



ḤAYĀTI TABRIZI, QĀSEM BEG

ḤAYĀTI TABRIZI, QĀSEM BEG (قاسم بیگ حیاتی تبریزی), sixteenth-century Persian historian whose chronicle, which he refers to just as *Tāriḳ*, spans the period between the formative years of the Ṣafaviya Sufi order under Shaikh Ṣafi-al-Din Eshāq Ardabili (d. 735/1334) and the opening years of the reign of Shah *Esmā'īl I* (907-30/1501-24).

Life. Very little is known of Ḥayāti's life and career. His name appears in an early 17th-century *Safavid* chronicle as a historian from Tabriz (Ḥosayni Qomi, p. 3). According to the Safavid prince Sām Mirzā (p. 242), Ḥayāti's father was a deputy judge, but he did not take over this post and ended up as a poet, scribe, and calligrapher. Throughout his history, Ḥayāti never mentions his first name, but, based on an entry in an early 19th-century *taḍkera*, it can be established that his first name was Qāsem (ʿAẓimābādi, I/1, p. 459; Bhopali, p. 144). Ḥayāti's studies seem to have been focused on Persian history and hagiography (*siar*). Apart from the *Ṣafwat al-ṣafā*, a biography of Shaikh Ṣafi-al-Din by Ebn Bazzāz, which he cites (Ḥayāti, fols. 41r, 44v) when dealing with Shaikh Ṣafi's life and career, there is evidence to suggest that he also took inspiration from Mirḳānd's (d. 902/1497) universal history, the *Rawzat al-ṣafā*. In the prologue to his history, Ḥayāti briefly discusses the "benefits of history," which is the title of a long introductory chapter in the first volume of Mirḳānd's history: "*Dar bayān-e fawāyed-e tāriḳ*" (Mirḳānd, I, pp. 9-20; Ḥayāti, fols, 13r-15v).

Autobiographical references are rare in Ḥayāti's history. In the prologue to his history, he calls himself "a servant battered by the arrows of outrageous



times” (Ḥayāti, fol. 12v), which can be taken to imply that he worked as a senior bureaucrat at the court of Shah Ṭahmāsp (r. 930-84/1524-76) when compiling his chronicle in the spring of 961/1554. He then adds that initially it was Shah Ṭahmāsp who commissioned him to write a history of the early Safavids, but later on the Safavid monarch instructed Ḥayāti to dedicate the final version of his work to Princess Mehin Begum (d. 969/1562), a blood (*a’yāni*) sister of Ṭahmāsp and, as Ḥayāti points out, the “oldest of Shah Esmā’il’s sixteen daughters,” born in 925/1519 from Tājlu Begum Mawṣellu (d. 947/1540; Ḥayāti, fol. 75r). Early in the 1550s, Mehin Begum was made chief superintendent of religious endowments (*awqāf*), a position that made it possible for her to disburse generous amounts of cash as pension and gift among the Shi’ite clerics and descendants of the Prophet (*sayyeds*) in Iran, the shrine cities of Iraq, Lebanon, and the province of Qaṭif and its Bahrain salient (Ḥosayni Qomi, pp. 430-31; Bedlisi, II, pp. 217-18).

Ḥayāti seems to have had a bureaucratic career in the *awqāf* sector. His detailed account of the Safavid shrine complex in [Ardabil](#) suggests that he must have spent a stint of bureaucratic service in that city, where over the course of the first half of the 16th century several members of the Safavid royal family, including Mehin Begum’s mother, funded and supervised various construction projects for physical expansion of the Safavid shrine. There is also evidence that Ḥayāti was in the circle of friends and acquaintances of a number of Safavid princesses and their female relatives. When eulogizing Mehin Begum in the prologue to his history, he recommended her sisters and other female associates, or as he put it “the veiled inhabitants of the nook of intuition,” to study his history and get a good grasp of the life and times of “their renowned and distinguished ancestors” (Ḥayāti, fols. 15r-v). From Ḥayāti’s references to Shah Ṭahmāsp’s other siblings, it can also be assumed that he was close to Sām Mirzā. Ḥayāti praised the Safavid prince for “his unwavering support and generous patronage of scholars and men of letters” and wrote with grief and sadness of the passing of his eldest son, Rostam Mirzā, who died of smallpox a few days after his wedding ceremony, which was held in Tabriz in 961/1554 (Ḥayāti, fols. 77r-v). At that time, Sām Mirzā worked as superintendent of the Safavid shrine complex in Ardabil (Ḥayāti, fol. 55r).

