying, “*chūn bih Yazd rasīd bih ḥukm al-jinsīyat ‘illah al-zamm nazdīk-i awlād-i Mavlānā Razī al-Dīn Ṭabīb shud,*” which translates: “When he reached Yazd, he drew close to the children of Mavlānā Razī al-Dīn Ṭabīb because they were cut of the same cloth.” Literally, the two variations of the phrase I have been translating as “because they were cut of the same cloth (*‘illat-i jansīyat* and *bi-ḥukm al-jinsīyat ‘illah al-zamm*)” mean something like: because of compatibility, like-mindedness, or being of the same ilk.

⁶²⁸ Also called Razī al-Dīn Ṭabīb.

⁶²⁹ Literally “from grandfather to father”: *ab^{am} ‘an jaddī bidīn ‘ilm ma‘rūf būdand*. Aḥmad Kātib titles the eponymous founder of this illustrious family, Mavlānā Razī al-Dīn Ṭabīb.

⁶³⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, TJY, 134.

⁶³¹ Ja‘farī, TY, 92. Aḥmad Kātib is more specific, “He wanted, on the pretext of service to them, to send on behalf of Mavlānā Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī, a *farmān* and a *yarlīgh* for the *ṣadārat* and *imārat*, but when the notice came, he had already died.” Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, TJY, 134.

fifteenth century, who was the architect of the *ṣāhib-qirānī* model of empire. In the above-quoted passage on Rashīd al-Dīn's madrasah and khānqāh in Yazd, there is no discussion of the buildings themselves; the anecdote of Rashīd al-Dīn's sojourn in Yazd occupies the entirety of the notice. As such, the authors are able to establish, first of all, that Yazd was a center of medical knowledge, where the famous *ṭabīb* from Hamadān, future grand vizier, and historian acquired from the most eminent *ṭabībs* of Yazd important knowledge of medicine along with some of merit that allowed him to attain success.

The Yazdīs also use the episode of Rashīd al-Dīn's sojourn in Yazd to invoke the special human and material connections the powerful vizier had forged with the city: Aside from the madrasah complex and caravansaries Rashīd al-Dīn constructed in there, we know from his *vaqf-nāmah*, *Rab'-i Rashīdī*, that of all the provinces in which he invested for the purpose of endowing his own mega-complex in Tabrīz, he invested most heavily in Yazdī properties. The Yazdī historians were well aware of the grand vizier's many properties in Yazd: when summarizing his accomplishments, Aḥmad Kātib refers by name to his *vaqf-nāmah*, as proof.⁶³² Moreover, as Abū al-Qāsim al-Qāshānī's *Tārīkh-i Uljāytū* attests, in his description of Rashīd al-Dīn's construction projects, the Grand Vizier brought cattle and farmers from Yazd to farm and fecundate the soil of his villages outside of Tabrīz, Fatḥābād and Rashīdābād.⁶³³ (Yazd's farmers

⁶³² Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 135.

⁶³³ "He brought to Tabrīz around three-hundred head of cattle with the bodies of demons and the features of giants (*gāv-i dīv-haykal-i 'afārīt-manẓar*), along with several cattlemen of Yazd (*gāv-bandah-i Yazdī*) ... to the Bāgh of Fatḥābād, Rashīdābād, and others; in former days, Fatḥābād was just barren mountains, now each one is like a heaven, adorned with streams, trees and flowers, fruits..." Abu al-Qāsim 'Abd Allāh ibn Muḥammad al-Qāshānī, *Tārīkh-i Uljāytū*, ed. Mahīn Hambalī (Tehran: B.T.N.K, 1348/1969), 116-17. Also see mention in discussion in Afshār, "Rashīd al-Dīn va Yazd," 30.

were famous for their skills as cultivators in arid climes.)⁶³⁴ Indeed, Rashīd al-Dīn was keen on all varieties of Yazdīs' expertise and, while in Tabrīz, went to great lengths to keep Yazd close.⁶³⁵

The above-quoted passage also serves to establish a close relationship between Rashīd al-Dīn and the al-Razī family. There was no marriage alliance between the two families; however, the authors clearly intend that the relationship was intimate, as indicated by Rashīd al-Dīn's efforts to construct a building for Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī (R.II) in Yazd and offer him a post in the vizierate. Although ties between these men had begun as a teaching relationship for the transmission of medical knowledge, the scope of the bond quickly expanded. As we know from elsewhere in all the texts, Rashīd al-Dīn's descendants maintained these connections with Yazd and Yazdī sayyid families, most notably in the story of Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad's asylum under Abū Sa'īd's grand vizier, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn (H.III.b), son of Rashīd al-Dīn, and the sayyid's subsequent marriage with the latter's daughter (H.III.a).

After the anecdote of Rashīd al-Dīn's early years in Yazd, what follows in both texts are discussions of the accomplishments of the children of Rashīd al-Dīn's friend and teacher, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī bin Shams al-Dīn Razī (R.II). These are Z̄īyā' al-Dīn

⁶³⁴ The farmers Rashīd al-Dīn brought from Yazd may have been Zoroastrians, who, even today are praised for their skills as husbandmen and gardeners. Among Muslims, such mastery among the Zoroastrians is thought to come from their particular nature-oriented religious devotions which exemplify a care for water, earth, plants, and animals. See discussion in: Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold*, 52. According to the European visitors to the Ṣafavid court, Pietro della Valle and Chardin, Shāh 'Abbās I, also brought Yazdī gardeners and farmers to beautify the gardens of Iṣfahān and labor in the surrounding orchards and vineyards. See discussion in: Boyce, *Zoroastrians*, 177-8.

⁶³⁵ As a complement to his expertise in medicine, Rashīd al-Dīn was also extremely knowledgeable about plants and agriculture in general. He wrote a treatise dealing with plants, trees, farming and irrigation called *Āṣār va Aḥyā'*, which was mentioned in footnote 615. The agricultural and horticultural techniques specific to Yazd come up frequently in the course of that work.

Ḥusayn (R.III.b) and Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn (R.III.a),⁶³⁶ both of whom, we are told, perpetuated their father's knowledge and wisdom.⁶³⁷ Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn received high offices (*ṣadārat va amārat*)⁶³⁸ and according to Ja'farī, even governed Yazd independently (*ḥukūmat bi-istiqlāl kard*).⁶³⁹ Only then do we learn anything about Rashīd al-Dīn's madrasah complex itself, which he had Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn construct on his behalf. (His friend, Sharaf al-Dīn had already died by this time):

Near the Kūchah-i Asfah, he built a *ribāṭ* and inscribed "*khallada zillu-hu*" (may his protection be everlasting) over the gateway. Khvājah Rashīd requested that they build some structures in the city of Yazd on his behalf. And they laid out this madrasah and *khānqāh* and a bazaar inside the madrasah and *khānqāh* and a minaret between the *khānqāh* and madrasah and a caravanserai in front of the Madrasah-i Vardānzūr. And in the year 715, they completed the building, and they wrote the epithet of Khvājah Rashīd, "*Makhdūm-i Jahānīyān*," above the door of the madrasah.⁶⁴⁰ They endowed many farms, lands, shares of qanāts, vineyards, and gardens for that building complex for posterity and as a charitable foundation. The bazaar at the door of this madrasah, which is known as Bāzār-i Kāghizān, is also endowed for the benefit of this madrasah.⁶⁴¹

There is some confusion about where this complex was actually located: The *TY* explains that only a caravanserai faced the Madrasah-i Vardānzūr; the other buildings

⁶³⁶ In actuality, Ja'farī says here that the two sons were Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn and Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr. On the other hand, Aḥmad Kātīb gives the two sons the names Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn and Z̤iyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn. This seems to be an error on Ja'farī's part, for he himself states that Z̤iyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn was the son of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Raẓī on page 94. There is someone named Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr in a later generation; this is in fact the father of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, our hero from the Tīmūrid age. In his reconstruction of the family, citing only what turns out to be an error in Ja'farī's work as evidence, Binbāş names this Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr as one of the sons, but, understandably confused by the sources, says that this man was in fact one of three sons: Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn, Z̤iyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn, and Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr. See Binbāş, "Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī", 21-2, 34. In Binbāş's numbering system, Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr, the supposed brother of Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn and Z̤iyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn is assigned the number IIIc; the later Shams al-Dīn is Va. However, none of the sources mention that there was a third son. In my evaluation, there was only one Shams al-Dīn Abū Bakr, and he belongs to a later generation.

⁶³⁷ *bi-'ilm va dānish māndah būdand*. Ja'farī, *TY*, 92.

⁶³⁸ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 134. Aḥmad Kātīb also relates that he repaired roads within the province of Yazd, which had formerly been impassible.

⁶³⁹ Ja'farī, *TY*, 92.

⁶⁴⁰ This epithet, meaning "Master of Mortals" is mentioned in *JK* as well in reference to some of Rashīd al-Dīn's properties in Mehrīz. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 65. See also Afshār's reference in Afshār, "Rashīd al-Dīn va Yazd," 26. Sometimes, Rashīd al-Dīn's Madrasah in Yazd is referred to as "Makhdūmīyah."

⁶⁴¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 134-5.

faced the Madrasah-i Maḥmūd Shāh.⁶⁴² Afshar places it in between the Ruknīyah and the Masjid-i Jāmi'.⁶⁴³ Furthermore, the location of Madrasah-i Vardānzūr is not specified in that structure's notice in the Yazdī histories. The texts say only that it was located within the walls of the city.⁶⁴⁴ Presumably, the Atābayks' madrasah complexes were clustered in the same area. Thus, like Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, the sons of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī built Rashīd al-Dīn's complex near the Atābayk's structures. A pattern is beginning to emerge here. Having established ties with the high *vazīrs* of the Īlkhānid bureaucracy, Yazd's eminent sayyid families were deliberately building in the spaces where the Atābayks had concentrated their patronage. It is likely that the Atābayks knew the days of their ascendancy were numbered.⁶⁴⁵

Aḥmad Kātib closes the notice with a terse summary of Abū Sa'īd's execution of Rashīd al-Dīn in 718 A.H., sharing that at the crux of the slanderous case against the great vizier and physician was that he had misdiagnosed the illness that had killed Sultan Muḥammad, Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd's father.⁶⁴⁶ It is telling that other historians' accounts of the tragedy of Rashīd al-Dīn's "martyrdom" put it quite differently.

⁶⁴² Ja'farī adds, "And many endowments from among his [Rashīd al-Dīn's] shares and properties, and farms, and water-ways were immobilized for its benefit in posterity and as charities. And the completion of these buildings was in the year 725/1324-5 and the buildings were beautiful." Ja'farī, *TY*, 92-3. There is some confusions about dates as well as location. Whereas Ja'farī gives the date of 725, Aḥmad Kātib gives 715.

⁶⁴³ Afshār, "Rashīd al-Dīn va Yazd," 26.

⁶⁴⁴ Ja'farī, *TY*, 24. Vardānzūr was one of the four sons of one of the first Atābayks of Yazd, 'Izz al-Dīn Langar.

⁶⁴⁵ It is worth repeating what we already mentioned above: in *Makātibāt-i Rashīdī*, we find evidence that Rashīd al-Dīn married his son, 'Abd al-Laṭīf, to a daughter of Atābayk 'Ālā' al-Dawlah bin Tughānshāh, named Tarkān Khātūn (Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh's niece): See Hamadānī, *Mukātibāt-i Rashīdī*, 128. We do not know when this marriage occurred, but considering that the Rashīdīyah complex was part of the new building program of the local sayyids, which overshadowed the Atābayks' complexes, this alliance must have predated the showdown between Rukn al-Dīn and Ḥājji Shāh, the son of Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh. The reader should also recall that Rashīd al-Dīn purchased property from Yūsuf Shāh, which converted into *vaqf*. (see above).

⁶⁴⁶ "Ū-rā ghamz kardand kih tashkhīṣ-i maraḡ-i Sulṭān Muḥammad ghalāṭ kardah ast va bi-farmān-i Sulṭān Abū Sa'īd, Amīr Chūpān vay-rā bi-qatl āvard."

Khvāndamīr, for example, focuses on the long-standing competition between Rashīd al-Dīn and the vindictive and ambitious Khvājah ‘Alīshāh Jīlānī as well as the treachery of his former ally, Amīr Chūpān; he writes that Khvājah ‘Alīshāh and his cabal convinced the new Sulṭān Abū Sa‘īd that Rashīd al-Dīn’s son, Khvājah Ibrāhīm, in his post as the royal *sharbatdār* (butler), had poisoned Sulṭān Muḥammad on Rashīd al-Dīn’s orders.⁶⁴⁷ However, the irony in *TJY*’s version is palpable and, from a rhetorical standpoint, quite effective: Jealous of Rashīd al-Dīn’s virtue and status, ruthless competitors at court turned the vizier’s irrefutable knowledge of medicine against him. This was the knowledge that he had perfected in Yazd. Rashīd al-Dīn’s adversaries immediately appropriated his properties, sacrilegiously liquidated the charitable foundations of the Rashīdīyah in Tabrīz, and pillaged the structure itself.⁶⁴⁸ Yet, this irony extends even further; despite Rashīd al-Dīn’s piteous murder, any reader of the Yazdī histories would have recalled that his son, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn (H.III.b), later redeemed his father by rising to the highest vizierate under Abū Sa‘īd. In that position, he stood poised to help Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad when he fled the Atābayk’s cruelty, rescue Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad from the dungeons, and secure a marriage between with the young sayyid and his own sister. In continuing his father’s work, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn was enabling the rise of the Āl-i

⁶⁴⁷ It should be noted that the meaning of the word *sharbatdār* varies. Firstly, it refers to the one who bears drinks, such as *sharbat*, water, or wine—the butler in the original sense of the Old French word, *bouteillier*, bottle-bearer. However, it can also be used to signify the dispenser of medicines. If we read the passage with this latter meaning in mind, we understand that the author intends that Khvājah ‘Alīshāh was accusing Khvājah Ibrāhīm and his father of poisoning the king as his physicians. With this reading, the Yazdī report is not quite so different after all. The chapter on the antagonism between Rashīd al-Dīn and Khvājah ‘Alīshāh is found in Khvāndamīr, *ḤS*, 3: 199-201. (The climactic scene with the trumped up allegations and executions are on page 201.) This episode can also be found in the English edition: Khvāndamīr, *Habibu's-Siyar, Tome Three: The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk*, ed. W. M. Thackston, trans. W. M. Thackston, *Sources of Oriental Languages and Literatures: Central Asian Sources* (Cambridge: The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 1994), 1: 113-14.

⁶⁴⁸ Khvāndamīr also reports this pillaging of the Rab‘-i Rashīdī, which follows an account of Rashīd al-Dīn’s being cut in two at the waist, after witnessing his son’s decapitation. Khvāndamīr, *Habibu's-Siyar, Tome Three: The Reign of the Mongol and the Turk*, 1: 114.

Nizām (and Razī) family, strengthening their new institutions of learning, where medicine was taught for years to come.⁶⁴⁹ Immediately after this summary of Rashīd al-Dīn's murder, both historians conclude and move on to the next entry.

The character of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh, an outsider in Yazd, plays a key, catalyzing role in the Yazdī historians' emplotment of this network's construction; for, in their telling, the Yazdīs made the story of Rashīd al-Dīn's connections with local notables a critical link in the chain of sayyids and sites, which constituted a newly configured urban landscape in Yazd. We have briefly mentioned already that Rashīd al-Dīn's financial and proprietary interests in Yazd were related, in part, to his intimacy with the important sayyid families of Yazd, ties that the Yazdī historians were happy to highlight. But these writers were not simply working to demonstrate that Rashīd al-Dīn was part of the local network. At the very center of the Yazdīs' history of the city's madrasah complexes lies a story of friendship. In that anecdote, Rashīd al-Dīn, while he is still an ambitious young physician, not yet minister of the Mongol regime, travels to Yazd to acquire medical knowledge from the masterful Razī family of medical practitioners. By situating this myth of the networks' origins prominently in this narrative of sites and sayyids, the Yazdī writers' purpose was to locate the wellspring and *raison d'être* of those relationships in a common intellectual orientation, a worldview and set of practices that would then shape the network of people and places that occupied the notices and narratives of the city's historiography.

At this point, the Yazdīs' rationale behind the inclusion of the Shams al-Dīn Juvaynī's hospital-madrasah, the Dār al-Shifā' among this cluster of notices related to

⁶⁴⁹ Of course, as Khvāndamīr tells us, Ghiyās al-Dīn survived intense plotting during Abū Sa'īd's reign, only to be executed himself in 736/1336 along with the reigning Sulṭān, Arpa Khān, by the rebellious Amīr 'Alī Pādishāh. *Ibid.*, 1: 126.

the 'Arīzī sayyids and their affiliates becomes apparent. Of course, there is the topographical connection; Rukn al-Dīn had used his watercourse from Taft to hook Juvaynī's older building into the orbit of the newer complexes. More importantly, however, by placing the notice on a hospital in between accounts of Rukn al-Dīn's projects and Rashīd al-Dīn's, Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātīb were articulating the point that they wished this cluster of notices to convey, that is, that a critical function of these complexes was the practice of medicine and the transmission of medical knowledge, a point which is further evidenced by the inclusion of a pharmacy amid each of the sayyids' complexes. Medical expertise was an integral component of the activities that were at the core of the local sayyids' collective mission and sense of solidarity and formed the basis of their particular strain of authority. Indeed these madrasah complexes were key sites in which these men came to learn these arts and don the habit of authority that went with them. Medicine was one key field of study within a tangle of interrelated and complementary sciences, including astronomy, astrology, mathematics, and the literary arts. Medicine and astrology were particularly closely related; in fact, physicians often relied upon their astrological expertise for many facets of their practice.⁶⁵⁰ This close relationship between the sciences of medicine and astrology was mirrored in both the urban morphology and social networks of Yazd. We will pick this argument up again, looking at the other fields of knowledge that

⁶⁵⁰ Citing a passage in Hippocrates' *De aere aquis locis*, which says "the science of the stars performs no small service to medical science, indeed an extremely large one," the authors of many Arabic treatises on medicine claimed the stars influenced the bodily humors. Moreover, numerous treatises instructed physicians when making a diagnosis that along with a physical examination, the stars needed to be consulted and that practitioners should only perform certain procedures under certain astrological conditions. In fact the positions of the heavens could sometimes predict diseases. Similarly, the planets and stars needed to be considered when gathering certain plants for pharmaceuticals. Not all physicians who wrote in the "classical" Islamic period agreed about the usefulness of astrology. Avicenna thought it bosh. Manfred Ullmann, *Islamic Medicine* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 109, 11-14.

comprised the sayyids' particular strain of intellectual and charismatic authority when we return to the function of the Ruknīyah in the next section.

As for Mufīd's version, by making the Dār al-Shifā' one of Rukn al-Dīn's own projects, that author renders absolute this implicit centrality of the medical arts in the sayyids' world. So, why does Mufīd omit this entry on the Rashīdīyah from his catalog of madrasahs, just as he excluded it from his list of sites linked by Rukn al-Dīn's qanāt from Farāshāh? This is a curious exclusion, considering the degree to which Rashīd al-Dīn's story would have bolstered his point that in prior years, Yazd rose to great heights of service to the empire through close relations between local elites and the intellectuals of the imperial administration. The most plausible explanation is that he left the Rashīdīyah out because all archeological evidence of that site was gone by his day. While Mufīd has a penchant for mentioning ruins, by his lifetime the complex was completely absent; not even a trace remained. Although a full entry on Rashīd al-Dīn's complex in Yazd would have aided his project, the invocation of the close relations and marriage alliance between the Āl-i Nizām and that renowned family, which appeared in Rukn al-Dīn/Shams al-Dīn's notice, satisfies Mufīd's purpose. Moreover, by attributing the Dār al-Shifā' hospital complex to Rukn al-Dīn, Mufīd was able to demonstrate Rukn al-Dīn's commitment to medicine, without the anecdote about Rashīd al-Dīn in Yazd.

Madrasah-i Z̤iyā'īyah: Consolidating the Network

After his notice on the Shamsīyah complex, Mufīd proceeds directly to the Madrasah-i Z̤iyā'īyah. In this ordering he is following the example of Aḥmad Kātīb, who

picks up with the *Ziyā'īyah* after the *Rashīdīyah*.⁶⁵¹ We are told that the *Madrasah-i Ziyā'īyah*, which was constructed by Sayyid *Ziyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn Raḏī* (R.III.b), one of the two aforementioned sons of *Rashīd al-Dīn*'s associate, *Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Raḏī* (R.II).⁶⁵² The *madrasah* was located in the very old *Ḥusaynīyah* quarter (*Kūchah-i Ḥusaynīyān*) of the city, near the eastern walls, where the *Ḥusaynī* sayyids had long been buried, to be near the *Imāmzādah Muḥammad bin 'Alī*⁶⁵³ but nonetheless, not far from the *Ruknīyah*. Beside the *madrasah* itself, this complex featured a retreat (*zāvīyah*), a library, two canals (*āb*), which fed into the shallow reservoir (*pāyāb*) of the *madrasah*, a treed *bāghchah*, a number of *bād-gīrs* (wind-catchers),⁶⁵⁴ and was surrounded by villas.⁶⁵⁵ He died before his *madrasah* complex's completion, leaving it to be completed by his two sons. The first of these was yet another person with the name *Mavlānā Sharaf al-*

⁶⁵¹ *Ja'farī*, however, first inserts a short entry on the *Madrasah-i Kamālīyah* before the *Ziyā'īyah*. *Aḥmad Kātib* saves his presentation on the *Kamālīyah* for later and *Mufīd* omits it all together. The inclusion of this site is curious. Like the others in this section, the complex consisted of a *madrasah*, *khānqāh*, *masjid*, pharmacy, and *hammām*, and was watered by a canal from the village of *Farāshāh*, near *Taft*. Moreover, the founder, *Kamāl al-Dīn Abū al-Mu'ālī*, son of *Khvājah Burhān al-Dīn*, (who, the sources tell us, served as *Shāh Shujā' Muẓaffarī*'s vizier for a time) was buried on site with his sons. *Aḥmad Kātib* adds that the *madrasah* was in ruins at the time of his writing. What is surprising is that this is the only building mentioned in this group of buildings built by a family that seems not to have had a sayyid lineage. The notice on this site is problematic, however; for the date given in *TY* and *TJY*, 720 A.H., is far too early for the son of *Shāh Shujā'*'s vizier. Later on, *Aḥmad Kātib* includes a notice for another complex, called *Madrasah-i Abū Mu'ālī*, outside the city, which he claims was built by the son of *Kamāl al-Dīn*. *Mufīd* also includes the *Madrasah-i Abū Mu'ālī* toward the end of his chapter on *madrasahs*. Both date this building to 786 A.H., which is more in line with *Kamāl al-Dīn Abū Mu'ālī*'s lifetime. It is possible that *Madrasah-i Kamālīyah* and *Madrasah-i Abū Mu'ālī* were actually one and the same building. *Ja'farī*'s notice for the *Kamālīyah* is *Ja'farī*, *TY*, 93. *Aḥmad Kātib*'s notice for *Kamālīyah* and *Madrasah-i Abū Mu'ālī* are found in *Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib*, *TJY*, 136-7, 44-5. *Mufīd*'s entry on *Madrasah-i Abū Mu'ālī* is in *Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī*, *JM*, 3: 658.

⁶⁵² This *madrasah* is sometimes erroneously associated with the *Zindān-i Iskandar*, discussed in the last chapter. See discussion in chapter 2, footnote 242.

⁶⁵³ *Afshār*, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 608; also see photo of ruin on 798.

⁶⁵⁴ High towers designed to catch breezes above the city and funnel them down and through vents to cool buildings in the city below. Sometimes, the air is first conveyed across the icy mountain waters flowing in the subterranean *qanāts* to cool it. More commonly, water is splashed upon the vents.

⁶⁵⁵ *Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib*, *TJY*, 135. To the *madrasah*, *Ziyā' al-Dīn*'s son *Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan* added a *ḥammām*, a number of pools, and pleasant chambers for solitary reflection (*khalvāt*). (p. 136). *Ziyā' al-Dīn Ḥusayn* led other construction projects, we find epigraphy at the *Qadamgāh-i 'Alī al-Riẓá*, at *Farāshāh*, near *Taft*, which indicates that the sayyid had made contributions that that complex. See *Afshār*, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 386-7.

Dīn ‘Alī (R.IV.b). The second was Mavlānā Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan (R.IV.a) (not to be confused with Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn’s brother, Majd al-Dīn Ḥusayn [R.III.a], who had been in charge of completing Rashīd al-Dīn’s complex after the unexpected death of his father, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Razī [R.II]). It is at this point in the Yazdī historians’ narratives that the lines of the Āl-i Razī family and the Āl-i Nizām intersect, for we are told that these two boys were the offspring of a union between Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn Razī (R.III.b) and a daughter of Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.III.a).⁶⁵⁶ The Yazdī histories do not name this bride. However, throughout Rukn al-Dīn’s *vaqf-nāmah*, the two daughters’ names, Fāṭimah Khātūn and Sāsān Khātūn, do come up frequently, usually as a pair. Unfortunately, I have not been able to determine for certain which of the two married Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn.⁶⁵⁷

The *vaqf-nāmah* of Rukn al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn (*JK*) indicates that in accordance with this marriage alliance, Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn (R.III.b) and his sons were trusted with administering the endowed properties of the family. For example, in that document, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad specifies that Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn Ḥusayn, (R.III.b) who was his brother-in-law, be named comptroller (*mushrif*) of his Shamsīyah Madrasah complex and that after Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn’s death, his sons and grandsons should succeed him in that post.⁶⁵⁸ Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn’s Ḥusayn’s son, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī (R.IV.b) is named

⁶⁵⁶ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 136. Ja’farī, *TY*, 94.

⁶⁵⁷ I had hoped to find in the *JK* some mention of one of these women alongside Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn or one of his sons, Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan or Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī, but have not found success. Holod-Tretiak indicates that it was Fāṭimah Khātūn, but does not provide any citation to substantiate that claim. Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting", Appendix IV.

⁶⁵⁸ This was a lucrative post. It paid annually 4,500 mans of grain from the produce of the *awqaf*. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 31. Lambton also mentions this stipulation, but incorrectly names Z̤iyā’ al-Dīn as Shams al-Dīn’s nephew (sister’s son) rather than his brother-in-law. Ann K. Lambton, "Awqāf in Persia: 6th-8th/12th-14th Centuries," *Islamic Law and Society* 4, no. 3 (1997): 307.

throughout the deed. First of all, he was made the *vālī* of certain endowed shops.⁶⁵⁹ More importantly, concerning the highest post of Rukn al-Dīn's *awqāf*, the superintendant (*mutavallī*), the deed stipulates that if Shams al-Dīn's line, through his daughter, 'Iṣmat (Ṣafvat) al-Dīn Arslān Khātūn (N.IV) should fail, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī (R.IV.b) and his offspring should take over.⁶⁶⁰

Both sons advanced to high ranks under the Muḏaffarids as a result of their prestigious lineage, their important offices, and the great knowledge that went with them. Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan (R.IV.a), who would turn out to be the grandfather of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a) of the Tīmūrid era, distinguished himself as the Qāẓī under Mubāraz al-Dīn Muḏaffar,⁶⁶¹ and became a confidant of the Muḏaffarid sulṭāns. Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan taught at his father's madrasah, Madrasah-i Ziyā'iyah, about which Aḥmad Kātib explains:

In the days of Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan, the Madrasah-i Ziyā'iyah was a treasure mine of learning and legal rulings. All of the notables and '*ulamā*' and meritorious folk came to attend his lessons. He was the greatest scholar of his age. He was a learned, just, erudite judge, upon whose skirts the mist of bribery never settled. The commentary on the book *Taysīr-i ḥāwī* ("The Comprehensive Facilitator"), which he wrote, is an indication of his munificence and merits... All of the rulers of the Banū Muḏaffar would attend to him [Majd al-Dīn Ḥasan—R.IV.a] and would leap to obey to his words.⁶⁶²

Madrasah-i Ḥusaynīyah: the Ashrafī line

All the histories of Yazd then turn to the works of another important line of 'Arīẓī sayyids, which we briefly mentioned earlier.⁶⁶³ Here we find a biography of the Sayyid Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf (A.IV), whom, as we discussed above, married Shams al-Dīn

⁶⁵⁹ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 17.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 70, 165-67.

⁶⁶¹ An office that he shared with Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn Ḥasan al-Ḥusaynī al-Bukhārī.

⁶⁶² Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 136.

⁶⁶³ As we already mentioned, Aḥmad Kātib first inserts his notice on the Kamālīyah, to be discussed below.

Muḥammad b. Rukn al-Dīn's daughter, 'Iṣmat (Ṣafvat) al-Dīn Arslān Khātūn (N.IV), whose mother was the daughter of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḫr Allāh (H.III.a).⁶⁶⁴ In particular, the Yazdī historians link Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf with the madrasah complex of his eminent father, Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥasan (A.III), known as the Ḥusaynīyah. The Ḥusaynīyah Madrasah was in the Ḥusaynīyah quarter of the city, close to the Ziyā'īyah madrasah, which Shams al-Dīn's nephews had completed. Mu'īn al-Dīn, his father, and his sons were all laid to rest at the Ḥusaynīyah complex. The family built extensively both inside Yazd and out, projects that included additions to the Ruknīyah and Shamsīyah complex. Among the most outstanding of Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf's works were his additions to the tomb complexes of *imāmzādahs* in Yazd and an improvement of the Āb-i Dihābād, which was supposed to have originally been dug by Alexander the Great.⁶⁶⁵ Concomitant with all this building, Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf became a respected and influential figure among the Muẓaffarid princes. The chain of commemorations honoring the ascendancy of the 'Arīzī sayyids ends with a brief summary of the distinguished careers of the descendents of Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf (and Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad) under the Muẓaffarids. Of Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf's three sons, the Yazdī historians focus on Rukn al-Dīn Shāh Ḥasan (A.V.a), who rose to prominence as Shāh Shujā' Muẓaffar's grand vizier, the highest office in the empire.

This should have been quite a triumph for the family, but the Yazdī sources remain suspiciously quiet about it. A quick cross-check with other sources provides an explanation: Khvādamīr relates, on the authority of his grandfather, that the sayyid-

⁶⁶⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 560. The marriage is also mention in the notice on the Masjid-i Sar-Rīg, which Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf built. (3: 649-50)

⁶⁶⁵ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 221. The village of Dihābād is on the northwestern side of the city in the county of Ardakān. Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 99.

vizier, Rukn al-Dīn Shams Ḥasan (A.V.a) turns out to have been one of those scheming and power-hungry bureaucrats, so common in Persianate historical narratives since Bayaḳī's fifth/eleventh-century portrayal of the nefarious Khvājah Bū Sahl in the story of Ḥasanak's martyrdom.⁶⁶⁶ What's more, he was something of a creep. As Khvandamīr puts it, despite his noble lineage, "of pleasant disposition, he had no share (*az ḥusn-i khulq bī-bahrah būd*)." Apparently, the sayyid forged a letter incriminating his two rivals in the ministry, Khvājah Jalāl al-Dīn Tūrānshāh and Khvaja Humām al-Dīn Maḥmūd, for conspiracy against the pādishāh. After inquiries were made, his scheme was discovered; the shāh confiscated his property, had him tortured and finally executed by strangulation with a bowstring.⁶⁶⁷ In the end, the vizierate went to the sayyid's nemesis, Jalāl al-Dīn Tūrānshāh, after all. Subsequently, as Khvandamīr tells the tale, the disgraced sayyid's father, Mu'īn al-Dīn Ashraf, refused to attend his funeral, saying:

What business do sayyids have with injustice, treachery, and iniquity? They dispatched our ancestor for the sake of mercy on the people of the world; it is acceptable that the descendent [of the Prophet] that becomes a cause of earthly creatures' suffering should be tortured and tormented with the tortures and torments of this world and the next.⁶⁶⁸

Having skirted this unsavory story of a Yazdī sayyid's malevolence with this oblique presentation on the union of the local Nizām, Razī, and Ashrafī families, the Yazdī historians present the consolidation of the sayyid families of Yazd. By manifesting their joint preeminence in the new skyline of the city, these families not only established themselves as the most important benefactors of the city at the

⁶⁶⁶ This story appears in the chapter entitled "Commemoration of the Hanging (*bar dār kardan*) of Amīr Ḥasanak, the Vizier" in Abū al-Faḳr Muḥammad b. Ḥusayn Bayhaḳī, *Tārīkh-i Bayhaḳī*, ed. 'Alī Akbar Fīyāz (Mashhad: Dānīshgāh-i Mashhad, 1971), 221-46.

⁶⁶⁷ The entire episode can be found in Khvandamīr, *ḤS*, 3: 304-5. A similar account is given in Kutubī, *Tārīkh-i Āl-i Muḳaffar*, 98.

⁶⁶⁸ "*Sādāt-rā bā zulm va ghadr va fisq chih kār? Jidd-i mā-rā jihat-i raḥmat-i 'ālamīyān mab'ūs gardānīdah-and; farzandī kih sabab-i miḥnat-i jahānīyān bāshad, maqarrar ast kih bi-'azāb va 'iqāb-i dunyāvī va ukhravī mu'azzab va mu'āqib shūd.*" Khvandamīr, *ḤS*, 3: 305.

expense of the Atābayks, but also, by allying themselves with the *vazīrī* family of Rashīd al-Dīn, made themselves integral to the administration of the imperial order— first Īlkhān, then Muḏaffarid, and eventually, Tīmūrid. Moreover, by simultaneously mapping the sayyids’ madrasah complexes and charting their intermarriages, and further, by connecting all these to the Ruknīyah complex, which stood at the center of the city and its narrative, all three of Yazd’s historians succeed not only in presenting an explanation for the city’s reorientation topographically, but also in providing a moralistic, even mythical gloss on such transformations. By affixing the story of the local sayyids’ madrasahs and political success to the grand, moralistic narrative of the Ruknīyah Madrasah and its founder, the entire series of notices becomes a part of that story and becomes charged with the same moral character implicit in that master narrative. However, this body of charged stories takes on an even stronger potency when we look more closely at the function and design of the Ruknīyah as it is presented in the sources. As we have already begun to observe, key to story of the alliance between the local sayyids and Rashīd al-Dīn’s family in the earlier Yazdī source, was a common interest in medicine. Our historians’ treatment of the Ruknīyah’s design will demonstrate that in their eyes, a privileging of the rational sciences— including medicine, but also strongly emphasizing astronomy—was an integral component of the rationale behind the sayyids’ rise in Yazd and in the empire at large.

5. Setting the Universe’s Clock: The Ruknīyah, authoritative knowledge, and the Training of Experts

An Astronomical Wonder at the Madrasah’s Gate

I opened this chapter with Mufīd’s enthusiastic commemoration of the beauty

of the Ruknīyah and Shamsīyah complexes. As we witnessed, these notices were lustrously adorned gateways of prose designed to open onto the stories about the buildings' own making. Mufīd's depictions did not provide access to descriptions of the buildings' appearance or function. As we delved deep into all this backstory, we brought the city's two earlier historians into the discussion, but chose to set aside temporarily those writers' descriptions of the Ruknīyah and Shamsīyah until we had exhausted the peripheral narratives these descriptions indexed. The reasons for doing so have not been accidental and will become clear in the course of our discussion in this section of the chapter. In any case, now that we have worked our way back out of the paratext, it is time that we turn those authors' images of the monuments themselves. The passages directly precede both authors' presentation on Rukn al-Dīn's conflict with the Atābayk; working backwards as usual, we finally arrive at the opening of Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's notices on the Ruknīyah.

Despite the fact that one can discern echoes of these descriptions in Mufīd's work, they are of a markedly different character than Mufīd's and are far more substantial. As usual, Aḥmad Kātib's text remains close to his predecessor's. We shall quote here from his depiction of the Ruknīyah madrasah:

This building is indicative (*dāl*) of his [Rukn al-Dīn] lofty ambition. Its high gateway is the envy of the inhabited corners of the world, and on the face of the Earth's surface, its pair (*juft*) of minarets is unique (*ṭāq*)⁶⁶⁹ in stature (*iqāmat*). Inside of his madrasah, with the edifice of the dome, porches, and chambers, is the populated world. His Raṣad-i Vaqt va Sā'āt is a luminous heaven (*āsmānī pur nūr*), replete with all the positions and revolutions of the firmament. *Miṣra'*:

It is a heaven that has taken shape on the surface of the Earth.

⁶⁶⁹ The reader should recall that Mufīd reproduced this play on uniqueness and bifurcation in his description.

The eyes of those with true vision (*ūlū al-abṣār*) are astonished (*ḥayrān*) by it; the faculty of reason of those with insight is turned upside down by the shape of its structure (*vaḏʿ-i banā-yi ū*). *Shiʿr* [a poem that Mufīd included in his work too, albeit with minimal modifications]:

Even though he saw its plan from afar,
impotent, he said, “O those endowed with true vision!”

“What a design (*rasmī*), of boundless amplitude!”
What a picture (*naqshī*)— the sky of heavenly bodies’ pathway!”⁶⁷⁰

While the Universal Intellect is the architect of the firmament,
on earth, no one has made such a perfect circle (*parḡār*) as this.

Should someone give a description of this building,
the rational mind would not believe what was said.

Nevertheless, once the eye sees and the senses perceive,
how can the rational mind deny the senses?⁶⁷¹

These introductory passages and verses single out the Raṣad-i Vaqt va Sāʿāt as the paragon of the complex’s magnificence. A *raṣad* is an astronomical observatory, a mirror of the skies, so to speak, where the heavenly bodies are reflected in the eyes of observers and recorded in legers, tables, and maps, activities that have the effect of bringing the stars down to earth in simulacrum.⁶⁷² Playing on this function of the observatory, Aḥmad Kātib sets up a nexus of metaphors here that compare the beauty of the site to that of the heavenly spheres. In so doing, he is actually setting the agenda for his treatment of the whole complex. While both Aḥmad Kātib and Jaʿfarī mention all the other edifices that comprise the complex—the madrasah itself, a mosque, a pharmacy (*bayt al-advīyah*), and a cistern—the very first and by far the longest

⁶⁷⁰ As already indicated, when Mufīd quotes this poem, he substitutes “courtyard (*ṣaḥn*)” and “roof (*saqf*)” for “(*rasm*)” and “(*naqsh*)”. See full poem and transliteration on page 299, and the discussion in footnote 464.

⁶⁷¹ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ʿAlī Kātib, *TJY*, 123.

⁶⁷² I am borrowing the phrase “the stars down to earth” from Theodore Adorno’s beautifully titled but deficient critique of astrology, pseudo-science, “irrational” thought, and fascism, which he bases on his analysis of astrology-columns in newspapers. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture* (London: Routledge).

description in both works concerns this Raṣad-i Vaqt va Sā'āt. The rest of the complex's buildings receive only a cursory treatment. This structure serves as the frontispiece of both accounts and immediately precedes the story of Rukn al-Dīn's trouble with Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh. Whereas Aḥmad Kātib and Ja'farī's descriptions are nearly identical, we should stress again that Mufīd's account, which we quoted at the beginning of the chapter, is significantly different. This variation is critical, and we will consider it toward the end of this section. For the time being we discuss Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's treatment of the *raṣad* in isolation from Mufīd's. I quote *TJY*'s passage on the *raṣad*:

In front of the gateway of the madrasah are placed two minarets at the two corners of its *ivān*. Upon one minaret is fashioned a bird of copper, and that bird faces and turns toward the sunlight from whichever direction it comes. And on the other minaret, a banner of the five divisions of the day's time (*hangām-i panj vaqt*) comes up when the drums beat.

And upon the top of that minaret, in the middle of the *raṣad* is built a painted wooden wheel (*charkh*). And it is subdivided into three hundred and sixty sections, each section corresponds to a degree, and every day as the sun comes up, and every degree, which it shows, corresponds with the letters of the *abjad*.

And upon the four corners of the wheel are placed four circles and upon each circle is written thirty houses and the name of the Turkish, Roman, Arab and Jilālī⁶⁷³ months. For every day that passes, one house on this circle turns black; as the hour passes two degrees at the top of the wheel, two brass birds stick out their heads and throw a glass bead into a cup, which they had placed under that shutter (*darīchah*).⁶⁷⁴ The wheel begins its turning and from among those twelve white panels (*takhtah*), which mark the twelve hours, one falls off and a black panel arrives in its place.

And on the five occasions when the glass bead falls, a drum beats once inside the *raṣad* and a banner goes up on the minaret. There is a circle drawn on that wheel and thirty white circles placed inside it; every day that the moon passes, one of those circles turns black. And in the middle of those circles, the name of the month is written.

⁶⁷³ Dating system starting from the rule of Malikshāh Saljūqī, which starts in 471/1078-9.

⁶⁷⁴ There is a sentence introducing this *darīchah* in *TY*, which has been omitted here in *TJY*. Ja'farī, *TY*, 82.

And from one side to the other, opposite the hours are placed twelve other panels (*takhtah*); at night, when an hour passes, one out of twelve lamps, which had been placed there goes back into its place.⁶⁷⁵ And a kind of a band (*kamar*) is placed at the middle of the wheel, with a likeness of the zodiac (*munṭaqat al-burūj*) and the names of the forty-eight⁶⁷⁶ [*sic.*, twenty-eight] houses of the moon inscribed: first Sharaṭayn [Sharaṭān], then Buṭayn, Surayyā, Dabarān, Haq‘ah, Han‘ah, Zirā‘, Naṣrah, Ṭarf, Jabhah, Zubrah, Ṣarfah, ‘Awwā [‘Awwā’ or ‘Awwá], Simāk-i A‘zal [Simāk], Ghafr, Zubānī [Zubānān], Iklīl, Qalb, Shawlah, Na‘ā‘im, Baldah, Sa‘d-i Zābiḥ, Sa‘d-i Bula‘, Sa‘d al-Su‘ūd, Sa‘d al-Akhbīyah, Muqaddam [al-Fargh al-Muqaddam], Mu‘akhkhar [al-Fargh al-Mu‘akhkhar], Rashā va Baṭn al-Ḥūt.⁶⁷⁷

On top of the circle of the moon, the five wandering planets (*khamseh-yi mutaḥayyarah*), i.e., Zuḥal, Mushtarī, ‘Uṭārad, Mirrīkh, and Zuhrah,⁶⁷⁸ and their relationships with each day have been written for each planet (*kawkab*) that there is.

On the inside of the *raṣad* is a tank (*tanūrah*),⁶⁷⁹ twice the height of a man (*du bālā-yi ādamī*) made from copper, and every day they fill it with water. A copper plumb bob fastened to a chain [floats] on the surface of the water in this tank.

At the bottom of this tank is a brass astrolabe. By means of its alidade (*‘izādah*) and a measurement (*mar*), that water flows out from an opening (*suqbah*). Even though the water of that tank (*tanūr*) may only be slight, that plumb bob goes down and accomplishes its work that way.⁶⁸⁰ And a little bowl, like a hanging cup, marks the minute; every minute a rod strikes that cup and it makes a sound.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁵ In *TY* it is mentioned that that these lamps are protruding from little cavities. *Ibid.*, 83.

⁶⁷⁶ This is a minor error, which turns up in all the extant manuscripts. There are only twenty-eight houses of the moon; despite the fact that the text says there are forty eighty, only twenty-eight houses are listed.

⁶⁷⁷ Editor’s note says that these are two names for the twenty-eighth house and that to use both is incorrect.

⁶⁷⁸ These are: Saturn, Jupiter, Mercury, Mars, and Venus.

⁶⁷⁹ The word “*tanūrah*” is usually used to signify a channel for running water, i.e., where water rushes on a water-mill. Here, the author is clearly describing a tank of stationary water. In his thirteenth-century, Arabic manual on water-clocks and other such machines, al-Jazarī employs the word “*khizānah*” (repository or reservoir) for this water tank.

⁶⁸⁰ *TY* contains a fuller description of the mechanism for flow regulation and describes how that controls the clock itself. Even still, the description is no less vague: “And inside the *raṣad* they made a copper tank (*tanūrah-i masīn*) filled with water and a plumb bob (*langar*) hanging from a chain upon the surface of the water; in its path, an astrolabe is placed on the bottom of that pipe, and by means of its alidade (*‘izādah*) water flows out and goes into a well (*chāh*). And even though only a little water comes out of that, that plumb bob goes down and roughly a hundred and fifty cords, each tied to a suspended wooden plumb (*langarī-i chūbīn*), move along with that [first] plumb.” Ja‘farī, *TY*, 83.

⁶⁸¹ The minute-marker is not discussed in *TY*.

And at the bottom of the wheel of the *raṣad* there is a wooden window, interlaced (*darham kardah*) with *ma'qilī* script,⁶⁸² fashioned in wood. And from out of [the entwined calligraphy in] this window, this very [phrase] (*īn chunīn*) comes out,

[in Arabic] The one who brought it forth, i.e., the craftsmanship of this clock, (*mustanbiṭu-hu ṣana'atu hādhihi al-sā'āt*) is al-'Abd, al-Faqīr ilā Allāh, al-Khalīl Abī Bakr bin Muḥammad Khalīl, *ghafara Allāh la-hu bil-khayr*.⁶⁸³

And the completion of this *raṣad* was in the year 725/1324-5.⁶⁸⁴

While apparently neither Aḥmad Kātib nor Ja'farī fully understood the inner workings of this feat of engineering, they give a thorough enough description for us to identify it as an automated water-clock or clepsydra (in Arabic: *binkām*, *finkān*, or *finjānah*),⁶⁸⁵ a device which had a long history, going back to the simple devices in use

⁶⁸² TY employs the same word. Manuscript ML for TJJ uses the word *Maṣṣal*= joint/articulation

⁶⁸³ The phrasing is slightly different in Ja'afī's work; whereas Aḥmad Kātib presents the epigraphic text in its original Arabic, his predecessor, Ja'farī, chose to translate it into Persian: "The designer (*muṣannif*) of this *raṣad* is Mavlānā Khalīl bin Abī Bakr Āmulī. At the bottom of the wheel is drawn a window (*panjarah*), and intertwined in *ma'qilī* script with such craftsmanship [the following] comes out: "the one who brought forth this clock (*mustanbiṭ-i īn tāriḥ*) is *al-faqīr ilā Allāh al-jalīl Khalīl bin Abī Bakr bin Khalīl*." And the date of this *madrasah*, *raṣad*, *qubbah-i bayt al-adviyah*, *maṣjid*, and *khānah* was in the year 725/1324-5." Ja'farī, TY, 83. Afshār summarizes the information found in TY and TJJ, without presenting any further reflections on the date of its construction or on the man who designed it. Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 561 (note 4).

⁶⁸⁴ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, TJJ, 123-5.

