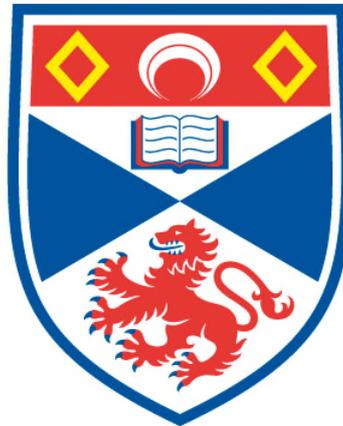


**A FAILED ALLIANCE AND EXPANDING HORIZONS:
RELATIONS BETWEEN THE AUSTRIAN HABSBURGS AND THE
SAFAVID PERSIANS IN THE SIXTEENTH AND SEVENTEENTH
CENTURIES**

David Robert Stokes

**A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews**



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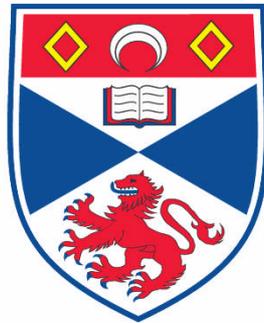
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A Failed Alliance and Expanding Horizons:
Relations between the Austrian Habsburgs
and the Safavid Persians
in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries

David Robert Stokes



This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews

4 February, 2014

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I, **David Robert Stokes**, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 78,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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**A Failed Alliance and Expanding Horizons:
Relations between the Austrian Habsburgs
and the Safavid Persians
in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries**

Throughout the 16th and 17th centuries, both Austria and Persia were each repeatedly at war with the Ottoman Turks. Diplomats travelled between the two countries in an attempt to forge an alliance against their common enemy. Although the alliance never materialized the relationship broadened to cover other concerns. Despite cultural differences, both countries tried to work together and approached each-other as equals. Contact between the countries exposed both cultures to wider influences. Their changing relationship illustrates the priorities of both parties. This thesis, for the first time, uses primary sources to view the evolution of the relationship over the two century reign of the Safavid dynasty. It charts the course of their diplomatic relationship, examines the turning point in this relationship, and explores why the alliance both sides wanted never materialized. By examining Austria's diplomatic initiatives to the east this thesis helps correct the historiographical imbalance in central European history of concentration on only European affairs, and shows that their understanding of the east was more nuanced than is often credited.

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Abbreviations

- HHStA Haus-, Hof-, und Staatsarchiv,
Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archive), Vienna.
- HKA Finanz- und Hofkammerarchiv,
Österreichisches Staatsarchiv (Austrian State Archive), Vienna.
- NAČR Národní Archiv České Republiky,
(National Archive of the Czech Republic), Prague.
- CHI Cambridge History of Iran,
Volume 6, The Timurid and Safavid Periods.

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Chapter One

Introduction

The Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians maintained a diplomatic relationship over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Diplomats from both sides travelled between the two countries, what could be a difficult and dangerous journey. The relationship started in the search for a military alliance against their common enemy, the Ottoman Turks. Military cooperation was never successfully realised, but over time the relationship developed into other areas of common interest, such as trade and cultural exchange. The two cultures were very different, and they did not perfectly understand each other. However, during the period, great strides were made in the knowledge each had of the other. The contact brought about by their diplomatic activity facilitated this growth in knowledge. Despite occasional difficulties in their relationship, the two dynasties always regarded each other as friends and worked to maintain their relationship through changing circumstances. This thesis charts the evolution of this relationship.

The scholar of early modern Austria, R. J. W. Evans, wrote when describing Austrian missionary activities, "My concern here is to illustrate an ambitious mentality, not to chart the modest returns".¹ Similarly, since the proposed alliance which was at the centre of their relationship never materialised, my focus must rest more on the attitudes and efforts of the participants than on the outcomes. What is important to show is that Austria and Persia tried to work together and that they approached each other as equals. In later years, the power differential between Europe and the East would be different, but during the centuries in question, it was possible for the two to enter into a relationship of mutual cooperation rather than one of domination and exploitation.

1 R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy: 1550-1700*, (Oxford, 1979), p. 427.

Although the alliance effort failed, the study of the relationship between two countries is still important. These relationships are important because overlooked details of a familiar country might be seen more clearly in the light of a foreign culture. The very 'otherness' of the cultures from each other makes them a more useful mirror. Every culture determines their self-image partially in contrast with an outside 'Other'. In the case of both the Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians, the primary 'Other' was the Ottoman Turks. Since they both defined themselves in contrast to the Turks, they were drawn to one another, despite their great differences. In both cultures, there was curiosity as well as ignorance about the foreign. Most information they had about the foreign culture came by way of travellers between the two countries, and most of the travellers between sixteenth century Austria and Persia were diplomats. By studying the relationship over the span of two centuries we can identify how and when the relationship changed. We can see why the proposed goal pursued by both sides was not achieved, but how that goal was replaced by other initiatives. We can discover where relationships, which were important to the participants, have been overlooked by later historians, and begin to redress the balance.

Relations between Europe and the Middle East have long been filled with tensions, from the medieval crusades through to modern times. However, the relationships have been complex and defy explanation as a simple clash of civilizations. During the period covered in this work, France was allied with the Ottoman Turks, while Austria was frequently threatened by the Turks and courted an alliance with Persia. All were participants in a shifting network of relationships at a time when contact, communication and trade were beginning to expand. A bi-polar discourse of East versus West completely misses the complexity of the interactions. While scholars and politicians of the time struggled to make sense of foreign cultures with limited information, they recognised the complexity because it was their lived experience. Later observers of the events, historians and orientalists, as well as critics of their work, such as Edward Saïd,² are in danger of losing sight of this complexity.

² Edward W. Saïd, *Orientalism*, (Penguin Books, 2003), originally published 1978.

Background of the Cultures

Despite cultural differences, Habsburg Austria and Safavid Persia shared certain similarities. Both were large, multi-ethnic empires. Each dynasty maintained its authority over these mixed polities by negotiating between the interests of various groups. They headed a coalition of supporters by making themselves appear the one, indispensable source of leadership, backed by propaganda and the judicious use of force when necessary.³ Both dynasties had, at times during the period, strong religious identities. Their religious piety and their doctrinal distinctions were part of their justification for their position. Each evangelized their beliefs: the Safavids converted their country from Sunni to Twelver Shi'a Islam, the Habsburgs maintained their Catholicism when most of their population was converting to Protestantism and eventually turned their lands back to the Catholic church. And importantly for their cooperation, both Austrian Habsburgs and Safavids derived part of their identity from their opposition to the Ottoman Turks. Each justified their power through their determination to combat the Turkish threat, serving as a counterweight to the expansionist Ottoman Empire, which would otherwise engulf their region. This affinity went beyond simply *Realpolitik* and 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend'. Opposition to the Turkish 'other' was a core part of their respective identities, and this shared identity created affinity despite their otherwise quite differing cultures.