Work. A potentially unique manuscript of Ḥayāti’s history, which is bound in with large portions of the third volume of Ġiāt-al-Din K’āndamir’s *Tāriḵ-e ḥabib al-siar*, is in the National Library of Iran in Tehran. In the library’s



catalogue, this manuscript is misidentified as an anonymous, 17th-century history of Shah Esmā'īl, with no mention of additions from K̄āndamir's chronicle that make up two-thirds of the manuscript in its current binding (Darāyati, II, p. 717). While Ḥayāti has called his work simply *Tāriḳ* (Ḥayāti, fols. 12v, 16r), it is catalogued under the provisional title *Tāriḳ-e Šāh Esmā'īl*.

Ḥayāti is one of the earliest Safavid chroniclers to experiment with dynastic history as narrative framework. Contemporary fellow historians such as K̄āndamir, Mir Yaḥyā Sayfi Qazvini, author of *Lobb al-tawāriḳ*, and Qāzi Aḥmad Ġaffāri Qazvini, author of *Tāriḳ-e jahānārā*, all chronicled Safavid history as the closing chapter of their universal histories, juxtaposing Shah Esmā'īl and Shah Ṭahmāsp with a long line of dominantly non-Shi'ite households, rulers, and claimants to power. When using dynastic framework, Ḥayāti followed the example of Ṣadr-al-Din Ebrāhim Amini Heravi's history, wherein Shah Esmā'īl's antecedents, rise to power, and military victories are chronicled as continuation of the history of the Prophet Moḥammad and the twelve Shi'ite imams, which is outlined and detailed in long introductory chapters. Both historians have the biography of the Prophet Moḥammad and the twelve Shi'ite imams as the starting point of their accounts of early Safavid history, but while Amini Haravi's account opens with two long chapters (*fathḥs*) on the Prophet Moḥammad (Amini Haravi, folios 28v-105r), in Ḥayāti's narrative, the twelve Shi'ite imams have received the lion's share of attention. Like Amini Haravi, however, Ḥayāti's introductory chapters on Shi'ite imams close with remarks and claims concerning the impending return of the Hidden Imam, Moḥammad al-Mahdi.

Organizationally, Ḥayāti's history can be divided into two parts. The first part, which outlines the history of the Ṣafaviya Sufi order (*ṭariqa*) in the 14th and 15th century, is structured into three sections (*ḥadiqa* "garden"). The second part, titled *šo'ba-ye dovvom*, deals with the early dynastic phase of Safavid history from the time of Shaikh Jonayd's (d. 864/1460) assumption of the mantle of spiritual leadership (*eršād*) of the Ṣafaviya early in the 1450s up to Shah Esmā'īl's invasion of Baghdad in 914/1508. Ḥayāti's account of the twelve Shi'ite imams is larded with *bāṭeni* and *ḥorufi/noḳṭawi* themes and tropes. All Shi'ite imams, according to Ḥayāti, were masters of hermeneutics (*ta'wil*), numerology, and the "science of letters" (Ḥayāti, fols. 18v-19r). It is likely that Ḥayāti associated with a group of *Mahdist* and *Noḳṭavi* mystics and demagogues who, according to Fazli Beg Kuzāni Eṣfahāni, an early 17th-century Safavid chronicler, attended on a regular basis the occasional get-



together with religious dignitaries at the court of Shah Ṭahmāsp in Tabriz and Qazvin (Kuzāni Eṣfahāni, p. 142).

The third *ḥadiqa* of the first part focuses on Shaikh Ṣafi and his successors. In this section, almost all anecdotes are reproduced verbatim or in an abridged form from the *Ṣafwat al-ṣafā*. Ḥayati's selective plagiarism of the *Ṣafwat al-ṣafā* concurred with Shah Ṭahmāsp's bid to prepare an official version of Ebn Bazzāz's controversial biography of Shaikh Ṣafi. Ḥayati considered Ebn Bazzāz an untrustworthy source, finding fault with his inclusion of the name of the pro-Umayyad mystic, preacher, and jurist, Abu Sa'īd Ḥasan Baṣri (d. 110/728) in the spiritual genealogy of the Ṣafaviya. According to Ḥayati, Ebn Bazzāz's claim that Baṣri had acted as a spiritual link between Shaikh Ṣafi and Imam 'Alī represented "one of many disgraceful qualities attributed rather unfairly in that book [the *Ṣafwat al-ṣafā*] to the Ṣafaviya spiritual leaders" (*moršed*; Ḥayati, fols. 47v-48r).