⁶⁸⁵ Al-Jazarī uses the term "*finkān*" for clock in general (including candle-clocks) and "*binkām*" for water-clock. The relationship to the Arabic/Persian word *finjān* (cup) is obvious. As Dekhoda explains that word derives from Greek, "*pentakis*," which is an adverbial form of the number five (*pentē*), which literally means "five times." Perhaps that name was given to the early bowl-style water clocks because they needed to be filled five times per day, possibly after each of the five subdivisions of diurnal time. It is not clear whether this word was a corruption of a loan word from Greek, or rather a later evolution of a word (now lost) which had been directly translated from the Greek into some Persian word deriving from the word for five (*panj/fanj*). Lambton mentions the Persian word "*pink*" (elsewhere *pang*) in her article on Ṣafavid era-terminology for water works found in the "Ṭūmār of Bahā'ī": Ann K. Lambton, "The Regulation of the Waters of the Zāyande Rūd," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, University of London 9 (1938): 671. I believe that this term, *pang*, refers specifically to the very ancient and rudimentary variety of clepsydra, which consists of a metal bowl with a hole for the timed outflow of water. In any case, this word is probably has a common origin in the Greek term, *pentakis/finkān*. In another article, Lambton describes another simple type of bowl water clock (called *taṣht* or *taṣhtah*), used for measuring the time in which water flows through *qanāts* even in the contemporary era. Ann K. Lambton, "The Qanats of Yazd," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1992): 24. *Taṣht* most certainly derives from the old Turkic word, *taṣ*- meaning "overflow," a word that is also related to *daṣ/ta:s*, meaning "outside," i.e. *taṣmak*= to flow outside. In older Turkic languages, these latter were phonetically distinct from *ta:ṣ/da:ṣ*, meaning "stone," but eventually both became a homophone in *taṣ*. In other words, the word *taṣht* employed to signify a simple bowl-shaped water clock would have had no relation with

among ancient Near Eastern civilizations.⁶⁸⁶ According to the medieval Arabic literary tradition, the sophisticated, complex clepsydra signified by the Arabic terms *binkān/finkān*, dates to Hellenistic times, and was invented by Archimedes.⁶⁸⁷ Nonetheless, when referring to the aggregate of the instruments and machinery as an instillation or built structure, both authors use the word *raṣad*, a term that usually designates an astronomical observatory, that is, a building equipped with the instruments necessary for observing the heavens. However, there is no indication that Ruknīyah complex contained a separate building that housed the machine that the authors describe. The device appears to have stood out of doors, visible from the street. Both writers appear to use of the term *raṣad* here to demarcate both the space in which the various instruments had been set up, including the machinery of the water-clock itself, and the function they fulfilled collectively. We will return to this question of function momentarily. Curiously, when describing the actual automaton, neither author uses the technical term for such a machine (*binkām*), which would have been a well-known (albeit technical) term at the time. In his description, Jaʿfarī calls it a

concept of stone (i.e., not a stone basin), despite the phonological similarity. See Clauson, *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*, 556-9.

⁶⁸⁶ See discussion of water clocks and their astronomical applications in the late Babylonian text, "Mul-Apin" in O. Neugebauer, "The Water Clock in Babylonian Astronomy," *Studies in Ancient Astronomy* 37, no. 1/2 (1947). Also see A. Pogo, "Egyptian Water Clocks," *Isis* 25, no. 2 (1936). Also see a summary of the history of texts on water-clocks in Donald R. Hill, *Arabic Water-Clocks, Sources & Study in the History of Arabic-Islamic Science, History of Technology Series* (Aleppo: University of Aleppo, Institute for the History of Arabic Science, 1981), 6-14.

⁶⁸⁷ The text, which the Arab clock-makers attribute to Archimedes, describing a monumental, sophisticated clepsydra, is *Kitāb Arshimīdis fī ʿamal al-bankamāt* (The Book of Archimedes on the Construction of Water-Clocks), which is of unknown date and authorship. The only extant manuscripts of this text are in Arabic, not Greek. While most scholars agree that there are probably sections that had been translated from an originally Greek work, much of the work consists of later, Arabic additions. The text is usually referred to as the Pseudo-Archimedes and is of unknown date and authorship. See discussion in Hill, *Arabic Water-Clocks*, 1-2; 15-35. However, there is evidence that the Greeks developed their earliest clepsydra-technology without much help from the Egyptians or Mesopotamians. See: Stephanie West, "Cultural Interchange over a Water-Clock," *The Classical Quarterly, New Series* 23, no. 1 (1973).

“*tārīkh*,” which can mean “calendar” and rarely, “clock”; he seems to have chosen this word intending a generic time or date-keeper. Aḥmad Kātīb reports that the fancy Arabic epigraphy on the machine identifies it as “*hādhihi sāt*,” or “these clocks,” a phrase that was apparently referring to its various time-keeping systems in composite.⁶⁸⁸ While certainly this machine was a marvel for anyone to behold, the automaton-clepsydra of the Ruknīyah complex was not unique. In fact, its maker, named Khalīl bin Abī Bakr,⁶⁸⁹ seems to have based his design on the much more famous clocks of the late twelfth-century master clock-makers, such as Riḍwān ibn al-Sā’ātī al-Khurāsānī and Ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī. The former clock-maker composed a work, *Kitāb ‘Amal al-Sā’āt wa al-‘Amal bi-hā* (The Book on the Construction of Clocks and their Usage), which describes monumental water clocks that he and his father had constructed. The latter, al-Jazarī, wrote *Kitāb fī Ma’rifah al-Ḥayl al-Hindisīyah* (The book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices) in 1206, a work describing the construction and operation of elaborate water and candle clocks he had constructed. A look at drawings of Al-Jazarī’s “Castle Clock” and al-Sā’ātī’s monumental clock at the Jayrūn Gate in Damascus reveals that these famous clocks almost certainly served as models for the Ruknīyah clock. With some modifications and adaptations, the Ruknīyah clock features the same basic design scheme used in these earlier clocks to mark the

⁶⁸⁸ Generally, in Arabic the singular form for clock is *sā’ah*, a word, which also means simply “hour” or “time”; nevertheless, in its plural form, *sāt* does often signify a single clock, rather than clocks in the plural. “*Hādhihi sāt*” could also mean “this clock.”

⁶⁸⁹ I have not been able to trace the clock-maker, Khalīl bin Abī Bakr. Ja’farī calls him “al-Āmulī,” the one from Āmul, which is either the old name for the town of Turkmenabad in modern day Turkmenistan on the Amu Darya or the name of a town in Ṭabāristān. In her discussion of the Ruknīyah *raṣad*, Holod-Tretiak, states that this Khalīl bin Abī Bakr was the “keeper” of the observatory. She takes this information from her reading of the local histories, where both historians clearly indicate that this man was the *muṣannif-i raṣad* (inventor or designer of the observatory) or *mustanbiṭ* (the one who brought it forth), so I do not know where exactly she finds this information. See Holod-Tretiak, “The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting”, 42.

passing of the twelve hours and the movements of the heavens. The Ruknīyah clock does introduce some innovations in presentation, but most are simplifications. For example, whereas the Castle Clock of al-Jazarī featured automated musicians playing drums and trumpets, the Ruknīyah clock had only drums that sounded internally, without the figures playing them. Despite these, and a few other variations and additions, the overall design seems quite similar. Even some of the artistic flourishes from the model clocks, such as the two birds dropping balls into metal cups found their way into the Ruknīyah clock.⁶⁹⁰

In fact, the basic design, discernable in the Ruknīyah clock and recorded in al-Jazarī and al-Sā'ātī's works, circulated widely among clock-makers in Islamic lands. For instance, there were also water-clocks, built in the fourteenth century in the city of Fez, which employed a similar design, namely the Bu'anāniyya Mosque Clock and the Qarawiyyīn University Mosque Clock.⁶⁹¹ Still, despite the design's pervasiveness,

⁶⁹⁰ Al-Jazarī provides a detailed description of the workings of his water-clocks. Some manuscripts include beautiful illustrations accompanying the text. For discussion of the "Castle Clock," see the beautiful, color facsimile edition of the famous illuminated manuscript of this work at the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul (MS Aya Sofya 3606), which has incredibly detailed diagrams of the inner workings of the machine: Ismā'īl Ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī, *al-Jāmi' bayna al-'ilm wa al-'amal al-nāfi' fi šinā'ah al-ḥiyal*, ed. Eckhard Neubauer Fuat Sezgin, Mazen Amawi (Jumhūrīyat Almāniyā al-Ittiḥādīyah: Ma'had Tārīkh al-'Ulūm al-'Arabīyah wa-al-Islāmīyah fī iṭār Jāmi'at Farānkfurt (Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe University, Frankfurt am Main), 2002), 6-82. For comparable pages in Hill's excellent, translated edition, see Ismā'īl Ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī, *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices (Kitāb fī ma'rifat al-ḥiyal al-handasiyya)*, trans. Donald R. Hill (Boston: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1974), 17-41. In this chapter, the reader will find sections dealing with every minute component of the machine's extremely complicated operation. Also see the critical printed edition in Arabic, which has an Arabic-English glossary of terms: Ismā'īl Ibn al-Razzāz al-Jazarī, *al-Jāmi' bayna al-'ilm wa-al-'amal al-nāfi' fi šinā'at al-ḥiyal*, ed. Aḥmad Yūsuf Ḥasan (Aleppo: Jāmi'at Ḥalab. Ma'had al-Turāth al-'Ilmī al-'Arabī, 1979), 9-78 (Castle Clock); 575-90 (glossary).

⁶⁹¹ The former was built by Abū al-Ḥasan al-Timilsānī, the latter by Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad al-'Arabī. Both featured twelve doors marking the hours and balls dropping into cups; however neither had birds. These adaptations were probably necessary, given the lack of enthusiasm for representations of animal forms on religious edifices in the Maghrib. See discussion of these clocks in Hill, *Arabic Water-Clocks*, 123-5. There are diagrams and photos and diagrams of the Bū'anāniyyah clock in Thomas Taylor, "The Water-Clock at the Bū'ināniyya Madrasa, Fes," *Fes Occasional Papers*, no. 2 (1995). There was also an automaton water-clock in Tabrīz, which the Venetian ambassador, Michele Membré, observed during his visit to that city in 947/1540. While this clock did feature animals dropping balls from their mouths, the overall

Riḍwān al-Sā'ātī makes a curious statement in his Arabic work about his father's clock in Damascus, which he had continued to maintain after his father's death. As he describes the use of twelve sequential devices (usually twelve small doors) to indicate the twelve hours of the day and the two birds dropping balls into the cup—two basic features of many later clocks, including the Ruknīyah clock—he explains that both features originated in Fārs, in Sasanian times, with an ancient master clock-maker, named Hurmūz,⁶⁹² who had invented such a clock. He elaborates on the transmission of that particular design:

As it is reported in the histories, such a design persisted in the land of Fārs for an extended period of time. Then, it was conveyed from there to the land of the Greeks. Their design was disseminated in the lands until it was conveyed to Damascus and was built there in the era of Rūm (Byzantium) and after that in the days of the Banū Umayyah. This clock associated with Hurmūz persisted; its template being replicated, from one man to the next, and it is as we described it.⁶⁹³

While the circulation of Riḍwān al-Sā'ātī and al-Jazarī's works allowed for the this design to reach Iran, the Maghrib and even Europe,⁶⁹⁴ in this passage al-Sā'ātī is

design was quite different. Moreover, the outstanding feature of this clock was that it produced written fortunes for those who dropped a copper coin into a slot. About his own experience with this machine, Membré wryly reports: “And that copper went down inside the said cabinet and a rumbling was at once heard, whereby a little door opened and a dragon came forth and voided from its mouth a little iron ball; and below that door another opened from which a cat-like creature came forth; and the said ball dropped into the mouth of the said cat. Then on the other side another door opened, and a serpent came forth and voided from its mouth a little sheet of inscribed paper; and they would read the paper and whatever the paper said, that would be their fortune. And I too tried my own fortune; and my sheet said that great riches would very soon come to me. So I am still waiting for them.” Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, trans. Alexander H. Morton (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1993), 33. Membré concludes his account by saying that the fashioner of this machine claimed to have learned his design from books. In a footnote, the editor, A.H. Morton refers the reader to al-Jazarī's work, adding that there is no precise model for it in that work. Indeed, there is nothing remotely like it in that work.⁶⁹² It is unclear whether this Hurmūz is the Sasanian king Hurmūz, son of Anūshīrvān. As discussed above, according to Yazdī tradition, Hurmūz and his sister Mihr-nigār had been appointed to Yazd by their father, Anūshīrvān, and were the namesakes of Khurmīz and Mihrjard respectively. The Yazdī histories do not connect Hurmūz to the knowledge of clockmaking or astronomy.

⁶⁹³ Riḍwān ibn Muḥammad al-Sā'ātī, *ʿilm al-Sā'āt wa al-ʿAmal bi-hā: majmūʿ fi al-mīkānīk al-islāmī*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān (Damascus: Maktab al-Darāsāt al-Islāmīyah, 1981), part 2: 16-17.

⁶⁹⁴ This is not to say that Europeans did not have water-clocks before al-Jazarī. Indeed, there was a reciprocal exchange of ideas and technology on clock making between the Arab world and Europe

transmitting what may very well have been a vocational tradition, well known among clock-makers, acknowledging that this ingenious design, which had become the standard model for keeping time and for displaying its passage, had its origins ancient Fārs. With this report, we perceive yet another example of the idea that in the collective memory of Muslim elites, Fārs had been the seat of mathematical and astronomical knowledge since mythic times. As I have been arguing, this is the very characterization of Fārs (and especially, of Yazd) that the Yazdī historians of the fifteenth century were adopting and were trying to promote in their works.

Keeping this aim of the Yazdī writers in mind, let us consider more closely the fact that both Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib equate this “*tārīkh*” or “*sā'at*,” with the *raṣad* itself, or at the very least, they introduce the clock as being the *raṣad*'s main attraction. The point is that the Yazdī historians present this marvelously fashioned and quite elaborate water-clock as the centerpiece of a working, astronomical observatory that operated in the space around the gate of the madrasah complex. In their treatment, the implication is that the use of the device was integral to the activities of the madrasah; astronomy/astrology and mathematics were at the core of the subjects taught in and about the Ruknīyah, alongside the traditional Islamic sciences, associated with training in Shāfi'ī jurisprudence. Standing at the gate of the madrasah for all to behold, the magnificent clock not only advertised the kind of knowledge practiced and transmitted at the madrasah—the very kind of knowledge required to design and build such a device— but also stood as a symbol of the particular brand of authority that the founder of the institution, Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, was supposed to have embodied. For

throughout the Middle Ages. See Hill's discussion in Hill, *Arabic Water-Clocks*, 125-31. Also see his discussion of water-clocks in medieval Toledo: Donald R. Hill, "The Toledo Water-Clocks of c. 1075," *History of Technology* 16 (1994).

the Yazdī historians, this marvel constituted a visible, public presentation of that sayyid’s ingenuity, wealth, power, and authority over the community. Moreover, in performing its operation before the entire community’s eyes, the clock indexed precisely the kind of knowledge that was requisite for that authority. No wonder the Atābayks were jealous!

In point of fact, while the Yazdī authors spotlight the *raṣad* in their notices on the madrasah complex, Rukn al-Dīn’s *vaqf-nāmah* (JK) only mentions it briefly, simply saying that was attached to the gate⁶⁹⁵ and that it was to be funded with an annual sum of three-hundred dinārs for the maintenance of its tools and instruments.⁶⁹⁶ This information is presented along with a catalog of similar expenses for the library, pharmacy, and canal, which filled the cistern beneath it.⁶⁹⁷ This cistern would have been essential because it housed the water supply necessary for the clock’s functioning, but of all the instruments necessary for the operation of the automaton, the *vaqf-nāmah* only singles out the cistern. The deed does not mention what kind of instruments this *raṣad* might have housed other than the *sā’āt*; in fact, it does not describe the clock at all. Furthermore, the document does not name or even mention the existence of an expert who was in charge of calibrating this sophisticated and fragile machine; nor does it stipulate the percentage of funds that would have gone toward his wages. In the end, although the fifteenth-century historians place the clock at the center of the complex and at the crux of the story of its founding, it is difficult for us to determine whether Rukn al-Dīn would have made the same assessment of its value relative to the

⁶⁹⁵ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 5-6

⁶⁹⁶ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 27.

⁶⁹⁷ Funds for the annual repair of the cistern is mentioned in Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 28.

other elements of the complex. Indeed, despite the central place the *raṣād* occupies in the Yazdī works, none of the sources explicitly intimates that Rukn al-Dīn or his son were themselves experts in astrology. The observatory actually may not have stood as a reflection of the sayyid's own intellectual dedication, as the later historians were implying. While astrological prognostication was certainly important in the fourteenth century, and while the Īlkhāns were already dubbing themselves as *Ṣāḥib-Qirāns* occasionally, it was not until the Tīmūrid age that the ability for sovereigns to fashion themselves as *Ṣāḥib-Qirāns* became obligatory and that a network of astrologer-historians capable of producing the necessary rhetoric based on science became essential to the business of empire. It is likely that in reality the sayyids of Yazd, who were only just rising to positions of extra-regional rank and recognition in the imperial order, still considered expertise in astrology only one of many related and equally useful sets of knowledge that they had been patronizing and that they had been mastering themselves. As a consequence of their increasing wealth and charisma, their intellectual interest allowed them to reach out to prestigious figures from around the realm with similar interests and skills and thereby increase their status in the realm at large.

Later, as astrological expertise rose in importance in association with an increase in millennialism and messianism, the Yazdī writers began to link sayyids like Rukn al-Dīn more closely with the science of astrology. This association of sayyids with astrology went hand in hand with the same writers' inclination to portray the sayyids of the fourteenth century as saints, using narrative elements that were evocative of hagiographical writing for Sufis. Just as a good horoscope was necessary for the

sanctification of kings, the knowledge and authority necessary for reading the stars depended on a saintly lineage. But being a descendent of the prophet was not enough. Men like Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī needed saintly forbearers to have founded their trade.

In any case, Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad had his madrasah complex designed to include a *raṣad*, whatever that might have entailed. This is significant, for even if we concede that sayyid may have placed less emphasis on the observatory than the later historians of Yazd did, by looking at the kinds of buildings he grouped together in the crown-jewel of his building projects, we can discern at least one of the functions he envisioned for his Ruknīyah. His madrasah was to serve as the center of the city’s astrological observation and training, a function that was proclaimed and celebrated by the existence of this wondrous automaton standing at its gates. Still, regardless of founder’s actual intentions, what the later historians reveal is that the sayyid’s *raṣad* did eventually become the focal point of the madrasah. Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn’s complex, which featured this monumental device alongside a madrasah, library, pharmacy, and hospital, made a space for the transmission and practice of the traditional Islamic sciences, medicine, and most notably, astronomy/astrology/mathematics; moreover, it brought all of these sciences together in a single compound, funded by a intertwined network of endowments of local properties. This pattern is repeated in Rukn al-Dīn’s twenty or so complexes in other cities, such as Iṣfahān, where his madrasah complex includes a Dār al-Ḥadīth, a library, and pharmacy.⁶⁹⁸ The same is true for his son, Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad’s complexes. The Shamsīyah included a madrasah, khānqāh, mosque, Shams al-Dīn’s own tomb, a library pharmacy, and most notably, the hospice

⁶⁹⁸ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 6.

for sayyids (Dar al-Sayyādah).⁶⁹⁹ As we observed in the previous section, the Ruknīyah may have become the most important institution in the city, but it was not the only such institution. The Yazdī historians demonstrate that just as the *raṣad* was integrated with other elements of the complex, so too was that whole complex integrated with similar complexes constructed by the other ‘Arīzī sayyids who installed buildings with comparable functions in the same neighborhood of the city. Still, the Ruknīyah is the only complex in Yazd with an observatory. Moreover, it is the only one of Rukn al-Dīn’s projects in cities across the realm that includes an observatory. Rukn al-Dīn had reserved that function for his premier building complex in his own hometown.

The combination of sciences that Rukn al-Dīn, his son, and their affiliates brought together at their new centers in Yazd during the fourteenth century were set up to transmit precisely the constellation of skills and knowledge sets that would make Yazdī scholars, such as the descendent of these families, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a), so indispensable under the Ṣāhib-Qirānī kings of the fifteenth centuries and after. It is only when the demand for astrological and literary expertise becomes so essential for the rhetorical projects of empire-building after Tīmūr’s death that the shift of Rukn al-Dīn’s *raṣad* into the center of the complex becomes evident in the sources. Still, there is no question that in practical terms, it had already become the centerpiece of the complex earlier—though not right away. That observatory had become not just a symbol of Yazdī’s knowledge and expertise, but had actively affected the orientation of Yazdī scholars, making astrology one of the Yazdī scholars’ specialties.

⁶⁹⁹ Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, JK, 8, 114.

Behind the rhetorical motivation for celebrating the Ruknīyah as a center of astrological expertise in the fifteenth century were real changes in the social order of Yazd and also in Yazd's relation to the imperial order in which it belonged. These were changes that were intimately linked to shifts in the social practices that surrounded the transmission of knowledge and to new conceptualizations of what constituted authoritative knowledge in Yazd. All of these transformations manifested themselves in the topography of the city, so much so that by Mufīd's day, the complexes of Rukn al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn were still being remembered as the preeminent madrasahs of the city, even as they were in decay; all others followed in their wake.

An Observatory in Oblivion: Supplication Stands in for Stargazing

At the same time, even though Mufīd celebrates Rukn al-Dīn's madrasah complex as the crown jewel of the city, it is clear that by his era, it had lost much of the glory and beneficence that it held during the fifteenth century. While Mufīd does not say that the madrasah had fallen into total ruin by his time, he laments the fate of the large library, for which Rukn al-Dīn had endowed three thousand books, saying: "Now, that building has fallen into ruins and remains deprived of the companionship and company of the various categories of sciences. There is neither a trace of his books, nor of his pious endowments."⁷⁰⁰ Clearly, the Ruknīyah could not have remained the prestigious place of learning it had once been without any books. Similarly, he laments the ruin of the nearby Dār al-Shifā' (hospital), for which Rukn al-Dīn had made

⁷⁰⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 655.

significant endowments.⁷⁰¹ Thus, Mufīd implies that the Ruknīyah complex could no longer serve as a center for medical practice and learning.

More astonishing is the fact that nowhere in his book does Mufīd even once mention anything about the *raṣad* or monumental *sā'āt*, which had formed the core of his predecessors' descriptions. This is a curious omission, especially when we consider the fact that Mufīd still calls the square outside the madrasah "Vaqt va Sā'āt." One would surely expect that Mufīd would jump at the chance to brag about this ingenious marvel, from which this square took its name, as Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib had done. It would appear that by the time Mufīd was born the entire observatory had vanished. We have seen that Mufīd had a penchant for describing buildings that by his day stood in ruins. He found countless opportunities to do so, particularly among the madrasahs of the city and its environs. However, he generally disregards monuments that his forbearers included in their works, but which have since completely disappeared; the *raṣad* was surely one of these. Still, Mufīd knew the previous histories of Yazd well and certainly understood the important place that *raṣad* held in those works. This was no minor edifice; as a center of life in the city, undoubtedly its memory would have circulated in oral lore.

In place of Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātib's celebration of Yazd's monument to scientific expertise, Mufīd offers only that the sayyid's tomb still serves as a hub around which the devotional life of the community still circles.⁷⁰² It is worth reprinting the

⁷⁰¹ As discussed above, Mufīd erroneously attributes this building to Rukn al-Dīn and includes it in his discussion of the Ruknīyah complex. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 558.

⁷⁰² As we have already mentioned, today Rukn al-Dīn's tomb, the only surviving structure of the complex, is still a popular site for ritual visitation and supplication.

lines we quoted in the first section of this chapter; this is the only passage in which Mufīd discusses the Ruknīyah's function in his day:

Today, great and small, residents and travelers seek blessing and fortune at this blessed shrine; they come and go making entreaty and supplication. Praying for desires of the two worlds, they find the honor of having them granted.⁷⁰³

The blessing that Rukn al-Dīn's bones were still imparting for supplicants appears to have been the only benefit still available at the site. While in Mufīd's view, the site's saintly power was indeed powerful and a critical benefit to the city, the function of the place had shifted from a place of learning and astrological observation to a place of supplication.

One would think that by bemoaning the *raṣad*'s extinction along with the library's ruin, he would have been able to redouble the potency of his dirge for the once-glorious powerhouses of the city that had formerly produced the greatest benefactors of the city and empire. After all, this was his main project. Indeed, the ruin of such an important symbol and tool of Yazd's particular sphere of expertise would have been yet another testament confirming that the physical, financial, and political infrastructure that had previously facilitated the free circulation of benefits throughout the city and abroad had fallen into serious disrepair.

What accounts for Mufīd's silence? When we consider the enormous presence this building must have retained in Yazdīs' memories, its absence in this work becomes a conspicuous blank spot in the city's picture. After writing all about the Ruknīyah and the Maydān-i Vaqt va Sā'āt, Mufīd was leading his readers to an empty space they could not help but stare into. I suggest that he was strategically using this patent absence to

⁷⁰³ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 655.

rhetorical effect, conjuring and intensifying the tragedy of its extinction by apophasis. If this is so, then we have discovered a clue to Mufīd’s intended audience. If, as we argued in the previous chapter, Mufīd composed his work as an admonition to the Ṣafavid pādishāh to whom the work was dedicated, then we have to refine our assertion. Only locals, who would have expected him to provide an account of the tragic loss of the astronomical observatory and clock, would have been stricken with the conspicuousness of its absence. In fact this rhetorical unsaying offers evidence that the work was not really written for the shāh after all. Although it was composed in the form of a princely mirror, its intended audience was his fellow Yazdīs who, like Mufīd, were experiencing the same sense of loss and shame that the author himself had endured. Such a rhetorical trick could only have affected the locals who knew the city’s history well. The ironic fact that the shāh would no longer have held sufficient knowledge of Yazd to understand the subtle lessons in the “mirror” dedicated to him would only have redoubled Yazdī readers’ sense of tragedy and loss at discovering this conspicuous omission. As all of the anecdotes examined up until now have demonstrated, Yazd thrived when it was able to draw the eye of the imperial center to its benefits. Partnerships with the center gave rise to institutions, like the Ruknīyah, which in turn allowed Yazdīs to serve and help strengthen the empire. The loss of the raṣad had been the result of the pādishāh’s neglect, and without the aid of the raṣad and the Yazdī experts trained there, the pādishāh’s sight was too weak to see a way back to kingly knowledge of his realm and prosperity in all its corners.

If Mufīd was using the fate of the astronomical observatory to call attention to Yazd’s degradation and to incriminate the sovereign in the process, then it is our job to

trace the real effects of such a loss on Yazdī experts' ability to participate in the imperial project. Having charted the network of relationships that gave rise to the Ruknīyah and its affiliated institutions in the first place—the very symbolic center of Yazd's saintly and scientific authority—in the last section of this chapter, we will explore the fate of Yazd's experts in the imperial machine during the Şafavid period. As we demonstrated in the last chapter, Yazdī elites' particular combination of proficiencies was epitomized in Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's astronomical/astrological skill and enabled that figure to help construct a pervasive and persistent model of imperial sovereignty. We will now determine the degree to which that local hero's legacy was still paralleled and perpetuated during Mufīd's lifetime.

6. Yazd's Astrologer-Historians at the Şafavid Court: The waning of the local Sayyids' legacy

Perfecting the precedent established by his forbears, such as Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a) had made himself invaluable to Tīmūr's successors for his skills as an astrologer and littérateur, for his wealth, his affiliations, and his honorable lineage. The marketable (and dangerously powerful) complex of skills Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī wielded epitomized the kinds of training and refinement that Rukn al-Dīn and his affiliates had cultivated in their network of madrasah complexes at the city center. Furthermore, as a descendent of the Āl-i Raẓī and the Āl-i Niẓām, Sharaf al-Dīn Yazdī literally embodied his predecessors' efforts to link Yazd's most noble and landed families. Accordingly, he inherited the saintly qualities that these figures had accrued, qualities that were continually reinvigorated through ritual acts of

commemorative visitation at their family tombs in the hearts of these madrasah-mega-complexes; this was on top of the regular traffic of students and scholars who patronized these spaces in the course of their studies. At the same time, following his ancestors' example, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī's achievements were also the fruit of a sequence of alliances with powerful (and sometimes competing) families at imperial courts, families whose building projects and endowments relied heavily on their good relations with their powerful Yazdīs and on the productivity of properties in Yazd, where they had invested heavily. The fortunes of that illustrious figure represent the culmination of gradual and interrelated processes that had begun under the Īlkhāns. These were processes by which Yazd's sayyid families consolidated their lines and constructed centers of power and wealth rivaling those of local rulers. Then, as high-ranking families outside of Yazd made their own power bases partially dependent on Yazd's stability and productive capacity, Yazdī sayyids, and other local elites, particularly those whose expertise bridged the sciences of astronomy/astrology, numerology, medicine, and the literary arts, attained posts beyond those of local jurisdiction, in imperial courts, where they served not only as astrologers and physicians, but as viziers and close confidants of the pādishāh.

The elevated position of Yazdī scholars persisted through the Aq Qūyūnlū period, as exemplified by the career of the Yazdī philosopher, Qāḏī Ḥusayn Maybudī, whom Sulṭān Ya'qūb Aq Qūyūnlū appointed Qāḏī of Yazd.⁷⁰⁴ At the beginning of the

⁷⁰⁴ In spite of his training in the rational sciences, Maybudī's attitude toward astrology and other rational sciences was ambiguous. He was interested in their practical applications, but not necessarily their more esoteric usages favored by certain Sufis. See Alexandra Whelan Dunietz, "Qāḏī Ḥusayn Maybudī of Yazd: Representative of the Iranian Provincial Elite in the Late Fifteenth Century" (Dissertation, University of Chicago, 1990), 161-68. While Maybudī did not consider himself an astrologer, and never held a post as an astrologer, his philosophical treatises express a profound knowledge of

Şafavid period, however, Yazdīs suffered a setback after the city revolted against the Shāh Ismā‘īl in 910/1504. Maybudī was executed along with other local elites who remained loyal to Sulṭān Murād’s governor, Ra‘īs Muḥammad Karra.⁷⁰⁵ Soon after, however, Yazdī local elites turned their fortunes around and found positions of influence in the Şafavid administration. Not least of these was the Ni‘matullāhī family of sayyid-Sufis, who were influential in legitimating Shāh Ismā‘īl’s role as a messianic king. The story of that family’s success as astronomical prognosticators is critical and will be treated in full in the next chapter. In the meantime, suffice it to say that the Ni‘matullāhīs occupied a truly exalted place in the Şafavid household for nearly a century.

The final chapter of the preeminence of Yazdī scholars began toward the end of the first Islamic millennium, during Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign. By that time, another important family had secured paramount influence at court. This was the family of Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Munajjim Yazdī (d. 1029/1619). Munajjim Yazdī was Shāh ‘Abbās’s chief *munajjim* (astrologer) and, along with Bahā’ al-Dīn Muḥammad Jabal-‘Āmalī, was considered the most skilled practitioner of that art.⁷⁰⁶ Munajjim Yazdī also became one of Shāh ‘Abbās’s closest advisors and confidants. Moreover, as chief astrologer, he had to keep an account of the shāh’s daily affairs in coordination with the movement of the heavens and so was well positioned to compose a court chronicle. He did just this,

cosmology/astronomy/astrology. See for example, the discussion of his *Jām-i Gītī-Numā* in Dunietz, "Qāḍī Husayn Maybudī", 70-75, 102-03.

⁷⁰⁵ Dunietz summarizes the story of Yazdī’s revolt and Maybudī’s role in it, which she takes from “Ross Anonymous.” At the same time, Dunietz considers Maybudī’s cosmological thought as an expression of his political rhetoric against the Şafavids. She accomplishes this by reading Maybudī’s work, *Jām-i Gītī-Numā*, which he wrote during this period, and which he dedicated to an unnamed—but clearly non-Şafavid governor. Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, Dunietz, "Qāḍī Husayn Maybudī", 169-77

⁷⁰⁶ For example, in the course of detailing Munajjim Yazdī’s involvement in the execution of the Nuqtavī insurgent, Darvīsh Khusraw in the year 1002, Iskandar Bayk Munshī says of him: “...he had risen to the top of that noble art [akhtar-i ṭāl’ah].” See: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 474.

composing the well-known chronicle of Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*.⁷⁰⁷ This pairing of ‘ilm- nujūm with the composition of *tārīkhs* marks yet another continuity with Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī’s legacy and brings into relief the degree to which the design and articulation of the imperial program (particularly the Şāhib-Qirānī-style program, over which Yazdī had been so influential) remained the purview of scholars with astrological expertise and, in particular, of scholars from Yazd. Moreover, owing to his unfettered access to the shāh, not only did this scholar have the opportunity to shape the narrative, he was able to influence the shāh as well. Knowledge of the stars was still king.⁷⁰⁸

By Mufīd’s time, there were some in Yazd who continued to portray their city as a center of astrological learning, where the most esteemed and capable astrologers learned their craft before entering the service of the pādishāh at the highest levels. However, by the latter eleventh/seventeenth century, it is difficult to gauge whether that city could legitimately claim such an elevated rank or whether such claims of greatness should be taken as traces of a more glorious legacy, dragged up onto the shores of history by nostalgia’s pen. There is no question that the astrological sciences continued to be taught in Yazd and that some of these astrologers did attain posts at the royal court, but Mufīd’s fevered celebration of these men’s influence upon the affairs of the empire appears to have been hyperbolic, perhaps even tactically so.

⁷⁰⁷ See discussion of Munajjim Yazdī and his work in: Quinn, *Historical writing*, 21-22, 24. Quinn singles out Munajjim Yazdī in a brief discussion of astrologers who write history in the early modern period on page 24.

⁷⁰⁸ The figure of the astrologer-historian was important in the Ottoman realm as well. For comparison’s sake, a good contemporary example is Ahmed Lütfullah Müneccimbaşı (1041-1113 / 1631-2 – 1702), a summary account of whose life, training, and works can be found in the Turkish introduction to his Arabic work, *Camiü’-d-Düvel*. Ahmed B. Lütfullah Müneccimbaşı, *Camiü’-d-Düvel*, ed. Ahmed Ağırakça (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 1995), esp. 10-14.

Curiously, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Munajjim Yazdī actually plays but a tiny part in Mufīd’s work. He is mentioned only in the course of another figure’s *tarjamah*, Muḥammad Zamān-Sulṭān, one of Yazd’s notables, who had entered Shāh ‘Abbās’s intimate circle and was one of attendants who accompanied the shāh on his walk to the shrine of Mashhad. Mufīd states that Munajjim Yazdī recorded Muḥammad Zamān-Sulṭān’s participation in this affair and calls him “Pillar of the Astrologers (*‘umdat al-munajjimīn*) Mavlānā Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad Yazdī.”⁷⁰⁹ While Munajjim Yazdī’s *nisbah* evidences his origins in Yazd, neither Mufīd nor any other author presents an account of his childhood or of his lineage. In the sources, Munajjim Yazdī enters the story only at the beginning of Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign. In *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, Munajjim Yazdī says little of his own involvement in the events he records, but his influence over the shāh is apparent in Iskandar Bayk Munshī’s work and is discussed in the history of his own son, Mullā Kamāl. Of course, we must take this writer’s account of his own father’s deeds with a grain of salt; nonetheless, Mullā Kamāl is the only one to present any information about his father’s whereabouts before serving Shāh ‘Abbās. Mullā Kamāl explains that his father had been in the employ of the *Ḥākīm* of Gīlān, Khān Aḥmad Khān, ruler of an important local dynasty the Kīyā family at Lāhijān that had proved instrumental in bringing Shāh Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī to power in the first place. Munajjim Yazdī originally came to court in Qazvīn as part of Khān Aḥmad Khān’s envoy for the ceremonies marking the birth of the shāh’s son, Ṣafī Mīrzā in 994/1585.⁷¹⁰ As already mentioned, Shāh ‘Abbās trusted the Munajjim with missions outside his duties

⁷⁰⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 472. I cannot find any reference to Muḥammad Zamān-Sulṭān in Munajjim Bashī’s *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*.

⁷¹⁰ Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Ṣafaviyāt: Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh - Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, ed. Ibrāhīm Dihgān (Charlestown, MA: Arak [facimile reprinted by Acme Bookbinding], 2010), 52. On Mullā Kamāl’s account of his father’s rise see: ‘Ali Ashgar Mossadegh, "La Famille Monajjem Yazdi," *Studia Iranica* 16 (1987): 126.

associated with the astrological arts, and as Mullā Kamāl explains it, his first such mission was to ask for the hand of Khān Aḥmad Khān's daughter on the shāh's behalf, a marriage which took place in 999/1590-1.⁷¹¹ Interestingly, this author reports that 'Abbās delegated Munajjim Yazdī for this mission while the two of them were in Yazd. In fact, using the astrolabe, Munajjim Yazdī had just furnished the shāh with some astrological intelligence that had allowed the shāh to make an expedition (*ilghār*) toward that city.⁷¹² After these events, Munajjim Yazdī entered the shāh's service in earnest.⁷¹³ Munajjim Yazdī's son reports a number of instances in which Shāh 'Abbās consulted him for his astrological expertise; in fact, the references to these incidents are far more frequent than in his father's own work. A paramount example is one that is well attested in other sources, including Iskandar Bayk Munshī's work: Mullā Kamāl reports that his father's astrological expertise was instrumental in saving the realm from certain chaos by advising Shāh 'Abbās give up his throne to a Nuḡṭavī leader,

⁷¹¹ This was an extremely important marriage alliance. This daughter of Khān Aḥmad Khān, called Yakhān Baygum, was the product of an early marriage alliance between the Khān and Shāh Ṭahmāsb's own daughter, Maryam Baygum. Originally, she was supposed to wed Ṣafī Mīrzā, the shāh's eldest son, a marriage that never occurred. That Munajjim Yazdī was trusted with such a mission demonstrates just how competent he had become in the shāh's eyes. On these alliances see *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 2: 621-4; Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī*, 25. Also see Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 54. Also see: Szuppe, "La participation des femmes de la famille royale," 114-18.

⁷¹² Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 54. The account is a bit garbled. In fact one wonders whether Munajjim Yazdī was actually residing in Yazd at the time, having returned there after leaving Aḥmad Khān's service.

⁷¹³ Mossadegh argues that it is fair to say that Munajjim Yazdī never served the Ṣafavid shāhs previously, for Iskandar Bayk Munshī mentions that Shāh Muḥammad Khudābundah's Munajjim-Bāshī was Mīrzā 'Arab Harāvī. (See: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 1: 360) While I agree, that there is no evidence of Munajjim Yazdī's involvement in Shāh Muḥammad's court, this is not proof of his absence from the shāh's court, for he could have served as one of the shāh's lower ranking astrologers. The very same work indicates that there was more than one astrologer at court. The Munajjim-Bāshī was simply the chief of those. Still, it seems that Munajjim Yazdī only came to work at the royal court under Shāh 'Abbās.

Yūsufī Tarkishdūz, for three inauspicious days in 1001 A.H. before reclaiming power and then destroying the Nuqtavī movement completely.⁷¹⁴

None of the narratives explains how or when Munajjim Yazdī came to serve the Kīyā family in Gīlān. Yazd and Gīlān were always connected by means of the silk industry: Since Gīlān was arguably the most important region for sericulture (production of silk thread), Yazd's fine silk weaving industry relied mostly on imports of silk from that region.⁷¹⁵ One might surmise that Munajjim Yazdī might have ended up in the Caspian area through some connection with silk, but we will never know with any certainty either the story behind his migration, or who his relations in Yazd might have been.⁷¹⁶

As we have stated, other than Munajjim Yazdī's importance to Shāh 'Abbās, his preeminence as court astrologer, and his Yazdī origins, Mufīd remains quiet about his

⁷¹⁴ Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 55. Munajjim Yazdī describes his own involvement in the Nuqtavī affair: Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī*, 121-4. Also see Iskandar Bayk Munshī's presentation: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yī 'Abbāsī*, 1: 473-4. On a full account and analysis of this affair, see: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 3-7, 350-1. Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *AA*, 31-33.

⁷¹⁵ There is no question that Yazd did produce some of its own silk thread. Mulberry leaves comprised the exclusive diet of silkworms; in the course of his discussion of mulberry trees and silk worms, Rashīd al-Dīn singles out Yazd in his treatise on agricultural production, *Kitāb-i Āṣār va Aḥyā'*: Rashīd al-Dīn Faḡl Allāh Hamadānī, *AA*, 31-33. Nonetheless, despite the fact that Yazd's textiles were among the finest anywhere, the stuff actually grown in Yazd was apparently inferior to the magnificent quality of silk thread produced in Gīlān and, to a certain extent, Māzandarān. Thus, the large majority of the materials used for textiles produced in Yazd were brought from the Caspian region, where sericulture was much more developed. For a summary of the various grades of silk thread, their names, and the regions in which they were produced see: Rudolph P. Matthee, *The politics of trade in Safavid Iran : silk for silver, 1600-1730*, Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization (Cambridge, U.K. ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36-7. A majority of the silk workshops were owned by Yazdī Jews, and many of the silk merchants and menial workers were also Jews. The Jews of Yazd were so pivotal in the city's silk industry, that when Shāh 'Abbās I's vizier tried to evict them from Yazd as he had done in Iṣfahān, the Muslims of the city implored them to leave the Jews alone, arguing that their eviction would destroy the local economy. See discussion in "Jewish Trades and Occupations in Nineteenth-Century Iran According to Contemporary European Sources," in *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. David Yeroushalmi (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 88. See also: Azaria Levy, "The Jewish Community of Yazd in the Nineteenth Century, according to Azaria Levy, Scholar of Jewish Communities of Iran," in *The Jews of Iran in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. David Yeroushalmi (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 201, 05. Also see the discussion in: Judith Lynne Goldstein, "Interwoven Identities: Religious Communities in Yazd, Iran" (Dissertation, Princeton University, 1978), 46.

⁷¹⁶ Considering the significant role that the Jews of Yazd played as silk merchants, it is not impossible that Munajjim Yazdī's family had been Jewish originally.

life; further, the fact that that Mufīd does not work very hard to pull him into Yazd’s orbit is suggestive. One might surmise that, other than his *nisbah*, the Munajjim had forgotten (or abandoned) his ties with Yazd, and so Yazdīs forgot him as well. But given Mufīd’s exhaustive knowledge of the genealogies of Yazd and his penchant for being decidedly “inclusive” when counting Yazd’s virtuous folk, I find this explanation unlikely. It is possible that Munajjim Yazdī came from a relatively lackluster family, who left no record before rising in the service of the Kīyās in the Caspian region. One thing is certain: He was almost surely not a sayyid. This is a major difference between Munajjim Yazdī and Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazd (R.V.a). Moreover, recalling that Mufīd’s primary purpose is to record the deeds of eminent personages who have directly benefitted Yazd, we should not jump to attribute too much meaning to Mufīd’s near silence on this figure. Furthermore, his account of notable Yazdī astrologers and experts in the other natural sciences, as with notables of other professions, is generally restricted to his contemporaries and so excludes the long list of Yazdī *munajjims* (such as Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī—R.VI.a) who could have appeared there.⁷¹⁷ Ultimately, there is no doubt that Mufīd recognizes Munajjim Yazdī’s greatness and most likely meant for his *nisbah* to do the work of crediting Yazd for his skills and fortune, which so benefitted the shāh and his realm at large. This would probably have been an obvious conclusion for residents of Yazd, even though Munajjim Yazdī apparently never left any identifiable benefit in his town of origin and may never have visited there. The great figure therefore never found his way into his own *tarjamah* in Mufīd’s work.

⁷¹⁷ As a reminder, we should note that many of the figures who are conspicuously absent from the *munajjimān* section, such as Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī, receive their notices in other sections of Mufīd’s work.

We must also account for Mufīd’s omission of Munajjim Yazdī’s son, Mullā Kamāl, and grandson, named Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, both of whom, like their progenitor, were Munajjims at the royal court and composed works of history. It is important to point out that Mullā Kamāl’s work, unlike that of his father, was not an official court chronicle. As we have already mentioned, Mullā Kamāl’s history, entitled *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl* or sometimes *Zubdat al-Tavārikh*, is our chief source for Munajjim Yazdī’s life, but biographical information about Munajjim Yazdī is still quite scanty in Mullā Kamāl’s work.⁷¹⁸ Unlike Munajjim Yazdī, who died before the end of ‘Abbās I’s reign, these two *munajjimān*’s lifetimes overlapped with Mufīd’s; in fact the grandson, Mullā Jamāl was still alive at the time that Mufīd was composing his work. While Mufīd includes an entire chapter on contemporary *munajjimān* of Yazd, he makes no reference to Munajjim Yazdī’s descendents there or anywhere else in his work. It should be noted that these figures barely show up in other contemporary works either, despite the fact that Mullā Kamāl places himself at the forefront of the affairs at court, insisting that he retained his father’s place as a Munajjim under Shāh Ṣafī and consequently participated in military expeditions in order to determine the auspicious time for battle.⁷¹⁹ Mullā Kamāl was sent in the service of the Sipah-Sālār (Field Marshall) Rustam Bayk, along

⁷¹⁸ Nor do we find much biographical information about the author himself, other than a few statements toward the end, in the course of his reports on the reigns of Shāh Ṣafī and Shāh ‘Abbās II. The work appears to be acephalous. The published edition does not feature any *dibāchah* that might provide such information about the author or his father. It begins straight away with the Ṣafavid lineage and then plunges directly into the story of Shaykh Ṣafī and Shaykh Zāhid Gīlānī. Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 26-7.

⁷¹⁹ Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 86, 87, 94. Mossadegh claims that Mullā Kamāl retained his father’s title of Munajjim-Bāshī. (Mossadegh, "La Famille Monajjem Yazdi," 127.) However Mullā Kamāl does not actually use this title. He merely says, "In accordance with the order of the one whom the world must obey, this most insignificant slave, Mullā Kamāl Munajjim, who, beeing one of the old born servants of this court, it was determined that having been dispatched to the Sipah-Sālār for the purpose of astrological services, he should accompany him to Georgia (*va ḥasb al-ḥukm-i jahān-muṭā’i bandah-i kamtarīn Mullā Kamāl Munajjim kih yakī az ghulām-zādah-hā-i īn āstān budah muqarrar shud kih bi-jahat-i khidmāt-i nujūmī khūd rā bi-sipah-sālār rasāndah, bi-murāfaqat-i ū bi-Gurjistān ravand*)." Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 86.

with his own brother, whom he does not name. Furthermore, it appears that the brother practiced medicine (*ṭibābat*) in Iṣfahān at the royal court of Shāh ‘Abbās II before this assignment and that Mullā Kamāl himself may have practiced medicine at court alongside him.⁷²⁰ There is a small reference to Mullā Kamāl in Muḥammad Ma‘šūm Iṣfahānī’s *Khulaṣat al-Siyar*, a history of Shāh Ṣāfi’s reign. In that work, the author explains that after the powerful *ghulām* Sipah-Sālār, Rustam Bayk (famously executed a decade later by ‘Abbās II’s Grand-Vizier, Sārū Taqī) took the fortress of Tarqī in Georgia in 1042/1633, the shāh

sent Mavlānā Kamāl, son of Jamāl Munajjim—who had fame for good service at the royal court (*‘atabah-i iqbāl*) since long ago—into the service of the Sipah-Sālār so that should an order come down, having determined the [appropriate] hour for whatever it was he deemed necessary, it he would carried it out. Kissing the threshold (of the royal court) he [Mavlānā Kamāl] set off for Gurjistān.⁷²¹

In other words, Munajjim Yazdī’s son was still at Shāh Ṣāfi’s court in the first years of his reign and must have been serving there as a *munajjim* (and *ṭabīb*), since he was sent to Georgia with the Sipah-Sālār to determine the appropriate times for military action, a rather prestigious assignment. Moreover, as a representative of the royal court, he may have been trusted to keep tabs on the Sipah-Sālār in the north. In his *Khuld-i Barīn*, completed in 1667, at the very beginning of Shāh Sulaymān’s reign, Muḥammad Yūsuf Vālih Iṣfahānī does mention two other occasions when Mullā Kamāl’s expertise was

⁷²⁰ Mullā Kamāl, *Tārīkh-i Mullā Kamāl*, 121. Mossadegh claims without a doubt that both brothers practiced medicine at court. (Mossadegh, "La Famille Monajjem Yazdi," 127.) However, Mullā Kamāl’s text only implies that author might have been engaged in that art along with his brother. After stating, “The brother of the most insignificant one who was concerning himself with the business of the medical profession (*barādar-i kamtarīn kih bi-amr-i ṭibābat mushghūl būd*),” the author relates that both of them (*har dū mullā*) accompanied the Sipah-Sālār. Whether Mullā Kamāl was actually engaged in the medical arts is not clear.

