

# **Relations between the Ottomans and the Safavids in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century: An Analysis of the Rhetorical Epistles**

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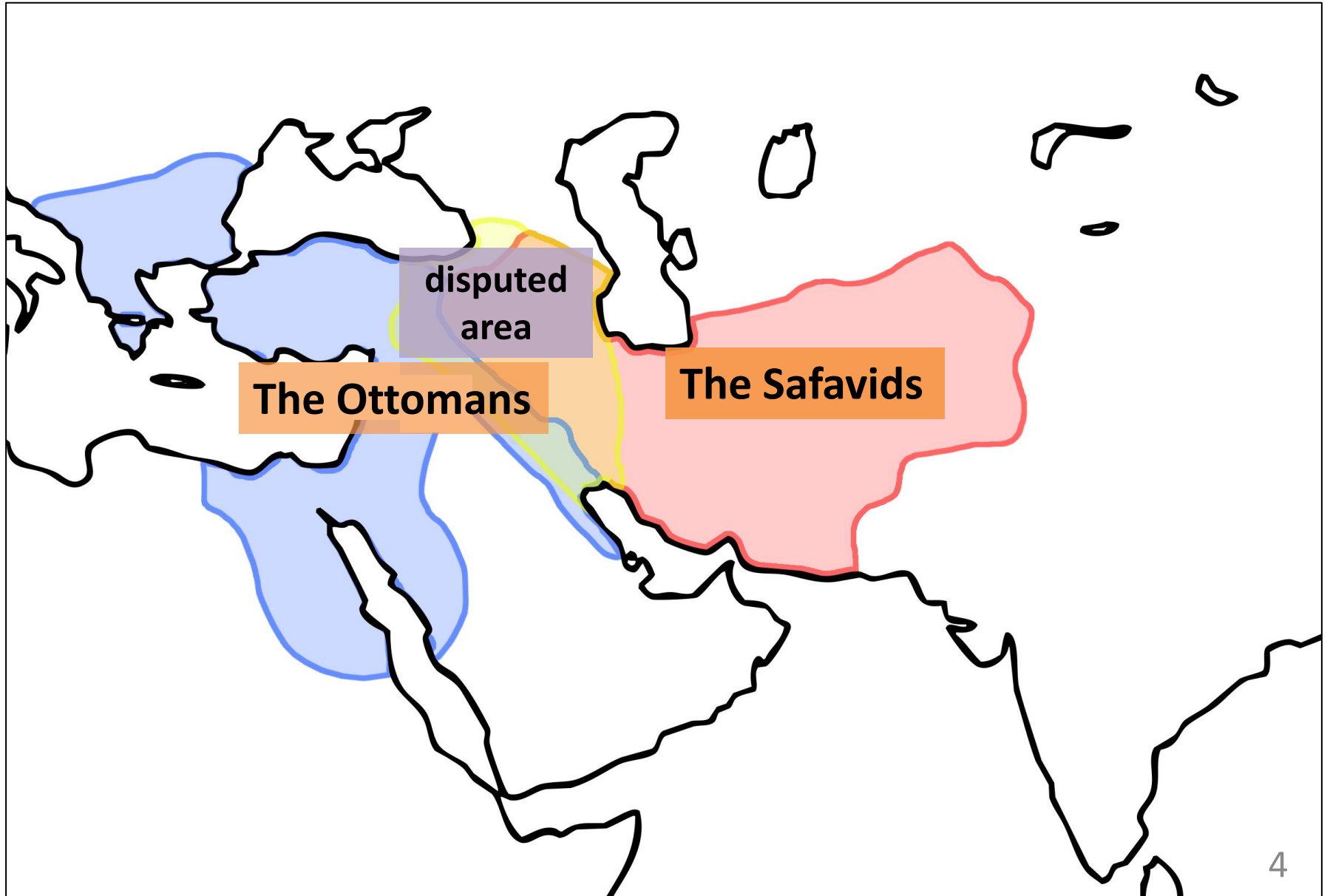
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# 1. Introduction

- The Ottomans and the Safavids
  - = great powers in Muslim World through the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> century
- Letters they exchanged
  - their relations and balance of power