The Safavids

The Safavid dynasty had its origins as the leaders of a militaristic Sufi religious order. The Safavid order was named after its fourteenth century founder, Shaikh Şafî al-Dîn Ishâq. A fifteenth century descendant of Shaikh Şafî, Junaid, aligned himself with Uzun Hasan, who ruled most of Persia in the 1450s-70s, and Junaid led the Safavid

3 Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, (London, 2006); R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*.

Turkmen faithful in battles against Uzun Ḥasan's rivals. Uzun Ḥasan began an imperial political discourse which united tribal, religious and royal elements of Persian society; this discourse would be picked up by the Safavids when Ḥasan's Āq Qoyūnlū descendants were unable to peacefully settle on a successor. Junaid married Uzun Ḥasan's sister, and Junaid's son Ḥaidar married one of Uzun Ḥasan's daughters, linking the Safavid leadership with political power. Ḥaidar's son Ismā'īl led his followers into the chaos which followed Uzun Ḥasan's death and became the new Persian ruler, founder of the Safavid dynasty, crowned in Tabriz in 1501.⁴ At his coronation he declared Twelver Shi'ism the new state religion, a conversion which has remained to this day. Ismā'īl I's descendants ruled Persia for over two hundred years, leading its transformation from a medieval realm to an early modern dynasty - one of the 'Gunpowder Empires' described by Marshall Hodgson.⁵ This designation marks the Ottoman, Mughul, and Safavid Empires which arose in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries at the time of the spread of gunpowder warfare. These empires represented a break from the older continuum of Islamic polities to a set of empires, each possessing its own territorial spheres (often overlapping on the edges), and developing separate institutions and markers of political and cultural identity. The Safavids developed such identity, through their propagation of distinct religious, linguistic, political, and even artistic institutions. The institutions founded in the Safavid period continued to shape Iranian consciousness into modern times.

The Safavid regime drew together the two main polities in Persian politics: the Turkic tribes who provided military power through their horsemen provided provided by the tribal leaders in a tributary relationship with the Shah, and the Indo-European Irani who had the administrative traditions to run a large state. Over time, other groups were added to this coalition of interests: *ghulām* servants of the royal court,

4 H.R. Roemer, "The Safavid Period", Chp. 5 in *The Cambridge History of Iran*, Vol. 6 "The Timurid and Safavid Periods" (henceforth CHI), ed. Peter Jackson and Laurence Lockhart, Cambridge 1986, pp. 190-205. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 9-12.

5 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, Vol. 3, "The Gunpowder Empires and Modern Times", (Chicago, 1974), esp. pp. 3-15; Bert Fragner, "The Safavid Empire and the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Political and Strategic Balance of Power within the World System", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 2012), pp. 17-29.

Armenian merchant families, and Shi'ite religious teachers, among others. Although they each manoeuvred for power within the government, all of these groups had a stake in maintaining the stability of the society.⁶ The diversity of interests in the Safavid coalition was a source of strength; but also, presented a challenge, a constant centrifugal force which, in the absence of confidence in the Shah, could rip the coalition to pieces.⁷

A major source of income for the Safavid regime was silk, which was produced in the provinces around the Caspian Sea. This commodity became a desired luxury in Europe and was the major export from Persia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was a major source of revenue for the regime. Armenian merchants, whose companies had been trading with Europe for generations, took a leading role in brokering trade deals and transporting the products to European merchants. Desire for profits from the silk trade drew the interest of the emerging European trading companies, such as the British East India Company. Control of the silk trade was a major issue in Safavid foreign policy of the seventeenth century.

The Habsburgs

The Habsburgs started as minor nobility in Alsace in the tenth century. They gradually gained more power through advantageous marriage arrangements and alliances. Rudolf, Count of Habsburg was elected as German King in 1273 to become Rudolf I, known as The Founder.⁸ It was he who obtained the Austrian lands for the family's patrimony. Habsburg fortune fluctuated in the following generations until 1452, when Frederick III was crowned Holy Roman Emperor, a title which would

6 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 123.

7 Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, (London, 2012), pp. 8-10.

8 Rudolf I was never crowned by the Pope and so was not called Holy Roman Emperor, but he exercised similar powers. Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. C. A. Simpson, (London, 1994), pp. 13-19, 49-52.

remain with the Habsburg family until the Empire's dissolution in 1806. Frederick also continued the family tradition of favourable marriage alliances by wedding his son, Maximilian, to the heiress of the Duke of Burgundy, Charles the Bold. An epigram describing their marriage success reads, *Bella gerant alii, tu felix Austria nube!* - "Let others wage war, you - happy Austria - marry!" As Emperor, Maximilian I (reign 1493-1519) tried to reform the governance of both the Holy Roman Empire and the Habsburg's Austrian lands, but opposition from the nobility who sought to maintain their privileges limited him to only minor results. Maximilian arranged marriages between his two children and the children of the Spanish royals. After a series of premature deaths, this left Maximilian's grandson Charles as heir to Spain, including its lands in the New World, the Burgundian Low Countries, Naples and Sicily, the Austrian patrimony, and various other small territories scattered about Europe. As Emperor Charles V (reign 1519-1556), he aspired to a universal monarchy - uniting all of Christendom under his rule. While Charles thought the threat of the Turks would draw the rest of Europe to him for leadership, the Valois kings of France, now surrounded by Habsburg territories, led resistance to his hegemony. Since Charles' lands were too scattered to rule effectively from one location, he turned administration of the ancestral Austrian lands over to his brother Ferdinand. Ferdinand, with help of yet another advantageous marriage arranged by his grandfather Maximilian, added the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia to the Austrian patrimony and created the Central European entity later recognised as the Austrian Empire. It is these lands ruled by Ferdinand and his successors, the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family, which are the focus of this thesis.