⁷²¹ Muḥammad Ma‘šūm Khvājagī Iṣfahānī, *Khulaṣat al-Siyar: Tārīkh-i Rūzgār-i Shāh Ṣāfi Ṣāfavī* (Tehran: Intashārāt-i ‘ilmī, 1368/1989), 161. The author does not mention that Mullā Kamāl’s brother accompanied him.

called upon to determine the proper time for military action, once upon the Sipah-Sālār's taking of the *qal'ah* at Vān and once at Khalaf Bayk Sufrah-chī-bāshī's taking of the Qal'ah-i Mārū-Chāq in Khurāsān.⁷²² On the former occasion, the author refers to the *munajjim* as the *Munajjim-i Khāshah-i Sharīfah* (Noble Chief Astrologer), a title that seems to have replaced that of *Munajjim-Bāshī* by this time. Oddly, in his own account, Mullā Kamāl never claims the title of chief *munajjim* for himself. We don't know how long Mullā Kamāl accompanied Rustam Bayk or how often; the fact that the shāh could spare his chief astrologer for such activities suggests that Mullā Kamāl might not have benefitted from the level of intimacy and everyday access to the shāh that his father had enjoyed. It is also possible that Shāh Ṣafī was simply less inclined to make use of a *munajjim* on a daily basis, as his father had done.

As for *Munajjim Yazdī*'s grandson, Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, he left a collection of anecdotes, partly a word for word copy of his grandfather's history, which states that his birth occurred in Iṣfahān while his grandfather was already retired and that he had been introduced to 'Abbās at court as a youth.⁷²³ Other than this, we know nothing of his life. By Mufīd's day, these latter two figures must have no longer held any

⁷²² Muḥammad Yūsuf Vālih Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī, *Īrān dar Zamān-i Shāh Ṣafī va Shāh 'Abbās-i Duvvam (1038-1071): ḥadīqat-i shashum va haftum az rawzat-i hashtum-i Khuld-i Barīn*, ed. Muhammad Rizā Naṣīrī (Tehran: Anjuman-i āsar va mafākhar-i farhangī, 1380/2001), 175, 206. This work is published in two separate volumes under different titles. The first volume, called simply *Khuld-i Barīn*, deals with the Ṣafavid house up through the second civil war. The second volume, cited here, concerns the reigns of Shāh Ṣafī and 'Abbās II. The citation for the first volume is as follows: Muḥammad Yūsuf Vālih Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī, *Khuld-i barīn*, ed. Mīr Hāshim Muḥaddīṣ (Tehran 1372/1993). Mullā Kamāl does not appear in the work of Vālih Iṣfahānī's brother, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Qazvīnī, entitled *'Abbās-Nāmah*, which details 'Abbās II's reign. See: Muḥammad Ṭāhir Vahīd Qazvīnī, *'Abbās-Nāmah*, ed. Āqā-yi Ibrāhīm Dihgān (1329/1961).

⁷²³ Mossadegh, "La Famille Monajjem Yazdi," 128-9. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 450. Mullā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad's work is referred to as *Rūz-Nāmah-i Mullā Jalāl*. A manuscript of this work at the University of Tehran central library (no. 4202) is titled "Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī," but that title is written in a different hand. Given that the work contains parts of *Munajjim Yazdī*'s work by that title, it is understandable that a later owner might have mistaken it for that work.

connections with Yazd and thus had no place in his work.⁷²⁴ Moreover, the fact that Munajjim Yazdī's descendents' appearances in other texts fizzled out after Shāh Ṣafī's or Shāh 'Abbās II's reign speaks to the fact that even if they did remain at court, they must have fallen in rank and prestige.

On this note, we must say something similar of those *munajjimān* of Yazd whose careers Mufīd does describe. His accounts of these men are rosy indeed, but as always, we must read between the lines. We are obliged to keep the legacy of their great predecessors in these arts, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī and Munajjim Yazdi, in mind as we read this section on later *munajjimān* who were the author's own contemporaries. The quotation printed at the opening of this chapter is in fact an excerpt from the introduction to Mufīd's *faṣl* on Yazd's notable *munajjimān*, which transitions directly into the *tarjamah* of the most eminent astrologer of Yazd in Mufīd's lifetime, Mavlānā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Munajjim Ardakānī Yazdī:

The wise men of subtlety and the subtle men of learned wisdom (*ḥukamā-yi daqīqah-shinās va daqīqah-shināsān-i ḥikmat iqtibās*) know that astrology (*'ilm-i nujūm*) is one of the miraculous wonders (*mu'jizāt*) of the Prophet Idrīs (salutations and peace upon him and our Prophet). In all ages, the astrologers have been a necessity for amīrs and viziers, both young and old. In the region of increasing fortune of Yazd, a group became the cynosure (*angusht-numā*) of the great and the humble in that noble *'ilm* and their rising stars began to shine. And because of their ascendant beauty and their skill in that art, the sunshine of

⁷²⁴ However, we should also mention an entry that appears in Mufīd's long chapter on poets for Mavlānā Akhtarī Yazdī, whose *takhalluṣ*, "Akhtarī" or "one who divines through star-gazing," is intriguing (Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 450); Mufīd says he was skilled in medicine (*ṭibb*), but he was also very likely skilled in the complementary art of astrology. The text says he spent a good deal of his life in Hind, but came back at the end of his life. He left a son, named Mavlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, whom Mufīd says is still alive at the time of writing and works in Yazd. Since we know next to nothing about Mullā Kamāl al-Dīn or Mullā Jalāl al-Dīn's lives, other than that they were astrologers and practiced medicine, it is tempting to suggest that Munajjim Yazdī's descendents did retain some connection with Yazd; this Mavlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad might in fact be Mullā Jalāl, and Akhtarī, his father, Mullā Kamāl. However, in his *Rūz-Nāmah*, Mullā Jalāl al-Dīn b. Kamāl al-Dīn explains that he was born in Iṣfahān. Mufīd explains that this Mavlānā Jalāl al-Dīn was born in Yazd shortly after his father's return to the city. So, this rules out the possibility that these men were in fact the same as Munajjim Yazdī's descendents.

favor of the kings of the horizons cast the shade of kindness upon the cheeks of their circumstances, especially upon Mavlānā Muḥammad Ṭāhir Munajjim Ardakānī Yazdī, the cream of the masters of the reckoning of glory (*aṣḥāb-i taqvīm-i iftikhār*) and of the lords of astrological prognostication (*arbāb-i tanjīm*). Ever since the revolving sky (*saphar-i davvār*) has been adorned with the fixed and wandering stars (*nujūm-i ṣavābit va sayār*) and has gone around the terrestrial sphere and has watched over the circumstances of the earth and earthlings with a hundred thousand eyes (*dīdah*), never has it seen the astrological good fortune of anyone's horoscope like the auspicious stars of that felicitous man [Muḥammad Ṭāhir] (*akhtar-i bakht-i hīch ṣāhib-i ṭālī-i-rā mānand kawākib-i iqbāl-i ān sa'ādat-mand nādidah*), because, in the royal court of heavenly loftiness, no one among sulṭāns has ever been elevated to this rank, and no one has attained such a perigee of sinlessness (*ḥaḏīq-i vabāl*) from the radiance of the lights of this sun-like, kingly-natured man (*khūrshīd-miṣāl, pādishāh-i majāzī*). It was nothing but the auspicious star of that man of blessed description, who day by day reached the apogee of elevation and perfection, so that the sunlight of the auspiciousness of the blessed emperor, cypress of the rose garden of rank and glory, Sulṭān Shāh Ṣafī I, set ablaze the cheek of his circumstances. Having attained the rank of intimacy (*taqarrub*), and the step of his foot and station having passed the archway (*īvān*) of Saturn, he remained safe from the entanglements of lunar and solar eclipses (*uqīdah-i khasūf va kusūf*). According to the favors of the *khusraw* of Kayvān's rank, the pleasant *qaṣbah* of Ardakān was allotted him as his *tuyūl* and salary (*muqarrarī*), one of the revenue-districts (*a'māl*) of Dār al-'Ibādah Yazd, which was the place of dwelling and residence (*maḥall-i tawaṭṭun va maskin*) of the great forefathers and munificent ancestors of that virtuous man of high rank. The elite and commoners of that region, having been assisted and made confident by the existence of the bounty of munificence of that Excellency, slept on the bed of relaxation...⁷²⁵

The text then gives an account of Mavlānā Muḥammad Ṭāhir's two sons, Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī and Mīrzā Muḥammad Shafī'.⁷²⁶ All three served the royal court, and as we just observed, under Shāh Ṣafī, the father held a high rank and was given his ancestral village of Ardakān (about fifty kilometers north-west of Yazd) as *tuyūl*. The sons, Mufīd tells us, held positions in the court near to the shāh as well. The younger, Mīrzā Muḥammad Shafī', he tells us,

now rests on the cushion of the *dawlat* and raises the banner of authority and is distinguished (*sar afrāzī dārad*) by being seated in the audience of the heavenly-

⁷²⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 391-2.

⁷²⁶ Not to be confused with another Mīrzā Muḥammad Shafī', who was twice the Vazīr of Yazd from 1059-1064/1649-1654 and again from 1070-1074/1660-1664).

natured Khusraw Sulaymān of the court (*mujālisat-i majlis-i bihisht-āyīn-i Khusraw Sulayman-i bār-gāh*) [i.e., Shāh Sulaymān].⁷²⁷

Here we should be careful not to let Mufīd's hyperbolic language bedazzle us. Even if these *munajjims* who learned their trade in Yazd did find favor or posts at the court, the evidence corroborating that these figures held the high post of Munajjim-Bāshī or Munajjim-i Khāṣṣah-i Sharīfah is questionable. The two fraternal historians, Vaḥīd Qazvīnī and Vālih Qazvīnī, who documented the reigns of Shāh Ṣafī and Shāh 'Abbās II, do report, on occasion, the presence of Muḥammad Ṭāhir Munajjim at court. However these occasions are infrequent and not particularly impressive. In *Khulaṣat al-Siyar*, Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Iṣfahānī mentions Muḥammad Ṭāhir only once, describing his assignment as an advisor to the Sipah-Sālār in 1039/1630 during the shāh's subjugation of the rebellious city of Hamadān.⁷²⁸ Furthermore, Muḥammad Ṭāhir never receives the title of Chief Munajjim in any of these works; as we have seen, that title went to Mullā Kamāl under Shāh Ṣafī.

Now, with regard to Muḥammad Ṭāhir's son, Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Iṣfahānī relates in *Khulaṣat al-Siyar* that Muḥammad Shafī played an important role under Shāh Ṣafī and was already positioned to do so in the last year of Shāh 'Abbās I's reign.⁷²⁹ In fact, Iṣfahānī goes so far as to call Muḥammad Shafī the second al-Bīrūnī and Albumasar (Abū Ma'shar al-Balkhī), two of the greatest astronomers and

⁷²⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 392.

⁷²⁸ On the ninth of Shavvāl, 1039/ May 22, 1630, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Munajjim was ordered to serve the Sipah-Sālār, and then quickly return to court. A few days later, on the seventeenth, he was permanently sent to the Sapah-Sālār. Iṣfahānī, *Khulaṣat al-Siyar*, 83-4.

⁷²⁹ Iṣfahānī, *Khulaṣat al-Siyar*, 30. The author states in his account of the day of 24, Zū al-Hijah, 1037/August 25, 1628, the last year of Shāh 'Abbās I's reign, that Mavlānā Muḥammad Shafī and Mavlānā Muḥammad Taqī Munajjim (editor gives his nisbah as Junābādī), were in attendance of the future shāh's boyhood in Qazvīn until the time of the book's composition, reading horoscopes.

mathematicians of the early Islamic dispensation.⁷³⁰ Vaḥīd Qazvīnī and Vālih Qazvīnī also relate that a Muḥammad Shafīʿ served as munajjim, indeed, as *the* Munajjim-i Khāṣah-i Sharīfah under Shāh ‘Abbās II. In fact, both historians relate that Muḥammad Shafīʿ Munajjim was present at the enthronement of Shāh ‘Abbās.⁷³¹ Vaḥīd Qazvīnī even tells us that this Muḥammad Shafīʿ taught the shāh to read and write in his youth.⁷³² Moreover, both historians report Muḥammad Shafīʿ’ s consultation for key military decisions, such as the campaign against Qandahār.

This having been said, Vālih Qazvīnī consistently and unambiguously gives Muḥammad Shafīʿ’ s name and *nisbah* as Mavlānā Muḥammad Shafīʿ Munajjim Khurāsānī, not Yazdī or Ardakānī. In fact, in the place where Vālih Qazvīnī names Muḥammad Shafīʿ’ s son and successor, a man by the name of Mīrzā Muḥammad Muqīm Munajjim, he specifies that the father’ s name is properly, Muḥammad Shafīʿ Junābādī Khurāsānī.⁷³³ Thus, it seems likely that Mufīd has either confused or, with a little smoke and mirrors, deliberately allowed the reputation of this rather illustrious Muḥammad Shafīʿ from the town of Junābād in Khurāsān, to stand in for Yazd’ s own Muḥammad Shafīʿ, son of Muḥammad Ṭāhir. Afterward, this Muḥammad Muqīm Munajjim, son of Muḥammad Shafīʿ, receives the title of Munajjim-i Khaṣah-i Sharīfah in Vaḥīd Qazvīnī’ s

⁷³⁰ Iṣfahānī, *Khulasat al-Siyar*, 293. Iṣfahānī refers to these figures as simply “Abū Rayḥān” and “Abū Ma’ shar.” The former died in the mid-fifth/eleventh century; the latter died toward the end of the third/ninth century.

⁷³¹ Vaḥīd Qazvīnī, *‘Abbās-Nāmah*, 18. Vālah Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī, *Kuld-i Barīn: Shāh Ṣafī va Shāh ‘Abbās II*, 369.

⁷³² Vaḥīd Qazvīnī, *‘Abbās-Nāmah*, 25.

⁷³³ Vālah Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī, *Kuld-i Barīn: Shāh Ṣafī va Shāh ‘Abbās II*, 612. The printed edition spells “Junābādī” as “Junabādī,” without the alif in the second syllable. In *Khulasat al-Siyar*, Muḥammad Ma’ šūm Iṣfahānī describes Muḥammad Muqīm’ s contributions as an astrologer in the year 1050/1641, a year before Shāh Ṣafī’ s death, and specifies that he is the son of Muḥammad Shafīʿ Munajjim. Iṣfahānī, *Khulasat al-Siyar*, 293. Both father and son are mentioned a number of times throughout the text. While the author himself never adds the *nisbah* Junābādī or Khurāsānī to either name, the editor confidently provides it. As mentioned above, the editor gives the same *nisbah* for Muḥammad Taqī Munajjim, mentioned along side Muḥammad Shafīʿ.

work.⁷³⁴ So, at least according to the Qazvīnī brothers, in the end, it was this Khurāsānī family of *munajjims* that had risen to positions of greatest influence at court after Shāh Ṣafī's reign and not the Yazdīs.⁷³⁵

To sum up, indeed it is a mark of some status that the father, Muḥammad Ṭāhir Yazdī, was given Ardakān as a *tuyūl*. However, even though Ardakān may have been a lucrative source of revenue, it was still relatively small potatoes. And while this *munajjim*'s sons never achieved the super lofty rank that Mufīd attributes to them, giving Mufīd the benefit of the doubt, we should allow that they might still have served at court as lower ranking *munajjims*.⁷³⁶ This possibility aside, Mufīd does not furnish his readers with the family's genealogy or an account of their marriages, so it is difficult to ascertain their rank, but his silence on the matter implies that they were not sayyids and, despite their relatively good fortunes, probably did not "marry up" into the high families outside of Yazd. In short, the most illustrious of Yazd's *munajjimān* by Mufīd's day were likely only slightly more elevated than those who served the local needs of the city. And it is with the *tarjamāt* of these local *munajjimān* that that Mufīd fills out the rest of the chapter. This is not to say that those local *munajjims* were not considered to be eminent and influential personages among Yazdīs; all the rest of these *munajjims* came from notable families (some with minor sayyid lineages) and all receive glowing accolades from the author, particularly for their knowledge and skill in *'ilm-i nujūm* (the

⁷³⁴ Vaḥīd Qazvīnī, *Abbās-Nāmah*, 128. Here the author describes the *munajjim*'s participation in the campaign against Qandahār.

⁷³⁵ Moreover, as cited above, Muḥammad Ma'ṣūm Iṣfahānī reports in *Khulasat al-Siyar*, that Muḥammad Shafī served Shāh Ṣafī along with another Junābādī *munajjim*, Muḥammad Taqī Munnajim. It is possible that these two astrologers were brothers.

⁷³⁶ It is worth pointing out that Muḥammad Shafī Khurāsānī was dead before Shāh Sulaymān's reign, so when Mufīd asserts that that Yazdī Muḥammad Shafī was in attendance at Shāh Sulaymān's court, he may have been speaking earnestly. However, this man certainly did not hold a rank comparable to that of the other Muḥammad Shafī from Khurāsān or his son, Muḥammad Muqīm.

science of the stars), but none plays any role outside of Yazd.⁷³⁷ Moreover, the record of astrologers' participation at the court, which we have pieced together here is quite different than that which Mufīd presents. Mullā Kamāl, son of the great Munajjim-Bāshī from Yazd, held the highest rank among astrologers after his father's death. He held this post for the latter part of Shāh 'Abbās I's reign and into Shāh Ṣafī's reign. The clan from Junābād, however, led by Muḥammad Shafī and his likely relative, Muḥammad Taqī, were already rising to high positions by the time of Ṣafī's enthronement. Ultimately, Muḥammad Shafī and his son Muḥammad Muqīm, completely eclipsed Munajjim Yazdī's line as well as that of Muḥammad Ṭāhir Yazdī, even before Shāh Ṣafī's death, and both became Chief Munajjims under Shāh 'Abbās II.

Although the marketability of Yazdī scholars resided in their mastery of the exact sciences, occult sciences, religious sciences, and literary arts in combination, here I have singled out the section dealing with astrologers precisely because the idiom of astrology had been so instrumental not only in the crafting of imperial narratives of history, but also in the practice of every day life in the court. Astrological expertise, of course, generally went hand in hand with skill in mathematics, medicine, the science of letters, divination, and other magical arts.⁷³⁸ As we have just observed, some of the

⁷³⁷ The most prominent of these astrologers is Mīrzā Muḥaffar, who is described as the son of someone called Nujmā Muḥammadā, who is not mentioned anywhere else in the text. Mufīd explains that Mīrzā Muḥaffar entered the service of Amīr Mu'izz al-Dīn Muḥammad, an important *'ālim* who, during the reign of Shāh Ṣafī, was made the Shaykh al-Islam of Yazd. Mīrzā Muḥaffar's notice is found in Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 392-3. Mu'izz al-Dīn's notice is found in Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 361-2. His three grandsons are also listed. These were born of Mīrzā Muḥaffar's daughter, who married a Mīrzā Ghiyās, son of Ruknā Muḥammadā, whom Mufīd describes as one of the famous sayyids of the realm; however neither Mīrzā Ghiyās nor Rukn Muḥammad appear anywhere else in the text. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 393. Mufīd also gives a *tarjamah* for another father-son duo, Mavlānā Ja'far and Mavlānā 'Abd al-Vāhid, who had unparalleled knowledge of the stars and were distinguished by their piety. Both were apparently alive at the time of the book's composition, in Ahrisān, in the 'Anbarī neighborhood. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 393.

⁷³⁸ Mufīd has little to say of practioners of the various magical arts. He does, however mention them occasionally. For example, in the section on *'ulamā'* and *fuḏalā'*, Mufīd narrates the career of his

munajjims at court, including Mullah Kāmil and his brother, were also physicians. The reverse is also true; there were those with this bundle of skills who didn't necessarily hold posts as *munajjimān*, but still served the shāh in a variety of other, sometimes informal capacities, whom Mufīd classifies (along with astrologers) under the rather generic rubric of 'ulamā' va fuḏalā', a category that also includes the subsets of notices on physicians (*aṭibbā'*), poets (*shu'arā'*), preachers (*vā'izān*), calligraphers (*khattātān*), and others. We could extend our study to such other Yazdīs, contemporaries of Mufīd, whom he celebrates here in his text. For example, Mavlānā Muḥammad Bāqir, about whom Mufīd says:

The virtues and perfections of this Aristotle of wisdom, Plato of sagacity, Mavlānā Muḥammad Bāqir, are many. His works conveying miracles in the religious sciences, the traditional arts (*funūn-i naqlīyah*), mathematics, and the rest of the sciences are without number and there is no need to enumerate them.⁷³⁹

Muḥammad Bāqir, as well as his descendents, the author tells us, were well received at the court in Iṣfahān.⁷⁴⁰ This fact is corroborated in a lengthy *tarjamah* that appears in *Qīṣaṣ al-Khāqānī*, Valī Qulī Shāmlū's chronicle, completed during Shāh 'Abbās II's reign, in 1085/1674, the second volume of which includes a biographical dictionary of notables, written in an elegant language, more florid and hyperbolic than even Mufīd's! In Shamlū's description of Muḥammad Bāqir's expertise, after a gorgeous passage wound around a complicated conceit built out of astronomers' paraphernalia, which demonstrates that mathematical knowledge is a window onto the universe and thence

contemporary, Amīr Muḥammad Ṣālih Ardakānī. In addition to expertise in the traditional and rational sciences, such as 'ilm-i rīyāzī (mathematics), he tells us that he travelled to India Dehli to learn 'ilm-i 'azīmat, the science of casting spells, but returned to Yazd because he couldn't abide the wildness of Hind or the dark people there. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 326-7.

⁷³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3: 309.

⁷⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3: 310.

the divine mind, the author actually gives an account of Muḥammad Bāqir's particular expertise within the field of mathematics (*'ilm-i rīyāzī*), an account that is rather more precise than Mufīd's.⁷⁴¹

With regard to the other categories of *'ulamā' va fuḏalā'*, we have already seen the degree of overlap between astrologers and physicians and have seen how earlier physicians often rose to high imperial ministries, as in the case of Rashīd al-Dīn Faḏl Allāh, whose medical expertise was used as evidence against him in bureaucratic coup. We could have easily included a lengthy section on Yazdī physicians in this chapter. But while medicine might have been a field of expertise that complemented expertise in astrology, magic, and mathematics and while physicians might have been necessary at imperial courts, a special expertise in medicine was not directly integral to the project of constructing the discourse on empire, as astrology was. Consequently, Mufīd's discussion of physicians is relatively spare. Moreover, although Mufīd commemorates this handful of physicians' virtues with his usual level of hyperbole, none of these seems to have served at the imperial court; in fact, he reports that many of them chose to seek their fortunes in the Indian kingdoms. Mufīd's treatment of one contemporary expert in medicine, who remained in Yazd, will suffice: Amīr Muḥammad Ja'far Mufī, whom we briefly mentioned in chapter 2. I choose this particular individual's *tarjamah*

⁷⁴¹ "Clad in the astronomical tables of the climes of the world of sight, throne-sitter on the chair of wisdom, page of the map of the attainment of divine secrets, one who is attached to the understanding of human signs, doorpost (reading *'izādah* for *'izāvah*) of the astrolabe of wisdom and foresight, beloved picture of the pen of creation, star-flash of the matchless heaven, first power of the mind's purity of the First [Being], center of the circle of glory and perfection, axis of the great firmament of rank and dignity, Almagest-opener of Aristotle's equal, Ptolemy of the age of "Euclid's Elements (*Uqlīdis-i taḥrīr*), instance of everlasting grace, Ḥaḏrat Mavlānā Muḥammad Bāqir Yazdī, who [is] the herald (*ṣūr*—literally trumpet) of the entirety of the heavenly planes in the chambers of the divine mind of his vision, sitting upon the throne of the seat of power, spider bound to the web of His memory in the recording of the warp and weft of the lines of the shapes of that famous astronomical chart [i.e. the creation]..." Valī Qulī ibn Dāvūd Qulī Shāmlū, *Qīṣaṣ al-khāqānī*, ed. Ḥasan Sādāt Nāṣirī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Sāzmān-i Chāp va Intishārāt-i Vizārat-i Farhang va Irshād-i Islāmī, 1374/1995), 2: 42-3.

because it appears in the chapter on sayyids rather than in the chapter on physicians. Like the progenitors of the Āl-i Raḡī, this man was both a sayyid and a medical doctor; his biography illustrates the fate of so many of his noble class during the latter Ṣafavid period. The *tarjamah* itself appears in the course of Mufīd’s extended narrative on the saintly forfather of Yazdī sayyids, Imāmzādah Abū Ja‘far Muḡammad. Amīr Muḡammad Ja‘far Muftī is mentioned here as being one of two of the great sayyid’s descendents still living in Yazd at the time of Mufīd’s writing, whom he describes as:

Two stars of the constellation of descent from the Prophet (*siyādat*) and piety (*dīn-dārī*)—of the utmost respectability and honor—were firmly seated upon the throne of desire and good fortune.⁷⁴²

He then moves on to discuss the career of Amīr Muḡammad Ja‘far Muftī:

In the knowledge of *fiqh* and *ḡadīth* he holds perfect juridical knowledge (*tafaquh dārad*) such that the people of this region consult him for legal rulings (*istiftā’*) on account of his solid judgement (*rāy-i matīnash*) and they ruminate on solutions to intricate questions from his intelligent mouth. He also has expertise (*yad-i ṡūlī dārad*)⁷⁴³ in many specialized, popular sciences—including the art of medicine (*fann-i ṡibb*). But because of the extent of his piety, he never turns his attention from treating any disease of the body (*mu‘ālijah-i marḡī az amrāḡ-i jismānī*).⁷⁴⁴

This man was a sayyid of a truly noble background, and an expert in the Shīī legal sciences, who continued to pursue the field of expertise that had been so common among his ancestors. But despite his noble lineage, this man remained local font of knowledge and skill and never made his way to reknown or service outside of Yazd. The praiseful language is (as usual) lofty, but compared to the legacy of his forefathers; the sayyid-physician’s career was actually somewhat lackluster.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 523.

⁷⁴³ Literally: He had a long hand.

⁷⁴⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 523.

⁷⁴⁵ The latter of the two sayyids, Mīrzā Rafī‘ al-Dīn Muḡammad al-ḡusaynī is praised for his nobility rather generically. Mufīd mentions no specific skill or field of expertise. *Ibid.*, 3: 524-5.

Still, the point is not that we don't find instances of Yazdī scholars in positions of influence and authority at court; clearly we do. What is at issue is the frequency of participation and the measure of that influence. In my evaluation, Yazdī experts found far less recognition of authority and capacity for influence than they did before the latter part of the eleventh/seventeenth century. What is more, after Munajjim Yazdī, the shāh no longer charged Yazdī scholars with the task of applying their literary and scientific expertise toward the composition of an official account of the royal house. Even Mullā Kamāl, who was both a Munajjim-Bashī and a historian, was not ordered to compose the shāh's history as his father had been. Nor was Mullā Kamāl's son, Jalāl al-Dīn, who failed to attain an important post as *munajjim* and who never completed a work of dynastic history. Even later, during Mufīd's adult life, as we have seen, Mufīd's fellow Yazdīs had lost premier access to the shāh as high-ranking astrological advisors. The kind of knowledge, authority, and prestige that the shāhs had formerly sought among Yazdīs since the days of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a) had come to be gathered from among the meritorious families of other parts of the realm, such as Junābād. At the same time, no Yazdī was given the honor of composing an official history of the realm after Shāh 'Abbās I's reign. These two points are revealingly related, for just as Yazdīs lost the distinction of interpreting the stars for the shāhs and, consequently, of shaping the policies and activities of the court, they also lost a leading role in the crafting of the imperial persona, as Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī and Munajjim Yazdī had both done so successfully in their respective eras.

7. Conclusion

By the Tīmūrid period, thanks to the special constellation of skills transmitted and developed in the Ruknīyah and the madrasah complexes affiliated with it, Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a), a sayyid who was descended from the founders of those institutions, found himself in a position of influence, helping to shape not only the politics of the realm, but the very discourse of empire, a discourse that would continue to evolve for centuries afterwards. At the same time, despite the fact that some Yazdīs had risen to high rank and influence in the realm, Yazd remained a relatively minor city when compared to metropolises like Iṣfahān or Shīrāz, Tabrīz, Herat, or Samarqand. Moreover, even though Yazd featured some of the most eminent scholars in the larger Persianate world, it was certainly not *the* center of learning in any field; nor was it unique in its cultivation of the exact sciences in combination with literary arts and the Islamic sciences. Nonetheless, up until the mid-eleventh/seventeenth century, we find Yazdīs in positions of influence at the court at a rate that is surprisingly disproportionate to its small size. Pound for pound, Yazd held its own.

Granted, the Yazdī historians’ goal was to make their city the center of the world, and they did tend to distort the role that Yazd played in the realm. For this reason, we have brought outsiders’ testimony from earlier sources into dialogue with the Yazdī histories. These sources have clarified our picture of events in Yazd during the Īlkhānid period somewhat; if nothing else, they reveal that the history of that period was much more contested than the local historians wished to admit. Rather than corroborate the Yazdī historians’ straightforward narrative of the sayyids’ triumph, these accounts amplify the inconsistencies buried in the local histories

themselves, pointing to a sober and complicated picture of gradual change in which, during Rukn al-Dīn's time, the local sayyids were only beginning to consolidate their lines and their collective control of property, both locally and in other cities. Moreover, the sayyids were only just attaining posts in the imperial administration through shrewd politics, wise investments, and pragmatic alliances with other powerful families inside and outside the region. Eventually their madrasah-tomb complexes replaced those of the non-sayyid family of Atābayks, but did so only slowly. Furthermore, even if we allow that a conflict between Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad and Ḥājī Shāh b. Yūsuf Shāh did actually occur—and considering Rukn al-Dīn's bold building program and the Atābayks' recent disenfranchisement by the Mongols, there is no reason to doubt that such a disagreement might have happened—in those sources, we found little evidence for the local historians' image of a totally polarized city, divided between the Atābayks and a cabal of sayyids and their allies in Tabrīz. Nor could we take at face value the Yazdī historians' assertion that astrology/astronomy was at the core of the sayyid's original mission for his madrasah complex. However, our objective in uncovering this history that belies the Yazdī narratives is to understand how our local historians of the ninth/fifteenth and eleventh/seventeenth centuries understood these fragments of the past, which they had inherited, and how they reconfigured and rearranged them to make sense of happenings in their own times. In tracing the ways in which they chose to portray the events surrounding the construction of the Ruknīyah and affiliated madrasah complexes, as we have done in this chapter, we have learned much about how our historians capitalized on the decidedly fragmentary and contentious narratives in circulation about the events of the fourteenth century; they did so in such

a way as to render the central role that Yazdīs played in the empires of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries indisputable, inevitable, and divinely favored. In order to accomplish this task successfully, the historians of Yazd needed to transform the forebears of this golden age of Yazd's influence into saints. By threading a whole host of narratives through the gateway of the Ruknīyah complex, the authors distilled a complex period of gradual social and political transition into a mythical tale of origins, reminiscent of the lives of great Sufi shaykhs and built on miracles and moral deeds. The cleverly grafted story of Rukn al-Dīn's predominance over the villainous Atābayk Yūsuf Shāh transforms the pragmatic sayyid into a divinely favored saint and, at the same time, accounts for the reorientation of the city around its premier madrasah; by the fifteenth century, this complex had become the center of astronomy/astrology, Islamic sciences, and ritual tomb visitation. Moreover, by explicitly connecting this tale with the stories of the other sayyids and their complexes, the Yazdī historians passed along the contagion of Rukn al-Dīn's charisma and judiciousness, making all into saints and capable agents of the imperial order. Consequently, their madrasah complexes became the source of their descendents' greatness. Inside those buildings, men of later eras obtained the knowledge and charisma that made them the architects of the *ṣāhib-qirānī* age.

For the Yazdī historians, demonstrating the charismatic authority of Yazd's experts was essential: Ja'farī and Aḥmad Kātīb needed it to position Yazd as at the forefront of the realm's good fortune. Mufīd, who had witnessed the decline of Yazdīs' influence at court and the related decay of Yazd's institutions of learning, contemplated this charismatic authority and its origins in order to draw the reader's

eye to the tragedy of its loss. In any case, the Yazdī historians could only demonstrate the existence of such a charisma and could only detail its origins once they could point to a network of ancestral saints, linked to a ring of sacred sites about the city, where their benefits and blessings could still be (or should still have been) found and where the tangible benefits of their patronage could still produce fruits for inhabitants of Yazd. Of course, the most valuable of these benefits were those that provided access to the pādishāh and influence over the realm.

In the previous chapter, we saw that the myth of Iskandar’s founding of Yazd had provided that city’s local historians with the rhetorical means to shape the discourse on kingship and the history of the empire’s affairs from the periphery of the realm. In this chapter, we have witnessed how the tangle of saintly stories that surrounded the figure of Rukn al-Dīn gave those writers the material they needed to chart the networks of people and places that made possible Yazdīs’ participation in that project at the highest levels—as advisors, historians, poets, administrators, and in particular, astrologers. But this project of “charting” was not simply descriptive. Our historians deployed these catalogues of newly formed networks of families and building complexes to legitimize Yazdī’s qualifications for participating in the project of empire, a feat that depended partly on charging these networks of people and places with an aura of righteousness and saintliness, partly on proving a long tradition of astronomical mastery, and partly on showing that Yazdī sayyids been contributing their expertise to the imperial administration since Īlkhānid times. Critical to the success of the Yazdī historians’ presentation was proving that during the Īlkhānid era the sayyids’ consolidation of their endogamous community and their redrawing of the

urban landscape were inseparably linked to yet another venture. This was the construction of madrasah complexes that had been designed specifically to perpetuate the particular constellation of scientific and rhetorical skills, which would later be deemed essential for service to the sovereign in the *ṣāhib-qirānī* age. For these historians, the astronomical observatory and automaton of the Ruknīyah was the totem of that community, that is, the sign of that community's existence and the physically manifested source of its cohesion, authoritative knowledge, and charismatic power. In Yazd's historiography, this structure was such an embodiment of the sayyids' authority and solidarity that its obliteration in Mufīd's work signified the dissolution of that community.

In reality, the signifying, socializing power given to the Ruknīyah observatory was but an artifact of the Yazdī historians' process of memorializing and was necessitated by their need for a sacred past. Durkheim and his totems may have facilitated our grasping the epistemology that motivated the Yazdī historians to frame their narratives in this way,⁷⁴⁶ but his framework cannot help us understand the *history* of that epistemology. For that task we needed the help of a different methodology, one that takes as its objective a catalog of the long history of associations between actors in the city, both human and non-human. The sayyids of the *Īlkhānīd* era did not, as the local historians implied, intentionally build an astronomical clock to serve as the emblem and embodiment of their own sacred society; in all likelihood, despite their common *Ḥusaynī* descent, Rukn al-Dīn and his associates did not view themselves as

⁷⁴⁶ Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields (New York: The Free Press, 1995), esp. 161-66.

belonging to such as thing as a sacred society.⁷⁴⁷ The path by which Yazdīs came to see their clock as such a sanctifying object was labyrinthine and largely contingent. Over time, the clock became one of many players in a tangled web of people, objects, and ideas, which were circulating through Yazd and other cities in other realms. This web was a series of real encounters that made possible Yazdī experts' successes at home and at court and, more importantly, led the city's historians to emplot the genealogy of those successes in the particular ways that they did.

Continuing with the history of Yazd's sayyid families and their monuments, in the next chapter we turn to the shrine complex of the powerful Ni'matullāhī family in the local historiography of Yazd. The *pīrs* of this order⁷⁴⁸ were sayyids as well, descended from the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Baqir. They had risen to immense standing locally and among the sovereign houses of Iran and India, first among a few Tīmūrids princes and then Bahmānid shāhs, the Qarā Qūyūnlūs, and afterward, the Ṣafavid shāhs. This last chapter will trace the decline of the Ni'matullāhīs of Yazd, a process that began during Shāh 'Abbās's reign. Using that story, we will explore how the waning influence of the family and their shrine complex outside of Yazd affected the city in general. Lastly, we will uncover what this meant for Mufīd's emplotment of his city's history.

⁷⁴⁷ See Latour's critique of Durkheim alongside his favorable assessment of Durkheim's contemporary, Gabriel Tarde, who warned against Durkheim's reification of "social forces" in Latour, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, 13-17.

⁷⁴⁸ The head of the order is referred to as the *quṭb* (pole).

Chapter IV

Losing the Center: The Shrine of the Ni‘matullāhīs and Footprint of the Imām

He brought these words to light upon the tongue of divine revelation: “O son, be confident that you will obtain the graces of security and [the fulfillment] of aspirations of every kind! From the Court of Singularity, He has entrusted to you and your children sovereignty over a region of Hindūstān.”⁷⁴⁹

With the footstep of supplication and sincere devotion, the inhabitants of that region scattered the coin of the soul on the soil of his blessed footstep.⁷⁵⁰

- Muḥammad Mufīd Bāfqī

In this last chapter, we turn from Mufīd’s characterization of his city’s oldest monuments and distant past to more recent times. Here we focus on the history and topography of Yazd during the Ṣafavid age and, most importantly, during his own lifetime. The bulk of our study will center on the powerful Ni‘matullāhī family of Yazd and their shrine center in the satellite village of Taft. However, our interest is not limited to the history of that family alone. Our purpose is to use Mufīd’s presentation on the Ni‘matullāhīs as a point of entry into the complicated changes happening across the realm that were reshaping the contours of Yazd’s religious and economic life during the Ṣafavid age. The sources show that the fate of that family and their shrine complex is tied up with the emergence of new sites of ritual visitation, but, while Mufīd

⁷⁴⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 53.

⁷⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 3: 651.

does acknowledge the appearance of new sites and of new patterns of patronage to fund them, he does not explicitly connect the dots. It is our job to put those outwardly disparate changes into dialogue with one another and to uncover the connections between them. It is by understanding these connections that we will get a clearer picture of what was befalling Yazd in the eleventh/seventeenth century.

Nevertheless, setting the stage for such a dialogue proves tricky. Where should we start? Which character should speak first? Instead of simply outlining the agenda for the chapter upfront, by way of introduction, it will be helpful to first present one of Mufīd's own anecdotes and let him lay the first stone and see where that leads. Our plans for the course of this chapter will unfold once we have scrutinized the signs he has carved in that rock. This way we can determine who, besides the Ni'matullāhīs, will join the actors on stage, and we can discern the contours of the set.

1. Following a Sign on a Stone, an Introduction

In the course of his chronology of the Kākūyid period in Yazd, Mufīd mentions a mosque that Kīyā Shujā' al-Dīn, one of the sulṭān's amīrs, built in Yazd. Even in Mufīd's day, the mosque was still called Masjid-i Kīyā Shujā' al-Dīn. Although the section of the work deals with fifth/eleventh century history, the name of the mosque reminds Mufīd of an event that took place there centuries later, during the relatively recent reign of Shāh Ismā'īl Ṣafavī, the first ruler of the Ṣafavid dynasty. The tale mirrors many others in Mufīd's work; it illustrates the ways in which the very soil of Yazd could function as a vehicle of God's bounty and could enable the city's inhabitants to endow their city with great benefits. Like many of Mufīd's anecdotes, this one smacks of orality and feels like

one picked up in the bazaar. An intelligent but poor fifteen-year-old boy named Mīr Khalīl Allāh devises an innovative way to make a living by pressing the oil out of cottonseeds (*panbah-dānah*) for lamp-oil. (Mufīd explains that no one had used cottonseed oil for anything before.) He draws up the plans and sets out to build his oil press (*rawghangar-khānah*) beside the Masjid-i Kīyā Shujāʿ where, the author adds, an oil press still stands in his own day. When the boy begins to dig the foundation, he finds a stone impressed with a symbol (*ʿalāmat-sangʿī*).⁷⁵¹ He then decides that the place is not solid enough for his structure and decides to build the press somewhere else. Suddenly, inspired by the hidden world (*ʿālam-i ghayb*), it occurs to the boy that something might be hidden beneath the stone. With some trusted friends, he moves the rock and finds a chamber with two chests, one full of gold and the other silver. The boy wishes to use the money for the benefit of the community, but knows that he cannot do anything without first acquiring an official post (*manṣab*). So, he travels to the high court (*urdū*) and, “thanks to the Khāqān of the Lofty Nest [Shāh Ismāʿīl],” he receives the post of mayor (*kalāntar*) of Yazd, an office he ends up sitting in for twenty years. His son, Mīrzā Shāhmīr, follows him as Kalāntar and serves for twenty-seven years. Both men—called Rawghanī (The Oil-Presser) in the text—served with justice and wisdom and built extensively in the city.⁷⁵² With this statement, Mufīd returns directly to his account of the Kākūyid/Saljūqid age.

To be sure, we have seen a number of such stories already, but this one stands out because it represents one of the last moments in which a resident of Yazd is able to

⁷⁵¹ *ʿAlāmat-sang* literally means “sign-stone.” I have not come across this term before and I find no definition in Dekhoda or any other dictionary. I assume it means a stone with a symbol on it or else hewn in the shape of a symbol.

⁷⁵² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 78-9. Mufīd also covers the careers of both men in his section on the kalāntars of Yazd: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 244.

take the benefits the city has bestowed upon him, bring them before the imperial court, and return home with the means and the royal blessing to utilize them for the benefit of his community and, in turn, the realm at large. In reality, the story of the oil-presser's success is but a minor one; although Mīr Khalīl Allāh Rawghanī and his son may have done an excellent job in their post, and while their story of success may have been extraordinary, they were still only local officials. Kalāntars enjoyed essentially no access to the royal court and no influence beyond local affairs.⁷⁵³ Moreover, whatever buildings the Rawghanīs constructed must have been fairly insignificant, since Mufīd doesn't actually name them. Still, in Mufīd's work, such instances of divine guidance, which would ordinarily have guaranteed the success of even the commonest men like this oil-presser, would have no effect during the period of late Safavid rule. What is true for the little men was even more true for the grand notables of the city. As we have been saying throughout the last chapter, the later Safavid rulers of Mufīd's lifetime simply turned their backs on Yazd and chose not to patronize Yazdī institutions or partner with Yazdī families.

The last new, monumental building project that a high-ranking agent of an imperial court constructed in Yazd was the Masjid-i Shāh Ṭahmāsb complex which Khānīsh Baygum, Shāh Ṭahmāsb's sister had built. She had married a member of the Ni'matullāhīs of Yazd. Her son, Mīrmīrān, the succeeding Ni'matullāhī grandee, built the 'Abbāsīyah palace nearby. Khānīsh Baygum also added a mosque to the Ni'matullāhī shrine in Taft. We will cover these projects in more detail below (pages 446, 461). These comprised the last such royal endeavors in Yazd during the Safavid period. In terms of

⁷⁵³ On the the office of Kalāntar in Ṣafavid times see: Ann K. Lambton, "The Office of Kalantar under the Safawids and Afshars," in *Mélanges d'orientalisme offerts à Henri Massé* (Tehran: 1963).

scale and expense they were smaller undertakings than the immense project that came before it, during in the Tīmūrid period. That mammoth complex was the Masjid-i Amīr Chaqmāq, known as the Masjid-i Naw; it was truly the last *monumental* complex. We shall say a bit about this Masjid-i Chaqmāq here because it will have some bearing on the Ṣafavid story later. It was Shāh Rūkh's able and munificent governor of Yazd, Amīr Jalāl al-Dīn Chaqmāq Shāmī, who completed the mosque complex in 841/1437-8, in partnership with this wife, the Tīmūrid princess, Bībī Fāṭimah.⁷⁵⁴ He accomplished this a few years before he was dismissed from the governorship of Yazd by the Tīmūrid prince, Sulṭān Muḥammad around 850/1447. Amīr Chaqmāq and his wife also constructed a khānqāh beside the mosque, and earlier, a ḥammām, a caravanserai, a bazaar, a qanāt, a cistern, a mill, a confectioner, a cold-water well, and a *siqāyah-khānah*, i.e., a building where water is distributed to thirsty visitors.⁷⁵⁵ Not least of all, he also constructed a fortified palace complex and administrative bureau called the Qal'ah-i Mubārakah.⁷⁵⁶ Of course, anyone of power and means had always contributed in some way to the old congregational mosque complex at the center of the city, the Masjid-i Jāmi'-i Kabīr, which had been constructed by the Kākūyid 'Alā' al-Dawlah and his Saljūq wife, Arslān Khātūn, in the fifth/eleventh century, and a completely new structure was

⁷⁵⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1:169-71 , 3: 649. Amīr Chaqmāq had been a Mamlūk general and surrendered to the Tīmūrid besiegers led by Shāh Rūkh at the Siege of Damascus in 803/1401. He thereupon joined Tīmūr's army and earned his trust. He was later appointed to govern Yazd around 818/1415.

⁷⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 1: 171-7. Amīr Chaqmāq's buildings are also discussed in Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 97-100. On the building projects of Amīr Chaqmāq and the Chagatayid Amīrs in Yazd, see: Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*, 168-76.

