



## MOḲTAŞAR-E MOFID

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**MOḲTAŞAR-E MOFID**, a geographical compendium written under Shah Solaymān (q.v.; r. 1666-94).

The *Moḳtaşar-e Mofid* (hereafter cited as *MM*) was composed by Moḥammad Mofid Mostawfi b. Najm-al-Din Maḥmūd Bāfqī Yazdī, who also wrote the *Jāme‘-e mofidi* (hereafter cited as *JM*), and a work titled *Majāles al-mo‘menin*. It is the only known geographical text from the Safavid period and as such of extraordinary importance. The work exists in just one manuscript version, which may be from the hand of the author himself, and comprises 276 leaves, nineteen of which are taken up by an index (Rieu, I, p. 427; Storey-Bregel, II, p. 700; *JM*, III, p. viii; *MM*, 1989-91, I, p. 8; for references, see Aubin). In 1989-91, the *Moḳtaşar-e Mofid* was published in a two-volume facsimile edition, edited and annotated by Seyffedin Najmabadi. The first part contains an introduction in German by the editor followed by the actual text, and the second is made up of the editor’s explanatory notes and corrections as well as an index of geographical and personal names. In 1390/2011, Iraj Afšār and Moḥammad Reżā Abu’i Mahrizi published a new, critical edition of the work with an informative introduction and an excellent index.

Little is known about the life and career of Mofid Mostawfi, and what we know about the author is contained in the *Moḳtaşar-e Mofid* and the *Jāme‘-e Mofidi*. Originally from Bāfq (q.v.), between Yazd and Kerman, Mofid Mostawfi served in Yazd as *mostawfi*, tax administrator, of the city’s religious endowments, *awqāf*. In 1081/1671, he left for Isfahan, whence he traveled to Basra, where he started writing the *Jāme‘-e mofidi*. After performing the



pilgrimage to the ‘Atabāt (q.v.), and spending seven months among the Moša‘ša‘ (q.v.) in Howayza (Ḥawiza), he set sail from Basra to Surat and thence traveled to Delhi and Hyderabad. From Hyderabad he went to Burhanpur, to arrive, in Şafar 1088/April 1677, in Ujjain, where he entered the service of the Mughal prince, Moḥammad Akbar, as *kān-sāmān*, house steward. A year later he moved to Multan, where he entered the service of the local ruler. The *Moktaşar-e Mofid* also indicates that the author visited Lahore in 1091/1680 and that, in the same year, he spent time in Faraḥabad and, again, in Delhi (*JM*, III, pp. vii and viii; *MM*, 1989-91, I, p. 251; *MM*, 2011, p. 228; also see Alam and Subrahmanyam, p. 492).

Mofid Mostawfi began writing the text of the *Moktaşar-e Mofid* in the Deccan in 1087/1676-77 and finished the work in Lahore in 1091/1680-81. The author gives as the reason for writing the work his encounter in the Deccan with a number of literati from various lands in 1087/1676-77. During this encounter, the discourse came to center on the virtues of the various countries whence the participants hailed. They thus held forth about the splendor of the ruler of China, the number of soldiers commanded by the Ottoman sultan, and the vastness of the realm of Rome (the Ottoman Empire). It was then that the author decided to write his account, to demonstrate that the realm of the Safavids was in every respect far superior to any of these empires .

Organized by region, the *Moktaşar-e Mofid* follows Kāndamir’s *Tāriḳ-eḥabib al-siar* in giving the range and the perimeters of the land of Iran. This means that Mofid Mostawfi conceives of Iran as greater Persia in its widest historical meaning, a land that stretches from the Oxus River to the Euphrates, from Khorasan and Makran to Iraq and Daghestan. More fundamentally, the author fully stands in the tradition of the great authors of the *masālek wa’l mamālek* genre of Islamic geography and travel literature who followed the Ptolemaic way of dividing geographical locations according to the climes in which they were located. Persia in this scheme falls within the “habitable zone,” the *rob‘-e maskūn*.

Part of Mofid Mostawfi’s account is clearly based on information gathered from contemporary, living sources. These remain unmentioned. It is equally as clear from the many references Mofid Mostawfi gives that he knew about and consulted a number of classical texts, not just various previous historical-geographical works, such as Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi’s *Nozhat al-qolūb*, Eşṭakri’s *Kitāb al-masālek wa’l-mamālek*, Zakariyā’ b. Moḥammad Qazwini’s *‘Ajā‘eb al-boldān*, and Kāndamir’s *Tāriḳ-eḥabib al-siar*, but also literary sources, among



them the works of Ferdowsi, Neẓāmi Ganjavi, and Hafez. For recent events Mofid Mostawfi relied on the well-known early seventeenth-century Safavid chronicle by Eskandar Beg Torkamān Monši, *‘Ālam-ārā-ye ‘abbāsi*. (For a complete list of the 57 works mentioned in the *MM*, see *MM*, 1989-91, introd., p. 6; also see the introduction in the 2011 edition, pp. t-yb, with references to mistakes made by the author).

The descriptions of the various regions follow the patterns of the traditional Islamic geographical genre, with information about the climate in which the region is located, its physical features, the main sub-regions and towns, their (positive) features, involving the abundance of water and the excellence of the fruit, followed by historical facts, including the origins and early history of various cities, their physical features and buildings, mosques, bathhouses, orchards—all interspersed with poetry. The focus of the historical segments tends to be on early Islamic history, but the author also provides information about later periods, most notably the reign of the Buyids and the Mongols, using works such as Eṣṭakri’s *Masālek wa-’l-mamālek* and Ḥamd-Allah Mostawfi’s *Nozhat al-qolūb*. At times, he covers contemporary events involving the Safavid period. He thus refers to the embellishment of Isfahan by Shah ‘Abbās I (q.v.), and offers ample information about Iraq under Shah Ṣafi I (q.v.), including the building activities overseen by grand vizier Mirzā Moḥammad Taqī. Occasionally a reference is made to contemporary conditions, a ruler of a province or the occurrence of a natural disaster. In his introduction, Mostawfi pays homage to Shah Solaymān (q.v.), the ruler of the Safavid state at the time of writing, as a monarch who had brought peace and prosperity to the country.

The Shi‘i character of the text stands out prominently. This comes out in the fact that, even though the order is alphabetical, Erāq-e ‘Arab takes pride of place in the enumeration of geographical sites, as well as in the ample space dedicated to Mashhad—a full twenty-two pages (as opposed to, for instance, Shiraz, which gets barely two). The same sensibility is reflected in the author’s frequent references to and laudatory words for Moḥammad-Taqī Majlesi (q.v.) and especially the latter’s son, Moḥammad-Bāqer Majlesi (q.v.), the doctrinaire Shaikh al-Islam in the late reign of Shah Solaymān (p. 53).



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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