The Habsburg Austrian monarchy was not a modern state, nor even an empire of conquered lands, but was instead a loose affiliation of lands ruled by the same family. The 'House of Austria' ruled over a patchwork of lands, many of which had separate histories as independent domains before coming under Habsburg rule. The central area – as much in terms of significance to the Monarchy as geographically – was the *Erblande*, or Inherited Lands. These were ruled by the Habsburgs in direct sovereignty, and correspond substantially to the modern Austrian Republic. They

comprised several medieval duchies acquired by the family in the thirteenth century, and this fact led the Habsburgs to take the title 'Archduke' to signify their rule over multiple duchies.⁹ In addition to their traditional inherited lands, during the sixteenth century the Habsburgs came to hold the crowns of two previously independent kingdoms, Hungary and Bohemia. Hungary, for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, was divided into three parts: Habsburg territories to the north and west - including what is today Slovakia, Turkish holdings in a wedge through the centre, and the effectively independent principality of Transylvania to the east. There was a mixture of languages and ethnicities, with Magyars, Slovaks, Croats, and Ruthenes in the countryside, Germans and Magyars in the towns, and Romanians, Germans, Szeklers and Magyars in Transylvania. As might be expected, this diverse territory proved difficult to rule, as evidenced by the many revolts and leadership disputes which arose in the area.¹⁰ The Kingdom of Bohemia was itself a conglomeration of territories, constituted of Bohemia proper, Moravia, Silesia, and Upper and Lower Lusatia. Silesia and the Lusatias had by this time substantial autonomy and greater cultural affiliation with the German parts of the Holy Roman Empire, while Moravia, a self-contained margravate maintaining its own laws and economy, was culturally more linked with Bohemia. Bohemia provided a source of wealth for the Habsburgs. The lands of the Bohemian crown formed, in the late sixteenth century, the "most densely populated, richest, and best developed region in Central Europe", and so it bore much of the burden of the cost of the Habsburgs' Turkish wars.¹¹ In addition to these lands that the Habsburgs held directly, they also controlled the position of Holy Roman Emperor. The title of Emperor was elective, but through their influence and political manoeuvring, the Habsburg family held the title almost constantly from 1490 to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806. The Empire stretched through the German regions, to the North Sea and the Baltic. It encompassed a myriad of independent principalities, from the tiny and obscure to those with major influence such as Bavaria and Saxony. The Empire was governed, in addition to the Emperor, by

9 Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 157-158.

10 Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*. pp. 235-237. Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*. pp. 190-191, 202-203.

11 quote from R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his world*, (Oxford, 1997; originally published 1973), p. 23; also see Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*. pp. 195-196. Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*. p. 203.

the *Reichstag*, an body of princes, religious leaders, and representatives of towns which met periodically in a semi-democratic assembly to set policy (here 'semi-democratic' indicates votes in the Reichstag were unequal and determined by noble rank). The Reichstag had to agree on new taxes for the Emperor and on military contributions from member territories. The necessity of negotiating a balance of powers between the Emperor and the Reichstag placed constraints on the power of the Emperor.¹² The sixteenth century was an especially contentious time for the Empire, since the Protestant Reformation was sweeping the area and religious issues set the German princes against one another. Issues of the Holy Roman Empire continually demanded the Habsburgs' attention, but the Empire also provided a source of income and prestige.

The only thing that united these various lands was Habsburg rule. In their roles as Holy Roman Emperor, King of Bohemia, King of Hungary, and Archdukes of Austria, government of these areas rested ultimately with one family, and usually one single person. However, a single head of state did not imply a unified government for all these regions. During the sixteenth century these were still independent countries, with their own laws, traditions and institutions. Their different interests often conflicted with one another. The main task for the Habsburg rulers was balancing the demands of different constituencies and regions within the vast holdings in a way which attempted to produce some sort of unified policy. To be successful, this task required compromise, political acumen and charisma, in order to rally diverse subjects behind a common goal. Unfortunately, the Habsburgs were not always well-supplied with these qualities. Ideally, the senior male on the line of descent would hold the title of Emperor, and was the acknowledged head of the family. As Emperor, he did not directly rule anywhere, but had power as arbiter in disputes between the German princes and between the princes and their subjects. The Emperor could also request taxes from the territories of the Empire, but these would have to be approved by the Imperial Diet, made up of representatives of the nobility, clergy and a few towns. As

¹² On the structure of the Empire's government see Peter H. Wilson, *The Holy Roman Empire 1495-1806*, 2nd Edition (Basingstoke, Hampshire, 2011; original edition 1999), esp. pp. 60-89.

head of the family, the Emperor would also fill the roles of King of Bohemia and King of Hungary. Of course, these positions depended on the heir being accepted by the Electors of the Empire and the Estates of the kingdoms. In exchange for acceptance, the claimant would have to negotiate an agreement of privileges for the nobility in each area. These agreements had the force of law during his reign, limiting the Emperor's actions within that region. Other members of the family were the Archdukes, who were given rule over various of the Inherited Lands. This was the Habsburgs' solution to the problem of inheritance and junior sons.

Terminology

The multi-ethnic nature of each political entity covered in this work gives rise to terminological difficulties. Some explanations of terms as I use them in this thesis are in order.

I call the land which the Safavids ruled *Persia*, rather than Iran. This follows the practice used internationally in documents of the era. I use it as a geographical and political term, with no implied ethnicity. I usually refer to the ethnic Turkic supporters of the Safavids as *Qizilbāsh*. While this term most specifically applies to followers of the Safavid religious order who wore a distinctive red hat, it aligns well with the Turkic tribes, many of whom followed the Safavid order, and is frequently found in the literature. I will refer to the Indo-European speaking people of the country as *Iranians* or *Irani*, as derived from the Avestan ethnic term 'Airya'.¹³ This group gave its name to the modern name for the country Iran, but are not isometric with it: there are Iranian citizens of other ethnic groups and there are ethnic Iranians living in other countries. For the period in this thesis there should be no such confusion; I use the term purely as an ethnic category not a political term. The Persian

¹³ Some other authors, particularly Newman, use the term 'Tajik' for this same group. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 6.

name for their ruler was *Shāh*, and I use typically use this term as well; however, in many European documents he was called the 'King of Persia', and I occasionally use this designation to maintain the tone of these texts. I use the Library of Congress system for Romanisation of Farsi words.