⁷⁵⁶ He built this structure on the site of a previous administrative bureau (*dīvān-khānah*.) Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 173-5. Holod-Tretiak provides an extensive discussion of Amīr Chaqmāq and Bībī Fāṭimah's buildings and endowments in Yazd. See: Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting", 95-122. The *vaqf-nāmah* of Amīr Chaqmāq and Bībī Fatima is extant and Afshār prints it as part of his critical edition of *JM* see: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3:871- 84. Also see Akio Iwatake's excellent article on this *vaqf*, which includes a translation of the bulk of the document: Iwatake, "The waqf of a Timurid amir- the example of Chaqmaq Shami in Yazd."

begun by Sayyid Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad (N.II [See Figure 1]) in 724/1323-4.⁷⁵⁷ In other words, improvements to the Great Mosque had been *sine qua non* for any governor and dignitary of the region since the structure was erected; building there constituted an act of noble beneficence and a sign of local authority and power. Amīr Chaqmāq's governorship was no exception: Bībī Fāṭimah paved the courtyard of the Jāmi' mosque with marble, installed marble pillars, and decorated the old wooden *minbar* with colorful tiles and jewels.⁷⁵⁸

There is no question that the early Safavids, Shāh Ismā'īl I, Shāh Ṭahmāsb, and probably Ismā'īl II, took great interest in their Yazdī subjects. They married into Yazdī families and promoted Yazdīs to the highest ranks. We will explore those alliances in detail throughout this chapter. But, while their agents did patronize Yazdī institutions and some construction projects, none of these endeavors compared to the monumental projects of Amīr Chaqmāq and his people. Under Shāh Ṭahmāsb, the Ṣafavid governor of Yazd, Āqā Jamāl al-Dīn Muḥammad, known as Mihtar Jamāl, did undertake some new additions to the old congregational mosque at the center of town, the Masjid-i Jāmi'-i Kabīr, which, as we have said, had always been essential for any local ruler. However, Mihtar Jamāl's endeavor, though worthy, paled in comparison with Amīr Chaqmāq's massive undertaking; he added two new minarets and two new entranceways, but

⁷⁵⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 643. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad's son, Sayyid Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, completed the project, and the Muẓaffarids continued to make additions. The Jāmi'-i Kabīr mosque has been treated in great detail in Holod-Tretiak, "The Monuments of Yazd, 1300-1450: Architecture, Patronage and Setting", 77-94.

⁷⁵⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 645-6. The Tīmūrīd vizier of Yazd's local administration, Shāh Niẓām Kirmānī also made improvements to the Jāmi'-i Kabīr mosque. The mosque had previously been white-washed inside. He covered it with colored tile and calligraphy; he apparently made sure to include Shāh Rūkh's name on the mosque. (p. 3: 643) Furthermore, in 863/1457-8, Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū ordered the calligrapher, Mavlānā Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, to install tile with beautiful calligraphy on the mosque. (p. 3: 645).

nothing more.⁷⁵⁹ Indeed, Mihtar Jamāl's additions represent the last occasion upon which a Ṣafavid governor would bother to attend to this central and highly symbolic structure in the center of the city, much less build any entirely new ones.

Ṣafavid princesses who had married into Yazdī notable families would continue to make endowments for and improvements to existing monuments up until part way through Shāh 'Abbās I's reign, that is, roughly around the time when the Shāh absorbed Yazd into Crown Lands, around 1009/1601, after which time, the court began appointing local viziers over the region (essentially revenue collectors) instead of governors.⁷⁶⁰ Coinciding with that, the Safavid Shāhs turned away from Yazd's most notable dignitaries, stopped marrying into their families, and with a few exceptions halted their patronage of local institutions in Yazd altogether. During this new period in Yazd's history, aside from a few small projects ordered by local men, we find no new construction. Moreover, Mufīd reports that a tremendous number of the traditionally important complexes around the city and its environs had fallen into total or partial ruin. Even many of the relatively new structures built by Amīr Chaqmāq and his chiefs, including the Khānqāh-i Chaqmāq, just mentioned above, had fallen into total dilapidation.⁷⁶¹ With a characteristic flair, Mufīd sums up the state of affairs, reporting that by the time of his writing, the Siqāyah-Khānah-i Chaqmāqīyah and its

⁷⁵⁹ Mufīd tells us that Mihtar Jamāl came up with his plan for his new structure with the aid of a person who was famous for dream divination. *Ibid.*, 3: 644-5.

⁷⁶⁰ See the tables of local governors and administrators of Yazd prepared by Willem Floor in his commentary on Naṣīr's untitled manual on administration. Mirza Ali Naqī Nasiri, *Titles & Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration by Mirza Naqī Nasiri*, ed. Willem Floor, trans. Willem Floor (Washington D.C.: Mage Publishers, 2008), 300-2.

⁷⁶¹ Aside from the works of Mīr Chaqmāq and Bībī Fatima, a large madrasah complex built by one the amīr's high ranking staff, Khvājah Shihāb al-Dīn Qāsim, which also featured a mosque and ḥammām was also ruined Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 253.

accompanying bazaar had become “the dwelling of depraved sodomizers (*lūṭiyān-i bī-sar*) and gamblers (*qimār-bāzān*) who have lost any notion of God.”⁷⁶²

Of the madrasah complexes listed in the Mufid’s chapter dedicated to those buildings, nine of the twelve structures were in a state of ruin, and this does not include the countless madrasahs scattered throughout the rest of the work whose dilapidation Mufid bewails ubiquitously. We have mentioned many of these instances in the course of the previous chapters. The khānqāhs and mosques stand in similar circumstances, although their situation does not appear to have been quite as wretched as the madrasahs. In any case, the bulk of these structures that were slipping into disrepair were constructed by important sayyids. Their tombs were located on site, and their endowments had previously funded the training and education of local Yazdīs. These were the institutions that had prepared them for service to their local community and to the imperial realm at large. As we argued in the last chapter, these moldering sites once stood at the center of Yazd’s ritualized, devotional life and at the heart of its educational program. In other words, these sites constituted the very core of Yazd’s efforts to make itself a center of the imperial realm. At the end of his chapter on madrasahs, with a rather pregnant sigh, Mufid attributes the sorry state of these institutions to the emigration of their founders and to absence of students; as a result, the people of Yazd “sprinkle the sands of regret on their heads.”⁷⁶³

⁷⁶² Ibid., 1: 173. Mufid adds a pithy little *misrā’* to punctuate his point: “Should a masjid come to be built someplace, a tavern is sure to follow (*agar masjid bi-jā’ī mī-rasad may-khānah khvāhad shud*).”

⁷⁶³ “*khāk-i ḥasrat bar sar mīkunad*.” Ibid., 659. This passage was also referenced in the introduction to this dissertation on pages 1 and 7. The full passage reads: “It has not remained hidden from the minds of the lords of clear-sightedness that several of the masters of good deeds and charitable benevolences have constructed and completed high madrasahs of limitless number in the Dār al-‘Ibādah-i Yazd, and they made many endowments for these. With the assistance of the pen of eloquence, commemoration of several of these men has come to be written down among the circumstances of the founders; some of them received a notice in this article. However, at the time of writing this article, (which, incidentally, is

Having summed up Mufīd’s ruinous view of the region’s landscape, a cautionary note is in order. Although by Mufīd’s day Yazd was clearly no longer enjoying the same kind of attention from the imperial center that it had enjoyed in previous centuries, it is easy to take Mufīd’s narrative of loss and devastation at face value. For all his subtlety and innuendo, it is possible that Mufīd’s other penchant, i.e., his taste for hyperbole, may have over-saturated the picture and washed out more subtle changes on the ground, which Mufīd himself may not have been capable of seeing. We must proceed with caution if we are to avoid being blinded by the light of Mufīd’s rather enticing, fatalistic narrative. Was Yazd really in ruin and on its way to abandonment, or were new patterns of patronage and devotional activity emerging that were changing the topography of the region? Certainly, Mufīd and other contemporary sources leave traces of a more complicated picture.

One clue that something slightly more complicated was going on appears in Mufīd’s own account of the sorry state of Amīr Chaqmāq’s buildings. After ticking off the buildings and endowments that had gone to ruin, he mentions that Amīr Chaqmāq’s substantial bazaar, the Bāzār-i Chaqmāqīyah was still extant. He further explains that Shāh Ṭahmāsb’s youngest daughter, Zaynab Baygum,⁷⁶⁴ who had acquired possession of that bazaar, converted it into an endowment for the upkeep of her own tomb in Mashhad, which she ordered to be built in the presence of the tomb of the

two years past 1080/1669-70 [i.e. 1082/1671-72]) such men have emigrated and all [their buildings] have become ruined and desolate; because of the absence of the seekers of knowledge, they sprinkle the sands of regret on their heads.”

⁷⁶⁴ The text actually reads “Zaynat,” which is obviously a printing error for “Zaynab.” According to Iskandar Bayk Munshī, Zaynab Baygum never married and remained in the harem her entire life. She made many endowments and was extremely influential at court, even during Shāh ‘Abbās I’s time. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 135.

eighth of the Twelve Shīʿī Imāms, Imām ʿAlī ibn Mūsá al-Riẓá.⁷⁶⁵ This vaqf was probably made toward the end of the princess’s life, during the reign of Shāh ʿAbbās; by then the khānqāh and a number of institutions for which Amīr Chaqmāq and Bībī Fāṭimah had originally endowed this property were long gone. It appears, however, that this Šafavid princess saw no advantage in funding any of the surviving Chaqmāqī institutions, such as the Masjid-i Amīr Chaqmāq, or in directing the profits of this property toward the benefit any other local Yazdī institutions, such as one of the imāmzādahs’ derelict madrasahs. Instead, Zaynab Baygum pumped the cash generated in this bazaar out of Yazd and off to her own *mazār* at the increasingly important shrine of Imām Riẓá in Mashhad.

By itself the Safavid princess’s actions may seem insignificant. After all, even the great Rashīd al-Dīn had used his property in Yazd to fund his complex in Tabrīz, as we have observed. But, as I will suggest in the course of this chapter, what is significant is not necessarily that Yazdī money was taken elsewhere, but rather, that it was taken to Mashhad in particular. In fact, Zaynab Baygum’s focus on Mashhad was not anomalous; although Yazd may still have been able to attract the attention of the court in her day, it was beginning to lose its ability to make itself a center of the realm. Yazd was becoming not a wasteland, but rather, a periphery, a subaltern space.

But we are getting ahead of ourselves. Let this episode with Zaynab Begum serve as a taste of what is to come. Before we can trace the new patterns of patronage, urban morphology, and devotional activities in Yazd, it still remains for us to chart the history of the last and perhaps most important sayyid family of the region, the

⁷⁶⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 172.

Ni‘matullāhīyah, a Sufi dynasty who had built an empire for themselves in the eighth and ninth/fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, which expanded outward from the ṭarīqah’s shrine complex in Taft. The Ni‘matullāhī shrine was one of the richest and most influential institutions in Yazd and the family members were among the highest ranking men in the realm until the reign of Shāh ‘Abbās, when their fortunes changed rather drastically. The Ni‘matullāhīs fell from serving as the right-hand men of sovereigns, to the humble post of Kalāntar of Yazd, that is, the very same office held by the modest Rawghanīs whose tale opened this chapter. Mufīd devotes a tremendous amount of space to the story of this family’s rise and fall and to the history of its shrine, and he presents these stories as being deeply intertwined with the fate of the Ṣafavid dynasty itself. For this reason, the history of the Ni‘matullāhīyah is critical for our understanding of the emergence of Yazd’s new landscape in the eleventh/seventeenth century.

In the first section we open with the Ni‘matullāhī shrine center itself and let Mufīd’s pregnant memories of that space guide us back into the past. There we will examine the early history of the Ni‘matullāhī order and explore the rise of the shrine at Taft in concert with the rise of the family’s fortunes vis-à-vis the Bahmānids, the Qarā Qūyūnlūs, and the Ṣafavids. The climax of the first section comes around a series of violent episodes early in Shāh ‘Abbās I’s reign, in which the Ni‘matullāhī family was critically involved. At the core of these events is Shāh ‘Abbās’s visit to Yazd in 999/1599, which Mufīd covers in detail. Mufīd makes the Shāh’s visit pivotal in his coverage of Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign and in the Ni‘matullāhī family’s fortunes. The section closes with

the collapse of the family after 999. Section two doubles back and takes a second look at the careers of a choice selection of early Ni‘matullāhī figures, whom Mufīd and some contemporary authors present as saintly and heroic kingmakers. Here we concern ourselves with questions of genre. Our purpose is to look critically at some of the historiographical issues at stake in Mufīd’s presentations on the great Ni‘matullāhīs who lived at the height of the family’s power and prestige. Reading these stories will help us understand the utility that these hagiographical narratives had for Mufīd’s account of the events of his own era. Here again, we revisit Mufīd’s use of history as advice, a recurring theme in this dissertation. In the last section we return to our tour of Yazd’s topography. Stepping away from the shrine at Taft and walking back toward within the city walls, we stop at the Masjid-i Furṭ, one of the few structures built within Mufīd’s own lifetime. The mosque enshrines a small chamber marking the place where the eighth Imām once stood, which had become a popular place for making ritual visitation in the author’s day. We use Mufīd’s representation of this site to map the new patterns of patronage that were already transforming the city from a cradle of empire and a center of knowledge into a outpost on the margins.

2. An Empty Tomb: The Shrine of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī at Taft

Although the madrasah and khānqāh complexes associated with the ‘Arīzī imāmzādahs’ tombs remained important centers of intellectual and ritual life in Yazd well into the Tīmūrid and post-Tīmūrid period, starting in the first half of the ninth/fifteenth century, a new center in the *mamālik* of Yazd began to reorganize

patterns of local, ritualized visitation and economic investment, changes that eventually drew the eyes of various imperial courts. This new center was the Ni‘matullāhī shrine complex in Taft. Taft had been an important settlement in the mountains to the southwest of the city near the foot of Shīr Kūh. Indeed, because of its proximity to mountain water, Taft’s importance long predates the rise of the shrine complex, but the shrine’s gravity certainly affected the ways in which all the Yazdī historians remembered the ancient history of the place. In the hindsight of those authors’ narratives, the sacrality of the place had been destined; signs of its future rise were always implicit in the flow of water, which originated in Taft.

The shrine centered around the Khānqāh-i Taft (also referred to by the name “Khānqāh-i Shāh Valī”), which the eponymous originator of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi ṭarīqah, Shāh Nūr al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh Valī (Nm.I) (d. 834/1430),⁷⁶⁶ founded himself before he died. Mufīd fails to provide the date of the institution’s founding, but his predecessor, Aḥmad Kātib, gives the date 821/1418-19 and explains that Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī began this project shortly after the Tīmūrid prince Iskandar b. ‘Umar granted him Taft as a *suyūrghāl*.⁷⁶⁷ Ultimately, Mufīd reproduces Aḥmad Kātib’s notice on the Khānqāh, adding his usual ornamentation and a few new passages, which catalog recent updates to the complex. Mufīd does include a lengthy hagiography of the Ni‘matullāhīs earlier in the work, which is absent from *TJY*. In reality, Mufīd acknowledges that he appropriated his hagiographical treatment of Shāh Ni‘matullāh

⁷⁶⁶ Please refer to Figure 3, Figure 4, and Figure 5 for the tree of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s descendants and marriages. Each person has been assigned a number in these figures for easy reference. I refer to these numbers in the text in parentheses after the name.

⁷⁶⁷ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 217.

Valī and his descendants from an early Ṣafavid-era hagiography, composed by one Sun‘ Allāh Ni‘matullāhī Kirmānī.⁷⁶⁸

As for the oldest history of Yazd, Ja‘farī’s *Tārīkh-i Yazd*, although the author makes many references to the waters of Taft, he does not mention the khānqāh even once in his book. This is in spite of the fact that, according to Aḥmad Kātib’s dating, the structure had long been built when Ja‘farī began his text. Moreover, the Ni‘matullāhīs had already wielded considerable influence for generations. The precise completion date of Ja‘farī’s work remains unknown, but we know that he composed it in the midst of the chaos of competition between Tīmūrid princes; it is possible that Ja‘farī’s omission reflects the current political climate: His own patron, the Tīmūrid vazīr, Z̧iyā‘ al-Dīn Mas‘ūd, who was of a local (though non-‘Arīzī) sayyid lineage, may have turned away from the Ni‘matullāhīs because of their recent involvement in Sulṭān Muḥammad’s insurrection.⁷⁶⁹ In any case, both Mufīd and Aḥmad Kātib feature the Ni‘matullāhī complex as one of the most honored and sacred places in Yazd. Here we quote from Mufīd’s notice:

⁷⁶⁸ Jean Aubin has considered this matter in the introduction to his edited anthology of four hagiographies about Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī. Mufīd also made use of a second work by Sun‘ Allāh, which concerned the life of the shaykh’s son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh. Neither of this author’s works are extant. While there is a lithograph edition of the hagiography of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī, titled *Savāniḥ al-Ayyām* or *Silsilat al-‘Ārifīn*, Aubin has shown that this is simply a modification of Mufīd’s work, made after Mufīd’s composition, and not the parent text that Mufīd used. Mufīd’s presentation on the later Ni‘matullāhīs of Yazd, beginning with Shāh Ni‘matullāh II, appears to be entirely his own. We know nothing about Sun‘ Allāh other than the fact that he was from Kirmān and that he was a *murīd* of the Ni‘matullāhī Sufi order himself, although Mufīd never names him among Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s descendants. Jean Aubin, ed. *Majmū‘ah dar Tarjamah-i Ahvāl-i Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī Kirmānī* (Tehran: Qismat Īrānshīnāsī, Instītū Īrān va Farānsah, 1335/1956), 7-8. Mufīd makes explicit acknowledgement of his use of Sun‘ Allāh’s work: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 6. He then refers to Sun‘ Allāh’s text throughout Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s tarjamah.

⁷⁶⁹ Although it is unlikely, perhaps Z̧iyā‘ al-Dīn feared competition from Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s new structure. He was himself involved in new projects in Yazd. Mufīd explains that among other projects, Khvājah Z̧iyā‘ al-Dīn Mas‘ūd built a *dīvān-khānah* in the central part of the city and nearby constructed a cistern, called Maṣna‘ah-i Khvājah, and a ḥammām, which used water from Taft. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 162-3.

Know, O dear reader, that the founder of that pleasant khānqāh is the Excellency (*nuvvāb*) of sayyid-lineage and of the leadership of the virtue of miracle-working (*niqābat-i manqabat-i karāmat*) and of the sainthood (*vilāyat*) of the rank of the light-bestowing star of the zodiac of prophecy (*ikhtar-i nūrbakhsh-i burj-i risālat*), world-lighting illuminator of the sky of glory (*nayyir-i jahān-tāb-i siphār-i jalālat*), leader of the Arabs and ‘Ajams, sulṭān of saints, and spiritual guide of the peoples, Shāh Nūr al-Dīn Ni‘mat Allāh Valī, who was the pole of the saints of his time (*quṭb-i awliyā’-i zamān*) and model of the people of faith, the sunlight of the heavens of gnosis (*‘irfān*), master of the world and its inhabitants. In reality this khānqāh is the envy of the garden of paradise! In the middle of it was built a high, lofty villa, known as Şuffah-i Şafā.⁷⁷⁰ Surrounding the khānqāh houses and rooms were built as residences for the indigent and the renunciates. Also beautiful kitchens were constructed where day in and day out food was prepared on behalf of the poor and for rich travelers and the wealthy folk who are present (*tavāngarān-i mu‘add*). The following verses, indicating the extraordinariness of that excellent one, are inscribed in writing over the gateway:

If you should wish to entertain Ni‘matullāh,
the tablecloth⁷⁷¹ must stretch all the way
around the sphere of world.

Ni‘matullāh rā agar khvāhī kih mihmānī kunī
sufrah gird-i jahān sar tā bih sar bāyad kashīd

And if you should build a little palace to match
his magnanimity,
the four walls must enclose the seven climes.⁷⁷²

var bih qadr-i himmatash sāzī sarā-yi mukhtaşar
chār-dīvārī bi haft-aqlīm dar bāyad kashīd

Opposite the villa was built a blessed tomb with a high cupola and lofty foundations. The sanctified sarcophagus was cut from marble. However, the blessed body of that Ḥaẓrat found tranquility in the luminous tomb at Māhān in Kirmān province. On the southern side of the Excellency of sunlight (*nuvvāb-i āftāb*), is [the tomb of] the Queen of Sheba’s rank, Khadījah of the Age, Fāṭimah of the era, Mary-like, cradle of exalted highborn women, Khānish Baygum, honorable milk-sister of the emperor of the abode of paradise, Shāh Ṭahmāsb, mercy and forgiveness upon her. She was the honorable wife of the divinely-approved Excellency of realm of Islam, leader of the nations of humanity, the crème de la crème of the sons of the sayyid of both human and jinn, spiritual guide and master of earthly beings, Shāh Nūr al-Dīn Ni‘mat Allāh Bāqī.⁷⁷³ She

⁷⁷⁰ Note, after his description of the Şuffah, Aḥmad Kātib adds a passage not found in Mufīd’s text that details the source of water for the khānqāh (the Sa‘dābād and Naşīrī qanāts) He then adds: “The two streams are divided: one stream flows to the end of the courtyard of the khānqāh and [the other] around the foundation (*shādurvān*) of the villa, and then they mix together again. And in the *andarūn-i ḥaram* of the great noble-born (*makhdūmzādīgān*), who are the light of the eye of the earth and earthly creatures, the streams find their course, and then they flow into orchards and gardens.” The author also mentions a ḥammām, which is absent from Mufīd’s discussion. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 217.

⁷⁷¹ Meals were served on a cloth, which was spread over the ground, not on a table.

⁷⁷² Aḥmad Kātib prints this *qit‘ah* as well: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 216.

⁷⁷³ This is Shāh Ni‘matullāh III (Nm.VI.a). See Figure 3. Here and in a few other places, the printed text actually gives the *nisbah* “Bāfqī,” rather than Bāqī. This is an error for Bāqī, his usual sobriquet. At least

ordered a mosque of lofty foundations to be built and with the utmost pains and perfect adornment and brought it to completion. On the other side is a building, which they call *Manṣūrīyah*⁷⁷⁴. . . Indeed, the aforementioned *khānqāh* has a courtyard— one that is pleasant, spacious, and invigorates the spirit (*rūḥ-afzāyī*). The length and width of it is lined with innumerable stalls and chambers and accommodates many canals and streams.⁷⁷⁵ Its open space is pleasant and cheerful; its garden greener even than the Garden of Iram.⁷⁷⁶ Its air tempers even the spring breeze; its spirit-invigorating fragrance perfumes the mind of the soul. *Maṣnavī*:

A rose patch like the garden of youth;
its rose, saturated with the water of life.

gulistān'ī chu gulzār-i javānī
gulash sīrāb-i āb-i zindagānī

The melody of its nightingale, pleasure-inducing;
its perfume-sprinkled breeze, repose-tinged.

navā-yi 'andalībash 'ishrat-angīz
*nasīm-i 'ītr-bīzash rāḥat-āmīz*⁷⁷⁷

Aside from a short coda, in which Mufīd packs the rest of the history of the *khānqāh* up to the eleventh/seventeenth century in one paragraph, these verses mark the end of the notice. We will return to that last paragraph later in this chapter (page 479). In the meantime, we should note although this notice pertaining to one of the most important sites in the region is quite terse, we should recall that Mufīd has routinely left his topographical notices enticingly elliptical and referential; either he tucks the real meat of the story into other chapters around his compendium—in the chronographic and prosopographical sections—or, if the backstory is well known, he

one of the manuscripts gives “Bāqī” in this place, not Bāfī. For example, see: Muḥammad Mustawfī Mufīd Bāfī, “Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī (Suppl. Pers. 1824),” in *Manuscripts Persans* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nationale, 1090/1679), 223b. No other author ever claimed that Ni‘matullāh III (or any members of the Ni‘matullāhī family) was from Bāfī. In Mufīd’s tarjamah for this figure in his hagiographical section of the work, this figure is referred to as Bāqī. See Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfī, *JM*, 3: 56–60. Also see the hagiographical portion in the BnF manuscript: Mufīd Bāfī, “*JM* (BnF Suppl. Pers. 1824),” 27b. The error may actually reflect a copyist’s error in one of the manuscripts, but not one that I have seen myself.

⁷⁷⁴ Mīrmīrān constructed this mosque for his son Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Manṣūr (Nm.VIII.f), who had died fairly young, and buried him there: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfī, *JM*, 3: 67.

⁷⁷⁵ Later Mufīd describes the clarity of these waters with a rather nice image; he writes, “one can count the grains of sand on the bottom, and one can see the fish-eggs in the hollows (*dānah-i rīg dar qa‘r-i ān tavān shumurd va bayz-i māhī dar jawf-i ān tavān dīd*).” *Ibid.*, 3: 687.

⁷⁷⁶ The fabulous garden of Iram constructed by King Shaddād of the tribe of ‘Ād in imitation of the garden of paradise. In the Qur’ān, the people of ‘Ād denied the prophecy of Hūd and his people were destroyed by a violent storm when they refused to give up their idols. (Q 11: 50–60, 46: 24–25). The garden is not mentioned in the Qur’ān.

⁷⁷⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfī, *JM*, 3: 685–7.

simply expects his reader to know it from other sources. As we have repeated many times, part of the subtly in the author's message comes through in the referential form of his text. This notice on the complex at Taft is no different. But before we return to the conclusion of Mufīd's notice on Taft, we will need to fill in a great deal of this backstory, which he has left implicit. In order to tell that story, we will need to look outside of Mufīd's telling. We will conclude Mufīd's notice on the shrine only after we have excavated the stories beneath it.

As a point of entry into this bigger story, we should note a particularly curious element of Mufīd's description of the shrine: The tomb built for Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī stands empty. Neither Mufīd nor Aḥmad Kātib offer any explanation as to why Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī never actually graced the tomb built for him at the khānqāh with his blessed bones. Indeed, it is unclear why this tomb would have been built for Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī in the first place, given that his home and center of operations were outside of Kirmān, in Māhān. In fact, despite what the Yazdī authors relate, it is possible that the tomb was not actually built for him to begin with. If this is the case, then whose tomb this was supposed to be remains shrouded in mystery. Nevertheless, the fact that the shaykh's body was interred in the Bāgh-i Kushk near his khānqāh at Māhān indicates the relative importance of the center in Kirmān at the time or, perhaps more accurately, the relative power of the community of followers based in Kirmān. As a result that town became an important shrine town and the center of Ni'matullāhī devotional practice prior to the rise of Taft. If *JM* and *TJY* are correct, and Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī really did have a tomb constructed for himself at Taft, it appears that Yazdīs performed *ziyārat* at the saint's empty tomb even without the presence of

his remains. This is not an unheard of practice in Persianate Sufism; occasionally dummy shrines serve as local outlets for a distant tomb. The tele-tomb serves as a kind of terminal that conveys prayers to a remote saint and makes his barakah available for local access.⁷⁷⁸

Early history of the Ni‘matullāhī family

Regardless of Khānqāh-i Taft’s early history, that shrine did later grow in size, wealth, and importance as the Taft branch of the family rose to preeminence and as many of the shaykh’s descendants were laid to rest on site, including the prominent Shāh Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b) (see below), Shāh Ni‘matullāh Bāqī III (Nm.VI), and as Mufīd emphasizes in the above passage, his wife, Khānish Baygum (S.II.a), sister of Shāh Ṭahmāsb Ṣafavī.⁷⁷⁹ As a consequence of these tombs, the shrine became a center of *ziyārat* and as affluent a site of saintly charisma as Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s real tomb, even to the point of eclipsing the shrine at Māhān. The story of Taft’s rise is intertwined with the history of the Ni‘matullāhī order in Iran and the Deccan during the ninth/fifteenth century. That story is in turn tied up with history of Yazd’s involvement in the imperial politics in both places. Mufīd’s Yazdī spin on the narrative offers a valuable perspective on that order’s role in contemporary geopolitics, in which the region of Yazd occupied an important place.

⁷⁷⁸ A modern example is the empty tomb outside of Flint, MI for ‘Abd Allāh Fā’izī al-Daghistānī, the late shaykh of Naqshbandī-Ḥaqqānī Sufi order, who is buried in Syria. I learned this from some of the *murīds* who showed me the sarcophagus to me and explained its function before performing supplications in its midst.

⁷⁷⁹ At least one of the *quṭb*’s of the Deccanī branch of the family, Mīr Shāh Burhān al-Dīn Khalīl Allāh II, who was murdered in Herat, was transported to Taft and buried there. A plaque at his mausoleum gives the date of his death. However, the date in Terry Graham’s chapter is given as 925/1518 in one place and 855/1451 in another place. Terry Graham, "The Ni‘matu’llāhī Order Under Safavid Suppression and in Indian Exile," in *Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 184, 86.

Despite the rapid rise to prominence of the Ni‘matullāhī order, Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī stood outside the established regional circles of affiliation. He was a Ḥusaynī sayyid, who traced his descent from the fifth Imām, Muḥammad al-Bāqir. This meant that he hailed from a different sayyid line than that of the ‘Arīzī clans, who accounted for the bulk of Yazd’s sayyid families. Moreover, although his mother had roots in Fārs, near Shīrāz, his father’s family came from Aleppo in Syria; Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī was born in that distant land in 730/1330 and spent his early childhood there.⁷⁸⁰ Although the shaykh spent his formative years studying in Shīrāz he only came to the regions of south-central Iran (Kirmān and Yazd) much later, after he had acquired a following. Before that time, in his early adulthood, he spent long years of study in Egypt, the Ḥijāz,⁷⁸¹ and Azerbaijan. He began performing miracles and teaching in Central Asia, then moved to Khurāsān,⁷⁸² and only after that, in the 790s/1390s did he settle in central Iran, outside of Kirmān, in a place called Kūhbanān, near the shrine of a famous Sufi, Shaykh Burhān al-Dīn Kūhbanānī. Within a few short years, however, despite his outsider’s portfolio, Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s influence reached Yazd, where it grew alongside that of the local, sayyid notables, who had been solidifying their power and authority in Yazd and the world outside it since Īlkhānid times.⁷⁸³ We should note at

⁷⁸⁰ For an introduction to Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s life and career, see Terry Graham, "Shah Ni‘matullah Wali: Founder of the Ni‘matullahi Sufi Order," in *The Heritage of Sufism: The Legacy of Medieval Persian Sufism (1150-1500)*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1992). However, Aubin’s article on Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī and his descendants in involvement with the royal courts of Iran and India is still the most thorough: Jean Aubin, "De Kūhbanān à Bidar: La famille Ni‘matullahī," *Studia Iranica* 20, no. ii (1991). Also see the relatively recent and very useful dissertation: Michael Paul Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah" (Harvard University, 2004).

⁷⁸¹ In Mecca, he studied for many years with the *faqīh* and Sufi, al-Yafī‘ī (d. 768/1367), who declared him his *khalifah*. See discussion in Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 27-9.

⁷⁸² All the hagiographies agree that Tīmūr banished Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī because he was jealous of the Sufi’s thaumaturgical powers.

⁷⁸³ The history of the Yazdī sayyids’ rise was discussed in chapter 3.

this point that even later on, there appears to be no record of competition between Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s descendents and the ‘Arīzī sayyid families of Yazd. In fact, as we will observe in a moment, during the disorder of the late Shāh Rūkhid period, there appears to have been a good deal of cooperation and mutual respect between the ‘Arīzī sayyids and the Ni‘matullāhīs.

During this period, while Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī lived in Kirmān, probably before settling permanently in Māhān, he attracted the attention and patronage of the Tīmūrid prince, Iskandar bin ‘Umar Shaykh, who ruled Fārs under Shāh Rūkh from 812-817/1409-1414, so much so that before Shāh Rūkh terminated Iskandar’s reign, the prince chose to give Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī the town of Taft as a *suyūrghāl*.⁷⁸⁴ It was at this point that the Sufi shaykh erected his khānqāh there, the Khānqāh-i Taft or Khānqāh-i Shāh Valī. While he remained alive, the khānqāh that the Shaykh built at Māhān and not the one at Taft served as the center of community of followers, who were beginning to seek him out from far outside central Iran.

Relocation to the Deccan and the rise of Taft

By the time of the shaykh’s death in 834/1431, he and his deputies had already established ties with the Bahmānid ruler in the Deccan, Aḥmad Shāh I, (r. 825-39/ 1422-36), who declared himself a devotee of the shaykh and lavished him with patronage.⁷⁸⁵ This was a relationship that would affect the particular unfolding of events that

⁷⁸⁴ Terry Graham argues that having a base in Yazd was of strategic importance for Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī and his followers, since Kirmān was coming under threat of raids by Buluchi tribesmen. They were also suffering from heavy taxation by local governors, who were determined to exert their independence from the Tīmūrid court. Graham, "Ni‘matu'llāhī Order," 166-7, 71.

⁷⁸⁵ Aḥmad Shāh I contributed significantly to the construction of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s tomb. He commissioned a pair of ornate doors to be fashioned from sandalwood and shipped to Māhān. To this day, these still open onto the crypt itself.

characterized the rise of the Taft shrine. Not long after Shāh Valī's death, however, Māhān's importance waned in favor of Taft's, as we indicated above.

Aḥmad Shāh Bahmānī had turned to Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī after his former spiritual master, the famous Chishtī Sufi, Shaykh Gaysū-Darāz, died in 824/1422.⁷⁸⁶ The king invited Shāh Valī to his capital at Bīdar, but had to settle for one of the shaykh's leading disciples, Quṭb al-Dīn Kirmānī. After more pressure from Aḥmad Shāh to at least send his son and chosen successor, Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II), Shāh Valī dispatched his eldest grandson, Mīr Nūr Allāh (Nm.III.b). Apparently, Nūr Allāh proved a worthy substitute because the Bahmānid sovereign married his daughter to him,⁷⁸⁷ raised him above all other Sufis in Bīdar, even above Gaysū-Darāz's descendants, and built a khānqāh complex for him, called Ni'matābād.

It was only after Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī's demise, when his successor and only son, Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II), fell into difficulties with Shāh Rūkh—or more likely with Tīmūrid agents in Kirmān—that the Bahmānid sulṭān saw his wish fulfilled.⁷⁸⁸ Feeling the pressure of rapacious taxation, Khalīl Allāh migrated to Aḥmad Shāh's court in India sometime toward the end of the 830s/early 1430s. Two of the shaykh's sons accompanied him to Bīdar, Mīr Muḥibb al-Dīn Ḥabīb Allāh (Nm.III.c) and Mīr Ḥabīb al-

⁷⁸⁶ Connell, "The Ni'matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 114, Haroon Khan Sherwani, *The Bahmanis of the Deccan* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharial, 1985), 133. The fact that the Bahmānid shāh moved immediately to replace his former pīr speaks to the degree to which sovereigns needed a partnership with a leading holy figure.

⁷⁸⁷ Sherwani, *Bahmanis*, 134.

⁷⁸⁸ The hagiographies, including the notice given in *JM*, present the governor of Kirmān as trying to frame Khalīl Allāh for withholding proper taxes. He comes before Shāh Rūkh to answer for himself and secures the sovereign's trust. Nonetheless, Connell argues that in truth, the relationship between the Ni'matullāhī pīr and the Tīmūrid sovereign remained cold. Connell, "The Ni'matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 111-13, Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order," 171-2. Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī himself had fallen into trouble with Tīmūr earlier, who forced him out of Samarqand at the behest the master of rival ṭarīqah, the Naqshbandīyah, namely, Amīr Kulāl (d. 773/1371).

Dīn Muḥibb Allāh (Nm.III.d), but the new *quṭb* of the order left another son, Mīr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad (Nm.III.a), as his *nā'ib* at the Māhān khānqāh. The Bahmānid Sulṭān became a disciple of Shāh Khalīl Allāh, who rose to the very top of the dignitaries and holy men at court. In fact, he even placed the crown upon the Sulṭān Aḥmad II's head.⁷⁸⁹ Mīr Ḥabīb al-Dīn Muḥibb Allāh and Mīr Muḥibb al-Dīn Ḥabīb Allāh received favors and *jāgīrs*⁷⁹⁰ at the Bahmānid court and were wedded to Bahmānid princesses. Ḥabīb al-Dīn Muḥibb (Nm.III.d), the younger and more scholarly of the two, succeeded Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II) as the spiritual head of the Ni'matullāhī *ṭariqah*, and, just as his father had done, he retained control over the assets in Iran and exercised his authority over Mīr Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad's family in Māhān.⁷⁹¹ Apparently before Khalīl Allāh died, he ordered three of Ḥabīb al-Dīn Muḥibb's (Nm.III.d) seventeen sons to go to Taft. These were Shāh 'Abd Allāh (Nm.IV.a), Shāh Ṣafī al-Dīn (Nm.IV.b), and Ṣahīr al-Dīn 'Alī (Nm.IV.c). All three of them had been born at the court to a Bahmānid princess, daughter of Aḥmad Shāh I, and had never visited their ancestor's shrine towns in Iran.⁷⁹² Ṣahīr al-Dīn 'Alī

⁷⁸⁹ Sherwani, *Bahmanis*, 158. Also see Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order," 175 (note 25). Participants in the ceremony and observers would have understood that by acting as officiant for the king's coronation, Shāh Khalīl Allāh's held the most favored position at the court. Moreover, his role in this ritual would have also communicated his status as an extremely important religious figure in the realm. This would have been true for Muslims as well as non-Muslims who were participating in and observing the ceremonies. Hindus considered the role of the priest in coronation (or installation) ceremonies to be essential and would have seen parallels immediately. See the discussion of medieval Hindu *Abiṣeka* ritual (in particular, the *paṭṭa-bandha* [binding of the headband or crown] ritual) in Ronald Inden, "Ritual, Authority, and Cyclic Time in Hindu Kingship," in *Kingship and Authority in South Asia*, ed. J.F. Richards (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72-6.

⁷⁹⁰ *Jāgīr* is a technical term in Indian land administration meaning a grant of land, or more properly, the rights to collect revenue on a particular allotment of land in exchange for service to the ruler. It derives from Persian and means literally "place-holding."

⁷⁹¹ Connell, "The Ni'matullāhī Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi *tariqah*", 116.

⁷⁹² See Sherwani, *Bahmanis*, table at end of work (after p. 348). Note, Connell mistakenly reports that Ḥabīb Allāh married Khānzā al-Dīn, daughter of Shāh 'Alā' al-Dīn Bahmānī (Aḥmad II (839-862/1436-1458)). See: Connell, "The Ni'matullāhī Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi *tariqah*", 117. Connell also reports that another of Khalīl Allāh's sons, Ṣiyā' al-Dīn, apparently married another daughter of this Bahmanid prince Shāh 'Ālā' al-Dīn. Graham does not include this Ṣiyā' al-Dīn among Khalīl Allāh's sons.

(Nm.IV.c) apparently was given authority over the others and soon become the dominant representative of the Ni‘matullāhī family in Iran,⁷⁹³ completely overshadowing the authority of his cousins in Māhān.⁷⁹⁴ From that point on, Taft became the seat of the Ni‘matullāhī ṭarīqah in Iran.⁷⁹⁵ Despite the broad reach of the Taft shrine, which was already drawing visitors from the Arabian Peninsula, Khurāsān, and Transoxiana,⁷⁹⁶ the spiritual heads of the order, the *quṭbs*, remained in India.⁷⁹⁷

In part, Ṣahīr al-Dīn ‘Alī (Nm.IV.c) succeeded because he found opportunities to play upon the rivalries that erupted between Tīmūrid princes in the mid-ninth century A.H., and he worked in concert with the other notable sayyid families of the region. During Sulṭān Muḥammad bin Bāysunghur’s revolt against Shāh Rūkh (discussed at in chapter 2, starting on page 272), Ṣahīr al-Dīn ‘Alī personally appeared in Iṣfahān, along with other notables from Yazd, among them, the now familiar Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī (R.VI.a, Figure 1), to declare his allegiance to the prince. In exchange, Sulṭān

⁷⁹³ This immigration and restructuring of the family hierarchy is discussed in Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 49. See also: Graham, "Ni‘matu'llāhī Order," 180.

⁷⁹⁴ Shāh Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad, the custodian of Māhān, died prematurely at roughly forty years old; we have no reports on his sons other than their names. Graham, "Ni‘matu'llāhī Order," 178.

⁷⁹⁵ Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 119. Connell suggests that rise of Taft was in part due to the fact that the Tīmūrids used Māhān as a base for military operations against the Qarā Qūyūnlūs. The town was ravaged during those wars and never really recovered. Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 122.

⁷⁹⁶ Michael Connell makes the argument that early on the shrine developed such strong magnetism in his dissertation: Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 169. His basis for this claim comes from statements to that affect in ‘Abd al-Razzāq Kirmānī’s hagiography of Shāh Ni‘matullāhī Valī: Aubin, ed. *Majmū‘ah*, 49. Because of the hagiographic purpose of this work, we should take this claim with a grain of salt.

⁷⁹⁷ Terry Graham argues that after Khalīl Allāh, although the succession of the order passed through the Deccan branch of the family, there was never a sense of a real Sufi ṭarīqah there called the Ni‘matullāhīyah. They seem to have been considered *pīrādahs*, serving as *sajjādah-nishīns*, i.e. hereditary custodians of the shrines of their ancestor, Khalīl Allāh. In fact, the Indian sources usually mention them as a branch of the Qādirīyah. Nonetheless, they thrived as important *jāgīr* holders and influential *grandees* at court due to their royal connections. They were by no means spiritual leaders. Graham, "Ni‘matu'llāhī Order," 167, 73-5.

Muḥammad confirmed the family's *suyūrghāls*.⁷⁹⁸ After this joint mission, Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī retired to Taft and demonstrated his friendship and devotion to the Ni'matullāhīs by building a *khalvat-khānah* (retreat center) in the Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī's khānqāh complex. Then, when Sulṭān Muḥammad later met his fate at the hands of his brother, Abū al-Qāsim Bābur, Ṣahīr al-Dīn (Nm.IV.c) wisely traveled from Taft to Yazd proper together with Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī, in order to offer allegiance, which Bābur accepted.⁷⁹⁹ Indeed, here we may find evidence that some competition may have been brewing between the two sayyids. After the meeting, Bābur gave Taft to Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī as a *suyūrghāl*, rather than to the leading Ni'matullāhī figure, Ṣahīr al-Dīn.⁸⁰⁰

Nonetheless, when Khalīl Sulṭān,⁸⁰¹ Abū al-Qāsim Bābur's newly appointed governor of Yazd, squeezed the region for funds and oppressed the populace, Ṣahīr al-Dīn (Nm.IV.c) led the campaign to shut him out of the city in coordination with other notable of the city. During Khalīl Sulṭān's devastating siege that followed, the Ni'matullāhī shaykh was instrumental in orchestrating the Qarā Qūyūnlū's rescue under prince Pīr Būdāq, an episode that we have encountered once before, in chapter 1.⁸⁰² Ṣahīr al-Dīn had succeeded in weathering the storm of violence that had ripped

⁷⁹⁸ The sources do not offer an explanation about how Ṣahīr al-Dīn managed to survive Shāh Rūkh's massacre of Sulṭān Muḥammad's supporters, even though they go to great lengths to account for Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī's survival. This episode was discussed in chapter 2, starting page 272. It should be noted that Sulṭān Muḥammad's father, Bāysunghur, had earlier declared himself a devotee of Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II). *Ibid.*, 172.

⁷⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 181.

⁸⁰⁰ Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 264. Aḥmad Kātib refers to Ṣahīr al-Dīn as Amīr Nūr al-Dīn Ni'matullāh.

⁸⁰¹ Another Tīmūrid prince, who was a distant cousin of Bābur, descended from Shāh Rūkh's brother, Jahāngīr.

⁸⁰² See footnote 116. Other authors do not paint such a heroic picture of Pīr Būdāq. The anonymous *Tārīkh-i Quṭb-Shāhī*, which gives the history of the Qarā Qūyūnlū family (who were the ancestors of the Quṭb Shāhs of the Deccan), makes plain that Pīr Būdāq repeatedly rebelled against his father, Jahān Shāh. An English translation of the relevant section in this work is available in: V Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Quṭb-Shahs," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 17, no. 1 (1955): 66.

across the western and southern portions of Iran in the mid-ninth century. He managed to secure an honored place for the Ni‘matullāhī family and their followers in Yazd and in the realm at large under the newly empowered Qarā Qūyūnlū dynasty. This alliance would affect affairs in Iran and the Deccan for generations, as I will argue.

Bedding the Qarā Qūyūnlūs and early Safavids: Ni‘matullāhī power at its height

Ẓahīr al-Dīn ‘Alī’s son, Na‘īm al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b), succeeded his father as the head of the order in Iran. The family quickly secured an exalted position for themselves in the Qarā Qūyūnlū household. Na‘īm al-Dīn married Khānum Sulṭān, the daughter of the victorious emperor Jahānshāh. Mufīd mostly ignores the Aq Qūyūnlūs, but where he does allude to them, they appear in a less than favorable light. This is consistent with the standard Ṣafavid line on the dynasty; the Aq Qūyūnlūs were, after all, the ruling house that Ismā‘īl I Ṣafavī vanquished. Also, they were responsible for sending the Qarā Qūyūnlū family packing for India and destroying the just rule that dynasty had established in Yazd. Jahānshāh’s rule had previously saved the city from the devastation that the fighting between Tīmūrid princes had caused.

Moreover, in his desire to demonstrate close ties between the Ni‘matullāhī family and the Ṣafavid, Bahmānid, and Quṭb Shāhī dynasties, Mufīd felt compelled to characterize the relationship between the Aq Qūyūnlūs and the Ni‘matullāhīs of Yazd as an oppositional one. For example, he includes a miracle-tale in his work, in which Shāh Ni‘matullāh II exposes Ūzūn Ḥasan’s secret ill will toward him. Ūzūn Ḥasan invites the shaykh to Shīrāz under the auspices of honoring him, but with the true intention of rampaging the holy man’s home in Taft, where his wife, Khānum Sulṭān had supposedly

hidden a large stash of jewels. The shaykh is invited to lead the prayer, but as soon as he recites the *shahādah*, Ūzūn Ḥasan blacks out and finds himself in the presence of the Prophet Muḥammad, who scolds him, saying, “We have seen to it that you acquire sovereignty and we have had you assigned to kingship. Yet, on account of some little worldly nonsense, you have gotten yourself into a tight spot with my descendent.”⁸⁰³ After coming to, the king renounces his wicked intentions and from then on honors Shāh Ni‘matullāh II.⁸⁰⁴

Setting aside Mufīd’s characterization of the Aq Qūyūnlūs for a moment, Abū Bakr Tihranī’s *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah* demonstrates that, in actuality, Ūzūn Ḥasan Aq Qūyūnlū continued to honor Shāh Na‘īm al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b), albeit not to the extent that Jahānshāh had.⁸⁰⁵ When Ūzūn Ḥasan ordered a *maḥmil* constructed for his royal ḥāj̄j caravan out of Yazdī silk, he requested that Shāh Ni‘matullāhī II bless it and accompany it from Yazd to Qumm.⁸⁰⁶ In spite of this Yazdī notable’s close ties with the Aq Qūyūnlūs’ enemy, Jahānshāh Qarā Qūyūnlū, it turns out that in reality Ūzūn Ḥasan deemed the power and charisma Ni‘matullāh II wielded essential for his own display of authority and for his own claim to the important title, “Servitor of the Two

⁸⁰³ “*Mā sulṭānat bā tu mītavānīm dīd va pādīshāhī bi-tu musallam dāshtīm, tu bi-jahat-i qalīlī az muzakhrāfāt-i dunyavī bā farzand-i mā dar maqām-i muḥā‘iqah dar āmadah-ī.*”

⁸⁰⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 52. This episode was most likely not borrowed from Sun‘ Allāh’s hagiographical works, which apparently only concerned Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī (Nm.I) and his son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II). Aubin believes all the Mufīd’s material on Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b) to have been of his own, or rather, to have been based upon other sources. Aubin, ed. *Majmū‘ah*, 7.

⁸⁰⁵ See Connell’s discussion in Connell, “The Ni‘matullāhi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah”, 128.

