Published: December 15, 2003
Last Updated: June 7, 2013

ḤAYDARI AND NEʿMATI

ḤAYDARI and NEʿMATI (also Amir-Ḥaydari; Neʿmat-Allāhi), mutually hostile urban moieties of Safavid and post-Safavid Iran. From the late ninth/fifteenth century up until recent decades, a number of cities and towns of Iran were perceived as being divided into two groupings of adjacent wards (*maḥalla*), one known as the *Ḥaydari-kāna* and the other as the *Neʿmati-kāna*, the respective (male) inhabitants of which would profess mutual contempt and antagonism, and would periodically clash in massive public fights. The origins of their names and the cause of the antagonism were not generally known to the participants; the topography and composition of the *Ḥaydari-kāna* and the *Neʿmati-kāna* (which in some places extended into the adjacent countryside) was apparently irrelevant; and membership in either of these factions corresponded to no other social, political, or sectarian affiliation.

As early as 1571 an Italian traveler reported that the nine wards of Tabriz (the Safavid capital up until 1555) were divided between the Neʿmati and Ḥaydari factions, five belonging to one and four to the other, and that it had been in a state of feud for more than thirty years (Grey, p. 224). Sir John Chardin, a century later, confirms this situation in Tabriz and likewise asserts that the factions divided "all of Persia": "The city of Isfahan is divided into two quarters, one called *Jubāra-ye Neʿmat-Allāhi*, facing east, and the other called *Dār-e dašt-e Ḥaydariya*, facing west . . . These two quarters . . . are really two factions, which embrace the suburbs and the territory of the city" (Chardin, 1711, II, p. 316). On public holidays, the one party would attack the other to secure precedence, and on ordinary days the wrestlers and young toughs of

each side hurled challenges at each other. Sometimes there ensued pitched battles on the main square (*maydān*), with hundreds fighting on either side. The participants were always of the lower classes, and although they fought only with sticks and stones there were always a few killed and many injured (Chardin, VIII, pp. 11-13). This division survived until at least the 1950s among the villages of Jolga-ye ru-dašt, the region east of Isfahan, where the landowners exploited these animosities to improve their access to water or otherwise extend their authority (Mirjafari, 1979, pp. 154-55).

Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, writing during the seventeenth century, adds that on festive occasions in Isfahan the two factions would bet heavily on bull- and bear-baiting, cock-fighting and other popular sports (Tavernier, 1679, I, p. 396). Shah ʿAbbās's astrologer records under the year 1003/1594 a fight between the Ḥaydari and Neʿmat-Allāhi factions that took place "by royal decree" on the Maydān-e Saʿādat in Qazvin, which served as the Safavid capital from about 1555 until 1588; victory went to the "Mir Ḥaydari" faction, and a second fight was ordered at a local shrine (Monajjem, p. 131; Mirjafari, p. 147). Other occasions on which Shah ʿAb-bās instigated such clashes for his personal amusement are reported by Pietro della Valle in 1617 (*Voyages*, III, p. 42). Chardin states that when the shah was absent from Isfahan, the mayor (*kalāntar*) made no real effort to prevent Ḥaydari-Neʿmati affrays because of the profit that his office derived from them (Chardin, 1711, VIII, p. 13). In other cases, observers noted bloody—and sometimes futile—attempts by the shah's troops or local authorities to quell spontaneous Ḥaydari-Neʿmati clashes that got out of hand (Grey, p. 224; Kaempfer, pp. 110-11; Krusinski, I, p. 91). There was one even as recently as 1975 in Ardakān, Fars (Mirjafari, p. 155).

Although essentially a plebeian phenomenon, the Ḥaydari-Neʿmati split automatically applied to patricians who resided in one or other of the factionalized neighborhoods. When the Qājār prince Masʿud Mirzā Ẓell-al-Solṭān, newly appointed governor of Isfahan in 1882, was apprised of the history of the moieties and of the fact that "in accordance with the division of the city, Your Highness is a Ḥaydari," he exclaimed, delighted, "Since I'm to be a Ḥaydari, let's give the Neʿmatis hell!" (Mirjafari, p. 148). The feud could also be exploited for more serious partisan or political purposes. In Dezful during the second half of the nineteenth century there were Ḥaydari-Neʿmati riots between *luṭi*s (q.v.; young toughs) of opposing camps, instigated by rival regional powers outside the city itself—Shaikh Ḵazʿal, who supported the Neʿmatis, and the Bakhtiāri khans, who favored the Ḥaydaris (Floor, p. 90). In

Ardabil during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906, two rival regional revolutionary councils (*anjoman*; q.v.) were set up, because the leader appointed by the provincial revolutionary council in Tabriz belonged to the Neʿmati faction; the two sides finally brought in tribal allies from outside the city, erected barricades, and shot at each other (Kasravi, pp. 195-97).