The Habsburg lands provide even more challenges. When I write *Habsburgs*, I typically mean specifically the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family, descended from Ferdinand I. I endeavour to make it clear by context when the Spanish branch of the family is also included. I use the term *Austria* to refer to the lands of central Europe ruled directly by the Habsburgs, including the *Erblande*, Hungary and Bohemia. This usage corresponds to what would be known as the Austrian Empire, and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the nineteenth century. When referring to the Habsburgs' ancestral lands which roughly correspond to the modern Republic of Austria, I will use the term *Erblande*, 'Inherited Lands', or directly name specific provinces, such as Lower Austria. The reader should be aware that the kingdoms of Hungary and Bohemia also had separate parts in addition to the main provinces for which they were named (e.g. the Kingdom of Bohemia also contained Moravia, Lusatia, and Silesia); however that should not be critical for the subjects covered here. In addition to the lands they directly ruled, the Habsburgs at this time also held the title *Holy Roman Emperor*. The term 'King of the Romans' referred to the recognised heir to the Emperor, elected before one Emperor's death so as to have a clear line of succession. When I refer to the *Empire* or *Germany*, I indicate the larger Holy Roman Empire beyond the lands directly ruled by the Habsburgs, which included many principalities, and other political units mostly covering modern Germany but also including some non-German areas.

The Ottoman Empire was also a large multi-ethnic entity. Although the term *Ottoman* should be preferred when referring to its citizens, I interchange it with the word *Turk* frequently, especially when citing period works. Writings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries called all members of the Ottoman Empire 'Turks', without

regards to their ethnicity, so it keeps more in the spirit of the primary sources to translate it as such.

Place names were a source of difficulty for writers in the period, especially when they heard the name of a foreign town spoken and had to render it in their own language. In these cases, I shall first give the name as written in the primary source, followed by the modern name in the local language in parenthesis, e.g. Lanzas (Lahijān). After the first appearance, I shall use the modern name. Where there is a widely used English name for a place, I shall use that instead of the local language's name, e.g. Vienna instead of Wien.

Finally, I use the terms *West* and *East* as a form of shorthand. By the *West* I refer to the primarily Christian countries of Europe, and by *East* to the countries lying to the south and east of Austria, including Turkey, the Middle East and Central Asia, most, but not all of which were Islamic. China, Indo-China and other parts of East Asia could be considered separate under the term *Far East*, but as they do not appear frequently in this work it is of little consequence here. These terms have been often used in the past and I adopt them for the convenience of writing about broad geographic areas. I do not mean to impart any essentialism of character to people living in these regions or imply any connection between the cultures. Indeed, the recognition of distinctions between cultures within the area of the East is an important part of my thesis.

Review of Literature

There has never been a systematic study of the relations between Austria and Safavid Persia. While archival records do exist, there has never been more than passing references to these events in the secondary literature. The subject is not unknown;

numerous books on Austrian or Persian history make reference to the diplomatic missions between the two. But these mentions are brief - often no more than a paragraph or a footnote. There are several secondary works which explore the diplomatic relations between Europe and Persia. However, all have deficiencies of some sort.

The main work examining the efforts of European countries and Persia to form an alliance against the Ottoman Turks was written in the 1960's by Barbara von Palombini.¹⁴ Her book chronologically covers the diplomatic efforts by each of the Iranian rulers and the various European countries. Notably, writing in German, she thoroughly describes contacts between the Austrian court and Persia, contacts which are given less attention in some English works.¹⁵ Unfortunately, she ends her work at the arbitrary date of 1600. This is directly before the decade which contained some of the most promising diplomacy and the one time when both Europe and Persia were both at war with the Ottomans simultaneously.¹⁶

Details of diplomatic activities between Europeans and Safavids are also covered by several other works, including *The Asian Trade Revolution* by Niels Steensgaard.¹⁷ He pays particular attention to the early decades of the 17th century. However, his book is primarily a work of economic history about nautical trade in the Indian Ocean, it just happens to cover events in Persia because it was an important trading centre. The book generated controversy when it was published, but was criticised more for his economic theory and his account of peddling trade than for the detailed facts it contained. Another deficiency of the book for the study of Austrian-

14 Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453- 1600*, (Wiesbaden, 1968).

15 for instance: Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts with Persia", while providing a useful survey, devotes more space to Italian, Spanish and English contacts than to those of Austria and Germany.

16 The paper: Jan Paul Niederkorn. "Zweifrontenkrieg gegen die Osmanen: Iranisch- christliche Bündnispläne in der Zeit des "Langen Türkenkriegs" 1593-1606", In: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 104 (1996), pp. 310-323, also makes this complaint and makes an effort to fill the gap.

17 Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago, 1974), also published as *Carracks, Caravans and Companies*, Copenhagen 1973.

Persian diplomacy is that he draws primarily on Italian and Spanish sources, ignoring German sources.

Helmut Slaby's book *Bindenschild und Sonnenloewe* covers Austrian relations with Iran throughout history. While he does mention the Safavids, it appears the primary focus of the book is on later periods, particularly the nineteenth and twentieth centuries up to 1980.¹⁸

In addition to the above described books, there are also a number of papers about the diplomacy of particular European countries with Persia, or about specific diplomatic events. For instance, Giorgio Rota wrote about Safavid relations with Venice, and R. W. Ferrier wrote about Safavid Relations with England.¹⁹ However, these efforts have focused more on Italian, Spanish, and English relations; there is not yet a study of Austrian endeavours. So while all of the above studies are useful in providing context and examples of European-Safavid diplomacy, none of them adequately cover the subject explored in this thesis.

There are a number of books on the history of each of the cultures: Habsburg Austrian and Safavid Persian. On the early-modern Habsburg Empire, two of the most influential studies in English are by R. J. W. Evans.²⁰ Also well known are books by Bérenger (translated from the original French) and Kahn.²¹ Naturally, there are many more works in German, for instance the recent contribution by Thomas Winkelbauer

18 Peter C. Marboe, "Review - Bindenschild und Sonnenloewe: Die Geschichte der osterreichisch-iranischen Beziehungen bis zur Gegenwart by Helmut Slaby", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Summer, 1983), pp. 474-475.

19 Giorgio Rota. "Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice, an Overview", in: *The Turks*. Vol. 2. (Ankara, 2002), pp. 580–587; R. W. Ferrier. "The Terms and Conditions under which English Trade Was Transacted with Safavid Persia", in: *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 49.1 (1986). pp. 48–66.

20 R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II, and, The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*.