⁸⁰⁶ Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s role in this affair here parallels that of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī in the *kisva* episode of Shāh Rūkh’s reign, which was discussed in chapter 2, page 276). Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī accompanied the covering from Yazd to Herat. The source of this episode in Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s career is: Tihranī, *Kitāb-i Diyārbakrīyah*, 2: 553-4, 60-1. (In Tihranī’s text, Shāh Ni‘matullāh is referred to as Sayyid Ni‘matullāh Ṣānī or Amīr Sayyid) Also see discussion in Woods, *Aqquyunlu*, 107-8.

Holy Cities.”⁸⁰⁷ This was a title that he hoped to snatch away from the rival Mamlūk kings. The ḥājī caravan marked a critical step in Ūzūn Ḥasan’s imperial program, and the monarch could not exclude the Ni‘matullāhīs of Yazd from that event, nor could he ignore the region’s silk industry with which the Ni‘matullāhīs were economically involved.⁸⁰⁸

Some time after the Aq Qūyūnlūs vanquished the Qarā Qūyūnlū dynasty, the succession to the Ni‘matullāhī authority passed to Ni‘matullāh II’S son, Ḥahīr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Nm.VI.b),⁸⁰⁹ and then later to the descendants of Shāh Ḥahīr al-Dīn ‘Alī’s brother, Shāh Ṣafī al-Dīn (Nm.IV.b). If we believe Mufīd’s account, Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b) retired to Māhān after having a vision telling him to do so and left the administration of his properties to his son, who disappears from the sources, making way for the story of Ḥahīr al-Dīn’s cousins’ rise under the Ṣafavids.⁸¹⁰ Despite the fact that Ni‘matullāh II’s own line dies off, Mufīd gives Na‘īm al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh II’s place in the drama of the Qarā Qūyūnlūs and Aq Qūyūnlūs a critical place in his overall narrative, and we will return to it below (page 498).

The status of the Ni‘matullāhī family in Taft only increased under the early

⁸⁰⁷ The ruler’s need for association with the holy man should not be understood in exclusively functionalist terms. In other words, while indeed he needed to demonstrate his association with the charismatic Sufi for legitimacy, he likely believed that association would bring real beneficial results outside the symbolic ones.

⁸⁰⁸ Graham points to the involvement of the Ni‘matullāhī family in the silk production and trade, but does not show specific connections. Graham, "Ni‘matullāhī Order," 167. He does cite the collection of letters (*Munsha’āt*) assembled by Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, which contains correspondence between Nūr Allāh (probably Muḥibb al-Dīn’s son) and various cousins, which shed light on the commercial affairs of the family. Graham, "Ni‘matullāhī Order," 179, note 36. Aubin discusses this collection of letters at various points in his important article: Aubin, "De Kūhbanān à Bidar: La famille Ni‘matullāhī." Also see Binbaṣ’s discussion of this *Munsha’āt-i Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī* (along with Tīmūrid *Munsha’āt* in general) in Binbaṣ, "Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī", 12-15. An edited edition of the *Munsha’āt* of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī were on the verge of being completed by Irāj Afshār at the time of that great scholar’s death. At the time of writing I have not been able to access this source.

⁸⁰⁹ Ḥahīr al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Bāqī should not be confused with the eminent and powerful Niẓām al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Nm.V.a), who was Ḥahīr al-Dīn’s first cousin once-removed.

⁸¹⁰ Mufīd *Mustawfī Bāfīqī*, JM, 3: 52.

Şafavids, and as the Ni‘matullāhīs buried in the vicinity of the khānqāh attracted more visitors and wealth, the size of the complex also expanded. The ascent of the Ni‘matullāhīs during the early Şafavid period is remarkable, considering that the Şafavids perceived almost every other Sufi organization within the realm as a threat to their exclusive claims to universal religious and temporal authority. Eventually, the Şafavids actively scattered or killed the members of all of the most important Sufi orders. Others have already dealt with the question of why the Ni‘matullāhī family did not pose a threat to the preeminence of the Şafavid Sufi order-royal house, where the others did. The generally accepted explanation, that the Ni‘matullāhīs shrewdly chose to espouse a distinctly Twelver-Shī‘ī orientation, in line with Shāh Ismā‘īl I’s own Shī‘ī pronouncements is convincing, but only partially so.⁸¹¹ Though important, this affiliation with Twelver-Shiism was only the beginning. The Ni‘matullāhīs and their followers listened carefully to the rhetoric and sometimes contradictory messages coming out of the Şafavid house and produced rhetoric of their own that complemented, rather than challenged the Şafavids’ messianic ideology and claims to universal rule. The most outstanding example is Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s prediction of the *Mahdī*’s arrival in 909 A.H., which his sixteenth-century hagiographers took to have presaged Shāh Ismā‘īl’s rise to power. This episode will be examined in detail below (page 492). In the meantime, it suffices to say that in much the same way that the Tīmūrīds needed to benefit from the authoritative and potentially dangerous astrological skills of men like Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Yazdī, so too did the early Şafavids need these powerful notables of Yazd for their own nascent program of empire building. The

⁸¹¹ For example, this explanation can be found in Said Amir Arjomand, *The shadow of God and the Hidden Imam : religion, political order, and societal change in Shi'ite Iran from the beginning to 1890*, Publications of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. 17 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 116.

Şafavids relied on the Ni‘matullāhīs’ acumen, their charisma, and their powerful networks of affiliates. They also needed behind them the wealth that the family possessed, wrapped up in the silk industry. One must also take into consideration the geopolitical consequences of an alliance with the Ni‘matullahīs. The tarīqah comprised a wide, transregional network of devoted communities. In addition to the centers in Taft-Yazd, Māhān, and apparently Tabrīz, there was also the key center in the Indian Deccan, namely the shrine centers in Bīdar, which had been patronized by the Bahmānid sulṭāns.⁸¹² The descendants of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī who had remained in the Deccan continued to be influential at the Bahmānid court and then, after its disintegration, among some of the Deccani Sultanates, notably the Nizām Shāhīs of Aḥmadnagar, the Barīd Shāhs of Bīdar, the ‘Ādil Shāhīs of Bījapur, and to some extent, the Quṭb Shāhīs of Golconda.⁸¹³ It is noteworthy that some of these dynasties had also professed Shiism. Access to the Ni‘matullāhī network furnished the Şafavid house with ties to these various Deccani houses. The Şafavids valued good relations with these kingdoms in part because of the religious and cultural affiliation, but more importantly, because they comprised an important check against the Mughal sovereigns’ preeminence in the North, and they often distracted the Mughals’ designs on Şafavid holdings on the Khurāsānī frontier.

In short, the Ni‘matullāhīs promised to be valuable allies who were willing to play ball with the Şafavids. The Ni‘matullāhīs had cultivated a widespread popular following

⁸¹² The most important of these are the Chawkhandī, the tomb of Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.II) and the Takht-i Kirmānī, Shāh Khalīl Allāh’s palatial residence that Aḥmad Bahmānī I had constructed for him. Another is the tomb of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s most famous disciple, Aḥmad I himself. A fourth is the madrasah complex built by Maḥmūd Gāwān, a Ni‘matullāhī disciple from Gīlān, who became the vazīr of the Bahmānīd court. See: Graham, "Ni‘matullāhī Order," 176-7.

⁸¹³ Green, *Making Space*, 127-8.

that extended further than that of the Ṣafavid tarīqah and had established a powerful shrine center that could potentially have rivaled the Ṣafavid complex at Ardabīl; even still, the family and their notable followers made it easy and appealing for the early Ṣafavids to allow them to prosper and to admit them into the inner circle of royal household.

Thus, the family rose quickly in the socio-political order of the realm and began forging marriage alliances with the Ṣafavid house. Amīr Niẓām al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Bāqī (Nm.V.a), the son of Shāh Ṣafī al-Dīn (Nm.IV.b), became Shāh Ismā‘īl’s Ṣadr, the highest religious office in the Ṣafavid household, and later, his Vakīl, the pādishāh’s second in command.⁸¹⁴ In fact, ‘Abd al-Bāqī enjoyed the honor of leading the center of Shāh Ismā‘īl’s forces at the infamous Battle of Chāldirān (920/1514), where he was killed along with several other high-ranking members of the Shāh’s inner circle.

Niẓām al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Bāqī’s own son, Shāh Na‘īm al-Dīn (Nūr al-Dīn) Bāqī Ni‘matullāh III (Nm.VI.a) (d. 971/1563), also held high office. Upon Ṭahmāsb’s accession, he was confirmed as the *naqīb* and given the governorship of Yazd. Beyond these titles, his lofty station and unmatched influence is evident when one considers the company he kept: It was he who negotiated for the life of Ṭahmāsb’s rebellious brother, Alqāṣ Mīrzā after his capture,⁸¹⁵ and in 961/1554-5, he married one of Shāh Ismā‘īl’s daughters, Khānish Baygum (S.II.a). (It was this Khānish Baygum who constructed the congregational mosque in Taft, just opposite Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s khānqāh, known

⁸¹⁴ See Sholeh Quinn’s discussion of these political appointments in the early Ṣafavid historiography of the Herat tradition in Sholeh Quinn, "Rewriting Ni‘matullāh History in Safavid Chronicles," in *Heritage of Sufism*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn (Oxford: Oneworld, 1999), 208-10. Also see: Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 116.

⁸¹⁵ This episode is famously recounted in Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 74-5.

as Masjid-i Shāh Valī.)⁸¹⁶ Furthermore, during Shāh Ṭahmāsb's reign, Khanish Baygum, in concert with Shāh Ni'matullāh III, constructed a mosque in Yazd itself, known as Masjid-i Shāh Ṭahmāsb, the original structure of which is not extant.⁸¹⁷

The son of Ni'matullāh III and Khānish Baygum, Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Mīrmīrān (Nm.VII) (d. 1000/1592), proved a formidable figure who was both politically astute and spiritually revered.⁸¹⁸ Although he made a series of dire miscalculations toward the end of life, before this time, he actively maintained close relations with the Ṣafavids and broadcasted his support for the shāhs through his building practices. For example, he constructed a *dawlat-khānah* in Maḥallah-i Dar-i Madrasah, on the Maydān-i Shāh of Yazd, in honor of Shāh 'Abbās I, which was named the 'Abbāsiyah.⁸¹⁹ Prior to that, Mīrmīrān sired a number of children, many of whom continued to marry into the Ṣafavid household during the reigns of Shāh Ṭahmāsb and his sons. Ṭahmāsb's successor, Shāh Ismā'īl II, himself married one of Mīrmīrān's daughters, Parī-Paykar Baygum (Nm.VIII.d). Their daughter, Ṣafīyah Sulṭān (S.IV.b) married her mother's

⁸¹⁶ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 686.

⁸¹⁷ Mufīd does not mention this edifice, but he does mention the Maydān-i Shāh, in which it is located and for which it was named. See: Afshār, *Yādgar'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 207-9. (In that place Afshār confuses the Ni'matullāh who built this mosque as being the son of Mīrmīrān. This was actually Ni'matullāh III, the father of Mīrmīrān, not Ni'matullāh IV, who was the son of Mīrmīrān. It is easy to confuse the two because both were married to Safavid princesses by the name of Khānish Baygum.) Also see: Connell, "The Ni'matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 170-1. Connell also notes Afshār's error.

⁸¹⁸ Mīrmīrān even had his own eulogizer-poet in his entourage, the important Ṣafavid era poet from Yazd, Vaḥshī (d. 991/1583-4), who composed numerous odes for him See: Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad Vaḥshī Bāfqī, *Dīvān-i Vaḥshī Bāfqī*, ed. Parvīz Bābā'ī (Tehran: Mūssasah-i Intishārāt-i Nigāh, 1373/1995), 147-224. With the exception of a very small handful of odes dedicated to other people, all of the odes in his *Dīvān* were addressed to Mīrmīrān. A notable exception is number 21 (p. 188), written for Mīrmīrān's son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh. Also see discussion in Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order," 192. Mufīd provides a tarjamah for Vaḥshī: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 423-5. On Vaḥshī, see: Paul Losensky, "Vaḥshī Bāfqī," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition*(2004).

⁸¹⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 65-66. Although Mīrmīrān built the palace in Shāh 'Abbās' honor, he lived in the building himself!

brother, Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.VIII.b).⁸²⁰ Two of Shāh Ṭahmāsb's daughters, Khadījah Sulṭān Baygum (S.III.c) and Khānish Baygum (S.III.d), married another of Mīrmīrān's sons, Shāh Ni'matullāh IV (Nm.VIII.a).⁸²¹ Mīrmīrān used another of his daughters to forge strategic marriage alliances with strong clans among the various *oymaks* (tribes) of the Qizlbāsh confederacy, who were violently competing for control over the weak Ṣafavid Shāh during the second civil war (984-998/1576-1590). During this period of instability, while power actually resided with the tribes, rather than with the shāh himself, these alliances with leaders of the warring factions proved essential for urban notable families such as the Ni'matullāhīs, who wished to obtain some semblance of security for their households amidst such instability and unpredictability. Mīrmīrān's daughter, who remains unnamed in the sources, first married Bayktāsh Khān of the Afshār tribe⁸²² and then, in 998 A.H., wedded the man who slew Bayktāsh Khān, namely, Ya'qūb Khān from the Zū al-Qadr tribe.

Although alliances with the Qizlbāsh tribesmen were necessary, they proved a

⁸²⁰ Graham declares this information to be patently false on numerous grounds but does not offer any explanations as to why. According to Graham, Ṣafīyah Sulṭān was a daughter of Muḥammad Khudābandah and not of Ismā'īl II. Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order," 194. Nonetheless, at least twice Mufīd claims that she was the daughter of Ismā'īl II. Mufīd calls her "*ṣabīyah-i ṣulbīyah-i Shāh Ismā'īl-i Ṣānī*" (Shāh Ismā'īl II's own daughter). Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 63, 67. Vālih Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī's explanation of Ṣafīyah Sulṭān's parentage agrees with Mufīd's: Vālih Qazvīnī Iṣfahānī, *Kuld-i Barīn: Shāh Ṣafī va Shāh 'Abbās II*, 116. In her important article on women in the Ṣafavid household, Maria Szuppe confirms that Shāh Khalīl married the daughter of an alliance between Parī Paykar and Ismā'īl II; however, Szuppe give the epithet Ṣafīyah Sulṭān to Parī Paykar and not to her daughter. She gives the daughter (Khalīl Allāh's wife) the title Ṣafīyah Khānum. To further confuse things, Szuppe refers to Parī Paykar's father, Mīrmīrān, as Ni'matullāh II. Szuppe, "La participation des femmes de la famille royale," 108. Other than Sholeh Quinn, everyone else, including the authors of the primary sources, uses that delineation for Na'im al-Dīn, son of Ṣahīr al-Dīn (Nm.V.b), who died back in 900/1494. It was not Na'im al-Dīn Ni'matullah II (Nm.V.b) who sired the line of the preeminent Ni'matullāhīs of the Ṣafavid era, but his uncle, Shāh Ṣafī al-Dīn (Nm.IV.b).

⁸²¹ Graham erroneously calls Khānish Baygum the daughter of Shāh Muḥammad Khudābandah rather than his sister on p. 194, but correctly refers to her as the sister of Muḥammad Khudābandah on p. 192. Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order." The other sources clearly state that she was Muḥammad Khuābandah's sister. For example, Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i 'Abbāsī*, 25-26.

⁸²² The spellings of his name vary. For Iskandar Bayk Munshī spells it "Bayktāsh"; Munajjim Yazdī spells it "Biktāsh."

risky business during such volatile times, while intrigue and double-dealing were rife. As we will soon see, at least the first of these two alliances proved a liability for Mīrmīrān in the long run.⁸²³ Moreover, they caused a rift between Mīrmīrān and his son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.VIII.b), which injured the family and negatively affected Yazdīs across the city.

The beginning of the end: How Shāh ‘Abbās I got to Yazd

The final chapters of the civil war are exceedingly complex, and it was in part because of Mīrmīrān’s support for his son-in-law, Bayktāsh Khān, that the Nī‘matullāhīs of Yazd were dragged into the melee. Yazd ended up at the center of a nasty bit of violence between rival factions within the Afshār and Zū al-Qadr tribes who had sought to undermine the shāh’s authority. In the end the affair would have long term effects on the Nī‘matullāhīs relationship with the shāh. Finally, in 998/1590, Shāh ‘Abbās would put an end to fourteen years of chaos that shaken the realm after Ṭahmāsb’s death and thereby consolidate his power over the Qizlbāsh and various rebellious factions. All the sources report that in 999/1591 when all matters had been settled, Shāh ‘Abbās paid a visit to the Nī‘matullāhīs in Yazd to confirm good relations with the Nī‘matullāhīs and other notables there and to make new official appointments. While the authors of other Safavid sources treat this visit as a matter of course, Mufīd makes a big deal out of it. His account of Shāh ‘Abbās’s visit to Yazd will be important for our project, in part, because it provides details other sources omit. At the same time, because Mufīd’s writing on the Nī‘matullāhīs is so filled with innuendo and allusion and hyperbole, his meaning is

⁸²³ It is likely that the Nī‘matullāhīs had no choice but to approve this marriage. Ya‘qūb Khān may have forced the marriage with this girl who had been the bride of his rival, Bayktāsh Khān Afshār.

difficult to grasp at times; this extended episode provides us with an opportunity to pick up some clues about how his entire account of the Ni‘matullāhīs should be read, in particular his treatment of the Ni‘matullāhī family during his own lifetime, in the seventeenth century.

This having been said, in order to understand the significance of the Shāh’s visit to Yazd, we must first review the tangle of events that lead up to it. This bit of background will help flesh out the circumstances of the Ni‘matullāhīs’ involvement in these violent affairs.⁸²⁴ In the earlier part of 998/1590, Bayktāsh Khān Afshār was himself camped outside of Yazd in order to set a trap for his rival, Ya‘qūb Khān Zū al-Qadr, who, at that point in the story, had been demonstrating his loyalty to the Ṣafavid house. For this he had been appointed as the *Amīr al-Umarā’* in Fārs and governor of Shīrāz.⁸²⁵ Rather than take up his post in Kirmān, where Shāh ‘Abbās had installed him, Bayktāsh Khān had installed himself in the vicinity of Yazd, which was under the governance of ‘Alī Qulī Bayk Karāmatlū Shāmlū, and decided to besiege the citadel when ‘Alī Qulī Bayk wouldn’t support his cause.⁸²⁶ Mīrmīrān, who was Bayktāsh Khān’s father-in-law, favored handing over the city to him and, if we believe Iskandar Bayk

⁸²⁴ The events surrounding this period in Ṣafavid history appear in Volume 2 of the *JM*. A single complete copy of that work is extant in manuscript. It resides at the Salar-Jung Museum in Hyderabad India. Unfortunately, I have not been able to inspect that manuscript. Afshār tried but was not able to publish Volume 2 of the *JM* in its entirety. His published edition of that volume was made from a manuscript, which resides at the BM, which contains only an abridged version in a codex that contains a *majmū‘ah* of a number of other abridged works as well. Mufīd Bāfqī, "intikhāb-i tārikh-i salāṭīn [Jāmi‘-i Mufīdī, jild-i duvum] (OR 1963)." While the compiler of that codex did provide a full list of the contents of volume 2, he only included a small selection of those chapters in his *majmū‘ah*. Fortunately the episode of Shāh ‘Abbās’s visit was included among them; however, the events leading up to it were not included. Those events are listed in the list of contents. Until I can view the codex in Hyderabad, I must rely upon other well-known Ṣafavid histories to fill in that story.

⁸²⁵ Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 412.

⁸²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 420.

Munshī, actually egged Bayktāsh on in his rebellious behavior.⁸²⁷ Meanwhile, Ya‘qūb Khān convinced some of Bayktāsh Khān’s own tribesmen, including Yūsuf Khān Afshār (the son of the Qurchībāshī, Qulī Bayk), to join him in breaking Bayktāsh Khān’s siege.⁸²⁸ Apparently, Mīrmīrān’s son, Khalīl Allāh (Nm.III.b) opposed his father’s support of the disobedient Bayktāsh Khān, preferring the Afshār tribesmen loyal to the shāh and opened up communication with Ya‘qūb Khān Zū al-Qadr and Yūsuf Khān Afshār.⁸²⁹ According to Iskandar Bayk, Bayktāsh Khān’s father, Valī Khān Afshār, and his own vizier, Ḥātim Bayk, both also tried to convince him to give up his ambitions before it was too late.⁸³⁰ In the end, Ya‘qūb Khān’s threats prevailed upon Mīrmīrān to betray his son-in-law. He finally did so, albeit reluctantly, and Bayktāsh was killed.⁸³¹ After Ya‘qūb sent Bayktāsh Khān’s head to the royal camp, the Zū al-Qadr streamed into the city and plundered the homes of the Afshārs who had been loyal to Bayktāsh Khān, molesting the general population. They also humiliated the illustrious Mīrmīrān by exacting huge fines upon him for his support of Bayktāsh Khān.⁸³² Iskandar Bayk tells us that on Ya‘qūb Khān’s orders, his men even violated the old man’s house, but that they behaved a bit more tactfully than they had in the Afshārs’ homes on account of the Ṣafavid princesses who resided there.⁸³³

⁸²⁷ Iskandar Bayk actually calls Mīrmīrān a “divisive man (*mard-i fitnah*).” Ibid., 1: 418. Iskandar Bayk also states that when Bayktāsh compared himself to Muḥammad Muẓaffarī who rose up from a simple *shahnah* of Maybūd to the emperor of the Muẓaffarid dynasty, Mīrmīrān would nod approvingly. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 421.

⁸²⁸ Iskandar Bayk claims that Yūsuf Khān had always secretly resented Bayktāsh Khān and was looking for an opportunity to undo him, despite the fact that they were fellow tribesmen. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 422.

⁸²⁹ Ibid., 1: 425. Also see: Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, 83.

⁸³⁰ Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 420. Yazdī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Abbāsī*, 84.

⁸³¹ Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 424. According to Iskandar Bayk Munshī, Mīrmīrān owed his high position to Bayktāsh Khān in the first place, a claim that does not stand to reason: Mīrmīrān’s parents were both highborn and held in high esteem in the Ṣafavid court.

⁸³² Ibid., 1: 424-5.

⁸³³ Ibid., 1: 425. “*chūn az bināt-i mukramah-i īn silsilah-i ‘alīyah yak dū nafar dar manzil-i ū būd.*”

In contrast, Ya‘qūb Khān treated Shāh Khalīl Allāh with honor when he arrived. Shāh Khalīl Allāh, recognizing Ya‘qūb Khān as the shāh’s champion—at least for the time being—entertained the victorious commander during his stay in Yazd.⁸³⁴ In any case, within a year, Mīrmīrān was dead and the rivalry between father and son became irrelevant.

In the meantime, as soon as Ya‘qūb had vanquished his rival, he no longer found a use for the mantle of loyalty to the shāh, which he had been wearing all throughout. He moved to rule the regions of Fārs, Yazd, and Kirmān in his own right, assigning Yūsuf Shāh Afshār as his governor in Kirmān and his own nephew as governor of Abarqūh without Shāh ‘Abbās’s consent.⁸³⁵ In 999/1590, ‘Abbās went to Shīrāz to check in on Ya‘qūb Khān. The khān’s recalcitrance and arrogance quickly convinced the shāh that he needed to be eliminated, despite his formidable capabilities. He ordered Ya‘qūb Khān’s men dismembered and then allowed the rebellious leader’s own tribesmen, whom he had formerly betrayed, to torture him and eventually finish him off.⁸³⁶

Meanwhile Yūsuf Khān, whom Ya‘qūb Khān had recently dispatched to Kirmān as his agent, decided to hold Kirmān independently, in violation of the shāh’s authority. Shāh ‘Abbās sent an influential amīr, Farhād Khān Qarāmānlū, to convince Yūsuf Khān to give up his mutinous ambitions and hand over Kirmān to Valī Khān Afshār, Bayktāsh Khān’s father, who had remained loyal to the crown all through out.⁸³⁷ Farhād Khān

⁸³⁴ Ibid.

⁸³⁵ Ibid., 1: 425-6.

⁸³⁶ Ibid., 1: 436.

⁸³⁷ Ibid., 1: 436-7. Shāh ‘Abbās had sent Farhād Khān on a similar mission to convince the recalcitrant *ghulām*, Yulī Bayk to hand over the city during the previous year: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 427-8. He was successful in that endeavor also. Yulī Bayk was later executed after his involvement in Yūsuf Khān’s takeover of Kirmān, which Farhād Khān was again called upon to resolve. Shāh ‘Abbās had sent Yulī Bayk along with Farhād Khān to help convince Yūsuf Khān to hand over the city. His decision to send Yulī Bayk was probably partly designed to test the newly repentant *ghulām*’s loyalty. However, Yulī

managed to convince Yūsuf Khān’s supporters among the Afshār tribesmen to abandon their leader, and eventually Yūsuf Khān surrendered. Having accomplished this mission, Farhād Khān met ‘Abbās outside of Yazd, and the two entered the city together to settle accounts, while the rest of the *urdū* proceeded to Iṣfahān.

Although Iskandar Bayk provides us with all the background in great detail, he says next to nothing about the shāh’s visit to Yazd. However, Mufīd has quite a bit to say about it, and now that we have the backstory, we can finally return to his narrative. Indeed, Mufīd offers some important details of that visit that no other author provides. These details are important, but our main purpose now will be to work out how he uses this episode—in particular, the Ni‘matullāhīs’ part in it—in order to address the larger problem of the changing relationship between the notable sayyids in Yazd and the Ṣafavid court.

All in all, we learn from Mufīd’s version of the story that Shāh Khalīl Allāh, Mīrmīrān’s son, came out on top. In the confusion of all the intrigue and plotting, he remained clear headed and chose sides prudently; even though he had temporarily sided with Ya‘qūb Khān, who eventually betrayed the crown, Khalīl Allāh’s own loyalty to the Ṣafavid house could not be questioned, or at least, not yet. Thus, when the shāh entered the city, it was Shāh Khalīl Allāh who received him, just as he had received Ya‘qūb Khān before,⁸³⁸ and in turn, the shāh honored Khalīl Allāh for his allegiance. This

Bayk took the opportunity to make deals with Yusūf Khān and plot against Farhād Khān. He thereby signed his death warrant. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 432-3, 36-7.

⁸³⁸ Another source, Naṭanzī’s early tenth/late sixteenth century *Nuqāwāt al-Āthār fī Dhikr al-Akhyār*, relates that he was also received by Shāh Khalīl Allāh’s brother, Ni‘matullāh IV (Nm.VIII.a), whom the author calls the spiritual head of the order. This appears to be the only source to relate that Ni‘matullāh IV participated in Shāh ‘Abbās’s visit. Naṭanzī’s text was not available to me at the time of writing, but Said Arjomand discusses this event as it is related in Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 116. Arjomand cites Maḥmūd ibn Hidāyat Allāh Naṭanzī, *Naqāwat al-Āthār fī dhikr al-Akhyār*, ed. Iḥsān Ishrāqā, Majmū‘ah-i mutūn-i Fārsī, 22 (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Bungah-i Tarjamah va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1350/1971), 366.

much, Iskandar Bayk had also reported.⁸³⁹ But Mufīd takes the opportunity to cast the event as a crucial moment in the dynasty's history and, at the same time, as both a confirmation of the Ni'matullahīs' elevated position vis-à-vis the Ṣafavid house and an affirmation of Yazd as a pivotal center of the realm.

The royal banquet in Yazd: Mufīd's suspiciously charming account

Mufīd actually covers 'Abbās I's 999 A.H. visit to Yazd in two different places. The first occasion appears in the second volume, which comprises his chronology of the Ṣafavid realm; the latter appears in his hagiographical notice on Shāh Khalīl Allāh (Nm.VIII.b) in the third volume. Both focus on the marvelous feasting and joyousness that occurred; the two presentations are quite similar. What follows is the entire episode as it appears in the second volume.

On the day when the Jamshīd of the azure-sky pitched the tent of the sun-beam of arrival in the center of the house of the vernal equinox, the sunlight of the conquering banner of the royal sign cast the shadow of arrival upon that paradise-like region. The retinue of the One Conjoined to Victory (*zafar-qarīn*), the Mirror of Farīdūn, gave the order to encamp gloriously among the buildings of the rose-garden. The branch of the massive tree (*dūḥah*) of power and glory and the fruit of the tree of goodness of prophecy and prophetic message, Shāh Khalīl Allāh, son of his Excellency Murtaẓá-yi Mamālik-i Islām, Amīr Ghiyās al-Dīn Muḥammad Mīrmīrān, who decorated the glorious standards, the symbols of his power, with banners and transcriptions of "Say! I do not ask you... (*Qul lā as'alu-kum,*)"⁸⁴⁰ presented worthy presents (*pīshkash'hā kashīd*), and he [Shāh 'Abbās] regarded the great commanders and chiefs and bearers of honor with courtesies befitting his esteem. *Bayt:*

⁸³⁹ Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 1: 437. Iskandar Bayk simply reports that the shāh and Farhād Khān spent their stay in Yazd as Shāh Khalīl Allāh's guests and that Ḥātim Bayk, who had tried to dissuade Bayktāsh Khān Afshār from his mutiny, received the post of *mustawfī al-mamālik*. This event is cited in all the major chronicles of 'Abbās's reign. Arjomand also sites Naṭanzī's *Nuqāwat al-Āthār fī Dhikr al-Akhyār*, which claims that Ya'qūb Khān was also entertained by Ni'matullāh IV, who was the spiritual head of the order, if not the most powerful figure politically. Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 116, note 68.

⁸⁴⁰ Q 42:23. The full sentence reads: "Say [O Muḥammad] 'I do not ask any payment for it [the glad tidings God gives to those who perform good deeds] except the love of close kinsmen (*qul lā as'alu-kum 'alay-hi ajr^{an} illā al-mawaddata fī al-qurbá*).'"

of everthing that was most worthy
whether horse, sword, helmet, or belt

*zi-har chīz k'ān būd shāyastahtar
az asb u zi-tīgh u kulāh u kamar*⁸⁴¹

The benevolence of his Excellency, the World-Conqueror, whose royal heart was characterized by the honesty of intension and beauty of faith, was formed out of the affection and pure friendship of the prophets [i.e, because the Ṣafavids claimed a sayyid's lineage through Imām Mūsá]. The daughter of Shāh Ismā'īl Mīrzā, paternal uncle of the pādishāh, Jam[shīd] of Power, was the honored wife of Shāh Khalīl Allāh [i.e., Ṣafīyah Sulṭān (S.IV.b)]. For this and several other reasons, there was a close, kindred relation (*nasbat-i qarābat-i qurbīyah*),⁸⁴² he assigned the aforementioned Excellency and his children and people to gardens of trust and aspirations (*riyāz-i amānī va āmāl*) and to the limpid water of favor and to verdant and flourishing glory. The notables and grandees and nobles were made happy by the good fortune of having kissed the carpet of his High Excellency. They adorned the tongue of good-cheer and righteousness of good fortune in congratulations for the conquest of Shīrāz⁸⁴³ and opened the hand of good-tidings of the scattering of coins. And numerous jewels and gold coins came to flow—as is the custom of gold-scattering— so the entire ground was mixed with jewels and gold. *Qiṭ'ah*:

So many jewels and gold were scattered that
the moon and sun's luster was obscured.

*zi-bas gawhar u zar kih pāshīdah shud
sha'ā'-i mah u mihr pūshīdah shud*

You might have said that they scoured the firmament;
the stars flowed down all over the soil.

*tu guftī kih az charkh kardand pāk
furū rīkht anjum sarāsar bi-khāk*

On the same day, Farhād Khān, who stood well in the district of Kirmān in establishing the responsibilities spreading justice and nurturing his subjects (*ra'īyat-parvarī*), gave account of the important affairs of that place. And with admonishments, he [Shāh 'Abbās] brought Yūsuf Khān to the highway of obedience (*shāh-rāh-i itā'at*) and to devotion to His Most Noble Excellency. He regarded him with the eye of kindness. And His Honor of the Greatest Precepts (*janāb-i dastūr-i a'zam*) raised up Ḥātīm Bayk, former vizier of Bayktāsh Khān, to the post of elevated dignity, the Comptrollership of the Royal Provinces (*istifā'-i mamālik-i mahrūsah*), in payment for the service which he had rendered in Kirmān. The next day, when the beautiful-faced sweetheart, the sun, showed its beauty from behind the curtain of the horizon, the image of the eastern sun (*khāvarī*) gave the inhabitants of the world the spectacle of its shining face from behind a water lily-colored veil. *Bayt*:

The turning of the heavens opened the door of
sunshine

dar-i mihr bigushād gardān-i sipīhr

⁸⁴¹ This single verse actually modifies “presents (*pīshkash'hā*)” in the preceding paragraph.

⁸⁴² In other words, Shāh 'Abbās considered Khalīl Allāh a relation through marriage and through a common sayyid descent from the Prophet Muḥammad's daughter, Fāṭimah, and the Imāms, whom she sired with Imām 'Alī.

⁸⁴³ Shāh 'Abbās had just had the rebellious Ya'qūb Khān Zū al-Qadr killed at Shīrāz.

and adorned the surface of the ground with love

*biyārāst rū-yi zamīn rā bi-mihr*⁸⁴⁴

Mufīd then proceeds to describe the luxurious feasting and marvelous entertainment that Shāh ‘Abbās⁸⁴⁵ provided in the orchard of ‘Ayshābād,⁸⁴⁶ before offering a conclusion that sums up the gist of his commentary on the king’s visit:

After several days, when the gathering of pleasure and mirth was gathered up, the ambition of the high Kayvān, Emperor of just manner showed favor by making provisions for the damages (*bi-tadāruk-i khalal’hā*), which, on account of the devastation (*turktāz*) of age’s events (*ḥavādis-i rūzgār*), had found a way into the circumstances of the people of that region in former days.⁸⁴⁷ He showed them favor and the breeze of kindness and compassion (*marḥamat va ra’fat*) began to blow through the window of equity and justice. And the cloud of favor, which was like a cloud that covers everything,⁸⁴⁸ began to drop rain upon the field of hope of all humankind (*bar kishtzār-i umīd-i hamigān bārīdan āghāz nihādah*). He made every wish flourish in ripe clusters of [fulfilled] desires (*dar khūshah-i ārzū parvardah gasht*). Because of the benevolence (*mayāman*) of his justice, not a trace remained of crookedness or obliquity (*kajī va nārāstī*)—aside from the two eyebrows and twisted locks of beauties;⁸⁴⁹ nor did strife or tumult come up— except from the amorous glances and tresses of the moon-faced folk.

The turning heavens loosen the snare from the
waist of the sword,
and time snatches the bowstring away from the
neck of the bow.⁸⁵⁰

gardūn furū gushād kamand az miyān-i tīgh
v’ayyām bar girift zih az gardan-i kamān

⁸⁴⁴ Mufīd is punning on the word *mihr*, which means both sun and love. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 2: 225-27.

⁸⁴⁵ Notice, in this version Shāh ‘Abbās hosts the party, not Shāh Khalīl Allāh.

⁸⁴⁶ In another place, Mufīd explains this garden is in Ahrīstān. Various Nī’matullāhīs contributed buildings there, including both Mīrmīrān and his descendent, Mīrzā Shāh Abū Mahdī. See Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 674-77.

⁸⁴⁷ A reference to Ya’qūb Khān and the Zū al-Qadr’s pillaging of Yazd which followed shortly upon Bayktāsh Khān Afshār’s crippling siege.

⁸⁴⁸ The phrase is “*saḥābi- ‘āmm*,” which literally means, “the general cloud” or “the universal cloud”. He probably means something like the cloud that covers the entire earth.

⁸⁴⁹ This is a joke involving a pun that works well in Persian, but proves difficult to translate into English. *Kajī* and *nārāstī* literally mean “crooked” and “not-straight” respectively; however, the words are most commonly used to describe unethical behavior, double-dealing, deceit, or slippery talk, all of which cause strife and disorder. In general, crookedness is a negative characteristic, except in the case of a beautiful face, where traits such as curved eyebrows and twisted locks of hair mark the epitome of beauty. Of course, Persian love poetry also expounds on the deceit and crookedness that characterize the delicious cruelty of the beloved toward the lover.

⁸⁵⁰ These verses feature a rather complex wordplay, which follows upon the punning in the previous sentences. The primary meaning is grounded in figures of war—the sword and the bow: the violence and strife regularly come about with the cycling of time. However, at the same time, the images the author chooses—the waist and sword, the neck and the bow—all come from the stock tropes of erotic poetry. The word waist, “*kamand*” may also be referring to the *firind*, or undulating pattern of lines, which are the mark of well-forged damascene steel. My thanks to Paul Losensky for this suggestion.

Inevitably, in a short time, thanks to the generosity and equity of that religion-cherishing Emperor, on account of the extent of that region's flourishing population (*ābādānī*), the multitude of its inhabitants (*kaṣrat-i ahālī*), and its plentiful foods and drinks, it attained such a rank that Cairo smote the Nile with the cloth of envy on account of its fame. And Baghdad, despite the fact that it is called the Realm of Islam (*dār al-islām*), made a flood of tears flow upon its face out of jealousy and ardor. God, the Exalted and Sacred, pruned all the people of Islam away from the thorns of hindrance and the predomination of the people of iniquity. The sapling of the aspirations of humanity [was watered] by the drops of perspiration (*rashḥat*) of this dynasty's equity and kindness:

<p>As long as the wandering heaven rests on the earth, may it have verdancy and lushness by virtue of the God of Muḥammad and his chaste family.</p>	<p><i>tā charkh-i rāhdār būd arz rā qarār</i> <i>sar-sabz u shādāb bidārad</i> <i>bi-ḥāqq-i Muḥammad u āli-hi al-iṭhār</i>⁸⁵¹</p>
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Let us look closely at the above passage. Just like the other sources that contain reports on the events of the years 998 and 999 A.H., Mufīd is quick to point out that Shah ‘Abbās brought the period of upheaval to a close in Yazd. In that city he honored those who had remained loyal to the crown or had been instrumental in resolving the violence within the Afshār and Zū al-Qadr tribes, which had threatened the stability of the realm and the authority of his own person. Where the other sources simply mention that Shāh ‘Abbās stopped in Yazd in order to accept the obedience of repentant mutineers and make new appointments, Mufīd adds this expanded account of his extended stay and lavish celebrations. He capitalizes on the shāh's decision to hold the ceremony marking the end of the period of *fitnah* in Yazd and thereby promotes Yazd as a center of the imperial realm and a major support for its security. Furthermore, Mufīd adds that the shāh singled out the city for reparations on account of the hardships Yazdīs had suffered during the period of bloodshed and, as a consequence of his special favors, flourished more than any other place.

⁸⁵¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 2: 228.

At the same time, Mufīd boosts the standing of the Ni‘matullāhī family in the narrative. First of all, he overlooks Mīrmīrān’s scandalous support for the insubordinate Bayktāsh Khān, and he conspicuously omits any reference to the humiliation he suffered at the hands of Ya‘qūb Khān or his disagreement with his son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh. In fact, Mīrmīrān’s name makes only a single appearance in the account; the author simply mentions him obliquely in reference to his son, where he receives the comparatively subdued but nonetheless honorable designation “Nuvvāb-i Murtaẓá-yi Mamālik-i Islām.” More important is the long passage dealing with the son, Shāh Khalīl Allāh. Citing intimacy between the Şafavid and Ni‘matullāhī houses that resulted from both the marriage between Şafīyah Sulţān and Shāh Khalīl Allāh and a common Ḥusaynī ancestry, Mufīd honors Khalīl Allāh with a lengthy honorific: “The branch of the massive tree of power and glory and the fruit of the tree of goodness of prophecy and prophetic message . . . who decorated the glorious standards, the symbols of his power, with banners and transcriptions of ‘I do not ask you (*Qul la as‘alu-kum*).”⁸⁵² Then, on account of this close relationship, Mufīd relates that the shāh assigned him and his children to “gardens of trust and aspirations and to limpid waters of favor and to verdant and flourishing glory.”⁸⁵³

Now, although Mufīd had diligently recorded the post the king assigned to Ḥātim Bayk, i.e., the *Mustawfī-i Mamālik*,⁸⁵⁴ for Shāh Khalīl Allāh, he provides only this effusive

⁸⁵² Ibid., 2: 226.

⁸⁵³ Ibid.

⁸⁵⁴ Mufīd fails to also report here that Valī Khān, Bayktāsh Khān’s loyal father, received the governorship of Kirmān. The other sources do emphasize this assignment in this place. For example: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 432-3, 37. Instead, Mufīd merely mentions that Farhād Khān had recently taken up residence there and that Shāh ‘Abbās had honored him with special thanks. He does not mention any specific assignment for Farhād Khān here. We know from other sources that shortly afterward, he was sent to lead a campaign in Khurāsān against the Uzbeks. After his victories there and then again in

but somewhat vague statement that he would honor him and his children with his trust. Here the reader must read between the lines. At first, this statement of trust appears to be intended as a smokescreen, designed to cover up for the fact that Shāh ‘Abbās did not give Shāh Khalīl Allāh the same degree of power that his father Mīrmīrān had once held under previous shāhs. This trust could not compete with the influence that his grandfather, Ni‘matullāh III, had exerted nor the immense power that his great-grandfather, ‘Abd al-Bāqī, wielded as Ṣadr and Vakīl under Shāh Ismā‘īl. Mufīd appears to have taken pains to demonstrate that the family maintained an elevated standing under Shāh ‘Abbās when in fact, from this point on, the status of the Ni‘matullāhīs in Yazd vis-à-vis the imperial court entered a period of decline. After all, after the marriages of Shāh Khalīl Allāh and his brother, Ni‘matullāh IV, to Ṣafavid princesses— alliances that occurred before Shāh ‘Abbās’s reign— the Ṣafavids never again wed their daughters or sons to the Ni‘matullāhīs. This is a key indication that the shāh had decided to let the Ni‘matullāhīs’ prestige and influence at court wither. Nonetheless, despite appearances, one should not misinterpret Mufīd’s intimations at creating a smokescreen as a genuine attempt to conceal the truth. As will become more and more obvious in the coming pages, the decay of the Ni‘matullāhī grandees’ station under Shāh ‘Abbās and his successors was a well-known fact that Mufīd could not have hidden away. As I will show in a moment, it was registered in contemporary sources that were composed by illustrious authors whose works were more widely read than Mufīd’s. The author’s efforts to screen the Ni‘matullāhīs’ fate must be read as kind of pantomime that was intended not to cover up the details, but, paradoxically, to call

Azerbaijan, in 1001/1592-3, the Shāh made Farhād Khan *Amīr al-Umarā’* of Azerbaijan and the warden of the Ṣafavid shrine at Ardabīl. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 454.

attention to the royal house's ill-advised treatment of the noble and saintly family. He does so delicately, of course, "in the clothes of figuration and the cloak of metaphors," without insulting the reigning sovereign's ancestors outright. After all, his intention was to present lessons of the past in order advise the Ṣafavid shāh and cajole him into acting wisely. Subtlety was the *modus operandi* in good Persian prose. It was Mufīd's most effective tool of persuasion.

After the banquet of 999: the unfortunate honor of being called to Iṣfahān

Mufīd's apophastic charade continues throughout his treatment of Shāh Khalīl Allāh's generation and the following one, which appears later in the work, in the hagiographical section on the Ni'matullāhīs. There, Mufīd announces that Shāh Khalīl Allāh had the honor of going to Iṣfahān, as did the children of his brother, Shāh Ni'matullāh IV.⁸⁵⁵ As glorious as that may sound at first, Mufīd most probably intended this statement to be read with a note of sarcasm. One well-known scholar of the Ni'matullāhīs, Terry Graham, sees this move as part of an extensive program by which Shāh 'Abbās sought to disempower the powerful local notable families in his realm by keeping them under close watch in Iṣfahān, away from their power-bases. Graham comments that this was a strategy successfully employed by Louis XIV not long after.⁸⁵⁶ This is not the place to evaluate the strength of Graham's argument about Shāh 'Abbās's

⁸⁵⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 70. Iskandar Beg mentions that in the year 999/1590-1, the whole Ni'matullāhī entourage travelled to Iṣfahān. He says specifically that Shāh Khalīl Allāh was honored and given control of Yazd because of his loyalty, but that Mīrmīrān, "on account of his evil deeds and pact with Bayktāsh Khān, was not looked upon with an affectionate gaze and did not receive much honor (*bi-jahat-i sū'-a'māl va muvāfiqat-i Bayktāsh Khān manzūr-i naẓr-i 'āṭifat naḡasht va ziyādah iḥtirāmī nayāft.*)" Munshī, *Tārīkh-i 'Ālam-ārā-yi 'Abbāsī*, 1: 431. The same passage also mentions that Kānish Baygūm II, the wife of Mīrmīrān's son, Ni'matullāh IV, died around this time.

⁸⁵⁶ Graham, "Ni'matu'llāhī Order," 194-5.

broad policy of local notable “emasculatation,” as he calls it; nevertheless, if indeed Shāh ‘Abbās was following some plan akin to the Machiavellian maxim “Keep your friends close, but keep your enemies closer,” then the significance of Mufīd’s earlier report that Shāh ‘Abbās invoked the “intimacy” between the families as the pretext for his special trust becomes an ironic one. In any case, Shāh ‘Abbās had seen enough treachery and opportunism in the tumultuous first years of his reign not to be fooled by Khalīl Allāh’s opulent display of welcome; such power could easily be mobilized in support of a rival in the future, just as Mīrmīrān had done for Bayktāsh Khān.