Many observers have noted that the Ḥaydari-Neʿmati conflicts have a regular, even cyclical, occurrence and other ritual, ceremonial, and ludic features. In Shiraz during the early nineteenth century, where five of the twelve wards were Ḥaydari and five Neʿmati (the Jewish and Armenian quarters were outside the scheme; see map), pitched battles would be held three or four times a year (Fasāʾi, II, p. 22); according to an attaché of the British legation, "Once a week, on Friday, the inhabitants of the two divisions of the population called Hyderi and Neametali, repair to the open ground beyond the city walls, and engage in a skirmish with slings and stones; an exercise which is not infrequently followed by a close fight with swords and daggers" (Watson, 1866, p. 110). Violence was expected during the major religious holidays that involved processions and gatherings. In the elaborate ceremonials attending the annual *ʿId-e Qorbān* at Isfahan as observed during the middle of the last century (a tradition from Safavid times), the two factions played a conspicuous role. Of the six "sharers in the camel" (*mučа-dār*), who have an equal share of the parts of the body of the animal, three belonged to the Ḥaydari and three to the Neʿmati party. During the parade, each one was preceded by his entourage from the city and the outlying villages, numbering more than a thousand. The factions processed separately from their own quarters, and all assembled in the main square, whence they would parade past the governor and across the river to the slaughtering ground. Despite extra guards and troops, there would always be clashes when the rival groups met at intersections and during the dividing of the sacrificial meat; every year thirty to forty people were injured and three or four killed (Taḥvildār, pp. 88-90; Keyvani, 1982, pp. 259-62; see CAMEL V. ŠOTOR-QORBĀNI).

On the principal Shiʿite holiday, the tenth of Moḥarram (*ʿāšurā*), the emotions generated by the mourning rituals and the rivalry between wards in staging processions and plays have repeatedly been observed to ignite bloody Ḥaydari-Neʿmati clashes—particularly since many of the *luṭi*s, apprentices and other young men of the rival *ma-ḥalla*s were members of the bands of flagellants or actors (Kaempfer, p. 111; Malcolm, II, p. 429). Despite intermittent bloodshed, the Ḥaydari-Neʿmati conflict characteristically did not

exceed certain bounds. Fasāʾi (II, p. 22) notes specifically that casualties on either side during their periodic battles did not lead to direct retaliation. It was thus not technically a feud, the mechanism of which depends on cyclical vengeance for past insults; each clash between Ḥaydaris and Neʿmatis appears to have been viewed as a discrete synchronic event, without appeal to atavistic insult or an "eye for an eye." Descriptions of clashes in modern times reveal a generally low level of personal violence, actual bodily harm being replaced by ritual insult, hazing, or a symbolic "counting coup." Sir John Malcolm makes the following observations of clashes during Moḥarram, "[I]f they force their opponents from their houses they do not enter or plun-der them, but make a mark on each door with a hatchet, as a token of victory" (Malcolm, II, p. 429). Encounters within the rival *maḥallas* (as distinct from set-piece battles or riots on holidays) emphasized territoriality. On the ninth of Moḥarram, a number of men from each of the rival neighborhoods at Ardakān of Yazd would "make the rounds" (*parsa-zani*) with a donkey and a saddlebag, clashing a pair of cymbals, to collect contributions of food and money for the next day's mourning rituals; if the two parties met at the boundaries, a fight would likely ensue. Anyone visiting the other party's *Ḥosayniya* (religious center for mourning rituals and passion plays) would have to demonstrate respect by kissing the *kelak*, a platform in the center of the courtyard (Mirjafari, pp. 153-54). Marriages were never contracted between Ḥaydari and Neʿmati families, and some Ḥaydaris regarded the Neʿmatis as ritually impure (*najes*) and would not visit the bathhouse in their neighborhood. Scurrilous characterizations were circulated in order to demonize the opposition: the Neʿmatis maintained that one could recognize a Ḥaydari boy by the fact that if he were to be picked up while urinating and moved a few paces away, he would involuntarily return to the same spot and continue (Mirjafari, p. 154).