21 Bérenger. *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. by C. A. Simpson; Robert A. Kahn. *A History of the Habsburg Empire*, (Berkeley, 1974).

covering the early-modern period for a multi-volume series on Austrian history.²² Safavid history is also covered in a number of books. The Safavid dynasty is included in David Morgan's history of medieval Persia.²³ Among those who have written about the Safavids in particular are William Floor, Rodger Savory, and Andrew Newman.²⁴ Rudolf (Rudi) Matthee has written a number of recent books and articles about the Safavids.²⁵

The development of diplomacy within Europe during the Renaissance and early modern periods is well represented in the literature. Klaus Müller examined the diplomacy of the Holy Roman Empire and the Viennese court.²⁶ The classic work covering all of Europe, is *Renaissance Diplomacy* by Garrett Mattingly published in 1955.²⁷ In it, Mattingly described how the Italian states during the 15th century developed innovations, such as the maintenance of permanent ambassadors and a dedicated bureaucracy for analysing foreign policy intelligence provided by these ambassadors. These developments grew out of the Italian environment of many city-states with rapidly shifting alliances and constant military threats which required the decision makers have access to more current information than was possible through the medieval institutions. Many studies have been published since Mattingly's work, but while they may expand on certain points, most are respectful of his conclusions. For instance, Michael Mallett describes his relationship to Mattingly thus, "Garrett Mattingly in his seminal book on Renaissance Diplomacy rightly countered the claims of the diplomatic theorists themselves that their main object was to preserve peace, but he underestimated the intimate connections between diplomacy and war in

22 Thomas Winkelbauer. *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht: Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, 2 vol., in the series, *Osterreichische Geschichte*, ed. by Herwig Wolfram, (Vienna, 2003).

23 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040 - 1797*, (London, 1988).

24 W. Floor, *The Economy of Safavid Persia*, (Wiesbaden, 2000); W. Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, (Costa Mesa, 2001); R. Savory, *Iran under the Safavids*, (Cambridge, 1980); Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran*.

25 Rudolph P. Matthee. *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, (Cambridge, 1999); *Persia in Crisis*, (London 2012); and others, see Bibliography.

26 Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden, 1648-1740*, (Bonn, 1976).

27 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, (London, 1955).

fifteenth-century Italy.”²⁸ More recently, some historians have called for a re-evaluation of Mattingly in order to reinvigorate the field of diplomatic history by introducing a new model. His work has been criticized for its sharp periodization of Renaissance from Medieval, his poor understanding of the subtleties of Medieval diplomacy, and his teleological focus on the development of practices.²⁹ However, even when his work is challenged, Mattingly remains the single author on the development of Renaissance diplomacy to which everyone must refer.

Unfortunately, there exists no such seminal work on Persian diplomacy. In part this is due to the Safavids themselves leaving few written records of their diplomatic actions. Diplomacy was carried out at the verbal instruction of the Shāh, and written records of diplomacy are mainly formalised letters to foreign rulers.³⁰ Only one account of a Safavid diplomatic mission written for a Persian audience is known to exist, the story of a 1685 embassy to the Court of Siam.³¹ The modern studies of Persian diplomacy that do exist tend to focus on one particular aspect or relations with one particular country.³² While useful, these papers do not present an overall view of the shape of Safavid diplomacy. The Persian chronicles are useful for describing the events of each Shah's reign, but their primary purpose was legitimising and extolling the virtues of the ruler and so have little to say about European visitors.

28 Michael Mallett. “Diplomacy and War in Later Fifteenth-Century Italy”, in: *Art and Politics in Renaissance Italy*, ed. by George Holmes, (Oxford, 1993), pp. 137–158, quote p. 143.

29 John Watkins, “Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe”, *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 38:1, (Winter 2008), pp. 1-5.

30 Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric*, (London, 2009, 2012), pp. 5-6.

31 Muḥammad Rābī' ibn Muḥammad Ibrāhīm. *The Ship of Sulaimān*, trans. by John O’Kane, (London, 1972).

32 Examples include: Rudi Matthee. “Iran’s Ottoman Diplomacy During the Reign of Shah Sulayman I (1077-1105/1666-94)”, in: *Iran and Iranian Studies, Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. by Kambiz Eslami. (Princeton, NJ, 1998); Rudi Matthee. “Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests: Diplomatic Relations Between Iran and Russia”, in: *Safavid Iran and her Neighbors*, ed. by M. Mazzaoui. (Salt Lake City, 2003), pp. 101-128; Ernest Tucker, “From Rhetoric of War to Realities of Peace: The Evolution of Ottoman-Iranian Diplomacy through the Safavid Era”, in: *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 2012), pp. 81-89.

Source Materials

Because there is little literature directly on this subject, much of my work will be based on reading of primary source documents. I piece together the primary sources with various secondary accounts in order to produce a complete account. Since my aim is to cover the interactions and changes over a two century relationship, there will inevitably be gaps in the records. I attempt to fill some of these gaps by turning to a wide variety of sources: primary and secondary texts, as well as other non-textual sources such as art.

The primary resource I use, which distinguishes this study from others, is the Austrian Habsburg court records. The main repository of documents from the Austrian Habsburg courts is the *Österreiches Staatsarchiv* (Austrian State-archive), located in Vienna. Within the Staatsarchiv, the section of most interest for diplomatic and courtly issues is the *Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv*, which holds documents related to the Habsburg family and matters of state. Another branch of the Austrian State Archives, the *Hofkammerarchiv*, holds financial records. The Austrian State Archives hold many documents from the Habsburgs' diplomatic activity, including translations of letters sent from the Safavid Shahs. The Austrian archives unfortunately have gaps in their coverage. In the sixteenth century the court was not settled in one place: Ferdinand I spent much time in Innsbruck; Maximilian II maintained Vienna as an administrative centre but he visited several residences; and Rudolf II moved his court to Prague before Mathias moved it back, finally, to Vienna. In the course of these many moves, along with the ravages of time and war, some records were lost, especially for the reigns of Rudolf II and his predecessors. Some stories can be assembled - one side of correspondence will exist but not the other, or documents will refer to earlier letters which are not found. In other cases, certain questions can simply not be answered as the documentation is missing. But compared to some other archives from the same era, the Austrian State Archives are a remarkable resource.

Some Habsburg records are now housed in other locations. When the Habsburg Empire broke apart in the twentieth century, some documents were distributed to the newly independent successor states. Some records regarding the Habsburgs' role as Kings of Bohemia ended up in Prague, along with material about Emperor Rudolf II, since he held his court in Prague. The *Národní Archiv České Republiky* (National Archive of the Czech Republic) has a few documents relevant to this thesis.