Once the shāh had settled Shāh Khalīl Allāh in Iṣfahān, Mufīd (and most other sources) say little about his affairs. There is one source, however, that sheds light on what may really have been the Ni‘matullāhī grandee’s situation there. Naṭanzī’s *Nuqwāt al-Āthār fī Dhikr al-Akhyār*, completed in 1007/1598, explains that he actually suffered some humiliation at court. Naṭanzī relates that Shāh Khalīl Allāh sulked and brooded over the fact that Shāh ‘Abbās favored a rival sayyid in Iṣfahān, Mīrzā Muḥammad Amīn.⁸⁵⁷ Shāh Khalīl Allāh must have made quite a scene because eventually the king

⁸⁵⁷ Mīrzā Muḥammad Amīn is most likely the son of the preeminent Iṣfahānī scholar Mīr Ghiyāṣ al-Dīn Muḥammad (also called Mīr-i Mīrān), whom Shāh Ṭahmāsb had given the title *Naqīb al-Nuqabā’* and the post of Ṣadr, an office that Khalīl Allāh’s ancestors had previously held. See: Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, 1: 144. One should not confuse this figure with the famous Shīrī scholar, Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī (d. 1033/1624 or 1036/1627), who was considered the founder and champion of the seventeenth century Akhbārī movement. Although it is difficult to tell when Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī might have been in Iṣfahān, it is fairly certain that he was not there long enough to have been the rival of Shāh Khalīl Allāh. He studied with Muḥammad b. ‘Alī b. Ḥusayn ‘Āmalī in Najaf (received an *ijāzah* in 1007/1598) and appears to have spent part of his early life in Shīrāz (including the year 1010/1601). Afterward, he lived in the Ḥijāz until he died. Naṭanzī apparently calls him Mīrzā Muḥammad Amīn from Iṣfahān. See: Etan Kohlberg, "Astarābādī, Moḥammad Amīn: founder of the 17th-century Akhbārī school," in *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition* (1987). Moreover, it appears that Muḥammad Amīn Astarābādī was not a sayyid. One must confuse neither of the above Muḥammad Amīns with another Muḥammad Amīn from Astarābād, known as Mīr Jumlah, who came to ‘Abbās’ court from the Quṭb Shāhī court of Golconda. (Mufīd discusses Mīr Jumlah and his trip from the Deccan on page 3: 91) The confusion between Mīr Jumlah and the founder of late Akhbarism, also see Etan Kohlberg’s article cited above.

acquiesced to bring him out of his despondency (*kūft*).⁸⁵⁸ Exactly what the shāh might have done to pacify the Yazdī notable is unclear. Again, Mufīd says nothing about this business with Mīrzā Muḥammad Amīn or anything further about Shāh Khalīl Allāh and his sons. However, as Michael P. Connell's important dissertation on the Ni'matullāhīs points out, an important episode in the memoirs of Mughal emperor Jahāngīr demonstrates that Shāh Khalīl Allāh's situation in Iṣfahān actually became quite dire after his little tantrum about Muḥammad Amīn. Jahāngīr reports that sometime afterward, Shāh Khalīl Allāh fled with his son, Mīrmīrān (Nm.IX.e), to the Mughal court at Lahore, leaving behind Mīrmīrān's own sons and younger brother, Shāh Ṣahīr al-Dīn 'Alī (Nm.IX.d). Jahāngīr comments that the family came to serve him after the decline of the family's standing in Iran, which he describes as undeserved. The Mughal emperor received them well, gave them noble assignments, and interceded on their behalf with Shāh 'Abbās, who allowed the rest of the family to travel to Hindūstān.⁸⁵⁹ Shāh Khalīl Allāh died of nasty case of diarrhea soon afterward—perhaps Jahāngīr's menu was too rich for the Yazdī sayyid's digestive system— and his branch of the family continued to thrive in Mughal domains after his death. Apparently Shāh Ṣahīr al-Dīn 'Alī's sons later returned to Iṣfahān; Mufīd claims they were living there during his lifetime. Nevertheless, despite what Mufīd says about the honor of going to Iṣfahān,

⁸⁵⁸ I have not been able to access this source, but Said Arjomand discusses this narrative in Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 116-17. Arjomand cites Naṭanzī's work as follows: Naṭanzī, *Nq A*, 456-7. This episode is also discussed in Connell, "The Ni'matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 234.

⁸⁵⁹ Connell, "The Ni'matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 234-5, 49-51. The pertinent passages in Jahāngīr's memoir can be found in Nūr al-Dīn Muḥammad Jahāngīr, *The Tuzuk-i Jahāngīrī or memoirs of Jahāngīr*, ed. Alexander Rogers and Henry Beveridge, trans. Alexander Rogers and Henry Beveridge, 2 vols. (London: Royal Asiatic Society, 1909-14), 1: 145, 304-5. As Connell shows, the episode also appears in 'Abd al-Hayy Shāhnavāz Khān Awrangābādī, *The Ma'athir-ul-Umarā: being biographies of the Muhammādan and Hindu officers of the Timurid sovereigns of India from 1500 to about 1780 A.D* (Calcutta: Royal Asiatic Society, 1941), 1: 773.

it appears that by keeping Shāh Khalīl Allāh near court, Shāh ‘Abbās stripped him and his children of all autonomy and much of their honor. Indeed they only narrowly escaped with their lives.

Again, the fact that Mufīd excludes this information about Shāh Khalīl Allāh and his descendents is suggestive; we have seen him make similar strategic omissions numerous times. To rub the shāh’s nose in the stains that his predecessors left on the carpet of history would have been indelicate, and, as Mufīd himself explains, delicacy and decorum are the mark of good writing and noble character. Instead, Mufīd chose the subtler and more rhetorically effective path; he left the entire well-known affair conspicuously absent. Thus, the hyperbolic characterization of Khalīl Allāh’s glorious career exudes sarcasm, but remains tactfully admonishing.

As for the next two generations of Ni‘matullāhīs descending from Shāh Khalīl Allāh’s line and from the other brothers, Mufīd celebrates their greatness, too. He has very little to say about them, save their names. He does explain that Shāh Khalīl Allāh’s great-grandson, Badī‘ al-Zamān Mīrzā (Nm.XI), was living in Iṣfahān in 1078/1667 and was well funded with suyūrghāls.⁸⁶⁰ Still, that line of the family was obviously severed from the shrine center in Taft and their old power-base in Yazd. The son and grandson of Shāh Khalīl Allāh’s brother, Ni‘matullāh IV, Sanjar Mīrzā (Nm.IX.c)⁸⁶¹ and Muḏaffar Ḥusayn Mīrzā (Nm.X.c), both remained in Iṣfahān, too; in fact, Mufīd writes that the latter, was still living in Iṣfahān at the time of his writing.⁸⁶² According to Mufīd, all of these figures lived there honorably and well pampered; however he surreptitiously

⁸⁶⁰ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 71.

⁸⁶¹ Sanjar Mīrzā was the son of Ni‘matullāh IV (Nm.VIII.a) and Shāh Ṭahmāsb’s daughter Khānīsh Baygum (S.III.d).

⁸⁶² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 67.

excuses himself from having to report on their offices or exalted titles, which were in fact non-existent.

Mufīd does leave a small clue, however, that problems persisted for some of these figures even after Shāh ‘Abbās’s long reign, during Shāh Ṣafī’s rule. He states that “in that great house, an arduous misfortune occurred, and the suffering from that persecution let the blood of sympathy flow from the eye of those close to that family of sayyids.”⁸⁶³ What he does not say must be gathered from other sources. The *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī* makes it clear that these misfortunes were indeed calamitous: Shāh Ṣafī actually had Sanjar Mīrzā murdered together with some other family members.⁸⁶⁴ Once again, Mufīd’s decorous silence about the Ṣafavid sovereign’s violence and implied shortsightedness speaks louder than words.

The Ni‘matullāhīs recover some ground but the rules have changed

In spite of the misfortunes that befell Shāh Khalīl Allāh and Shāh Ni‘matullāhī IV’s lines, the fate of the Ni‘matullāhī family were not entirely tragic during the reigns of Shāh ‘Abbās I’s successors. Shāh Ṣafī ordered the sons of another branch of the family, descended from the third of Mīrmīrān’s sons, Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā (Nm.VIII.c), to return to Yazd to look after the shrine in Taft.⁸⁶⁵ These were Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī (Nm.IX.b) and Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā’ (Nm.IX.a). Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā, their father, seems to have been a pious and passive figure, less politically engaged than his

⁸⁶³ “*dar ān dūdmān-i ‘azīm al-sha’n muṣibatī dar ghā’it-i ṣu’ūbat ittifāq uftād va miḥnat-i īn muhājirat khūn-i dil az dīdah-i muntasibān-i khāndān-i siyādat biḡūshad.*” Ibid., 3: 75.

⁸⁶⁴ Connell is the first to have brought this passage to light. Connell, "The Ni‘matullahi Sayyids of Taft: a study of the evolution of a late medieval Iranian Sufi tariqah", 235-6. He gives the following citation in the *Zayl-i TAAA*: Iskandar Bayk; Yūsuf Turkmān Munshī, Muḥammad, *Zayl-i Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi ‘Abbāsī*, ed. Suhaylī Khvānsarī (Tehran: Chap-khānah-i Islāmīyah, 1327), 98.

⁸⁶⁵ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 74.

brothers, Shāh Khalīl Allāh and Shāh Ni‘matullāh IV. In fact, it is unclear that Shāh ‘Abbās ever coerced Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā into relocation in the first place.⁸⁶⁶ In any case, on account of his quiescence Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā received the title of Naqīb,⁸⁶⁷ and his descendants were given the authority of the old suyūrghāls in Taft. Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī (Nm.IX.b) receives a relatively long tarjamah in Mufīd’s work. The author describes his piety and acts of devotion, which he manifested in the form of new building projects. (Those projects will be discussed in a moment.) He was also clearly looked upon with friendship by Shāh ‘Abbās II, who confirmed his title of Naqīb, authorized him to go on pilgrimage to the Ḥijāz, and received him honorably in Iṣfahān on his return trip.⁸⁶⁸ Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī’s brother, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā’ (Nm.IX.a), became the Kalāntar of Yazd. Both of Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī’s sons, whose names were Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Valī (Nm.X.a) and Mīrmīrān (Nm.X.b), continued to fare well in Yazd. The former retained his father’s title of Naqīb, and the latter, received his uncle’s post of Kalāntar.

The building projects of Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī (Nm.IX.b) and his brother, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā’ (Nm.IX.a), bear some significance and should be considered in detail. Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī made a contribution to the Ni‘matullāhī shrine complex at Taft. Mufīd describes this project in his notice on the Khānqāh-i Taft; in fact, this description constitutes the final passage of the notice, which we had set aside at the beginning of this chapter. Mufīd tells us:

⁸⁶⁶ Graham asserts that he was relocated, citing Mufīd, but I cannot locate the reference in the text. Graham, "Ni‘matu’llāhī Order," 196.

⁸⁶⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 72ff.

⁸⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3:77-82. The description of Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī’s pilgrimage accounts for a large proportion of his long tarjamah.

In 1074/1663-4, the high-minded architect, the Excellency of sayyid-lineage and leadership of the exalted rank of the sublime degree of the echelon of the glory of the house of the Sayyid of Mankind (*sayyid al-vará*), seed of the family of “*wa yuṭahhira-kum taṭhīrān*,”⁸⁶⁹ Murtaẓá-i Mamālik-i Islām Niẓāmā Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī, who is the faithful son of the sayyid of the saints, built a sublime pond in the courtyard of the khānqāh. The purity of those waters is like the immaculate cheek of the faces of the rose-faced and the taste is like the sugary words of the lips of sweet speech. “Black Trees” (*darakht-i siyāh*) are planted beside it and along its edges.⁸⁷⁰ *Shi‘r*:

On one side, branches of sweet-basil have sprouted; on the other, trees have stretched forth their heads	<i>zi-yak sū shākh-i rayḥān bar damīdah</i> <i>zi-dīgar sū darakhtān sar kashīdah</i>
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At the foot of the cypress, hyacinth has taken root. Violets have raised their heads among lilies.	<i>bi pā-yi sarv sunbul dar futādah</i> <i>bunafshah pīsh-i sūsan sar nihādah</i> ⁸⁷¹
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The pool must have been charming, but one might consider Mufīd’s description to be a bit over-the-top for Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī’s comparatively modest undertaking. Although Mufīd was no doubt proud to demonstrate that a local grandee had undertaken a building project in the region during his lifetime, at the same time, it seems likely that he scrawled this hyperbolic description with a sardonic smirk. Although the khānqāh of the Ni‘matullāhīs fared better than many other such structures in the region, this pool was small potatoes in the grand scheme of things. Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī may have enjoyed the Ṣafavid shāh’s favor, but his contribution to the khānqāh complex does not indicate that a real Ni‘matullāhī revival was underway.⁸⁷²

Similarly, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī’s brother, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā’, (Nm.IX.a) the Kalāntar of Yazd, also engaged in building projects in the Taft area. At

⁸⁶⁹ Q 33:33 “Verily, O people of the Prophet’s house, God wishes to remove sin from you and to purify you with purification (*innamā yurīdu allāhu li-yudhiba ‘ankumu al-rijsa ahla al-bayti wa yuṭahhira-kum taṭhīrān*).”

⁸⁷⁰ According to Dekhoda, *darakht-i siyāh* is a kind of small tree related to the jujube tree (*annāb*). Rashīd al-Dīn does not mention a tree by this name in his horticultural manual, *Āṣār va Aḥyā’*, not even in his chapter on jujube trees.

⁸⁷¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfāqī, *JM*, 3: 687.

⁸⁷² This pool was not Mīrzā Shāh Abū Mahdī’s only building project. Among other projects, he built a garden called Bāgh-i Mihrābād. *Ibid.*, 3: 673-4.

Cham-i Taft, a village not far from the shrine complex, where the important qanāts of the mountainous area to the southwest of the city intersect before heading to the city, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā' renovated the pleasure gardens that one of the later Muẓaffarid rulers had originally constructed:

In the time when the rule of 'Irāq— particularly, Yazd, the image of paradise— was held by Nuṣrat al-Dīn Shāh Yaḥyá,⁸⁷³ in the locale of Cham (which is two leagues from Taft and three from the city itself, and into which water would enter in both the cold and warm seasons) he drew up the plans for a building and arranged a high ṣuffah, parlor, and domes, and built a pool, which was like profound thought of wise men (*fikr-i 'uqalā'-i 'amīq*)... Afterward, the land of Yazd came into the possession of Amīrzādah Iskandar, who commanded the renovation of the building. Khvājah Jalāl al-Dīn Maḥmūd Khvārazmī also invested his ambition in repairing these structures. Day by day, the building become totally ruined. . . Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Baqā' Kalāntar invested his ambition in repairing it. He established a bāgh and planted trees. Now, it is perfectly flourishing and extremely populous.⁸⁷⁴

Mufīd makes clear that this picturesque village in the shrine's shadow, which the Timurids had previously kept up, had been left to crumble until the Nī'matullāhī Kalāntar had revived it. It was a worthy endeavor for sure, but like the efforts of his brother, not monumental.

Although there is no doubt that Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā's line of the family received a better lot than the cousin clans descended from Shāh Khalīl Allāh and Shāh Nī'matullāh IV, theirs were essentially local appointments and local honors, and their construction projects were limited to relatively small, local renovations. In the end, the Nī'matullāhīs of Yazd who did hold on to their lives shared the fate of the Yazdī astrologers, whom we examined in the last chapter. They retained their local eminence, but lost their positions at court. Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā's line remained local grandees

⁸⁷³ He was the son of Sharaf al-Dīn Muẓaffar, who reigned 789/1387-793/1391. He was one of the Muẓaffarid vassals of Tīmūr, before Tīmūr abolished the dynasty.

⁸⁷⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 681-2.

who presided over local spheres of influence, with little more than ceremonial connections with the court; the post of local Kalāntar is a far cry from that of Ṣadr or Vakīl. To put things in perspective, the reader should recall the story from the beginning of this chapter, in which a mere oil-presser, who was not even a sayyid, came to hold this office. Furthermore, their wealth remained grounded in the local endowments associated with the shrine center at Taft and they received no new *suyūrghāls*.

***Sharī'ah* not *'irfān*: A shift in the nature of the Ni'matullāhīs' authority**

As the political power and spiritual influence of the Ni'matullāhī family in the Ṣafavid realm dwindled during Shāh 'Abbās I's reign, so too did the transregional pull of the shrine complex at Taft. We must add that we can also detect changes in the nature of the Ni'matullāhī family's position beyond this demotion in rank and prestige. Indeed, the surviving Ni'matullāhīs appear to have lost the kind of spiritual authority held by their Sufi ancestors. This, too, would have consequences for their shrine complex at Taft. Said Arjomand was the first to note that while Mufīd uses the terms *irshād* (spiritual guidance) and *'irfān* (gnosis) to describe the particular expertise of Shāh Sulaymān Mīrzā, he uses a different set of vocabulary to characterize the work of his descendants who were his own contemporaries.⁸⁷⁵ With regard to Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī (Nm.IX.b), for example, Mufīd speaks of his "devotion to the fortification of the foundations of the *sharī'ah* (*taqvīyat-i arkān-i sharī'ah gharā'*)"⁸⁷⁶ and says "he never

⁸⁷⁵ Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 117. Both Graham and Quinn pick up on Arjomand's interpretation. See: Quinn, "Ni'matu'llāhī History," 205.

⁸⁷⁶ Mufīd *Mustawfī Bāfīqī*, *JM*, 3: 76.

neglected attention to the welfare of the noble sayyids, the ‘ulamā’ of Islam, the knowledgeable folk of the era, or the poets of eloquent character” (*dar ri‘āyat-i jānib-i sādāt-i ‘azām va ‘ulamā-yi Islām va fuḍalā-yi rūzgār va shu‘arā-yi balāghat-shu‘ār hargiz taghāfil va ihmāl nanamūdī*).⁸⁷⁷ About his son, Mīrzā Shāh Abū Valī (Nm.X.a), Mufīd says that “he was diligent in smoothing the way for the foundations of manifest religion and strengthening the precepts of the law of the Sayyid al-Mursalīn [i.e., the Prophet Muḥammad] (*bi-tamhīd-i arkān-i dīn-i mubīn va tashyīd-i qavā’id-i shar‘-i sayyid al-mursalīn... aqdām mīfarmāyad*)”⁸⁷⁸ This variation in vocabulary offers a glimpse of a paradigm shift that was occurring throughout the Ṣafavid realm at this time, but which had very particular ramifications for the Sufi and saintly leaders in Yazd, such as the Ni‘matullāhīs and some of the other local sayyid families. Sharī‘ah-minded or legalistically oriented Shiism, first propounded in the Ṣafavid realm by the Twelver Arab immigrants from Jabal ‘Āmil and Mesopotamia, came to overshadow the sufic forms of ideology and practice that had been the purview of the notable, usually sayyid families, in urban centers across the Persianate world since Mongol times.⁸⁷⁹ As the increasingly professionalized Shī‘ī ‘ulamā’ appropriated the wealth, prestige, and spiritual and legal authority of the Sufi shaykhs and saintly sayyids, they not only

⁸⁷⁷ Ibid., 3: 77.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid., 3: 84.

⁸⁷⁹ This shift has been covered extensively in the scholarship of the Ṣafavid world. For some of the more recent, important works see: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, Kathryn Babayan, "Sufis, Darvishes and Mullahs: The Controversy over the Spiritual and Temporal Dominion in Seventeenth Century Safavid Iran," in *Safavid Persia* (I.B. Tauris, 1996), Kathryn Babayan, "The Safavi Synthesis: From Qizilbash Islam to Imamite Shi'ism," *Iranian Studies* 27 (1994), Abisaab, *Converting Persia: Religion and Power in the Safavid Empire*, Newman, *Safavid Iran*, Andrew J. Newman, "Sufism and Anti-Sufism in Safavid Iran: The Authorship of the *Hadiqat al-Shi'a* Revisited," *Iran* XXXVII (1999), Andrew J. Newman, "The Myth of the Clerical Migration to Safavid Iran," *Die Welt des Islams* 33 (1993), Andrew J. Newman, "Clerical Perceptions of Sufi Practices in Late Seventeenth-Century Persia: Arguments Over the Permissibility of Singing (Ghinā)," in *The Heritage of Sufism: Late Classical Persianate Sufism (1501-1750)- The Safavid & Mughal Period*, ed. Leonard Lewisohn & David Morgan (Oxford: One World, 1992), Arjomand, *Shadow of God*.

disenfranchised a host of formerly powerful families, in the process they also altered the urban morphology of the city centers around the realm, where local notable families had established their power bases. This is not to say that members of sayyid and local notable families were totally disenfranchised by a completely new demographic of immigrants from outside the realm. In fact, a fair number of ‘ulamā’ came from established urban notable, sayyid families. However the basis of that authority and power switched from expertise in esoteric and eclectic forms of knowledge to knowledge of law and ḥadīth, from local imāmzādah-lineages or Sufi *silsilāt* to scholarly chains of transmission, from roots at local shrine complexes, to association with the large shrine centers associated with the Imāms and their immediate families at Qum, Karbalā, Sāmarrā’, and Najaf, but most especially, at Mashhad. The wealthy shrine complexes associated with families such as the Ni‘matullāhīs and the ‘Arīzī sayyids suffered at the expense of new patterns of patronage and construction.

Exactly how those local shrines suffered will be addressed in the last section of this chapter. In the meantime, now that we have charted the arc of the Ni‘matullāhī family’s fortunes and have painted a picture of the Ni‘matullāhī family circumstances during Mufīd’s own lifetime, we must now do a closer reading of some of the key stories about the most illustrious men from the family’s early history. Here, our concerns are historiographical; we explore the ways in which Mufīd and some of his contemporaries put stories about the family’s days of glory to use. These tales are often constructed in the form of hagiographical notices or hero’s tales. Given that the Ni‘matullāhīs no longer sat in the Shāh’s inner circle, what purpose did these stories serve? What was

their effect on the rest of the narrative?

3. **Heroes, Saints, and Kingmakers: Reformulations of Ni'matullāhī Glory in the Later Ṣafavid Age.**

Some heroic portrayals of early Ni'matullāhīs in the works of Mufīd's contemporaries

Sholeh Quinn uncovers in her important article on the Ni'matullāhīs in the later Ṣafavid historiography that even though the family had slipped down to the level of local notables with little transregional presence, there appears to have been a resurgence of interest in Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī's descendents in a new sub-genre of chronicle writing that emerged during the seventeenth century. These chronicles—almost exclusively composed by anonymous authors—feature elements that Quinn collectively refers to as “Invented Tradition,” following the terminology of A.H. Morton. Morton had previously characterized the narratives of these works as featuring heightened dramatization, invention of speech and heroic deeds, an emphasis on personal relationships, negotiation, and predictive dreams. These are features that were absent from the dominant Herat Tradition of historical writing,⁸⁸⁰ and probably reflect local oral traditions that were in circulation.⁸⁸¹ (More on the local character in a moment.)

⁸⁸⁰ This summary is taken from Alexander H. Morton, "The Date and Attribution of the Ross Anonymous: Notes on a Persian History of Shāh Ismā'īl I," in *Pembroke Papers I*, ed. Charles Melville (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Centre of Middle Eastern Studies, 1990), 187-8. However, Quinn cites Morton's breakthrough article: Quinn, "Ni'matu'llāhī History," 210.

⁸⁸¹ See Robert McChesney's *Elr* article on this work: Robert McChesney, "Ālamārā-ye Šāh Esmā'īl, an anonymous narrative of the life of Shah Esmā'īl (r. 907-30/1501-24), the founder of the Safavid dynasty in Iran," *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition* (1985). McChesney calls attention to the legendary nature of the work, emphasizing the episodes' origins in oral tradition. He points out that it treats Shāh Ismā'īl as an archetypal hero.

Quinn examines two of these works and finds an extraordinary, quasi-legendary heroizing of Ni‘matullāhī figures from the early Ṣafavid period, during the reigns of Shāh Ismā‘īl I and Shāh Ṭahmāsb. These two works are ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*,⁸⁸² written in 1085/1675, and ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, completed some time after ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*. All of the stories in these works concern a figure whom the authors simply name “Shāh Ni‘matullāh Yazdī.” The events take place during the lifetime of Mīrmīrān’s father, Shāh Na‘īm al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh III (al-Bāqī) (Nm.VI.a), who married Shāh Ṭahmāsb’s sister, Khānish Baygum (S.II.a); the authors must be referring to Shāh Ni‘matullāh III (Nm.VI.a).⁸⁸³ The author of ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī* narrates two important episodes in which Ni‘matullāh Bāqī defends the realm from villainous rebels. In the first he defends the city of Yazd against Muḥammad Karrah, who, according to the court chronicles, had formerly been a local official of the Aq Qūyūnlūs, but had murdered Ismā‘īl’s appointed *dārūgah* of Yazd (Ḥusayn Bayk Sulṭān Shāmlū)⁸⁸⁴ and tried to rule the city himself. In those sources, the authors frame this episode as one of the last stands of the old regime against the Ṣafavids.⁸⁸⁵ In ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*, the narrative instead revolves around Ni‘matullāh Bāqī’s heroism, which the tale implies is the cause of the

⁸⁸² Morton argues that another work, ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ismā‘īl*, should be considered a variant of ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*. Quinn, “Ni‘matu’llāhī History,” 212. Quinn agrees: Quinn, “Ni‘matu’llāhī History,” 214-15.

⁸⁸³ Quinn refers to this man as Shāh Ni‘matullāh II—apparently following Szuppe’s numbering (see footnote 820). This numbering omits the important Ni‘matullāhī shaykh (Nm.V.b) who had married into the Qarā Qūyūnlū house. Perhaps Szuppe and Quinn exclude Nm.V.b because he did not father the line of shaykhs who became preeminent during the Ṣafavid age. These were descended from his uncle Ṣafī al-Dīn (Nm.IV.b); thus, Nm.V.b and Nm.VI.a were first cousins once removed. ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, ed. Īraj Afshār (Tehran: Dunyā-yi Kitāb, 1370/1991), 45-50. Also refer to: Quinn, “Ni‘matu’llāhī History,” 215-16. The reader should recall that this is the figure who appears as Bāfqī in Mufid’s work rather than Bāqī. (See in footnote 773.) Essentially everyone else refers to Nm.V.b as Ni‘matullāh II (*Ṣānī*). This is also true of scholars writing in Persian. See, for example: Ḥamīd Farzām, *Tahqīq dar Aḥvāl va Naqd-i Āsār va Afkār-i Shāh Ni‘mat Allāh Valī* (Tehran: Sarūsh, 1374/1995), 214.

⁸⁸⁴ Iskandar Bayk Munshī explains that Ismā‘īl had named him *dārūgah* of Abarqūh before his revolt. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi Abbāsī*, 1: 30. The author of AAS gives his name as Ḥusayn Bayk Sulṭān Shāmlū: ‘*Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī* ed. Yad Allāh Shukrī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Iṭṭilā‘āt, 1363/1984-5), 99.

⁸⁸⁵ Iskandar Bayk Munshī’s presentation on Muḥammad Karrah is brief and does not mention the Ni‘matullāhīs. Munshī, *Tārīkh-i ‘Ālam-ārā-yi Abbāsī*, 1: 30-1.

close alliance between the Şafavid and Ni‘matullāhī houses. In the elaborate story, Muḥammad Karrah (called Karrahī in the text) captures Ni‘matullāh III and tries to seize the eminent Sufi’s daughter in marriage.⁸⁸⁶ The shaykh escapes and sends a letter to the shāh, requesting his help. When Shāh Ismā‘īl arrives, Ni‘matullāh Bāqī goes out to welcome him and convinces the people of Yazd to open the gates to the shāh. After the Şafavid army captures and executes Muḥammad Karrah, Shāh Ismā‘īl marries his daughter to Ni‘matullāh Bāqī.⁸⁸⁷ In a second episode, not included in the other chronicles, Ni‘matullāh Bāqī protects the city of Yazd from an attack by the Uzbek commander Jān Vafā Mīrzā by means of a clever ruse, which gives Shāh Ismā‘īl time to reach Yazd before the Uzbeks can enter the city.⁸⁸⁸

‘Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb features a number of similar episodes concerning the same Ni‘matullāh Bāqī, but set a little later, during Shāh Ṭahmāsb’s reign. In the first of these, the hero plays an instrumental role in saving the city of Yazd from another Uzbek invasion, this time at the hands of ‘Abd Allāh Khān (called ‘Abd Allāh Bahādur or simply “dog” [sag] in the text).⁸⁸⁹ The sequence parallels the narrative of Shāh Ni‘matullāh’s two stand-offs with Uzbeks in *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Şafavī*, and in fact the author even references the relevant passages in that work. After the battle, Shāh Ni‘matullāh

⁸⁸⁶ The author does not give the name of the daughter, nor of her mother.

⁸⁸⁷ The entire episode is found in: AAS, 99-103. Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 211-13.

⁸⁸⁸ The entire episode can be found in: AAS, 271-9. Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 214-15. The anecdote is reminiscent of one we discussed in chapter 1, where Sayyid Ḥusayn Gul-i Surkh miraculously defends the city against the Uzbeks with his baker’s apron during Shāh Ismā‘īl’s reign. The reader may recall that in that story, the sayyid ultimately converts the Uzbek king to Shiism and makes him one of his disciples. One has to wonder where Shāh Ni‘matullāhī III was during this attack on the city! (See chapter 1, page 117)

⁸⁸⁹ The episode can be found in AAST, 45-9. This would apparently be ‘Abd Allāh I (bin Köchkunju) who only ruled for a year (946/1539).

has the honor of personally accompanying Shāh Ṭahmāsb to Mashhad.⁸⁹⁰ The work also provides an extended and dramatic account of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Bāqī’s intercession on behalf of his rebellious brother-in-law, Alqāṣ Mīrzā, which the other chronicles had narrated with much less color.⁸⁹¹ In another place, the author details the extravagant wedding between Shāh Ni‘matullāh Bāqī’s daughter to the Ṣafavid prince, Ismā‘īl Mīrzā, who would later become the pādishāh himself, Shāh Ismā‘īl II. He describes the elaborate preparations for the wedding in tremendous detail and pays particular attention to the lavishness of feast itself—the food, the clothing, decorations, and the like.⁸⁹² Indeed, the description of this feast echoes Mufīd’s own description of the banquet that Shāh Ni‘matullāh Bāqī’s grandson, Shāh Khalīl Allāh enjoyed with Shāh ‘Abbās, examined above (page 470). Later, the text describes Shāh Ni‘matullāhī’s wise counsel and noble effort to prevent his son-in-law, the future Ismā‘īl II—then governor of Khurāsān—from rebelling against Shāh Ṭahmāsb. As usual, the shāh rewards the shaykh handsomely for his loyalty and wisdom, even though the prince ultimately did revolt later on.⁸⁹³

Writing at a time when the Ni‘matullāhī family’s standing in the Ṣafavid realm had significantly slipped, the authors of both works were clearly making a special effort to give the Ni‘matullāhī grandee an instrumental role in the preservation of the Ṣafavid house during the tumultuous first generations of the dynasty. Both worked to pivot key moments in Ṣafavid dynastic history around the heroic efforts of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Bāqī

⁸⁹⁰ Shāh Ṭahmāsb comes off as a Rustam-like figure in the scene. He personally smites ‘Abd Allāh and cleaves seven champions in two with one stroke. *Ibid.*, 46, Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 216.

⁸⁹¹ This affair with Alqāṣ Mīrzā was mentioned above on page 460 of this dissertation. *AAST*, 113-18.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*, 135-8. See: Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 216-18.

⁸⁹³ *AAST*, 349-53. Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 218-19. All the chronicles related that Ismā‘īl Mīrzā was captured in 963/1556 and narrowly escaped with his life; before becoming shāh, he spent twenty years imprisoned the Qahqahah fortress in Azerbaijan, the same place where his uncle, Alqāṣ Mīrzā, had been incarcerated when he had revolted.

in the city of Yazd. The question is what accounts for the interest in this figure in works composed over a century later? Quinn proposes that this heroic reframing of the Ni‘matullāhī grandee’s role in early Ṣafavid dynastic history reflects a regional, historical perspective. In explanation, she cites the philological analyses that the editors of both works present in their introductions to the published editions of the texts. Both scholars confidently determined the regions in which authors of the works had grown up: Yad Allāh Shukrī, the editor of *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*, was convinced that the work’s author must have been of Azeri upbringing.⁸⁹⁴ The editor of *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, Irāj Afshār, proved beyond a reasonable doubt that a Yazdī had penned the work.⁸⁹⁵ Building on these philological studies, Quinn notes that Tabrīz, the capital of Azerbaijan, remained one of the few important Ni‘matullāhī lodges in the Ṣafavid realm apart from the family shrine center in Yazd.⁸⁹⁶ As a consequence, she suggests that the author may have been articulating the persistence of a pro-Ni‘matullāhī perspective in Tabrīz, long after the decay of the family’s prestige at court. This information comes from Ibn Karbalā’ī’s local hagiography of Tabrīz, which he completed at the end of the sixteenth-century,⁸⁹⁷ of course, we don’t know for sure that the Ni‘matullāhī lodge lasted in Tabrīz for another century, so it is not clear that such a perspective actually could have influenced the author of *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Ṣafavī*. Based on the assumption that the author of *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb* was a Yazdī, Quinn proposes a similar

⁸⁹⁴ AAS, xx-xxi.

⁸⁹⁵ Afshār was raised in Yazd himself and had a particular sensitivity to the particulars of the local dialects. In his introduction to the work, he presents a series of examples of unique Yazdī usages, which appear throughout the work. Ṣafavī, *Tazkireh-ye Tahmasp*, 15.

⁸⁹⁶ Quinn, "Ni‘matullāhī History," 219. Arjomand makes the same observation: Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 117.

⁸⁹⁷ Ḥusayn Karbalā’ī Tabrīzī, *Rawzāt al-Jinān va Jannāt al-Janān*, ed. Ja‘far Sulṭān Qurrā’ī, 2 vols. (Tehran: Bungāh-i Tarjumah va Nashr-i Kitāb, 1344-9/1965-70), 1: 165. It was completed somewhere around 990/1582.

conclusion about the Ni‘matullāhī devotees in Yazd: the followers of the Ni‘matullāhī ṭarīqah in Yazd must have still been going strong in the late eleventh/seventeenth century, even if the heads of the order had lost their influence at the capital.⁸⁹⁸

If the apparently pro-Ni‘matullāhī perspective discernable in these two texts does reflect the view of a real community on the ground, one wonders what kind of polemics might have been boiling beneath such a local revision of the imperial narrative. What did the author hope to accomplish by putting Shāh Ni‘matullāh at the center of old Ṣafavid history? Quinn proposes that the authors might have been writing for popular audiences involved in local Ni‘matī-Haydarī street battles, or that they might simply have been reflecting the Ni‘matullāhī community’s nostalgia for more glorious times.⁸⁹⁹ She also tentatively raises the possibility that the report in *‘Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb* on the lavish display at the wedding feast of Ismā‘īl Mīrzā and Shāh Ni‘matullāh’s daughter might have been intended as a critique of the contemporary situation at court. Quinn suggests that the author possibly intended this scene of luxury and gaiety to cast into relief the comparatively parsimonious atmosphere of the court in his day; the financial administration had imposed austerity measures on the court during Shāh Sulaymān’s time.⁹⁰⁰

Although the particular example Quinn chose in this last suggestion may have been only tentative and not entirely convincing, this idea that the episode should be read as an admonishment may be on the right track. Now, at first glance *‘Ālam-ārā-yi*

⁸⁹⁸ In any case, the order eventually all but disappeared in Iran, even if it happened later than had previously been thought. There was a revival in the modern period, but repression of Sufis in Iran returned in force after the revolution. Since then, Ni‘matullāhīs have sought refuge in the West. See: Leonard Lewisohn, "Persian Sufism in the contemporary West: reflections on the Ni‘matu'llahi diaspora," in *Sufism in the West*, ed. Jamal Malik and John Hinnells (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁸⁹⁹ Quinn, "Ni‘matu'llāhī History," 220.

⁹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 221.

Shāh Ṭahmāsb and *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, two contemporary works written by Yazdī authors, obviously belong to two different genres of historical writing. Mufīd's book is an encyclopedic, long durée history of the region and its notable people, which combines the genres of history, geography, prosopography, and hagiography. *Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb* constitutes a heroic, romanticized account of one king's career. Yet, if we place their respective portrayals of the early Ni'matullāhīs side by side, we can discern a similar perspective and perhaps even a similar purpose. I have made the point several times that Mufīd composed his history to be read as a work of advice literature. It is entirely plausible that both authors intended their fantastical treatments of the great Ni'matullāhī figures to admonish the contemporary Ṣafavid shāhs, who had shunned the beneficial wisdom and power of the Ni'matullāhī family and reduced their power and authority. If this is true, then one does not need to point to the persistence of a Ni'matullāhī Sufi community in Yazd to explain the pro-Ni'matullāh spin in *Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb*. Whether there was such a community in Yazd or not is irrelevant here because the author's interest was not in the Shāh Ni'matullāh as the head of a Sufi community, but rather in his leadership of the Yazdī community and in his authority and influence within the imperial realm. Like Mufīd, this Yazdī author uses these stories of past glory to highlight the loss of this local notable family's means of access to the Shāh and its ability to make Yazd a center of imperial affairs. It is this access and influence of Yazdī leaders in general that had been lost with the demotion of the Ni'matullāhīs in more recent times. Both works display a Yazd-centered orientation; both enjoin the promotion of Yazdī families. The Ni'matullāhīs represent the most important and most promising of these families.

Even if these authors both mobilize fantastical stories of the family's past greatness to make a case for Yazdī participation in imperial affairs, the two emphasize quite different qualities of greatness, and they do so by telling very different kinds of stories, taken from different literary traditions. While the author of *'Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb* draws from a heroic tradition of Persian epic for his fanciful portrayal of Shāh Ni'matullāh, Mufīd relies on hagiography for his. In Mufīd's telling, the great benefit that the Ni'matullāhīs had to offer in the old days was the ability to see the "unseen." It was this gift that enabled them to empower benevolent kings. Two episodes in Mufīd's hagiographical section on Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī and his successors demonstrate that for Mufīd, the Ni'matullāhīs of Yazd were not just heroes; they were kingmakers and saints. Moreover, their knowledge of the unseen made Yazd the cradle of empires. The first of these stories concerns Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī, the founder of the Ni'matullāhī ṭarīqah. The second deals with his great great-grandson, Ni'matullāh II.

"231 is his number:" Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī and the making of the Ṣafavī Shāhs

Hagiographers of the Ni'matullāhī *quṭb* who wrote in the early Ṣafavid era emphasized Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī's messianic prognostications and astrological predictions, which peppered his writings. Knowledge of the unseen and divinatory claims such as these were *de rigueur* for Sufi shaykhs in the fifteenth century. Like his contemporary hagiographers, Sun' Allāh strove to interpret these prognostications in a way that complemented, rather than challenged the messianic preeminence of the Ṣafavid ruling house. Indeed, efforts such as these allowed the Ni'matullāhīs to flourish for the first century of Ṣafavid rule, whereas other Sufi houses and their networks of

followers were systematically squelched.⁹⁰¹ Mufīd crowns his tarjamah of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī with an extensive passage from Sun‘ Allāh, which quotes a number of verses from one of these prognosticatory *qaṣīdahs*, extracted from Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s *Dīvān*. Accompanying these verses, Mufīd also includes Sun‘ Allāh’s distinctly pro-Şafavid interpretation of them. Mufīd introduces the poem with the sentence: “In that profit-returning book are known verses which indicate the sign of the rising of the sun of the preeminent fortune of the Şafavid sovereigns of pomp.”⁹⁰² In other words, Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s verses were supposed to have predicted the rise of Shāh Ismā‘īl Şafavī. First he quotes a long section of verses describing the disorder and chaos of the era before Shāh Ismā‘īl’s rise.⁹⁰³ He then moves on to the prognosticatory section of the *qaṣīdah*, followed by Sun‘ Allāh’s exegesis, which is based heavily on the art of *jafr* and *‘ilm-i ḥurūf* (the science of letters):⁹⁰⁴

Don’t be sad because in this disquiet,
I see the cheerfulness of union with the
beloved.

*ghamm makhur z-ānkih man dar īn tashvīsh
khurramī-i vaṣl-i yār mī‘bīnam*

A few years after this year
I see a world like a beautiful painting.

*ba‘d az imsāl u chand sāl digar
‘ālamī chun nigār mī‘bīnam*

The Mahdī’s deputy will become manifest
Nay, I see the manifestation [of the Mahdī].

*nā‘ib-i mahdī āshkār shavad
balkih man āshkār mī‘bīnam*

With prescient vision and sure unveiling (*bi-naẓr-i dūrbīn va kashf-i yaqīn*), they calculate the solar years with [the letters] ‘*ayn* and “*zā*” and “*dāl*”. For every 100 solar years, one must add 3 years; 100 solar years totals 26 [In fact, the text

⁹⁰¹ Shāh Ismā‘īl’s destruction of competing Sufi networks has been discussed at length. See: Arjomand, *Shadow of God*, 112. Arjomand references Ibn Karbalā‘ī colorful description of Ismā‘īl’s crushing of “all the chains of Sufi lineage” of the “sayyids and shaykhs” and destruction of “graves of their ancestors,” which can be found in: Karbalā‘ī Tabrīzī, *Rawẓāt al-Jinān va Jannāt al-Janān*, 1: 490, 2: 159. Bashir focuses on the destruction of the Nūrbakhshīyah during Ṭahmāsb’s reign in Bashir, *Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 186-95. Babayan details Shāh ‘Abbās I’s extirpation of the Nuṭṭavīyah: Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*.

⁹⁰² Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 3.

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

⁹⁰⁴ For an excellent introduction to *jafr* the primary tool of *‘ilm-i ḥurūf*, see: Gernot Windfuhr, “Jafr,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica, Online Edition*(2008).

should read “800 solar years totals 826”. So 178 solar years [really 878] give the result of the lunar year 904 [1498-9 C.E.].⁹⁰⁵

This verse contains only the first stage of a sophisticated calculation, which continues in the verses that follow. But before we go any further, a bit of clarification is warranted here because Sun‘ Allāh’s explanation of the verses is highly technical and rather elliptical. In order to arrive at this year 904 A.H., he pulls out the word “zi-” (which means “from”) from the first verse. That word, which consists of the single letter *zā’*, has the numeric value of 8. Then, from the word *ba‘d* (meaning “after”) in the second verse, he extracts *‘ayn-dal* (70 + 4 = 74). At this point, we discover that rather than simply reading this second verse as “a few years after this year,” the author intends that it should be read as “in 74 (*‘ayn-dal*) [solar years] after a few years from this year...” Sun‘ Allāh takes this phrase “a few years” to mean 4 years. This means that the second verse gives 78 (74 + 4 = 78). At this point we discover that the value of 8 from the first verse corresponds to the year in which Shāh Ni‘matullāh was supposed to have been making his prediction. In other words, 8 should be read as 800 (solar years). Thus, Sun‘ Allāh combines these values from the first and second verses by assigning 8 to the hundreds place and seventy-eight to the tens and ones place, yielding 878 (i.e. 74 + 4 solar years after the time of writing— the solar year of 800).⁹⁰⁶ The solar year 878 corresponds to the lunar year of 904.⁹⁰⁷ Having established this base number, Sun‘ Allāh continues his presentation of verses from Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s same qaṣīdah:

He also says:

⁹⁰⁵ Mufid Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 4. There is clearly an error or a deliberate obfuscation in the text: 800 (not 100) solar years equals 826 lunar years. 878 (not 178) solar years equals 904 lunar years. See below.

⁹⁰⁶ As was noted above, Sun‘ Allāh’s explanation is further complicated by the fact that, in his explanation, he explains that the number should be one hundred and seventy-eight years (*sad va haftād va hasht*) rather 878 (*hasht-sad va haftād va hasht*).

⁹⁰⁷ I am deeply indebted to Matthew Melvin-Koushki, who helped me figure out Sun‘ Allāh’s method.

When the fifth winter has passed,
in the sixth, I see a pleasant spring

*chun zamistān-i panjumīn bigužasht
shishumash khush-bahār mī'binam*

In other words, when 5 winters (which is an idiom for 4 years) have passed beyond 904 years, the result is 908; thus, in 909 [the pleasant spring after 5 winters], the deputy (*nā'ib*) of the Mahdī will become manifest. And:

I see an emperor of perfect wisdom,
a stately sovereign.

*pādishāh-i tamām-dānā'ī
sarvarī bā vaqār mī'binam*

I see the servants of his Majesty
everywhere, up to the ends of the earth.

*bandigān-i janāb-i ḥazrat-i ū
sar bi-sar tā jidār mī'binam*⁹⁰⁸

Once again, let us pause for a moment to sum up Sun' Allāh 's interpretation so far before we move on. He explains that Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī, writing in the solar year 800/826 lunar (1421 C.E.), predicted that after 82 solar years (i.e., 78 solar years – [derived from verse 2] plus 4 solar years [derived from verse 5], Shāh Ismā'īl would rise to power (882 solar/909 lunar/1504 C.E.). Sun' Allāh takes his analysis of the verses even further:

The word “deputy” (*nā'ib*) [from verse 3] has 8 letters: “*nūn*,” “*alif*,” “*yā*,” and “*bā*,” which total 231.⁹⁰⁹ And the value of “Ismā'īl Hādī [Ismā'īl the Guide]” is also 231. So, it is ascertained that the deputy (*nā'ib*) of His Excellency, the Twelfth Imam (*Qā'im*) of Muḥammad's family, is Ismā'īl Hādī, who made his emergence (*khurūj*) in 909 [A.H.]⁹¹⁰ As for the certainty of this, the *rubā'ī* of that perfect Ḥazrat (Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī) has the same cryptogram (*ramz*):⁹¹¹

⁹⁰⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 4-5.

⁹⁰⁹ He arrives at the number 231 by totaling the numeric values of each of the names of the letters in the word “*nā'ib*”: *nūn* is 50 + 6 + 50 = 106; *alif* is 1 + 30 + 80 = 111; *yā* is 10 + 1 = 11; *bā* is 2 + 1 = 3. He determines that the word *nā'ib* has eight letters by spelling out the names of the letters in the word (*nūn*= NWN, *alif*= ALF, *yā*= Y, *bā*= B) He doesn't count the hamzah or the long alifs of the letter *bā*' and *yā*'. He counts the letter *nūn* (N) twice, following Ibn al-'Arabī's assertion that the letter functions as a kind of double consonant; in Ibn al-'Arabī's assessment of *nūn*, the two nasal sounds are bisected by the *waw* (W), which acts as a veil (*hijāb*) between them. Along with its semicircular shape, the bifurcation of this letter has cosmological implications for Ibn al-'Arabī, which concern the divide between the seen and unseen worlds. I would like to thank Noah Gardiner for introducing me to these ideas of Ibn al-'Arabī, which he addresses in his *Kitāb al-Mīm wa al-Waw wa al-Nūn*. At the time of writing, I have not seen this work with my own eyes.

⁹¹⁰ This date corresponds to 1503-4 C.E., which is a couple of years later than the date usually supposed for Shāh Ismā'īl's *khurūj*.

⁹¹¹ A number of scholars have referenced Shāh Ni'matullāh Valī's prediction of Shāh Ismā'īl's *khurūj* in 909. Nonetheless, to my knowledge, nobody has tried to crack these passages that actually explain the numerology.

In 909 I see two conjunctions
and I see signs of the Mahdī and the Antichrist.

*dar nuh-ṣad u nuh man du qirān mī'binam
va zi-mahdī u dajjāl nishān mī'binam*

Another kind of religion appears and another Islam;
I see the hidden secret is revealed.

*dīn-i nu'-i digar gard va Islām-i digar
īn sirr-i nihān ast 'ayān mī'binam*⁹¹²

And he also said (*rubā'ī*):

These eight letters are the name of my shāh—
that shāh who is the manifestation of my God.

*īn hasht hurūf nām-i ān shāh-i man ast
ān shāh kih ū mazhar-i allāh-i man ast*

The sum of 231 is his number;
know that it is the name of my beloved.

*majmū'-i davīst u sī u yak bi-shumārash
tā daryābī kih nām-i dilkhvāh-i man ast*⁹¹³

Indeed, the math seems a little fuzzy; clearly, Sun' Allāh and his contemporaries had to work hard to make Shāh Nī'matullāh Valī's verses predict the rise of the Ṣafavid messiah.⁹¹⁴ Nevertheless, Mufīd felt obliged to include them in his reconstitution of the Nī'matullāhī hagiographical material over a century later. Why? As we have observed on numerous occasions, not unlike the author of *'Ālam-ārā-yi Shāh Ṭahmāsb*, Mufīd was determined to demonstrate the centrality of Yazdī figures in the shaping of the affairs at the imperial court, i.e., as royal advisors and high officials, but most of all, as kingmakers. He demonstrates that, with the use of the science of letters and conjunction astrology, this powerful Sufi shaykh predicted—and by extension, precipitated—the rise of the Ṣafavid dispensation. Moreover, just as in the case of Sharaf al-Dīn 'Alī Yazdī and the Tīmūrīds, here too Mufīd argues that the rhetorical machinery of the early Ṣafavid court needed to make use of the particular spectrum of fields of expertise that Yazd's most saintly and scholarly figures championed. This

⁹¹² Although this *rubā'ī* shares the same radīf as the qaṣīdah, which precedes it, it is composed in the standard *rubā'ī* meter rather than *khafīf*, in which the qaṣīdah was composed.