# The Ottomans and the Safavids in the 16<sup>th</sup> century



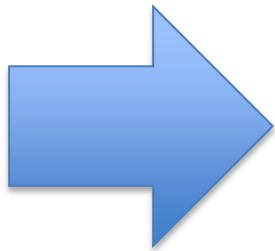
# Previous Studies

The Sunnni  
Ottomans

VS

The Shi`ite  
Safavids

→analyzed in the religious dichotomy



could not explain their multi-layered and nuanced relations

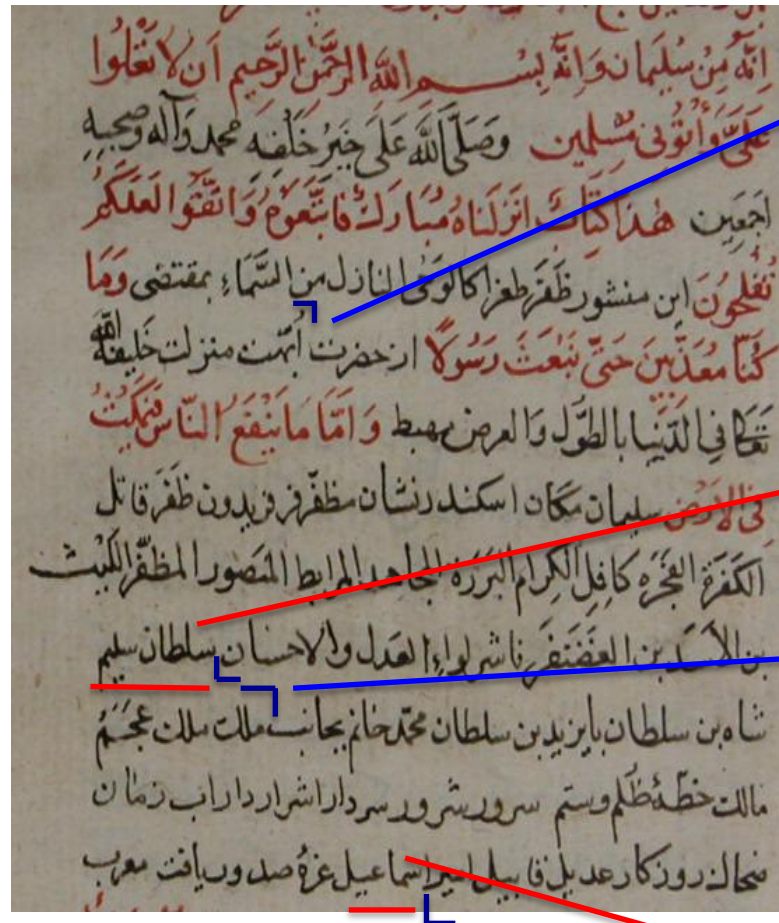
- Colin P. Mitchell, “Am I Brother’s Keeper?: Negotiating Corporate Sovereignty and Divine Absolutism in Sixteenth-Century Turco-Iranian Politics.” in *New Perspectives on Safavid Iran: Empire and Society*. (2011)

**The Safavids’ legitimacy = Shi`ite doctrine,  
pre-Islamic Iranian  
concepts**

# The Goal of this Paper

- To understand relations between the Ottomans and the Safavids not as a religious dichotomy but from both sides
- By analyzing a sizeable body of epistolary evidence (67 letters), written in Ottoman Turkish and Persian, from correspondence between the Ottomans and the Safavids in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

the introductory section in the letter from the Ottomans to the Safavids, in 1514



① the titles of Selim, the Ottoman ruler (sender)

② the name of Selim

③ the titles of Ismail, the Safavid ruler (addressee)

④ the name of Ismail

(Sarı Abdullah Efendi, *Münşeat-ı Fârisi*, Süleymaniye Kütüphanesi, Esad Eendi Kitaplığı, Nr. 3333, fol. 98b)

## 2. The Styles of the Letters

- The styles of the letters (esp. the introductory section)  
= reflected the power relations between the senders and addressees
- letter-writing manuals (since the 11<sup>th</sup> century)

# Examples of the styles

The introductory section in the letter is...	Example	The rank between sender and addressee
a tone of command	know that...	Sender > Addressee
a salutation	I will send you the salutation that...	Sender = Addressee

**Case 1:** In 1501, from the Safavids to the Ottomans

“The Prayer which would be suitable for the God and the praise which would be suitable for the Sultanate court were sent to the royal palace of Bayazit...””