Shah Esmā'il's rise to power and the early years of his reign are dealt with in the second part. Ḥayati's account of the reign of Shah Esmā'il concludes with a section on his invasion of Baghdad in 914/1508. A partly obliterated colophon signed by the copyist, a certain 'Alī Khan b. 'Alī Beg, is added at the end of Ḥayati's account of the Safavid invasion of the province of Arabian Iraq. Here the copyist states that "[the copying of] the book was finished (*tammāt al-keṭāb*) on 1 Ša'bān 1039/16 March 1630 en route from Tabriz to Ardabil" (Ḥayati, fol. 212r).

When dealing with the history of the Safavid shrine complex in Ardabil, Ḥayati's history shines new light on the names, dates, and locations of a number of buildings added to the core of the shrine during the course of the 14th, 15th, and early part of the 16th century (Ḥayati, fols. 50v-52v). His account also contains a list of those bureaucratic authorities who acted as superintendent (*tawliat*) of the shrine during the period in question (Ḥayati, fols. 54r-v). Ḥayati Tabrizi has the distinction of being remarkably detailed about Shaikh Ṣafi's own family as well as his immediate descendants. In Ḥayati's history, Jonayd (d. 1460) and his son Ḥaydar (d. 1488) emerge as the real founders of the Safavid dynasty. Throughout his narrative, he calls Jonayd "shah," giving him the royal *konya* Abu'l-Faṭḥ. Similarly, Ḥaydar bears the epithet Šojā'-al-Dīn (Ḥayati, fols. 73r, 78v, *passim*). Both leaders are cast in the role of military heroes and conquerors on a par with the Qarā Qoyunlu and Aq Qoyunlu rulers of Azarbaijan and Diyarbakir. Time-honored rivalries between the dominantly nomadic population of mountainous Ṭāleš and the dominantly



agriculturalist landed notables of the plains of Saliān and Šervān, on the one hand, and the Qarā Qoyunlu-Aq Qoyunlu wars in Azarbaijan, on the other, constitute the backdrop against which Ḥayāti chronicles Ḥaydar's rise and fall.

Ḥayāti's history contains as well a detailed account of Esmā'il's escape from Ardabil, which, as he points out, is based on personal testimonies of a number of those Sufi fighters who either personally witnessed those events or took part in escorting Esmā'il on his way from Ardabil to Lāhijān (Ḥayāti, fol. 126v). The late 16th-century Safavid historian [Ḥasan Beg Rumlu](#) has plagiarized verbatim large portions of Ḥayāti's account of Shah Esmā'il's ascent to the throne without citing him as his primary source (Rumlu, pp. 13-22, 48-53; Ḥayāti, fols. 123v-128r, 138v-142r). Ḥayāti's history also sheds new light on Shah Esmā'il's military campaigns in central Iran. New details are provided in his history concerning the Safavid conquest of [Kashan](#), [Kerman](#), [Damavand](#), [Astrabad](#), [Isfahan](#), and Yazd. In its contours, Ḥayāti's account of the Safavid invasion of [Baghdad](#) overlaps the writings of Amini Heravi and K̄āndamir on the same event. Nonetheless, additional details can be found in Ḥayāti's history with regard to Shah Esmā'il's friendly relations with a number of Arab Shi'ite tribes in the province of Arabian Iraq such as the Banu Mozāḥem, the Banu Mosā'ed, and the Banu 'Isā clans of *sayyed* notables of [Karbala](#).

Ḥayāti's history closes with a brief section on the early phase of Shah Esmā'il's invasion of Khuzestan. Emphasis is given to friendly relations between the Safavid monarch and the governor of Šuštār, Fayyāz b. Moḥammad Našr-Allāh, and his vizier, Mir Šojā'-al-Din Asad-Allāh Šuštari, and the way rivalries between the court of Šuštār and the Mosha'sha'ids of Khuzestan helped the Safavids to bring the province under their effective political control (Ḥayāti, fols. 210v-212r; cf. Šuštari, fols. 10v-11r).

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