⁹¹³ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 5.

⁹¹⁴ The reader should note that the interpretation reflects a messianic vision of Shāh Ismā'īl that is more subdued than the shāh's own vision for himself, which he presented in Turkish for his Qizlbāsh devotees. In his poetry, Shāh Ismā'īl is nobody's deputy; he is the very manifestation of the twelfth Imām, 'Alī, Jesus, Muḥammad, and even God himself. See discussion beginning on page 261, (particularly footnote 411).

expertise includes both Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī’s “prescient vision and sure unveiling (*nazr-i dūrbīn va kashf-i yaqīn*)” and also Sun‘ Allāh’s⁹¹⁵ facility with the science of *jafr*. The irony in Mufīd’s presentation is palpable, and its effect, clearly admonitory: Although the founder of the Ni‘matullāhī order helped put the Ṣafavids on the throne and build their *dawlah*, the later Ni‘matullāhī descendants themselves had lost influence at court, just like the ‘Arīzī sayyids, the astrologer-historians, and the other Yazdī practitioners of the esoteric sciences, whom we have considered in the previous chapter. Furthermore, as we have witnessed repeatedly, Mufīd’s own presentation of the narrative serves as proof that Yazdīs’ mastery still survived in some corners, despite the lack of royal attention, and that Yazdis’ expertise still offered essential benefits to the royal court, that is, advice in the form of knowledge of the past. The implication is that the revival of such mastery in the city as a whole could only succeed and could only begin to benefit the realm on a grand scale with the proper care and nourishment from the royal family.

“Upon the tongue of divine revelation”: Shāh Ni‘matullāh II and the making of the Quṭb Shāhs

A second episode of prescience in Mufīd’s long chapter on the Ni‘matullāhī family serves a similar purpose. In this case, however, the message about the centrality of the Ni‘matullāhīs’ importance as kingmakers is more subtle and more sophisticated than the previous one, in part because it speaks to the role of the Yazdī community as a key intermediary between imperial realms rather than simply as a center of a single *dawlah*. As we proposed in the introduction to this dissertation, Mufīd gives Yazd the

⁹¹⁵ Sun‘ Allāh may likely have been from Kirmān rather than Yazd, but as a Ni‘matullāhī Mufīd would have considered him a member of the Taft community, where the most important shrines were located.

capacity to draw distant places into itself—to make them local— a facility I have been calling “absorption” or “localization.” At the same time he also gives Yazd the ability to cast its beneficial shade over faraway lands— an operation I term “projection.” Both operations have the effect of making Yazd “universal.” In the case of absorption or localization, Yazd stands as the center of the entire world; in fact, it encompasses the entire world. In the case of projection, it makes itself present everywhere. In this next episode, Mufīd retools a story of from one of the important Ni‘matullāhī notables, Shāh Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b), in order to demonstrate precisely this universalizing power through which Yazdīs had formerly projected their influence, power, and authority into faraway lands.

We have already briefly mentioned Shāh Ni‘matullāh II (Nm.V.b) above (see page 455). He was the great great-grandson of Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī, and he died in 900/1494, just prior to Shāh Ismā‘īl’s *khurūj*. A little background will be helpful, as Mufīd provides little of the political history in his notice on Ni‘matullāh II.⁹¹⁶ As we have already stated, the penultimate Qarā Qūyūnlū sovereign, Jahānshāh, had favored the Ni‘matullāhī family, and in particular, Shāh Ni‘matullāh II; Jahānshāh gave him his daughter, Khānum Sulṭān, in marriage. However, after Ūzūn Ḥasan Aq Qūyūnlū killed Jahānshāh and conquered the Qarā Qūyūnlūs in 872/1467,⁹¹⁷ many of those who had ties with the vanquished dynasty, including royal princes and members of the Ni‘matullāhī family, feared for their lives and fled to the welcoming court of the Bahmānids in the

⁹¹⁶ The notice begins on 3: 50 of Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*. Mufīd gives his full name as Na‘īm al-Dīn Ni‘matullāh Ṣānī.

⁹¹⁷ This victory occurred at the Battle of Mush. See: Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 66-67, Woods, *Aqqyunlu*, 96-7.

Deccan.⁹¹⁸ Shāh Ni‘matullāh II and his Qarā Qūyūnlū bride kept a low profile in Taft, residing for a time in Māhān, away from his powerbase in Yazd. Eventually, the relationship between Ūzūn Ḥasan Aq Qūyūnlū and Shāh Ni‘matullāh II did improve. As we have already discussed, Ūzūn Ḥasan stopped molesting Shāh Ni‘matullāh II and his household after a miraculous visit from the Prophet Muḥammad (see above, page 455). As a result of that event—or so Mufīd would have his readers believe— Ūzūn Ḥasan gave Yazd to Shāh Ni‘matullāh II.⁹¹⁹ In reality, it appears that Ūzūn Ḥasan actually spared certain members of the Qarā Qūyūnlū family, notably Pīr Qulī (Q.III.d), grandfather of Sulṭān Qulī (Q.V), (d. 949/1543).⁹²⁰ Sulṭān Qulī would eventually become the founder of the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty in Golconda (See Figure 5), at which time, he took the title Quṭb al-Mulk. Ultimately, Ūzūn Ḥasan may have not been quite as inimical to the Ni‘matullāhī family’s prestige as Mufīd lets on. Nevertheless, after Ūzūn Ḥasan’s death, his son and successor, Ya‘qūb Aq Qūyūnlū, was definitely more determined to eliminate all traces of the Qarā Qūyūnlūs and their former partners.⁹²¹ It was under Ya‘qūb’s reign that one of these Qarā Qūyūnlūs, Sulṭān Qulī (Q.V), whom, as we just mentioned eventually became the founder of the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty in the Deccan, left for the Bahmānid court as a boy. The story of Sulṭān Qulī’s rise to power in India is extraordinary, and Mufīd does not miss the opportunity to weave it into Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s hagiography. In Mufīd’s plotment, this story of king-making

⁹¹⁸ As a reminder, the Bahmānid court at Bīdar had established ties with the Ni‘matullāhī order in India since the mid-fifteenth century. The history of that relationship is found above, on page 450.

⁹¹⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 52.

⁹²⁰ Haroon Khan Sherwani, *History of the Quṭb Shāhī Dynasty* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1974), 2, Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 70.

⁹²¹ See: Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 69-70. On page 71 of the same article, Minorsky quotes *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī* in order to show that after learning of Sulṭān Qulī’s immanent fortune from his astrologers, Ya‘qūb became nervous and thus sought to eliminate Pīr Qulī’s descendants. Apparently, the future sulṭān’s greatness was not just known to the Ni‘matullāhī pīr. Also see Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, 2-3.

revolves around one of Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s feats of prophetic prescience, which occurred during his retirement in Taft, toward the end of his life. These events comprise the final episode in Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s tarjamah.

For this story, Mufīd cites local, Deccani sources that he claims to have read while he was living in Hyderabad, the seat of the Quṭb Shāhī dynasty’s power.⁹²² In fact, the entire account consists of a quotation from the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*, (completed 1026/1617 for Sulṭān Muḥammad Quṭb Shāh, Sulṭān Qulī’s great-great grandson), which Mufīd mentions by name. Mufīd also remarks on the fact that the anonymous author claimed to have been quoting from *Marghūb al-Qulūb*, a work that is not extant, but was composed by Sadr-i Jahān, who was apparently an intimate of Sulṭān Qulī.⁹²³ What follows is Mufīd’s excerpt from *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*’s reproduction of Sadr-i Jahān’s account of a story he allegedly heard directly from Sulṭān Qulī’s lips:

I [Ṣadr-i Jahān] heard from the tongue of the Pādishāh Ghāzī Amīr-zādah Sulṭān Qulī [Q.V] known as Barār al-Mulk the following:

“We are descended from the sons of Amīr Qarā Yūsuf [Q.I], and were among the close relations of Jahānshāh.⁹²⁴ The homeland of our ancestors was the village of Sa‘dābād in the province of Hamadān. After the predomination of the Aq Qūyūnlū sovereigns over the Qarā Qūyūnlū house, as a child, in the company of my

⁹²² Mufīd relates that he arrived in Hyderabad from Delhi (Shāhjahānābād), by way of Burhānpūr and Awrangābād, on 17 Rajab, 1084/ October 28, 1673. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 795. He left for the city of Ujjain a few years later on the 7th of Ramaḥān, 1087/13th of November, 1676: Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 813.

⁹²³ Mufīd names this work on page 3: 53. See discussion of *Marghūb al-Qulūb* in Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 50-52. Minorsky concludes that it was written during the reign of Sulṭān Qulī. According to Mufīd, and contemporary scholars, *Marghūb al-Qulūb* was an abridgement of the anonymous *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*, but Minorsky argues that *Marghūb al-Qulūb* was actually an earlier work. Sherwani also offers some discussion of this work: Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, 68 (note 79), 77 (note 121). In that work, Sherwani provides a fuller version of the author’s name: Ṣadr Jahān Mullā Ḥusayn al-Ṭībsī (al-Ṭīblīsī.)

⁹²⁴ Jahān Shāh’s granddaughter, Khadījah Khanūm (Khadījah Bīgum) [*in Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*, she is Yūsuf’s daughter] had married Pīr Qulī, the grandfather of Sulṭān Qulī. However, Pīr Qulī, like Jahān Shāh, was himself a descendant of Qarā Yūsuf.

uncle, Allāh Qūlī Bayk [Q.IV.a], I went to the Deccan in India and after meeting the rulers there, in the end, returned to Iraq for a while. After a time, my noble uncle determined to set out with swift-footed horses, gifts, and presents for the rulers of the Deccan. It so happened that we took up the path of the journey to India again;⁹²⁵ when we reached Yazd, we went in visitation and service to His Excellency, Shelter of Guidance, Instrument of Spiritual Knowledge, Shāh Naʿīm al-Dīn Niʿmatullāh Ṣānī [Nm.V.b], (may his beloved grave be sanctified)⁹²⁶ because our connection to him was somewhere between discipleship for a pīr and kinship—[that is,] given that his wife was Jahānshāh’s daughter and that the magnanimity and holiness of that Excellency was perfect. After inquiring about his health, and making statements of favor and sympathy, he brought these words to light upon the tongue of divine revelation (*vaḥī*): ‘O son, be confident that you will obtain the graces of security and [the fulfillment] of aspirations of every kind! From the Court of Singularity, He has entrusted to you and your children sovereignty over a region of Hindūstān.’⁹²⁷ His blessed hand anointed (*mālīdah*) my head and shoulders. Picking up several gold coins from under the carpet, he gave them to me, [saying]: ‘This is the first revelatory opening (*futūḥ*). Go in good health, for that region is appointed to you.’ Having had our hope piqued on account of that shāh, knower of deep knowledge, and having requested that he recite the *fātiḥah* [on our behalf], we turned our attention to the region of Hind.’⁹²⁸

Ṣadr Jahān’s quotation from Sulṭān Qulī continues; he explains how he arrived in Bīdar (Muḥammadābād), found favor with the Bahmanid sovereign, Sulṭān Maḥmūd Shāh (r. 887-924/1482-1518), and eventually rose to power himself, just as the Niʿmatullāhī saint had predicted. The quotation concludes:

With the aid of divine favor, I was placed upon the pedestal of command and the cushion of authoritative sovereignty in the kingdom of the Deccan, just as the

⁹²⁵ There is some discrepancy in the sources about whether Sulṭān Qulī and his uncle made two journeys to India or only one. Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 71.

⁹²⁶ “*quḍisa sirru-hu al-‘azīzu.*”

⁹²⁷ “*‘In kalāmāt bar zabān-i vaḥī tarjamān guzāranīdand kih ‘ay farzand, bi-ḥusūl-i ‘ināyat-i amānī va āmāl dar har bāb vaṣīq va mustazāhir bāsh kih az bārgāh-i aḥādīyat sulṭānat-i quṭrī az iqtār-i Hindūstān bi-tu va awlād-i tu ḥavālah kardah’and.*”

⁹²⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfīqī, *JM*, 3: 53. Minorsky, translates sections of this same passage as it appears in the *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*, but the two versions are rather different. Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 71-2.

details of these circumstances have been recorded in the many writings of the historians of eloquence.⁹²⁹

With these words, Mufīd brings Shāh Ni‘matullāh II’s tarjamah to an end. Mufīd uses this extended passage to great effect: In his presentation, a future king, the progeny of former kings laid low, wandering in the wilderness between kingdoms, passes through Yazd and pays homage to the Ni‘matullāhī *pīr*, who is both spiritual guide of the age and husband to his royal aunt. There, in Taft, far outside the seat of royal power, Shāh Ni‘matullāh II sits not merely as a man wedded to kings, but as a kingmaker himself. In the same way that Mufīd had presented Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī as being instrumental in the rise of Shāh Ismā‘īl Ṣafavī, he also presents Shāh Ni‘matullāh II, with his miraculous prognostication and anointing of Sulṭān Qulī, as partaking in the enthronement of the Quṭb Shāhīs in their new land. At his ancestor’s shrine in Taft, surrounded by the tombs of his ancestors, the Ni‘matullāhī saint sits motionless, at the center of a world, bridging the realms of Iran and the Deccan, two lands that would continue a close cultural, social, and confessional connection for centuries. Like the Ṣafavids, the Quṭb Shāhīs would convert to Shiism, and for a time, the Quṭb Shāhīs actually had the *khuṭbah* pronounced in the name of the Ṣafavid sovereign.⁹³⁰ Thus, as far as Mufīd was concerned, the Ni‘matullāhīs of Yazd not only participated in bringing

⁹²⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 54. Mufīd does not include any further information about Sulṭān Qulī’s reign, nor does he mention that his own son, Jamshīd, assassinated him in 950/1543, after a long reign of sixty years. This detail is discussed in *Tārīkh-i Quṭb Shāhī*, as quoted in Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 73.

⁹³⁰ See discussion on the Quṭb Shāhīs’ Shiism and nominal obeisance to the Ṣafavid Shāhs in: Sadiq Naqvi, *Muslim Religious Institutions and Their Role Under the Qutb Shahs* (Hyderabad: Bab-ul-Ilm Society, 1993), 24-27, 41, 118-24. Two important articles address the problem of Shiism in all the Deccan kingdoms, particular its political role. See: Daniela Bredi, "La Funzione Politica della Sciismo nei Sultanati Deccani," *Revista degli Studi Orientali* 64, no. 1-2 (1990). The second article is: D.; Coslovi Bredi, F.; Amoretti, B. Scarcia, "Shīism in the Deccan: A Hypothetical Study," *Islamic Culture* 62, no. 2-3 (1988). The matter of the Quṭb Shāhīs Shiism is also briefly discussed in Sherwani, *Quṭb Shāhī*, 45-6, Minorsky, "The Qara-Qoyunlu and the Qutb-Shahs," 72 (especially note 2).

the Ṣafavids to power in Iran, but they were also instrumental in establishing the Ṣafavids' agents in the Deccan.

Mufid's use of this narrative from Ṣadr Jahān's work has a powerful effect: Certainly, the author intends his readers to see the Ni'matullāhī saints as heroes of the story, but if we consider the collection of notices on the Ni'matullāhīs as part of his compendium of material on the territory of Yazd, we cannot help but see this episode as saying as much about the larger territory and community of Yazd as it says about this one important family. By virtue of the Ni'matullāhī saint's prophetic authority, the region of Yazd, though geographically on the fringes of the action, nonetheless appears as an inevitable crossroads, possessing tremendous gravity. The city is situated at the center of the world, a hub where kings—by virtue of their ties of kinship and their pious devotion toward the city's eminent personages—are drawn in and must funnel through. There, in the village of Taft's blessed ground, kings come to be reoriented and emerge remade. By presenting Yazd as the sanctifying womb of sovereigns, Mufid pushes Yazd's boundaries far beyond its provinces, projecting its effects into faraway lands. As a result, Golconda-Hyderabad becomes something of a shadow frontier-province of Yazd; its kings become Yazd's children.

This episode from relatively recent history echoes one of the earliest episodes in Mufid's work, which we examined in the first chapter of this dissertation. Recalling the story of Yazdigard and the Green Spring (page 63), the reader will remember that Mufid appropriated that legend in order to demonstrate that the region of Yazd served as an expansive vehicle for divine moral judgment, manifested in its blessed waters. That agent of God's judgment exercised its authority far beyond the limits of Yazd's borders

through networks of waterways, which had terminals around the Sasanid realm spreading outward from Yazd. In Mufīd's telling, this water tested and then struck down Yazdigard when it found his moral fiber lacking and anointed a new, wiser, and more just king in his place. The city of Yazd took its name from this king who had vacillated between justice and injustice, and Mufīd used his story to initiate what he observed to be the main engine of his history, i.e., the cycles of just rule and tyranny that precipitated periods of discord and peace, decay and prosperity. This cycling punctuates his narrative all the way through and marks the unfolding of history, with Yazd at its center. If Yazdigard's story of king-making and king-breaking marks the opening of history in *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*, then the story of Sulṭān Qulī's anointing in Yazd stands as one of the last such occasions; Mufīd has shown repeatedly that Yazd and Yazdīs have been denied their former role, not only in bringing kings to power, but more importantly, in running the imperial administration and crafting the discourse of empire. The underlying message is always present: Take heed, O Ṣafavid shāhs! If you won't attend to Yazd and nourish the benefits that Yazdīs have to offer, then you too will find yourselves on the bottom of fortune's wheel, lashed by "the tongue of divine revelation."

4. Following the Footprints of the Imām

The fountainheads of Yazd's benefit were located at the great shrine complexes and madrasah complexes, which we have been examining in the preceding chapters. It was at these places that Yazdī experts had learned their craft; it was at these places that saintly men, like Ni'matullāh II, sat and shaped the affairs of kings. Hence it was toward

the shrine complexes, khānqāhs, and madrasahs of Yazd's able families that Mufīd would have the Ṣafavid shāhs redirect their attention. Indeed, the Khānqāh-i Taft and its dependencies fared better than most of the khānqāhs and madrasah complexes built by the 'Arīzī sayyids, many of which Mufīd claims were standing in ruins. As we saw, after falling into dereliction, too, the shrine of the Ni'matullāhīs and the neighboring gardens had enjoyed a minor facelift in the 1040s/1630s, thanks to the Ni'matullāhī notables of that era, Mīrzā Shāh Abū al-Mahdī and his brother. Although the royal court had returned to civil relations with the Ni'matullāhīs of Mufīd's era, they did so only after the heads of that family had heeled to the shāh, that is, after Ni'matullāhī grandees had adopted a less independent, sharīah-centered mode of religious leadership, and after they had been divested of any significant power base. Even with this return to cordial relations, no significant new structures appeared in Taft. Any improvements that did happen there, came from local initiatives, not from representatives of the royal court.⁹³¹ Even Mufīd's earlier patron, the local vizier, Allāh Qulī Bayk (Āqā Āṣaf), about whom he sings great praises, made no efforts to build or to endow anything in Yazd.⁹³² Without question, neither the Ṣafavid shāhs themselves nor their agents took any interest in funding the Ni'matullāhī complex at Taft. The shrine and its patrons were on their own. As a result, the operations grew smaller and the shrine's reach and gravity contracted. While Taft could no longer rival the power or religious authority centered at the Ṣafavid court, neither could it offer much guidance.

⁹³¹ There is an exception. A vizier, whom Mufīd characterizes as benevolent, Ṣafī Qulī Bayk, who was vizier of Yazd from 1064-66/1654-66, built an edifice in Taft, in which he was buried, called Buq'ah-i Ṣafavīyah. It was named Ṣafavīyah after him (Ṣafī), not the Safavid dynasty. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 197, 689. Afshār transcribes his gravestone in Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 408-9.

⁹³² In his description of Mufīd Allāh Qulī Bayk character he says, "He placed servitude of the sublime Ṣafavid lineage into his ear of his soul." Much of the notice is spent in describing his service to Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī. See the notice for Allāh Qulī Bayk in Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 206-10.

Despite the fact that Mufīd bemoans all the dilapidated complexes around the region, the city of Yazd never fell into total ruin, nor did its population completely abandon it. In fact, while Mufīd grumbles about embezzlement, the disappearance of libraries, the collapse of madrasahs, and the lack of royal interest in Yazdī intellectual and devotional infrastructure, he himself admits that people were still making ritual visitation to many of the tombs at those sites. Shrine-centered forms of religiosity, which had been traditionally been enabled by powerful, transregionally connected local families persisted, albeit in a somewhat muted way, without the influx of imperial capital. This last section of the chapter will demonstrate that this cooling off of traditional bases of local religiosity was compounded by new patterns of local patronage, which took shape in accordance with an increasingly deliberate imperial preference for more universal, juridical, Shīī forms of devotion.

At this point, the episode we raised at the beginning of this chapter concerning the Ṣafavid princess, Zaynab Baygum, will begin to take on more significance (see above, page 439). The reader will recall that in that instance Zaynab Baygum alienated Amīr Chaqmāq's bazaar from the Yazdī institutions that it had originally been built to fund and converted it into a vaqf for her tomb at the Imām's shrine in Mashhad. As we shall discover, the princess's choice dovetailed nicely with a larger imperial program of centralization, designed to curb the power and religious authority of local notables and disrupt their power bases, which were centered in their shrines and madrasah/khānqāh complexes. By promoting alternative, Twelver Shīī loci of ritual devotion, which were centered on devotion to the twelve Imāms and a more universal set of mythological narratives, these new forms of patronage succeeded in further

marginalizing the networks of local notables who had traditionally presided over the parochial microsystems of devotional life. These new patterns of patronage succeeded in bringing Yazd's notable families and the institutions that defined the city further under central control. Indeed, these practices went hand-in-hand with reforms in administrative oversight, which brought Yazd under the direct control of the royal house: As we have already related, just under a decade after 'Abbās I consolidated his power and brought the Ni'matullāhīs to Iṣfahān (roughly 1009/1601), he made Yazd part of crown property; it was thereafter administered by bureaucrats who worked directly under the court's supervision rather than by governors.⁹³³

The Masjid-i Furṭ: whispers of the Unseen

In order to tease out these new patterns of patronage, we turn now to Mufīd's notice on the Masjid-i Furṭ, a site just inside the walls of the city, which Mufīd presents as having become an anchor point for Yazdī's devotional life in the seventeenth century; at the time of the work's composition, the complex had only recently been restored from ruin, a point that we will return to below. As usual, Mufīd uses this site as an opportunity to explain the origin and character of the devotion practiced there. In so doing, he locates the city squarely within the sacred space and time of Shī'ī piety. But, as we have seen countless times, the author impregnates this seemingly straightforward presentation of ancient history with implications about the current circumstances in the city.

⁹³³ See the tables of local governors and administrators of Yazd prepared by Willem Floor in his commentary on Naṣīrī's untitled manual on administration. Nasiri, *Titles & Emoluments in Safavid Iran: A Third Manual of Safavid Administration by Mirza Naqī Nasiri*, 300-02.

Mufīd begins his notice in the early second century, during the ‘Abbāsīd Revolution. Here we learn that Aḥmad bin Muḥammad Zamchī, under Abū Muslim’s orders, marched out from Yazd and defeated the armies of the Umayyad loyalist, Abu al-‘Alā: “He burned the standard of Yazīd in the fire of wrath and anger; he put his children and followers to the sword of vengeance. And in that territory he sat upon the throne of rule.”⁹³⁴ In fact, in chapter 1, page 71, we already examined Mufīd’s treatment of Zamchī in the chronological section of the work.⁹³⁵ Here, the author frames his notice on Masjid-i Furṭ by reviewing Zamchī’s massive program of construction across the city while he was governor of Yazd. The Masjid-i Furṭ, which Zamchī built outside the Darb-i Mihrījard on the south side of the city, is presented as this heroic governor’s crowing achievement.⁹³⁶

With the above passage, Mufīd places Yazd at the center of the narrative of the Abū Muslim legends. These had been popular in urban centers of the Ṣafavid realm in part because they were so easily cast in accordance with Alid soteriology.⁹³⁷ According to Mufīd’s account, then, the Masjid-i Furṭ came to be founded on the ashes of the tyrannous, Umayyad polity, which in Shī‘ī discourse had murderously stolen the caliphate from the descendants of the prophet. Here he presents the founding of that mosque, as well as Zamchī’s other building projects in Yazd, as a step toward the redemption of the Imāms.

⁹³⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 650.

⁹³⁵ This episode in Yazd’s history is more fully elucidated in 1: 37-41; Mufīd has provided a cross-reference to this longer account in this notice for Masjid-i Furṭ.

⁹³⁶ In the chronological section of the work, Mufīd adds that Zamchī built the mosque beside the Ḥammām-i Mavlānā-yi Khīẓr. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 39-40.

⁹³⁷ See Babayan’s chapter on Abū Muslim legends in Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 121-60.

Murīd sets the next leg of the story in the early third/ninth century, where he weaves the mosque’s history together with a pivotal and much rehearsed episode in Shīī history in which the ‘Abbāsīd Caliph al-Ma’mūn invites the eighth Imām, ‘Alī Rizā (d. 818), to travel from the Arabian city of Madīnah to the Khurāsānī city of Marv.⁹³⁸ Once there, the Caliph allegedly names the Imām to be successor to the Caliphate (a story that dates at least to the early fourth/tenth century).⁹³⁹ Now, in the course of his journey, Mufīd tells us, Imām Rizā stopped in Yazd. While there, the author tells us:

For some days, impoverished folk (*khāk-nishīnān*) of that place, seeking guidance, traveled to take up residence in that realm. The inhabitants of that region bound the waist of their souls with the pilgrim’s garb of attendance and servitude, hurried to the threshold of the Ka’bah [i.e., the Imām himself], and with the footstep of supplication and sincere devotion (*bi-qadam-i niyāz va ikhlāṣ*), they scattered the coin of the soul on the soil of his blessed footstep (*naqd-i jān niṣār-i khāk-i qadam-i mubārakash nimūdand*). In this very “Masjid-i Furt,” his Excellency stood in worship of the omniscient King (*malik-i ‘allām*). Thus, one of the believers, in devotion, built a humble cupola at that noble spot; to this day, it’s a place of making prayers for the inhabitants of this region. Anyone who prays two *rak’ats* in complete devotion, pressing the face of entreaty upon the ground, will certainly receive his share of desirable things in both worlds. The speaking voice of the “unseen” (*hātif-i ghaybī-i gūyā*) will cause this message⁹⁴⁰ to reach the ear of awareness of the masters of devotion:

O you who step into this place, you are turning attentively to sacred space	<i>ay kih dar īn kūy qadam mī’nihī rūy-i tavajjuh bih ḥaram mī’nihī</i>
Place the foot into this place as you should; if your foot should turn to dust, put your face in.	<i>pāy bih andāzah dar īn kūy nih pāyat agar sūdah shavad rūy nih</i>
Turn in decorum toward the door of the One without need; Bring helplessness and supplication before the One without need.	<i>rūy-i adab nih bih dar-i bī-niyāz ‘ajz u niyāz ār bar bī-niyāz⁹⁴¹</i>

⁹³⁸ The text, however, refers only to his traveling to Ṭūs, the place in which he was eventually interred.

⁹³⁹ This story appears in al-Ṭabarī as well as in Ibn Bābawayh (both early fourth century). Pilgrimages to Imām Rizā’s shrine in Mashhad go back at least to the fourth/tenth century. On the story of Imām Rizā and Caliph Ma’mūn, see Michael Cooperson’s excellent book: Michael Cooperson, *Classical Arabic biography: the heirs of the prophets in the age of al-Ma’mun*, Cambridge studies in Islamic civilization (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 70-106. (In particular see 73-74.)

⁹⁴⁰ The word I am translating here as “message” is “*maẓmūn*,” which is difficult to translate. More literally, it refers to the contents of something, the subject matter, the meaning, or the gist.

⁹⁴¹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 651.

So, this building, which the author had first presented as a sign of Shīī redemption, now comes to have been blessed by the eighth Imām, who was the living promise of future redemption incarnate. Moreover, the very ground where the Imām made his devotions to God absorbed his material blessing, so much so that it became a place of visitation and supplication. At that spot, supplicants stood praying in imitation of the Imām’s actions there. In exchange for their proper devotion, visitors received their desires. This site at the Masjid-i Furṭ is as a *qadamgāh* (stepping-place or foot-place), that is, a place where the footprint and charismatic imprint of the Imām remains fixed in the soil. *Qadamgāhs* make up a special category of shrine sites, devoted to places where a saint, almost always one of the Imāms, stopped.⁹⁴² The footprints of other Imāms appear across the Persianate world, but that of Imām Riḏá is most common, perhaps because, in Islamic lore he is remembered as having traveled across the Muslim world.⁹⁴³ Some *qadamgāhs* feature stones with an image of a footprint in them, but not all.

Essentially this reference to the Eighth Imām’s visit to Yazd here in the notice for the Masjid-i Furṭ comprises a simple summary of a somewhat more lengthy

⁹⁴² On *qadamgāhs* and *astānahs* (stopping places) in Islamic South Asia, see discussion in Green, *Making Space*, 121. Green notes an important tale in which a handprint (not a footprint) of ‘Alī was revealed in a dream to one of the Quṭb Shāhīs, who then located it on a hilltop outside of Hyderabad. The Quṭb Shāhs patronized a shrine there that became known as Mawlā ‘Alī.

⁹⁴³ Outside of *qadamgāh*-centered shrines, Imām Riḏá’s footprint is also common talismanic image in Shīī iconography. That image comes up in illustrated books of auguries (*fāl-nāmahs*), which were popular during the Ṣafavid period and after. For example from the Ṣafavid period see the illustrated *fāl* from the “Dispersed Fāl-Nāmāh” in: Massumeh and Serpil Bağcı Farhad, *Falnama: The Book of Omens* (Washington, D.C.: Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 2009), 136, transliteration and translation of accompanying text on 263. The text beside this image reads: “Any place that Imam Riḏá sets foot, / There hyacinth and basil always grow. / With the fragrance of love is perfumed the nostril of anyone / who smells the dust of the court of that king of the truthful ones. O augury user, know that the footprint of the Lord of *jinns* and men, father of Ḥasan, son of Musa, Ali Riḏá... has appeared in your augury. This augury indicated happiness, prosperity, contentment, and success in your affairs...”

treatment in the first volume’s chronological section of the work.⁹⁴⁴ That section of the work does reference Masjid-i Furṭ in the course of the Imām’s story, but it also contains another anecdote about the Imām’s visit there, which Mufīd does not repeat in his later notice on the Masjid-i Furṭ. In this tale, the Imām performs a miraculous healing, which occurs in the ḥammām that abuts the mosque, which Mufīd calls Ḥammām-i Furṭ.⁹⁴⁵

Mufīd presents the story as follows:

At that time, there was a head of police (*shaḥnah*) whom they used to call Sultān Quṭb al-Dīn Zangī. He had become a leper (*mabrūṣ*), and since he didn’t want the secret to be revealed, when he went to any ḥammām, he would go separately. By chance, having come to Ḥammām-i Furṭ, he issued an order to the ḥammām-keeper saying, “While I’m in the Ḥammām, don’t let anyone enter.” Having issued this order, he went inside and sat at the foot of the basin of water (*khizānah*.) After a moment had passed, a person of elegance and beauty entered the ḥammām. Seeing him, the *shaḥnah* became ashamed because if—God forbid— this grandee should see he was a leper, he would be despised. He began to speak to him saying, “This ḥammām-keeper has disgraced me!” Meanwhile, that person, who was in fact the Ḥaḏrat-Imām, drew a bowl of warm water from the basin, poured it out upon the head and body of the *shaḥnah*, and went out of the ḥammām. The *shaḥnah* followed him out and started reproaching the ḥammām-keeper, “I ordered you to keep people ignorant of me lest they enter the ḥammām. Why did you do the opposite of what I said?” The ḥammām-keeper swore an oath (*sawḡand yād kunad*) saying, “While you were in there no one showed his face in the ḥammām. I never saw anyone and never gave anyone permission to enter.” In the middle of the argument, the *shaḥnah* noticed a luminescence on his body. The scars of leprosy (*lak’hā-yi piṣī va baraṣ*) were completely erased and the skin of his body returned to its original color.⁹⁴⁶ Amazed and bedazzled, he got dressed and left. He inquired about the circumstances of the [man whom he didn’t yet know was the] Ḥaḏrat-i Imām, thinking he might find some sign of that honorable person. When he reached the place that is now famous as Zangīyān, he saw the pitched tent of the Ḥaḏrat-i Imām. When his eye fell upon the beauty of the Ḥaḏrat-i Imām—peace be upon him— he knew that he was the same person who had poured water upon his

⁹⁴⁴ There he also references the Masjid-i Furṭ and also states that supplicants miraculously have their desires fulfilled at that place where the Imām stopped. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 39-40.

⁹⁴⁵ Elsewhere he gives the name of the building prior to Zamchī’s renovations, which was Ḥammām-i Mavlānā Khizr. This is also the name that appears in the earlier Yazdī histories.

⁹⁴⁶ As distasteful as it is to today’s audiences, contemporary readers would likely have taken this line as humorous one. A Zangī, is a person of African decent; elite, fair-skinned ‘Ajāmīs considered dark skin to be unattractive. This *shaḥnah* had already been afflicted by dark skin even before he acquired leprosy. It was also thought that Zangīyān had an evil disposition, by nature of their skin color. The Imām’s cure would have been understood as being only partial.

body in the ḥammām and had thus delivered him from the affliction of leprosy. Powerless, he fell at the feet of the Ḥaẓrat and beseeched him: “O Valī Allāh just us you have delivered me from the diseases of the flesh (*amrāz-i jismānī*), release me from the maladies of the soul (*mahlakāt-i nafs*) that I may be remorseful and penitent for my evil deeds!” And in service to the Ḥaẓrat, repenting of all of his sins and pouring tears of regret down his face and cheeks, he abased himself. The Ḥaẓrat-i Imām said with his eloquent utterance, “Your repentance (*tawbah*) has attained the rank of acceptance; you are purified of sin.” The Sulṭān of the Zangīyān [Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn Zangī] made a second supplication: “If my repentance has attained the rank of acceptance, I desire that my soul be separated from my body, that I may amble gracefully to the Sacred Realm (*‘ālam-i qudus*), for death at the feet of the Ḥaẓrat (*dar āstān-i ān ḥaẓrat*) is the same as everlasting life.” His prayer having found acceptance, during that very encounter (*maḥfal*) he flew to the Sacred Realm, may God’s mercy be upon him. After the washing and shrouding, that Ḥaẓrat said prayers over him and they buried him in that place. This event occurred on the first day of the month of Rajab in the year 201 [January 23, 817]. . . Now the Mazār-i Zangīyān is a place where prayers are heard (*ijābat-i du‘ā*) and where pious and distinguished folk are buried (*madfan-i abdāl va rijāl*). On blessed nights, men of the hidden world (*rijāl al-ghayb*) appear. At night that place is terrifying and awesome (*hawlanāk va bā haybat*).⁹⁴⁷

The story of Ḥammām-i Furṭ leaves no doubt that the Eighth Imām blessed that building along with the mosque itself. What’s more, if the Ḥammām-i Furṭ embodied the memory of the miraculous healing of Quṭb al-Dīn Zangī’s body, then the place called Zangīyān manifested the healing of his soul. The narrative has the effect of mapping an itinerary across the city, one that recalls the passage of the Imām and suggests a scheme of supplicatory visitation.

Mufīd includes another anecdote about Masjid-i Furṭ in the course of his quasi-hagiographical notice on the Atābayk, Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, which does not appear in either of the earlier histories of Yazd. We have already presented that story in chapter 1, page 128, so we will simply paraphrase it here: A pious darvīsh⁹⁴⁸ comes to the city and finds himself rebuffed by the residents. He retires into the Masjid-i Furṭ and places

⁹⁴⁷ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 40-1.

⁹⁴⁸ Mufīd calls him one of “*darvīsh’ī az majzūbān*,” i.e., a darvīsh from among those drawn [to God].

an imprecation upon the city. By “the light of divine authority,” the saint-king, Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, becomes aware of the darvīsh’s presence in the mosque, humbles himself before him, and apologizes. At that moment, the darvīsh blesses Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn’s rule and proclaims that the city will thrive and grow during his reign.⁹⁴⁹ The author does not explicitly mention the qadamgāh here, but it is significant that he sets this miraculous episode of sanctified king-making in this particular spot, where he has already explained the Imām left his blessing for the benefit of visitors. The success of that just and saintly Atābayk’s rule flows out from the Imām’s traces; the pious darvīsh serves as his agent.

All in all, the format of this notice on Masjid-i Furṭ, together with the tangential stories that surround it, mirrors many we have seen in this work. The author describes the site and its location, explains the events that occurred there and how the site and its related monuments came to take their current form. Most importantly, he explains the benefits the site offers visitors and what one needs to do in order to partake of them. Key is that the available benefits are inseparable from knowledge of the history of their origins; benefit comes only when the past is made present through commemoration; that can be done through *ziyārat* or through *tārīkh*. In this case, the soil only exudes the Imām’s blessing when his former presence is recalled: supplicants imitate his actions, and subsequently, if devotion for the Imām and his family is sincere, they can be assured of their reward, a pledge that is further guaranteed by the Imām’s spectral voice, which echoes verses in the ears of only the worthy petitioners.

⁹⁴⁹ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 86.

With this notice, Mufīd accomplishes two feats of “place-making” simultaneously. On the one hand, he locates the shrine as a center of the city; it is not a geographical center, but a major pivot about which the rhythm of devotional life revolves, a well-spring of potent, saintly benefit, a terminus for streams of patronage, and a reservoir of local lore. On the other hand, the site emerges in Mufīd’s writing as an important center of the Shīī world, close to the orbit of Imām Riẓā’s tomb in Mashhad and still resounding with that figure’s story—with his very voice. Mufīd’s presentation has the effect of expanding Yazd’s reach into distant places, centering the city quite close to the axis about which the Shīī world turned.

The Imām’s traces had become a powerful hub of Yazdī life, despite the fact that his sojourn there was brief and that his remains were not interred on the site. In fact, the *Ṣawma‘ah-i Imām ‘Alī Mūsá al-Riẓá*,⁹⁵⁰ the chamber containing the *qadamgāh* at Masjid-i Furt, still stands today.⁹⁵¹ Throughout the last series of chapters, we have observed the centrality of tomb-centered shrine complexes in Yazdī devotional and economic life from at least the Īlkhānid era forward, but probably even since the Saljūqid period. Here this other variety shrine, the *qadamgāh* or “foot-print place” appears as a magnet of devotional activity. Whereas the tomb complexes stood as sources of the Imāms’ *descendants’* barakah, these *qadamgāhs* manifest the blessing of the Imāms themselves; although a person can only have one tomb,⁹⁵² conceivably, there can be as many *qadamgāhs* as the Imams took steps.

⁹⁵⁰ A *ṣawma‘ah* is a retreat-room, where a person withdraws for fasting (*ṣawm*), reflection, and prayer for a period of time.

⁹⁵¹ Afshār, *Yādgar’hā-yi Yazd*, 2:210.

⁹⁵² This is not entirely true; after all, there are a number of shrines in which the body of Imām ‘Alī is supposedly interred. Furthermore, as we have already discussed, Shāh Ni‘matullāh Valī had two tombs. Although in his case, it seems clear that supplicants knew the saint was only buried in one of them.

Mashhad or mashhad? forgotten qadamgāhs and stolen stones

It turns out that during Būyid/Kākūyid and Saljūq/Atābayk periods, a number of these qadamgāhs appeared in the area around Yazd, all honoring the places where the eighth Imām ostensibly stopped during his layover in Yazd. They date from roughly the same period as the Davāzdah Imām structure, which was also built during the Shīʿī golden era of the Būyid period.⁹⁵³ Mufīd mentions another, too. In his long, quasi-hagiography of the Atābayk, Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn, which we have examined in chapters 1 and 3, Mufīd reports that among that saintly monarch's pious deeds was the construction of a qadamgāh and a mosque honoring the stopping place of the Ḥaẓrat-i Imām 'Alī-yi Mūsá al-Riẓá outside the gates of Māl-i Amīr on the East side of the city. That site came to be called Masjid-i Qadamgāh.⁹⁵⁴ Irāj Afshār has argued, convincingly, that the inscribed stone of the *miḥrāb* from this mosque, which is missing and has long been rumored to have been stolen, actually resides in the Freer Gallery in Washington D.C.⁹⁵⁵

Mufīd and his predecessors all neglect to mention another, rather important qadamgāh in the town of Farāshāh, near Taft, which was constructed by one of the Kākūyid rulers, Garshāsb bin 'Alī, in 512/1118-1119 along with a mosque.⁹⁵⁶ The same is true for a number of others qadamgāhs in the city and its environs. Irāj Afshār has

⁹⁵³ Built 429/1037. See: Renata Holod, "The Monument of Duvazdah Imam in Yazd and its Inscription of Foundation," in *Near Eastern Numismatics, Iconography, Epigraphy and History: Studies in Honor of George C. Miles*, ed. Dickran K. Kouymjian (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1974).

⁹⁵⁴ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 88, 3: 620. This event also appears in *TY*: Ja'farī, *TY*, 25. It also appears in *TJY*: Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Kātib, *TJY*, 69-70. Also see discussion in Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 274. Afshār also offers some discussion in: Irāj Afshār, "Two 12th Century Gravestones of Yazd in Mashad and Washington," *Studia Iranica* 2, no. 2 (1973): 211.

⁹⁵⁵ Afshār, "Two 12th Century Gravestones of Yazd in Mashad and Washington," 211. Afshār provides a transcription of this stone (p. 208), which was carved in 548/ 1153-1154. The stone predates Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn who died in the 7th/13th century. He built it on a place that was already recognized as a qadamgāh at least a century before. Afshār also includes a photo of this stone in his article.

⁹⁵⁶ See Afshār's long presentation on this site in: Afshār, *Yādgār'hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 382-88.

catalogued the ruins of many of these and recorded what remains of their vaqf inscriptions and gravestones in his encyclopedic work on the monuments of Yazd: In addition to the Farāshāh site, he reported on the locations of qadamgāhs at Turun-Pusht, in the chain of mountains to the south of the city,⁹⁵⁷ at a nearby place called Dih-i Shīr,⁹⁵⁸ and at a site called Mashhaduk in Kharānak, a village just east of Maybud, on the north side of the city.⁹⁵⁹ There is also a qadamgāh at the Masjid-i Chahār-Mīl (Mosque of the Four Rods), which is three leagues from Mihrījard, known as Qadamgāh-i Khitk or Khavīdak.⁹⁶⁰ At most of these sites, Afshār finds epigraphic evidence on tombstones demonstrating the presence of devotional activity dating to the Kākūyid and Atābayk periods; however, after sixth/twelfth century there appears to be almost no evidence of any construction, endowments, or burials at these sites until the eleventh/sixteenth century and afterwards, a point that we will return to in a moment.⁹⁶¹

With respect to the qadamgāh at the Masjid-i Furṭ, Mufīd does not provide any explanation about when the original chamber for the qadamgāh was constructed or who built it, but he implies (in the chronological section in volume 1) that it occurred right after the Imām’s visit.⁹⁶² One would suspect that it was probably built later, during this same period as the others listed above, that is, during the fifth/eleventh century.

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid., 1: 278.

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid., 1: 282.

⁹⁵⁹ Ibid., 1: 175-6. This site is actually referred to as a *namāz-gāh*, not a qadamgāh. In another, very important article, Afshār explains that the name Mashhaduk derives from “*mashhad*” which was originally used to indicate a place where the Imām stopped. It is a place of witnessing his blessing and recalling his miracles. The same term, “*mashhad*,” is used in an inscription at the Qadamgāh-i Farāshāh. See: Afshār, “Two 12th Century Gravestones of Yazd in Mashad and Washington,” 210. The transcription of both stones appears in this same article, p. 210.

⁹⁶⁰ Afshār, *Yādgar’hā-yi Yazd*, 223.

⁹⁶¹ There is one exception to this observation that no one patronized the qadamgāhs of Yazd after the Mongol period. Afshār finds epigraphy at the Qadamgāh-i ‘Alī al-Riḏā, at Farāshāh stating that that Sayyid Ziyā’ al-Dīn (R.III.b), son of Sharaf al-Dīn ‘Alī Raḏī, whom we discussed in chapter 3, made contributions to that that complex. See Ibid., 1: 386-7. None of Yazd’s historians mention this.

⁹⁶² “And on that blessed place they built a dome.” Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 1: 40.

In fact, the tireless Irāj Afshār has demonstrated that this is most probably the case. In an incredible piece of detective work, Afshār appears to have proved that the stone at Imām Riḏā's tomb in Mashhad, previously thought to be a forgery of the Imām's gravestone, is actually a plaque, dated Sha'bān 526/ June 1132, which marked the qadamgāh of the Imām Riḏā, which had been stolen from the *ṣawma'ah* at the Masjid-i Furṭ.⁹⁶³ Afshār explains that the stone was carved in a style extremely similar to other such stones in the Yazd area. Moreover, this stone bears an inscription with the rather distinctive name of the man who carved it, 'Abd Allāh bin Aḥmad "M-r-h."⁹⁶⁴ This is the very same name that appears on a number of similar qadamgāh stones in Yazd. The phrase on the stone, "*al-mashhad al-riḏāwī*," had previously been understood to refer to the Imām's tomb in Mashhad and probably explains why the stone had been sold to the museum in Mashhad in the first place. But Afshār reads "*mashhad*" to mean "place to see" "place to visit," and he cites numerous examples of the term from early Islamic texts, where it refers to a site of visitation where an Imām had stood, including the texts from several other stones at qadamgāhs in Yazd.⁹⁶⁵ The stone was not the Imām's tombstone in the city of Mashhad, but rather a *mashhad*, marking one of his qadamgāhs in Yazd.

Thus, it appears that already in the fifth-/eleventh-century, Zamchī's mosque had become a *mashhad* or qadamgāh honoring the manifest traces of the Eight Imām's

⁹⁶³ Afshār tells how the stone was most likely taken from the mosque in the early twentieth century and brought to Tehran, where it was bought and then sold to the Museum of Āstān-i Quds-i Riḏāwī in Mashhad during World War II. Afshār, "Two 12th Century Gravestones of Yazd in Mashad and Washington," 207-9. The transcription of the plaque can be found on p. 207-8 of the same article, which also includes a photograph of the stone.

⁹⁶⁴ م - ر - ه. It is a strange nisbah, and even Afshār does not know how to vowel it. Nothing like it appears in *Kitāb al-Ansāb*.