Unfortunately, there are fewer surviving Persian sources for Safavid diplomacy. Persia at the time did not keep archival records in the same way as Europe. As explained above, those items which do survive - official chronicles, theological tracts, letters - hold little information regarding relations with foreigners, especially non-Muslims. The scribes of the Safavid court developed an elaborate style for communications from the dynasty, using medieval Islamic rhetorical science and poetry to project an image of dynastic ideology.³³ Safavid rulers commissioned history writers to legitimize their rule.³⁴ The chronicles are useful for setting the background events to the diplomacy, such as the many wars with the Ottoman Empire, but have very little to say about actual relations with European diplomats. Most chronicles, when they refer to Europe at all, do so only in a generalized, undifferentiated way as *Farangestan* (land of the Franks). The biographer of Shah 'Abbās I, Iskander Beg Munshi, does list the names of European countries, but he has little else to say about them, and he is an exceptional case.³⁵ Therefore, my use of Persian sources is rather limited. Even modern Iranian books on Safavid history, such as Naṣrallāh Falsafi's *Zindigānī-yi Shāh 'Abbās Avval* and Navā'i's *Ravabiṭ-i siyāsī va iqtisādī-i Irān*, use mostly European sources.³⁶ While it is sometimes illuminating to see how Iranian

33 Mitchell, *Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, pp. 11-16.

34 Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles*, (Salt Lake City, 2000), p. 5, 90-91.

35 Iskander Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. 2, p. 1305; Mansur Sefatgol, "Farang, Farangi, and Farangestan: Safavid Historiography and the West (907-1148/1501-1736)", in *Iran and the West in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 2011), pp. 357-363.

36 Naṣr Allāh Falsafi, *Zindigānī-yi Shāh 'Abbās Avval*, (Tehran, 1955) Vol. 4, pp. 1423-1437. 'Abd al-Ḥusayn Navā'i, *Ravabiṭ-i siyāsī va iqtisādī-i Irān dar dawrah-i Ṣafavīyah*, (Tehran, 1998), pp. 184-200.

scholars interpret the European sources, ultimately, it makes more sense to go straight to the original works. While I have striven for balance in representing the perspectives of both cultures, in the end I have been forced to rely mostly on European sources.

In addition to the archival sources there are several published collections of primary sources, including correspondence of several of the Emperors and Vatican representatives in the Imperial court, records from Christian missionaries in Persia, and Persian chronicles. Some of these deserve special explanation here.

Die Prager Nuntiatur des Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland (The Prague Nunciature of Ferrei, Nuncio-reports from Germany) collected and translated into German the letters from the Papal representative to Emperor Rudolf II's court in Prague in the years 1603 to 1606.³⁷ These years included visits by several Persian ambassadors, as well as important decisions about war with the Ottoman Empire which affected the relations with Persia. Ferreri was an important advisor to the Emperor and quite involved with the Persian ambassadors. He kept Rome apprised of the activities regarding the ambassadors and many other details of the court's activity. Ferreri was not a neutral observer - his job was to influence Imperial policy in the way favoured by the Vatican, and his perspective must be taken into consideration, but with this consideration his reports are a treasury of details about the politics and activity in the court. Since the records from Rudolf's reign are particularly incomplete due to court moves and the subsequent sacking of Prague in the Thirty Years War, Ferreri's reports provide a valuable record of events in the Prague court.

A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia collected and translated into English a multitude of documents concerning the Carmelite order's mission in Persia in the seventeenth

³⁷ *Die Prager Nuntiatur des Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland*, A. O. Meyer, editor, Vol. IV. 3. (Berlin, 1913).

and eighteenth centuries.³⁸ Many of the documents are letters written by the missionaries in Persia, and they report many details about their experiences there. They also report on the religious and diplomatic situation in Persia and Persian-ruled Armenia. The collection also includes letters from the Popes to the Shahs and other related documents. Since the letters are from Christian missionaries, they can at times be unflattering about their Muslim hosts. Nevertheless, they provide extensive and detailed observations on Safavid Persia.

Einführung in die Persische Paläographie, 101 Persische Dokumente (Introduction to Persian Paleography, 101 Persian Documents) collected Persian writing examples from several centuries in Many European archives.³⁹ These include several letters from the Safavid Shahs to the Habsburg Emperors, the Pope and other European rulers concerning diplomatic issues. This book includes the typeset Persian text, a German translation and, where possible, a photographic reproduction of the original document. It was notionally published as a workbook for study of the Persian language, but as it collects many important source documents in one volume, it is also a useful resource for historical research. The Austrian archive made available many official translations of letters from the Shahs, usually to Latin, but this book provides the original language and so helps compensate for the lack of Persian sources.

Methodological inspiration

Several recent papers have helped guide my research methodologies. John Watkins introduced a special issue of the *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* with the

38 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*, [translated and edited by H. Chick](London, 1939). A selection of Carmelite letters have been translated into Persian in Manuchihr Sutūdah, *Asnād-i pādaryn-i karmilī, bazmandah az 'asr-i shah 'abbās-i safavī*, (Tehran, 2004).

39 L Fekete. *Einführung in die Persische Paläographie, 101 Persische Dokumente*, ed. by G Hazai. (Budapest, 1977).

article titled "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe".⁴⁰ Watkins argues that pre-modern diplomatic history has been cut off from developments in social and cultural history by the dominance of certain works, including Mattingly's *Renaissance Diplomacy*, which suggest a teleological development of diplomatic practice towards modern forms. Instead, Watkins proposes, the field must consider the social and cultural conditions within the societies, and between the societies in the case of international diplomacy, in order to understand the behaviours of diplomats representing and influencing those societies. "[Diplomacy's] history is inseparable from the histories of the visual arts, dramatic and nondramatic literature, education, race, the state, marriage, and manners."⁴¹ Particularly in a cross-cultural study such as this thesis, consideration of the cultural differences and the social perceptions of the participants towards foreign cultures are of vital importance. I have attempted to bring into the story of the diplomatic relationship consideration of such factors, and to include information on the personal outlooks of individual diplomats where such is available. I include as source material not just official papers, but literary works, material culture, and art work in an attempt to expand the range of information considered.

The difficulty of studying cultural attitudes is more severe in the case of Persia and their perceptions of the west. Rudi Matthee discusses this problem in the paper, "Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West".⁴² Matthee discusses how official Persian literature projected an "Iran centred world view" reflecting the political and religious elites' creation of an attitude of cultural superiority. Consequently, the Persian chronicles make few cursory references to European visitors. Such a situation is a challenge to researching Persian views, since one must turn to foreign sources almost exclusively. However, Matthee is able to help interpret what sources do exist and examine Persian behaviour in order to infer their more

40 John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, Vol. 38:1, (Winter 2008), pp. 1-14.

41 John Watkins, "Toward a New Diplomatic History", p. 13.

42 Rudi Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (Spring 1998), pp. 219-246.

complex attitudes towards European visitors, which showed "an active, if selective, interest" in what the foreigners could offer.