- begin with a Salutation  
→ **the Safavids = the Ottomans?**

lasted until the end of the reign of Shah Tahmasb (the 2<sup>nd</sup> Safavid ruler )

## **Case 2:** In 1514, from the Ottomans to the Safavids

- immediately before the 1514 battle of Chaldiran, the Ottomans sent the threatening letter to Shah Ismail

“Brave Ismail, know that..., when this imperial order reached you...”

- a tone of command

**the Ottomans > the Safavids**

# After the Amasya treaty(1554)

**Case 3:** From the Safavids to the Ottomans in 1554, a reply an appeal for peace from Tahmasb

“The favor which is joyful and pure....was sent and delivered to Shah Tahmasb...”

**→a Salutation**

## Relations after the Amasya treaty

- The Ottomans essentially chose the style of salutations but they use the style of order, as before, in case of the need to threaten the Safavids

→ The Ottomans assumed a feigned politeness

**The Ottomans > The Safavids**

# 3. The Titles of addresses

- The Ottomans' attitude towards European rulers in the 16<sup>th</sup> century

**The ruler of the Ottomans > European rulers**

- Did the Safavids acquire equal status with the Ottomans?

# The titles of the Ottomans through the 16th century

## Case 1: The titles of Sulaiman

“One who raises the flags of justice and kindness, who expunges the signs of oppression and rebellion, the greatest sultan obeyed by people, the sultan of two lands, the haqan of two seas, the servitor of the two holy sanctuaries, the keeper of the boundary zone of Islam and Muslims, one who is helped by the God...”

→ The titles of a ruler in the Islamic world

# Titles of the Safavids from 1501 to 1514

## Case 2: The titles of Ismail

“the greatest commander in chief, the commander in Ajam (Iran), the renown Amir...Ismail”

- The Ottomans recognized the Safavid ruler as a mere amir in Ajam (the limited kingship of the Safavid ruler)

**The Ottomans > The Safavids**

# The titles of the Safavids after 1554

## Case 3: The titles of Tahmasb

“One who broadens Aman and Amān, who surely holds the hard rope (Quran), who is helped by God’s grace, ...Shah Tahmasb”

- always referred to as Shah
- **Tahmasb = one ruler in Islamic world**  
(sometimes called Padishah)

# The relations after 1554

**For the Ottomans...**

**the Safavids = a Muslim state worthy of  
entering negotiations with**

**For the safavids...**

**acquired equal titles to some extent**

# 4. The Expressions in the Main Texts

- The Ottomans and the Safavids exchanged many letters through the 16<sup>th</sup> century

<b>fewer than 10 of 67 letters</b>	<b>their conflicts</b>
<b>more than 30 of 67 letters</b>	<b>treaty negotiations, the treatment of refugees</b>

**more complicated their relations than expected by a dualistic religious perspective**

# From 1501 to 1554

**Case 1:** Selim described the Ismail as below  
(before the battle of chaldiran)...

“You (Ismail) opened the door of injustice and unjust for Muslims and combined impiety and irreligion...”

**Case 2:** Sulaiman took a critical attitude towards  
Tahmasb (in 1554)

“We are planning to conduct Jihad to destroy  
the eastern district of infidels...”

**The Safavids = infidels**  
**attacks on the Safavids = Jihad**

# After the Amasya treaty

**Case 3:** The negotiation over the treatment of Bayazıt who sought refuge with the Safavids (in 1559)

## Sulaiman's claim 1

“The friendship and affection between us requires that...you hand him (Bayazıt) over to us...”

## Sulaiman's claim 2

“It is required that we always eradicate the sedition and protect the blood of Muslims...”

## Tahmasb's claim

“I(Tahmasb) would act as intermediary (between Sulaiman and his son Bayazit)...to strengthen our friendship and peace...”

- Both sides emphasized the Amasya treaty in the negotiation process
- The Ottomans recognized the Safavids as a Muslim state

**The protection of treaty >  
Their religious conflicts**

**→ similar to their relations after the Zuhab treaty in 1639**

# 5. Conclusion

- **Before the Amasya treaty**

The Ottomans > The Safavids  
religious conflicts

- **After the Amasya treaty**

The Ottomans = The Safavids (superficially)  
protection of treaty

The relations after the Amasya treaty (in 1554)

≡

The relations after the Zuhab treaty (in 1639)

**→ the continuity between the 16<sup>th</sup>  
and the 17<sup>th</sup> century in the  
international relations of Muslim  
states**

**Thank you for your attention**