⁹⁶⁵ Afshār, "Two 12th Century Gravestones of Yazd in Mashad and Washington," 209-11.

presence. Curiously, while the earlier historians of Yazd do mention this mosque, none of them speak of the qadamgāh on this site, which Mufīd takes great pains to describe.⁹⁶⁶ However, Mufīd provides a clue as to why his predecessors might have omitted this shrine from their texts; he explains that the buildings of that complex had long stood in ruin. In other words, while Ja‘farī and Aḥmad Kātīb were composing their works, the site had long been forgotten. I suggest that the abandonment of this and possibly other very early shrines that marked the Imām’s visit came during the Mongol period as the result of the tremendous rise in the construction of shrine complexes that housed the remains of local, ‘Arīzī descendents of the Imāms or other powerful sayyid families, such as the Nī‘matullāhī Sufis later on.

The qadamgāhs simply came to be overshadowed during the golden era of the imāmzādah-centered shrine construction, which we have been following in these last two chapters. For supplicants, these tomb-centered shrines contained more tangible traces than did the qadamgāhs and would have seemed a more immediate and effective site for performing *dū‘ās* and making *nazrs*. At these tombs, people could visit and make entreaties to the ancestors of powerful people who were still living in the city. When people were offered the choice, the Imāms, though worthy of the highest devotion, must have seemed a bit less accessible when it came to the practical business of making supplications. Moreover, these shrines expanded and became wealthier over the course of generations because they functioned as the economic and spiritual centers of particular families and their networks of allies and devotees, whose affiliates pumped

⁹⁶⁶ Prior to Mufīd’s time, the mosque was called by other names. Ja‘farī does not mention the mosque at all. Aḥmad Kātīb mentions it only once, where he calls it Masjid-i Patak. Aḥmad ibn Ḥusayn ibn ‘Alī Kātīb, *TJY*, 56. It also appears in JK, where it is called Masjid-i Bazak or Masjid-i Padak. Rukn al-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad Ḥusaynī Yazdī, *JK*, 34. See discussion in Afshār, *Yādgār’hā-yi Yazd*, 210. Afshār catalogs a stone plaque on site, which refers to the place as Masjid-i Riḏāwī. See: Afshār, *Yādgār’hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 212.

their resources into endowments for these complexes, frequented them daily, and eventually arranged to have themselves interred on site. Each new generation could renew the prestige and charismatic aura that surrounded these spaces. This was especially true once these local sayyids established close relations with the imperial courts, and their local sites could benefit from royal patronage or the patronage of high-ranking courtiers.

The most compelling examples of these relationships have been covered in the pages above, namely the Niẓāmī and the Raẓī families' alliances with the Īlkhānid, Muẓaffarid, and Tīmūrīds courts and the Ni'matullāhīs' relationships with the Qarā Qūyūnlūs, Bahmānids, and early Şafavids. During this period, even though the Imāms continued to enjoy the devotion of the Yazdī faithful throughout the ages, their charisma remained too remote to be encountered directly; locals preferred to access that charisma through the Imāms' descendents, the presence of whose traces and signs (*āṣār va 'alāmāt*) was viscerally evident around their corporeal remains and around their illustrious offspring who perpetuated their blessings. Once the tomb-complexes for local sayyids had been established, the qadamgāhs of the Imāms simply could not compete, and they faded into the background, at least until the eleventh/seventeenth century. While all the authors of Yazd's histories do mention the region's qadamgāhs from time to time, they pay little attention to them. Mufid is the exception.

The Revivification of the qadamgāh and the marginalization of Yazd

The fact that Mufid celebrates the Masjid-i Furṭ and its qadamgāh with such exuberance indicates that by his day the complex had retaken its place as an important

focal point in the city's devotional life once again. Indeed, the concluding passage in his notice on the site explains that the site had actually been rebuilt during Mufīd's own lifetime:

It has not remained hidden from knowledgeable men that because of the devastation of the lords of conquest, who snatched the endowments of this mosque from the supervisors, for a long time the buildings were left in a state of ruin and had been destroyed. In the year 1078/1667-8, under the guidance of the Guide of success, the pilgrim of the Sacred House of God, Mavlānā Muḥammad Amīn Bazzāz,⁹⁶⁷ son of Shāhmīrak Nā'īnī, refurbished the renovation of the structures of that holy place. He turned the full extent of his efforts toward that object and spent a large sum on the repair of the mosque and pool. He went to a great deal of trouble to bring it back to its original purity. The righteous and modest *sayyidah*, wife of Mavlānā Muḥammad Amīn, in partnership with her husband, spread carpets of great beauty across all the buildings and installed candelabras on the ceilings.⁹⁶⁸

Mufīd apparently did not know when the original structure fell into ruin, but for once he can't blame his contemporaries for its spoliation. In fact, this notice on Masjid-i Furṭ contains one of the rare few instances of construction in his era. Irāj Afshār has affirmed that indeed, the foundations of today's structure date from the Ṣafavid era.⁹⁶⁹ He has also transcribed a *vaqf-nāmah* inscribed on a stone plaque on the wall of the masjid's entrance, which provided for the upkeep of the mosque. The plaque is dated a few years later, 1082/1672, but corroborates Mufīd's report that, between 1076 and 1082 A.H., this man, Muḥammad Amīn al-Bazzāz al-Nā'īnī⁹⁷⁰ and his wife made renovations on this site. All of the properties endowed were local ones; these included a farm in the neighborhood of Pīr-i Burj, some shares of the Salghurābād canal, and a plot of ground in Bāgh-i Zangīyān. It is probably no coincidence that Zangīyān was used to fund the

⁹⁶⁷ Bazzāz is an occupational name, meaning cloth merchant.

⁹⁶⁸ Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 651-2.

⁹⁶⁹ Afshār, *Yādghār'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 212.

⁹⁷⁰ The *vaqf-nāmah* gives his name as follows: "Son of the late Shāhmīr al-Bazzāz Muḥammad Amīn Nā'īnī." *Ibid.*, 2: 215. Mufīd had called him Shāhmīrak, i.e., Shāhmīr Junior.

mosque; it is the very place where Imām Riẓá purified the leper-police chief, Sulṭān Quṭb al-Dīn Zangī, of his sins and packed him off to heaven (see above, page 511).

As for Nāʾīnī and his wife, the renovators and *vāqifān* of the endowment, I have not been able to find further information about any of them; their names do not appear anywhere else in the Yazdī texts. However, the Nāʾīnī clan most likely came to Yazd from Nāʾīn, in Iṣfahān province, perhaps on assignment with the administration of the local Ṣafavid vizierate.⁹⁷¹ Mufīd simply refers Nāʾīnī's wife as *sayyidah* (daughter of a sayyid), but the *vaqf-nāmah* explains that she was the only daughter one Mīr Sayyid Riẓá Sabzavārī.⁹⁷² In other words, the wife appears to have been descended from a sayyid family of Sabzavār. It is not entirely clear when these families came to the Yazd region or why they came. It is possible that because they were relatively new to the city and were not part of the networks connected to the complexes of local notable's tombs, they chose to develop, or redevelop, a corner of the city that had no affiliation with the established shrine networks. It made sense for them to tap into a more universal well of Imāmī blessing; the *qadamgāh* would have allowed unconnected residents of Yazd to bypass the entrenched authority of the 'Arīẓī sayyid families and their partners.

Before we consider more fully why Nāʾīnī and this sayyidah from Sabzavār might have chosen to refurbish this site, we should note that the epigraphy inside the Masjid reveals that while this husband and wife team appears to have completely revived this mosque, their interest in the site did not come *ex nihilo*; a few others demonstrated their attachment to that site at least a few generations beforehand.

⁹⁷¹ I do not find any Shāhmīrs with the *nisbah* of Nāʾīnī. There is a poet with the name of Mullā Muṣāhib Nāʾīnī who appears in Mufīd's *taẓkirah* section. The author explains that his Nāʾīnī was born in Nāʾīn, but spent most of his time in Yazd, but he does not say when he lived. Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 448. In any case, it is unlikely that this is the same Nāʾīnī.

⁹⁷² Afshār, *Yādgar'hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 215.

Afshār identifies a plaque on the eastern side of the *ṣawma‘ah*, containing a *vaqf-nāmah* by one Mīrak Sharbat-dār (the Butler), which refers to the places as Ṣawma‘ah-i Imām ‘Alī Mūsá al-Rizá. It is dated in 937/1530-1.⁹⁷³ As a *sharbat-dār*, this Mīrak may well have been an outsider who served the Ṣafavid governors (who at the time would have been from one of the Qizlbāsh oymaks). This plaque must have been salvaged and re-hung on the wall during Nā‘inī’s renovation. There are also a number of stones marking graves in the *ṣawma‘ah*. Most of these graves date from prior to the sixth/twelfth century, close to the time when the qadamgāh was first becoming holy ground.⁹⁷⁴ After this period, there are no graves represented until the Ṣafavid era, when a handful of new stones were added. For example, there is one for the Yazdī poet, Shūkhī,⁹⁷⁵ featuring a chronogram that renders the date 990/1582.⁹⁷⁶ The grave, which was laid during the reign of Shāh Muḥammad Khudābandah, predates Nā‘inī’s renovation of the mosque complex by almost a century. One can observe the same pattern of burial for some of the other early qadamgāhs in the territory of Yazd: There are graves at these sites from the early sixth century A.H. and then none until the eleventh century A.H.⁹⁷⁷

Clearly, although no one bothered to rebuild the mosque surrounding the Qadamgāh of Imām Rizá until the 1070s/1660s, interest in the stopping places of the

⁹⁷³ Ibid., 2: 214.

⁹⁷⁴ Afshār gives a transcription for the writing on these stones. Ibid., 2: 213.

⁹⁷⁵ An extremely brief notice on Shūkhī appears in Mufīd’s tazkirah section Mufīd Mustawfī Bāfqī, *JM*, 3: 468. Afshār notes that Shūkhī also appears in the Ṣafavid Prince, Sām Mīrzā’s tazkirah. That notice is even shorter and supplies next to no information. The only point of interest there is that while one manuscript gives Shūkhī’s *nisbah* as Yazdī, another manuscript calls him Haravī (i.e., from Herat). Ṣafavī, *Tazkirah-i Tuhfah-i Sāmī*, 290.

⁹⁷⁶ The chronogram appears in the last hemistich of a qit‘ah. The last verse reads: “One requests an exposition of the date of his death. I say to him: His place is [in] High Heaven. (*jā-yi ū bihisht-i barīn* = 990).” Afshār transcribes these verses in Afshār, *Yādgār’hā-yi Yazd*, 2: 216.

⁹⁷⁷ For example at Qadamgāh-i Dih-i Shīr, there is a grave dated 1040/1630-1 for Khvājah Sharaf al-Dīn Ḥasan Yazdī. Ibid., 1: 282. At Qadamgāh-i Chahār-Mīl (Qadamgāh-i Khitk/Khavīdak) there is a tomb, dated 1044/1634-5, for a person named Muḥammad Ṭālib bin Ḥajjī al-Ḥaramayn Shāh Ḥusayn. Afshār, *Yādgār’hā-yi Yazd*, 1: 223.

Imām had been on the rise since the mid ninth/fifteenth century. At the same time, Nāṣirī's rehabilitation of the Masjid reflects the general shift in religious ideology and practice that was connected with the Ṣafavid house's religious policies. As we have already discussed above (page 483), the later Ṣafavids had begun to favor sharī'ah-oriented, juristically focused Twelver Shiism at the expense of Sufi-minded or eclectically learned religiosity. Ultimately the promotion of legalistically focused Shiism probably had more to do with expanding and centralizing political control than it did with royal religiosity. The Ṣafavids fostered the professionalization of a Shī'ī jurist class; these scholars focused on jurisprudence which was increasingly standardized and universally applicable. Moreover, members of the clerical class— at least those of the Uṣūlī school— claimed that it was knowledge of Shī'ī jurisprudence that allowed the *mujtahids* to collectively stand in for the absent Imām and have authority over the Shī'ī community. For them, proximity to the Imāms had to do with legal knowledge rather than with traditional hereditary and charismatic modes of establishing closeness with the Imāms, which came from blood relations, from association with a local imāmzādah, or from indoctrination into the more eclectic and often esoteric forms of knowledge transmitted at those centers. Precisely because of its interconnection with local spheres of influence, the Ṣafavids rejected non-juridical Shiism or 'Alidism that promoted the study of esoteric knowledge and other sciences that had traditionally been studied with Sufis and sayyids of saintly stature, who were themselves attached to particular, local shrine centers across the realm.

By emphasizing the legalistic forms of Twelver Shiism, the Ṣafavids succeeded in severing the transmission of knowledge and the transfer of religious authority from

the purview of entrenched, local sayyid families. In accordance with these preferences, rather than patronizing local saints' shrines, such as imāmzādahs or Sufi khānqāhs, the Ṣafavids heavily patronized the tomb of Imām Riḏá, in Mashhad, and made it the universal spiritual center of the realm. In this way, they disrupted the pietistic and ritualized currents of devotional life that had previously swirled around many local sites of visitation at the tombs of the Imāms' descendents. They reoriented those currents so that they now flowed around this central axis, the tomb of Imām himself.

We may observe, provisionally, that some of this construction around Yazd's qadamgāhs was carried out by newcomers in Yazd, perhaps by officers of the Safavid local vizierate in Yazd. People like Nā'īnī made patronage choices that were in accordance with the desires of the royal court, even if they were not doing so deliberately. In essence, then, the qadamgāhs in Yazd became local outposts of the newly preeminent shrine center in Mashhad, the tomb of Imām Riḏá. Earlier, the shrine complexes of the local sayyids constituted centers in their own right, and they functioned to bring far-flung parts of the empire into Yazd's orbit, that is, to make them local. Yazd was now incontestably in the orbit of Mashhad (and Iṣfahān), and Mufīd could not find any narrative that might reverse that relationship of subordination, as he had been able to do before. As the qadamgāh at the Masjid-i Furṭ grew taller than the traditional shrine centers, Yazd found itself being relocated to the periphery. Having said this, Afshār's discovery that the Imām's gravestone in Mashhad had actually been the sixth-/twelfth-century stone marker of his qadamgāh in Yazd's Masjid-i Furṭ says a great deal about the long term effects of these shifts in religious

orientation during the eleventh/seventeenth century, which had transformed Yazd into a satellite of Mashhad. By the twentieth century, Mashhad's gravity had increased so massively that the Imām's shrine literally drew its outpost at Yazd into itself and appropriated it into its own space. Yazd's own *mashhad* became *the* Mashhad. Were it not for Irāj Afshār's dedication to his home-city's history, even this relatively subordinate, peripheral site of local Imāmī devotion might have been forgotten.

By examining the local situation in Yazd, we have the opportunity to observe the consequences of these large trends in imperial preference on a local town. As Mashhad and the jurists rose in wealth and importance, the previously powerful local families became disenfranchised and the seats of their power—their madrasah and khānqāh complexes—fell into ruin or else shone less brightly than they once had. Nevertheless, the example of the Masjid-i Furṭ shows that despite this disenfranchisement of the old families, Yazd did not become a ghost town during the latter Ṣafavid period. Rather, as the circulation of patronage shifted away from established local complexes and toward outposts of universal, imperially sanctioned devotion, local currents of ritual life slowly tilted away from signs of the imāmzādahs' blessing and toward those of the Imāms themselves.

In conclusion, I should stress that I am not arguing that the promotion of sites like Masjid-i Furṭ directly caused the decay of the other sites around the realm. Rather, I am suggesting that both the rise of Masjid-i Furṭ and the denigration of the older sites were symptomatic of broad policy changes and shifting trends in religious belief and practice, which were affecting the entire realm. Nevertheless, the long-term effects of the local changes engendered by these external forces had particular local

consequences for the local topography and social networks in Yazd. These changes would continue to unfold over the course of generations.

This conclusion that the old powerhouses of Yazd's imperial influence lost out in favor of new sites like Masjid-i Furṭ likely never occurred to Mufīd. In fact, Mufīd giddily expressed great pride about that newly renovated masjid and its qadamgāh. For him, Masjid-i Furṭ was a bright light in a sea of darkness. Moreover, Mufīd appears to have been content with Twelver Shiism, and he never demonstrates any signs that he viewed the Imām-oriented Shiification of the city as being incompatible with the traditional imāmzādah-centered religiosity. From his perspective, the problem was that the court had ignored Yazdīs and made it difficult for them to maintain the health of the local centers of learning and devotion that had been so valuable to kings in the past. Mufīd was not able to see the degree to which the court's apparent disregard for Yazd actually fit into a larger set of (not entirely deliberate) religious and political policies that were designed to offset the power of local families across the realm and disrupt their networks. He also could not perceive the court's policy of redirecting the many objects of local devotion to a just few key sites around the realm. What Mufīd understood to be ignorance or misguidedness appears to have been an attempt to bring religious and political authority under central control. Perhaps if Mufīd had known what he was really up against, he might not have bothered to write his *Jāmi'-i Mufīdī*.

Postscript

Very few Yazdi architects know how to build the large windtower. Very few can or will build qanats. And, more important, very few people are asking to have any of these built. Vernacular Yazdi architecture is already a lost art. Destroying evidence of its greatness is a tragedy...Yazdis, along with residents of other old cities in Iran, may one day, too late, regret this loss.⁹⁷⁸

As much as these words could easily have flowed from Mufid's pen, they did not. In fact, the above passage was written centuries later, in 2006, by another Yazdī expatriate, Ali Modarres, an urban geographer and scholar of urban history and urban planning at California State University, Los Angeles. The quotation concludes his book, entitled *Modernizing Yazd: Selective Historical Memory and the Fate of Vernacular Architecture*, and makes an eloquent plea for help in halting the destructive tide of modern urban construction that has demolished huge sections of the old city of Yazd, disrupted countless neighborhoods and the traditional rhythms of urban life, and erased all traces and memory of the communal past. The author argues that the rampage of the "capitalist engine," which ignores ancient architectural and engineering solutions to Yazd's harsh environment, has not only alienated the city and its inhabitants from their heritage, but, in doing so, has caused environmental and

⁹⁷⁸ Ali Modarres, *Modernizing Yazd: Selective Historical Memory and the Fate of Vernacular Architecture* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2006), 178.

infrastructure problems that threaten to make the desert city of Yazd unsustainable and unlivable.⁹⁷⁹

While, of course, Modarres and Mufid, his predecessor, were writing about their home city for very different ends and for different audiences, they were, nevertheless, both hoping to precipitate the preservation of the city's traditional morphology and social networks, which had come under threat from new trends in external investment. Furthermore, both worried about the general, long-term effects of the new patterns of building on the city. Like Mufid, Modarres wrote his admonitory work from a faraway land. Both writers had left their home city seeking a better life in the promised land of their respective eras. Despite the fact that the two men had established firm roots in their new homes, they both devoted themselves to projects they thought would benefit the city of their birth.

Indeed, Modarres knew Mufid's work; in fact, he cites Mufid occasionally. I certainly would not suggest that Modarres set out to imitate Mufid's work in the same way that Mufid actively engaged in dialogue with his predecessors, nor would I expect that he would find any advantage in doing so. (After all, the sophisticated dialogic tradition of good writing that Mufid was fighting to preserve had died years before Modarres picked up his pen to write.) At the same time, even if we can't justifiably

⁹⁷⁹ The lines that immediately precede the passage quoted above help to illustrate this connection between the sustainability of the city and the preservation of its heritage: "Unsustainable social and physical developments have dire consequences on the quality of life in every city. To truly care about the future, one needs to embrace the principles of sustainability, within which vernacular architecture looms large. Wind towers, qanats, adobe-style buildings, and adaptation to the desert environment marked the life of many cities on the Iranian plateau, including Yazd. Destruction and the loss of this way of life and the architecture that allowed people to live in a warm climate without the need for air-conditioning may cost the city and its residents dearly. How much water will Yazd need to sustain its growth? How many more streets have to be built to quench the thirst of a society that needs cars to traverse an expanding city? Without a sustainability agenda, the loss of the old city will be felt even deeper. And without preservation and a comprehensive public history project, memories and knowledge of a great culture will be lost under the wheels of progress." *Ibid.*, 177-8.

think of Modarres as continuing Mufīd's work, we might productively consider his book to have been written in a historiographical tradition that continues to draw on the fusion of place and narrative in order to situate contemporary polemics in the history of the city's sites.

Although the nature of the problems that the two men claimed that Yazd faced were quite different, one might argue that at least some of the roots of the city's modern problems can be traced to changes that occurred during Mufīd's lifetime, some of which he was hoping his work would combat. In their rush to rid themselves of challenges from local strongholds of power and authority and in their desire to bring those centers under central control, the Ṣafavids and their successors increasingly alienated themselves from the Yazdī expertise that they needed for robust rule. Moreover, by failing to nourish the well-established hubs of economic, intellectual, and devotional life in Yazd, they weakened the health of the city as a whole. In addition, they further guaranteed the exclusion of Yazdī local notables from contributing to imperial power precisely because they had dispersed the networks of experts who could pass on their knowledge to future generations and because they had weakened the institutions where such learning had been funded. At the same time, because the Ṣafavids' choice to invest so vehemently in a more uniform, professionalized, legally-centered Shiism, they had encouraged a reorientation of the realm toward fewer mega-shrines. These policies had the effect of discouraging eclecticism, for which Yazdīs were known. By making it impossible for a variety of fields of expertise to thrive in the provinces, the imperial courts ultimately weakened their own position.

In the end, these measures, which were designed to make local centers into peripheral outposts of a unified whole, ended up over-stretching the imperial centers and forcing them into a position of vulnerability and dependence on the rising European powers. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the concessions that the European powers secured for themselves in exchange for cash further exacerbated the problem. European technocrats began to provide technical expertise for the building of modern infrastructures, modern military forces, medicine, schools, and administration; the weakened and isolated institutions in cities such as Yazd no longer possessed the strong intellectual wherewithal to compete with the Europeans. By the mid-twentieth century, European models of urban planning, driven by “capitalist engines,” as Modarres puts it, were bulldozing the old quarters of Yazd and paving them over with parking lots, erecting supermarkets where cisterns and observatories once stood, and cooling them with air-conditioners rather than wind-catchers.

I am not arguing that if a robust network of madrasahs in Yazd had remained during the Şafavid, Qajar, and Pahlavi periods, Yazd would have been able to keep the forces of globalization that have been ruining it at bay. Instead, I am suggesting that by weakening the local centers of knowledge and disenfranchising their networks of experts, the Şafavids helped to create circumstances in which those globalizing forces had such a powerful and total effect that they smashed any possibility that healthier, hybrid urban morphologies might have developed. By marginalizing local centers on the boundaries of the empire, the Safavids ensured that future generations would have

to choose between traditionalism and modernity. Indeed, we can find the ancestors of Modarres's dystopia in the rubble of the complexes that Mufīd decries in his work.

The entirety of the old city has not yet been paved over. There is still time to introduce hybrid patterns of urban planning that might integrate traditional forms of architecture and allow for the flow of vernacular modes of social interaction. Nevertheless, the chances that Modarres's work (which is written in English) will ever reach the desks of the appropriate officials in the Islamic Republic of Iran seem slim. My guess is that his *naṣīḥat* will have about as much effect on those officials as Mufīd's compendium had on Shāh Sulaymān Ṣafavī. Yazd's spirit of place will remain lost among the ashes of its ruin, and the rest of Iran may one day regret the loss of its benefits.

One uplifting thought remains. While Mufīd had only two models for the history of Yazd, Modarres enjoyed the benefits of at least twenty works on Yazd!⁹⁸⁰ Even though Mufīd failed to stem the tide of change that is continuing to destroy his city, even today his work continues to circulate and to benefit new historians writing about Yazd. Moreover, Yazdī scholars, such as Modarres, are still using his compendium of history in order to improve the situations of their city in ways that Mufīd could never have dreamed of. In the end, Mufīd's memory of Yazd has been preserved, even if the Yazd that he knew has long since vanished. Perhaps his "Useful Compendium" may yet come to his hometown's aid.

⁹⁸⁰ Afshār lists at least twenty modern works on Yazd in the introduction to Afshār, *Yādgar'hā-yi Yazd*, vol. 1. There is also a history of Yazd from the Qajar period: Muḥammad Ja'far, *Jāmi'-i Ja'farī* (Tehran 1974).

Figure 1: Lineages of Yazdī Sayyids and Their Marriage Alliances

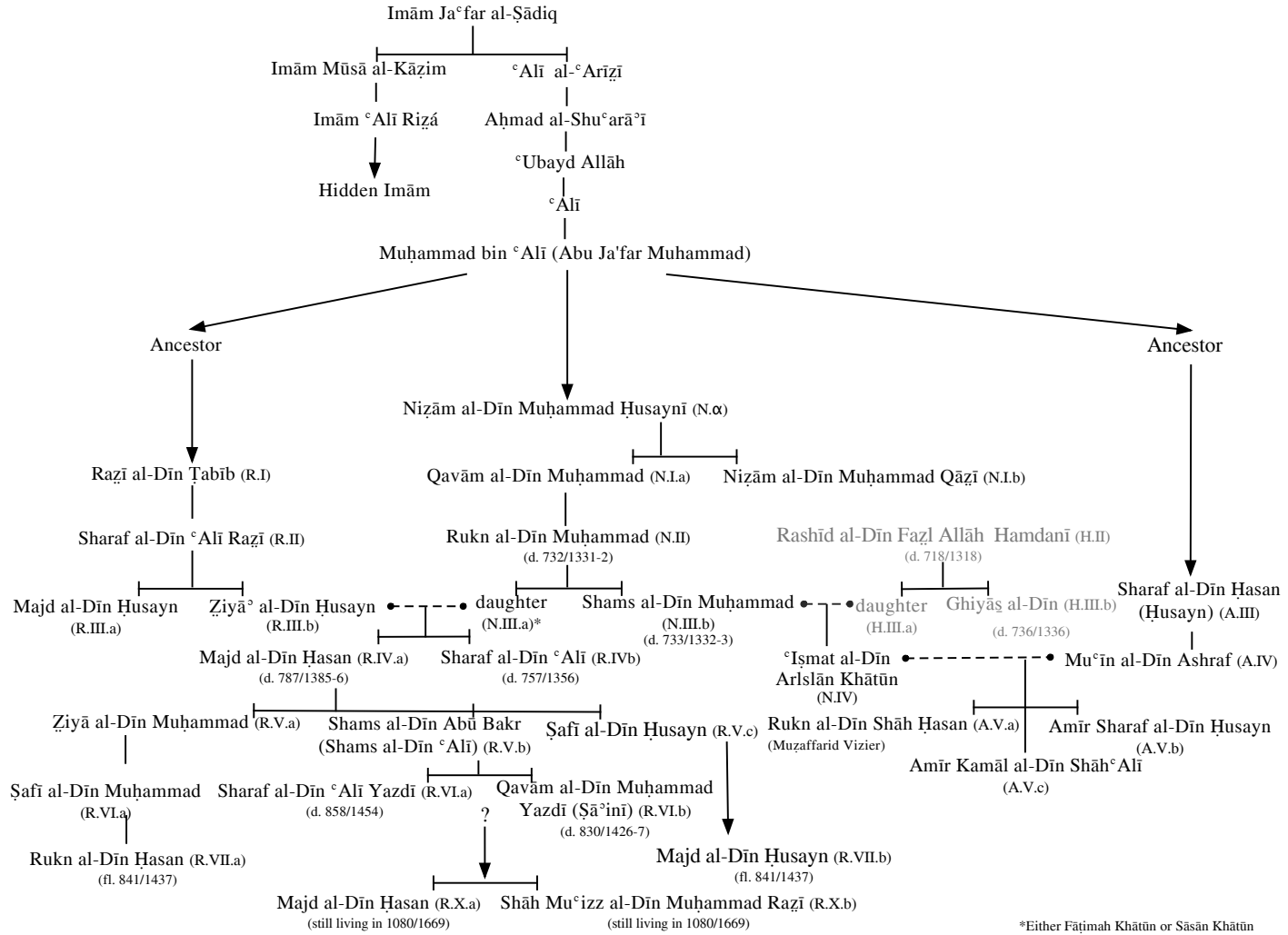
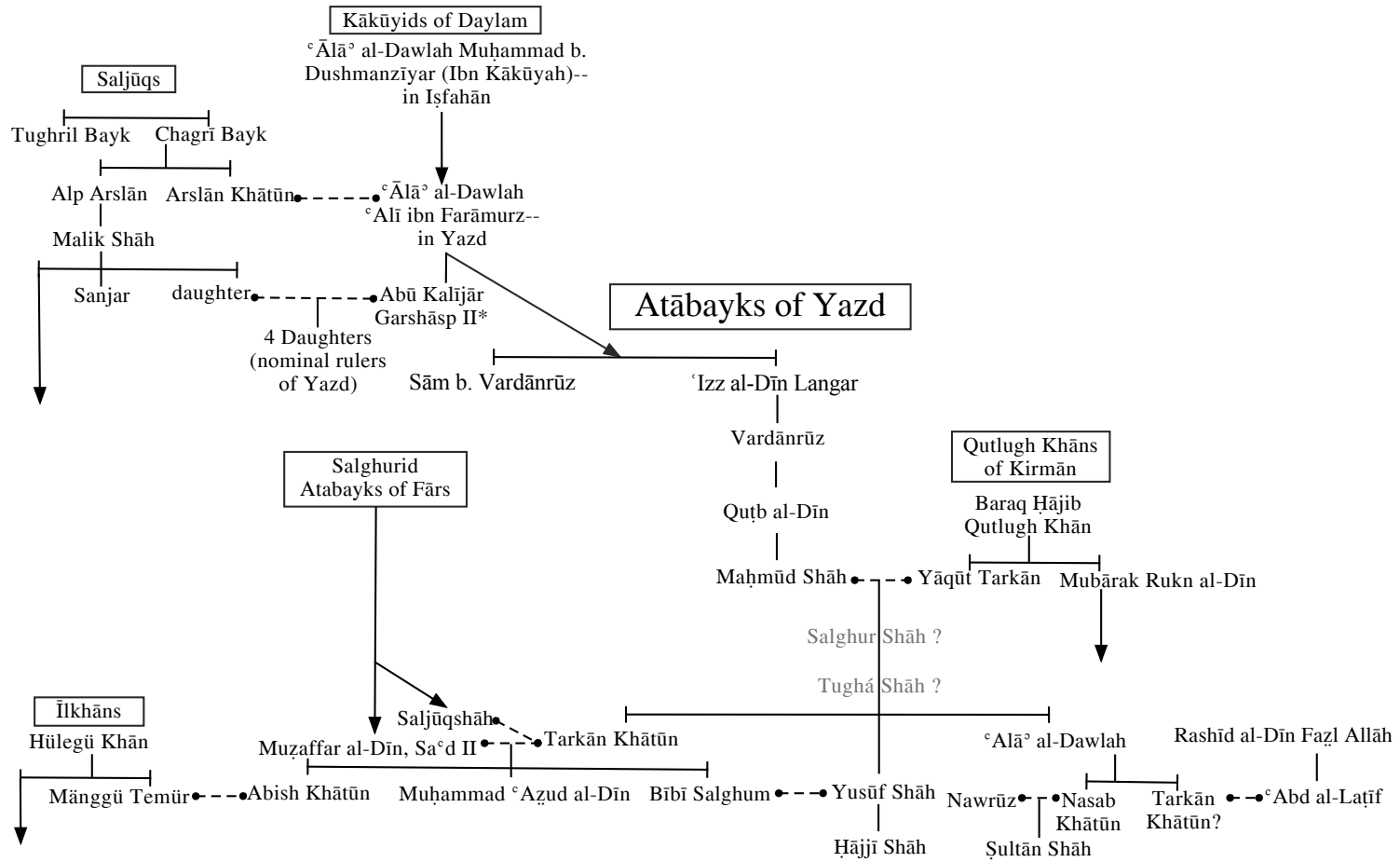


Figure 2: The Atābayks of Yazd and Their Marriage Alliances



*Abū Kalijār Garshāsp II is called Amir Farāmurz in the Yazdī histories

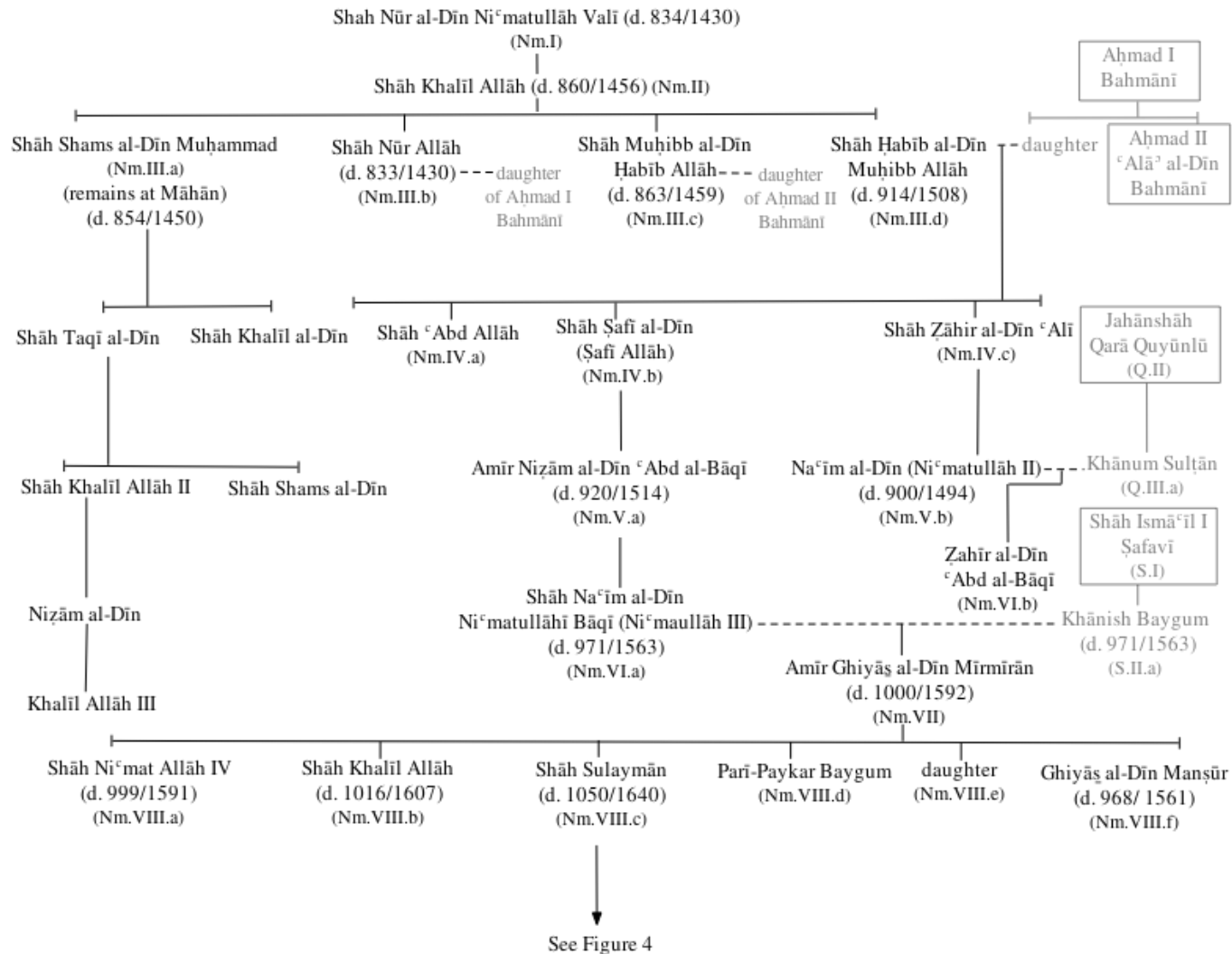
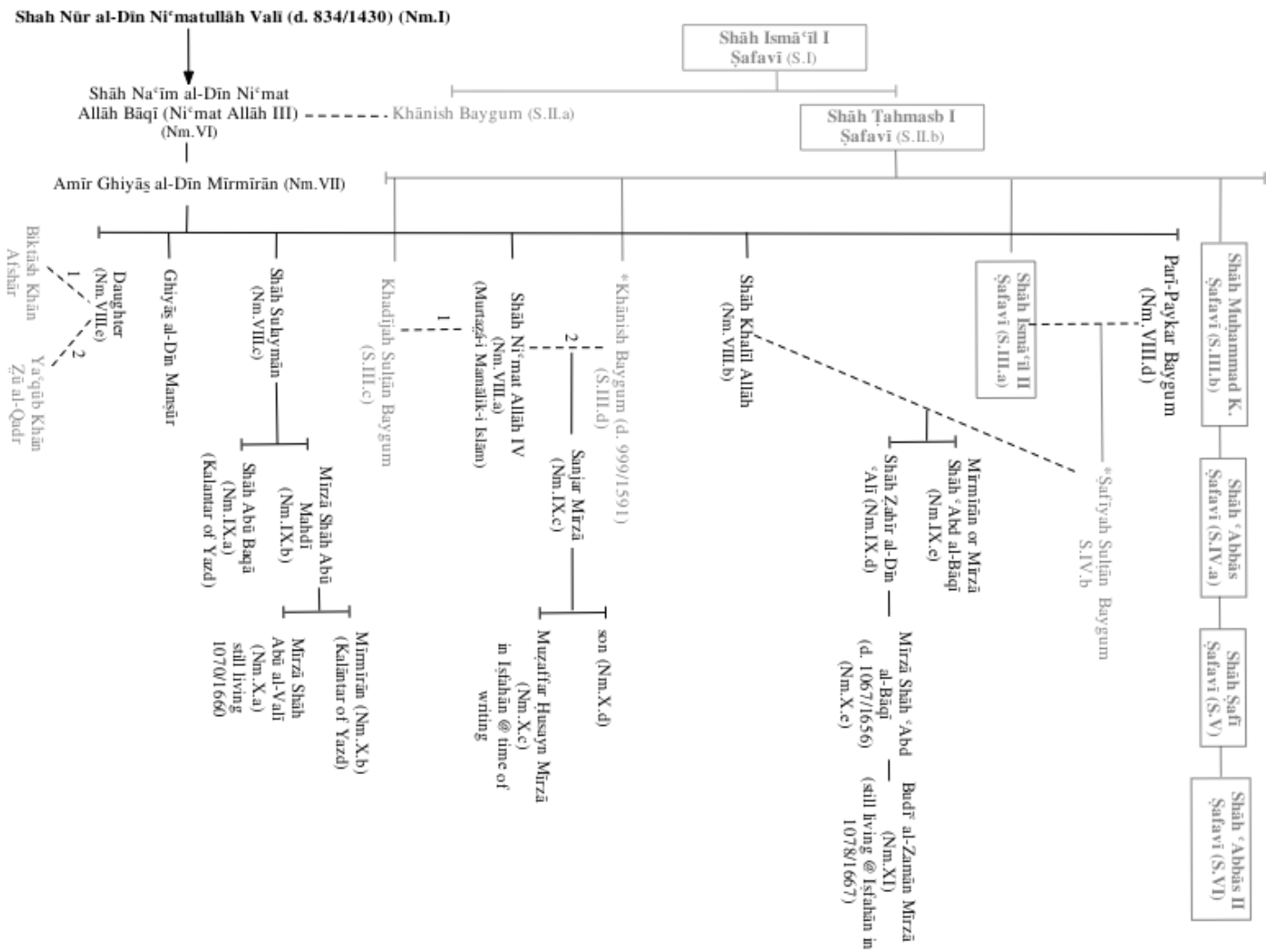


Figure 3: Ni^cmatullāhī Marriage Alliances to 1000/1591



* Some sources report that Šafīyah Sultān and Khānīsh Baygum were the daughters of Shāh Muḥammad Khudābandah

Figure 4: Ni'matullāhī Alliances, Šafvids and Afterward

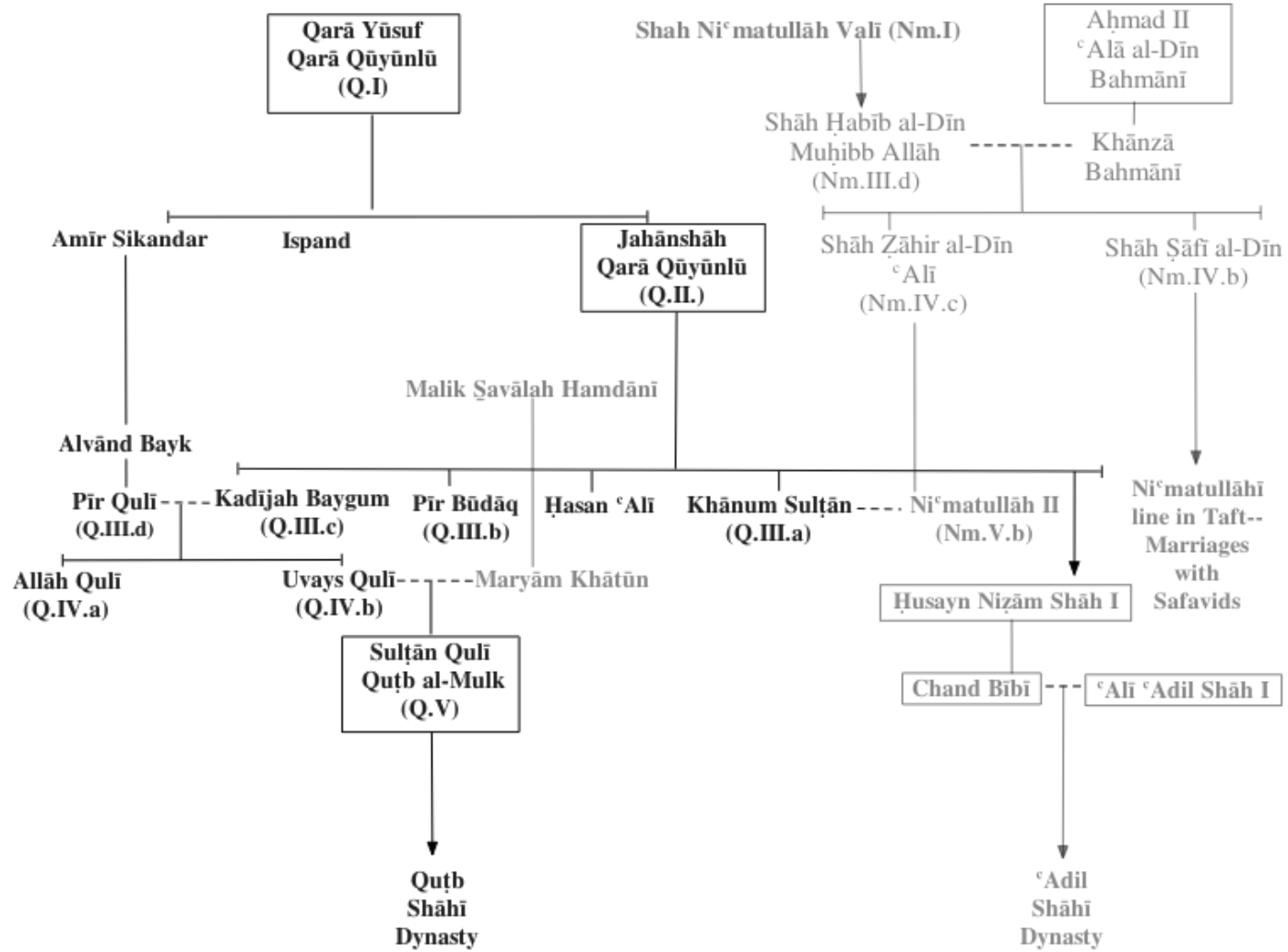


Figure 5: Niʿmatullāhī Alliances with the Qarā Qūyūnlūs and Deccan Houses

NOTE: MAP IS NOT TO SCALE

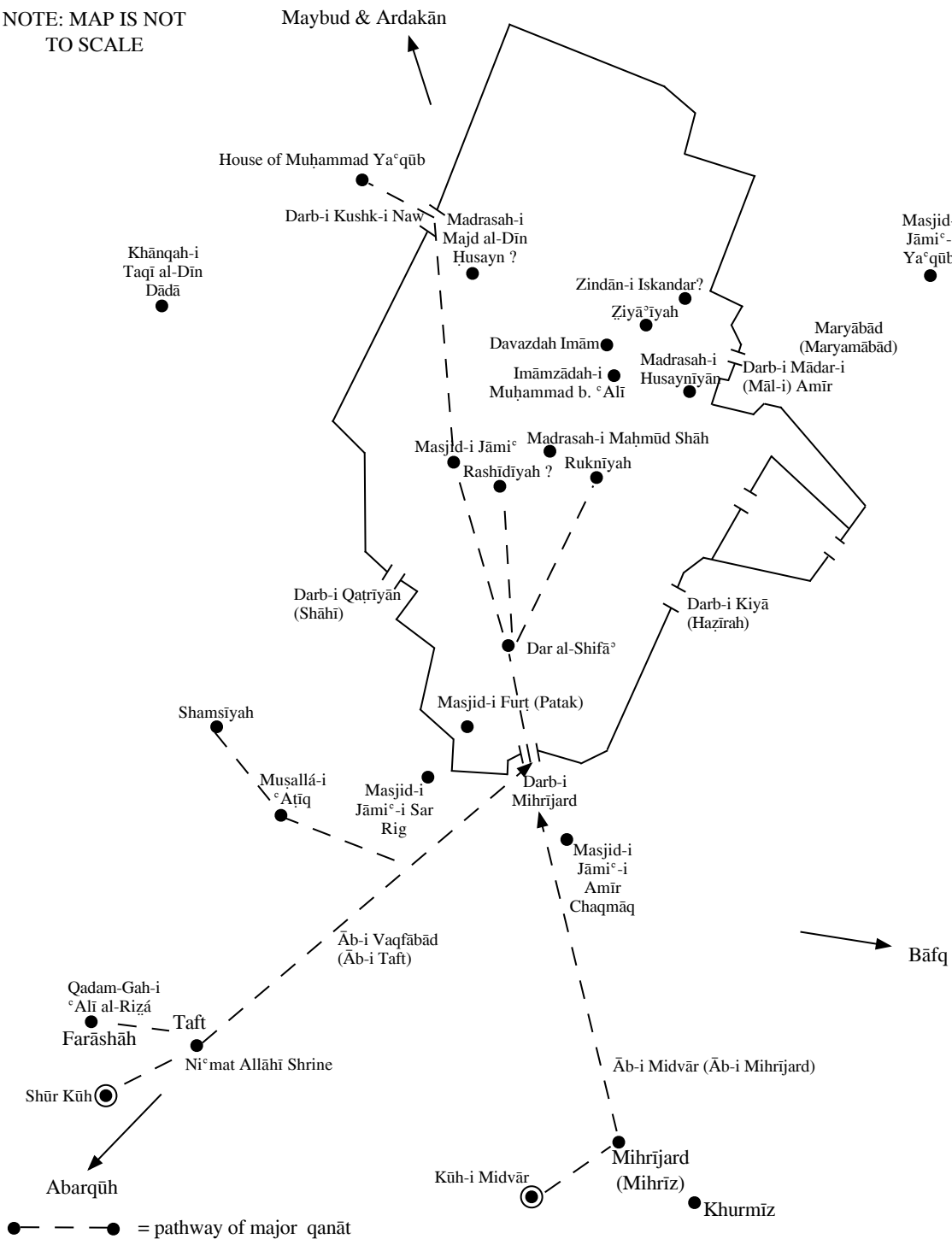


Figure 6: Old Walls of Yazd and Key Monument

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