Another field which aided in the interpretation of diplomats' written accounts is the literary study of travel writing. Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs edited the *Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, and their introduction to this volume plus other contributions in the collection provide a guide to examining the sources from the diplomats.⁴³ Some of the Austrian diplomats who travelled to Persia, notably Tectander and Olearius, published narrative accounts of their journeys on their return. These gave to the public of early modern Europe a description of Persian culture with the immediate authority of first-hand experience. However, as these are literary works, they must be analysed carefully, since they depict the mentality and biases of the author in addition to the culture they profess to describe. Even the more official reports are a form of travel literature, although written for the limited audience of the court, and these too can be analysed as such.

Outline of Chapters

Because the relationship between Austria and Safavid Persia has never been systematically covered, establishing the events that occurred between the two is the first priority. Only once that is done can a more theoretical discussion of the relationship be possible. This concern dictates the structure of the following text. First come three chronological chapters, which describe the evolution of the relationship through time in the order in which events occurred. This presentation establishes the basic facts, and also allows readers to see how earlier actions influenced later ones and how the interactions changed with time. Following these chronological chapters are two thematic chapters, which examine in more detail certain issues raised in the

43 Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. eds. Hulme and Youngs, Cambridge, 2002, pp. 1-13. Cambridge Companions Online <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL052178140X>.

chronological chapters.

The chronological section is comprised of the following three chapters: *Chapter Two* covers most of the sixteenth century, with a prelude explaining some events from earlier eras which influenced the relationship. In the sixteenth century the issue of primary importance was the attempt to form a military alliance against the Ottoman threat. Each generation of rulers made fresh attempts at such an alliance, but each was unsuccessful. *Chapter Three* covers the turn of the century - the decades immediately before and after 1600. This was the time of the rulers Emperor Rudolf II and Shah 'Abbās, and of Austria's 'Long Turkish War'. This period saw the most concentrated diplomatic effort at establishing the alliance, but also the final failure of such attempts. However, as the alliance effort was failing, hints of new issues in the relationship, such as religion and cultural exchange, were first appearing. *Chapter Four* examines the remainder of the seventeenth century and up to the fall of the Safavid dynasty in 1722. In this time, other issues came to predominate over the military alliance. The relationship broadened to cover a range of subjects such as trade and religion. It became a normalised relationship of two countries dealing with various common interests and points of friction, instead of being driven by a single concern. Since numerous issues were addressed simultaneously this chapter will not be as strictly chronological as the previous two, instead it separates out the various strands. However, it still stands as a distinct time period in the relationship compared to the previous chapters.

Following these chapters are the thematic chapters. The questions addressed in this section require viewing the entire sweep of the Habsburg-Safavid relationship and so are properly addressed here, where the whole of the previous chapters can be observed and used as data. Some of these issues have been touched upon in the previous chapters, but are re-examined in more detail with the full context available. These questions follow two themes: issues about the failure of the alliance and the change in the relationship, and issues regarding what this relationship can reveal

about historiography and theory.

In *Chapter Five*, the change in relationship is examined in more detail. First the opening decade of the seventeenth century is identified as the turning point for the relationship. While this is clear from the events in Chapter Three, here it is addressed more explicitly and put into context with other countries also dealing with Persia at the same time. Second, following on from the first point which saw the ultimate failure of the alliance attempt, we examine why the alliance that both sides desired was never realized. Two theories from the literature are covered: that the distance and difficulty of travel was too great an obstacle to cooperation, and that each side preferred to use the respite given when the other side was at war with the Ottomans to deal with other concerns rather than to launch into a fresh war which might have seen longer term gains. To these theories I add my own: differences in the styles of diplomacy expected in each culture inhibited making a lasting arrangement. All three theories are valid, and combined they lead to the historical outcome. Finally, the failure of the Austrian-Persian alliance is contrasted with the more successful relationship between France and the Ottoman Empire.

Chapter Six draws some lessons for historiography from the events examined in the rest of the thesis. Austrian engagement with the east is observed, and it is seen in light of the Persian diplomacy that the Habsburg rulers paid considerable attention to eastern affairs. Traditional Austrian historiography has concentrated more on European relations and so this section makes a small effort at a needed correction. The Habsburg understanding of the different nations and currents of the Middle East and Central Asia are seen to be more nuanced than they are often credited, perhaps even more informed than they themselves realised. Their actions defied their rhetoric. Finally, the existence of a nuanced view of the East is used to critique and expand Edward Saïd's *Orientalism*. In that work, Saïd attributed to the West a monolithic, stereotyped view of the Orient. However, as established above, the Habsburg view was quite aware of distinctions among eastern cultures.

Chapter Seven is a conclusion which draws together all the events described, summarises their lessons and points towards future work to be done. The post-Safavid era is examined briefly to show how the relationships established in Safavid times developed later. For instance, Austrian trade with Persia was small during the Safavid era, but in later centuries they used contacts established then to become a major trading partner. Persia's position in the world changed in the era of European imperialism; however, Austria maintained a unique relationship with Persia through the modern era. The post-Safavid era is beyond the scope of this work, although it is important to quickly observe, in order to see where the trends examined in this thesis led. Overall, the conclusion drawn from the events described throughout this thesis is that, in the early modern era, Persia and European nations conducted friendly diplomacy and attempted to work together despite cultural differences. The hostility between Iran and the West is an artefact of later times and not a cultural necessity.

Chapter Two

The Sixteenth Century: Search for an Alliance

In this chapter, we see how the Safavid dynasty in Persia and the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family both emerged in the early sixteenth century and quickly established diplomatic contact. Both Persia and Austria faced repeated invasions by the Ottoman Empire, which was at the peak of its power. The primary diplomatic concern for both Safavid and Habsburg rulers was arranging military cooperation against their common enemy. This one issue dominated their contacts during this century. As will be seen in future chapters, it was not until the next century that the relationship would broaden to other issues. Several features will be seen here, and examined in more detail in Chapter Five. The difficulty of communicating over such distances, as well as missteps and distractions on both sides, led to missed opportunities and a failure to reach any alliance. From the beginning of their branch with Ferdinand I, the Austrian Habsburgs thought their destiny lay in the east and pushed for more attention in that direction against the reluctance of their Spanish cousins. At the start of the Austrian-Persian relationship neither side knew much about the other. Their image of the other was formed more of myths and ancient history rather than facts. While contact through the century did not create the military alliance, it did gradually improve their knowledge of each other, which would be essential for future cooperation.