While the Neʿmatis (Neʿmatiya) originated amongst the followers of the well-known Sufi and poet of Kerman, Sayyed Šāh Neʿmat-Allāh Vali (d. 1430 or 1431), the Ḥaydaris ([Mir] Ḥaydariya) are probably named after a less celebrated contemporary Sufi, Solṭān Mir Qoṭb- al-Din Ḥaydar Tuni of Tabriz (d. ca.1426). Šāh Neʿmat-Allāh himself was actually a Sunnite, even though his successors came to profess Shiʿism early in the Safavid period as a result of marriage alliances with that dynasty. Mir Ḥaydar was a Twelver Shiʿite. Though their respective mystical schools arose at opposite ends of Iran some two generations before the rise of the Safavids, it appears that the disciples of both shaykhs soon gained a following among the citizenry of Tabriz, the Safavids' first capital. Their antagonism probably originated in a Sunnite-

Shiʿite sectarian dispute; despite the conversion of Tabriz and other cities to Shiʿism under Safavid rule, the apparent demise of the Ḥaydariya order even before the rise of the Safavids, and the withdrawal of the Neʿmat-Allāhiya to India during the reign of Shah ʿAbbās, the urban factions spawned by this doctrinal clash persisted and expanded without any motivation other than their eponymous labels (Mirjafari, pp. 137-43, 158, n. 17). (The Neʿmat-Allāhiya Sufi order was reintroduced into Iran late in the eighteenth century, by which time the Neʿmati urban moiety was a totally unrelated phenomenon.)

Several European travelers attribute the origin of the factions to two rival secular rulers; Tavernier (I, p. 396), Chardin (II, p. 316) and others also draw pertinent analogies with the urban factions of medieval Italy, namely the Guelphs and Ghibellines of Florence and the Castellani and Nicolotti of Venice (see also Perry, 1998, esp. pp. 116-18). Their misunderstanding of the eponyms may be due to the dervishes' sobriquets (*solṭān*, *mir*, *šāh*); mystics were frequently given titles of secular rulers by their followers in medieval Iran and India. Not only European, but even Persian, writers sometimes assert that the moieties owed their invention to a sovereign (usually identified as Šāh ʿAbbās), who decreed that his cities should be arbitrarily so divided in order to diffuse the chance of a concerted popular revolt (Krusinski, I, pp. 91-93; Fasāʾi, II, p. 22). Krusinski even adds that ʿAbbās tried to institute a pair of factions in the Afghan city of Qandahār when he conquered it, but the institution lapsed when Qandahār was recaptured by the Mughals.

Similar moieties are reported under different names. Krusinski refers to a widespread rivalry between factions called, opaquely, "*Pelenk*" and "*Felenk*." The following cities and towns (or villages near them) are identified as being divided between Ḥaydari-Neʿmati (or similar) moieties at some time: Ardabil, Tabriz, Qazvin (and villages in the region; see ùĀL), Rašt, Isfahan, Ardakān (Fars), Shiraz, Dezful, Šuštar, Behbehān, Ardakān (Yazd), and Birjand. Most of these were prominent Safavid centers; Tehran, which did not attain prominence until the early nineteenth century, is notably absent, as are cities in the East (e.g., Mašhad, Kermān). Though the dichotomy arose in the pre-Safavid period, it seems to have become identified with, and to have been spread by, the Safavid ethos. Contributing factors were, perhaps, an enthusiastic (at times, fanatical) Shiʿite fervor imposed rapidly on a variegated population; selective urban expansion and consolidation through commerce; increased mobilization of apprentices and other youths for public pageantry; and encouragement of factionalism by the authorities as a safety valve (Perry,

1998, pp. 115-16; for a more general, comparative and theoretical study, see Perry, 1999).

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