Prelude: Prester John and Europe's Myth of a Saviour from the East

Throughout the middle ages and after, Europeans hoped for an eastern force to attack their Muslim enemies in the rear. This fervent wish gave rise to a myth: a fictional character named Prester John. He was the supposed priest-king of a powerful

Christian kingdom beyond the Islamic lands, who would join Europe in fighting the Muslim armies. This myth had a powerful effect on European minds. For centuries, various eastern nations were hailed as the followers of Prester John and the saviours of Christianity. Even when the story was no longer believed, the myth still exerted its influence on Europeans' perception of Asia, and it kept them hoping for an ally in the East. The Safavids would become one in a series of countries to be courted as the embodiment of this 'Saviour from the East'.

The legend of Prester John began circulating in mid twelfth-century Europe. Otto von Friesing, a German historian, mentions him in his world chronicle of 1145. He described news reported by the Bishop of Syria, that a John, a priest and the king of people living in the extreme Orient and professing Christianity, had fought a battle against the kings of the Medes and Persians. He intended to come to the aid of the Holy Church, but was presently held up by the Tigris river.¹ Details were added in other German chronicles, and eventually the legend became accepted as genuine. Prester John leapt from rumour to celebrity in 1165, with the circulation of a letter claiming to be from John to the Byzantine Emperor, and forwarded to the Pope and to the Holy Roman Emperor. In the letter, 'John' boasted of his power and wealth, and described his kingdom, with its exotic animals and monstrous inhabitants. He wrote of the piety and justice of his society, which he claimed far exceeded that of Europe. He boasted of his own Christian humility, preferring the simple title of "Prester" (priest) to some more grand appellation. After expressing his concerns about Western Christianity, he pledged the purity and zeal of his own religion and his desire to help the Europeans with their struggles with enemies of the faith.²

Modern analysis clearly shows the letter was fabricated. The language and

1 L.N. Gumilev, *Searches for an Imaginary Kingdom: The Legend of the Kingdom of Prester John*, trans. R.E.F. Smith, (Cambridge, 1987), p. 4. Citing: Hoffmeister, *Scriptores rerum Germanicarum in usum scholarum*, Hanover-Leipzig, 1913, p. 365.

2 Charles E. Nowell, "The Historical Prester John", *Speculum*, Vol. 28, No. 3, (July 1953), pp. 435-445; Gumilev, *Searches*, p. 6; Friedrich Zarncke gives the full Latin text in *Abhandlungen der Kgl. Sach. Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften*, Bd. 7, No. 8, Leipzig, 1879, Reprint: Hildesheim 1980.

references point to a Central European author, and the exotica described can be traced to various medieval bestiaries and classical sources such as Pliny and the *Alexander Romance*.³ The author wove together elements compelling and plausible to European audiences. There are several theories on the origins of the 1165 letter: fragmented knowledge of the Ethiopian Christian kingdom; garbled reports of the Qarā-Khitāy ruler Yeh-lü Ta-Shih's victory over the Seljuks at Qatwan in 1141; or an allegorist's attempt to criticise Western Christianity by describing a distant utopian kingdom. The reality is probably a combination of all of these elements, with the author drawing upon fragments of information current in Europe to lend verisimilitude to his utopian creation.⁴ But the origins are not as important as the tale's effect on Europe. Coming after a series of reverses for the Crusaders, the news of a Christian power who could attack the Muslims in the rear thrilled European audiences. Prester John was considered a real ruler and the letter authentic. In 1177, Pope Alexander III sent an emissary, the physician Master Philip, with a letter from the Pontiff to John. But while a copy of the Pope's letter exists, nothing is known about Master Philip's expedition.⁵

Europeans continued to look for Prester John's kingdom, fully expecting it to be there, somewhere in their hazy Asian geography. In 1221, Crusaders were encamped in Egypt when news reached them of a King David, a Christian king of India, who was attacking Muslims. This David was identified with Prester John's son or grandson. This encouraging news was passed on to the Pope in Rome in a letter by James of Vitry. Buoyed by the news, the Crusaders pressed ahead with their attack, but the rumour never materialised and the Crusaders were defeated by the Mamlūks. The story may have been based on Chingiz Khān's campaign against the Khwārazm-shāh, which was occurring at that time.⁶

Initial reports of the Mongols' campaigns gave rise to the idea that Chingiz

3 Igor de Rachewiltz, "Prester John and Europe's Discovery of East Asia", *East Asian History*, No. 11, (June 1996), p. 65.

4 Nowell, "Historical Prester John", pp. 435-445.

5 Nowell, "Historical Prester John", pp. 444-445. Gumilev, *Searches*, p. 6.

6 David Morgan, *The Mongols*, (Oxford, 1986), p. 178.

Khān might be Prester John or King David. However, after the Mongols' 1241 invasion of Hungary, stories of the destruction wrought made it clear that they were not the fabled Christian kingdom of the east. The Pope sent emissaries into the Mongol Empire, in part to find out what had happened to Prester John's kingdom. One, John of Plano Carpini, travelled to the Great Khan Güyük's court in 1245.⁷ But his entreaties to give up their massacres and become good Christians did little, and the Mongols sent back a letter demanding the rulers of Europe submit and send tribute. In 1248, as Louis IX of France was preparing for a crusade in Egypt, he received two Nestorian Christian ambassadors from Eljigidei, the Mongol commander in the Middle East. The ambassadors hoped that the coming crusade could help Mongol efforts against the Muslims, and to capture Louis' interest they emphasized the Mongols' goodwill to Christianity. They may have even said that Eljigidei and Güyük had become Christians themselves. King Louis was impressed – the appearance of Asian Christian allies against Islam was exactly what was hoped for, and he sent an envoy with a richly decorated portable chapel as a gift. Independent accounts indicate that Güyük, while not Christian himself, had several Nestorian Christian members of his inner circle and was tolerant of all religions. But once the French envoy arrived at the Mongol court, the political situation had changed; Güyük had died, and his widow and regent were in the middle of a power struggle. The French ambassador was given a frosty welcome, and for a time European hopes for relations with the Mongols faded.⁸

Europe and the Mongol dynasty established in Persia, the Ilkhāns, conducted many diplomatic negotiations. As the Mongol Empire of Chingiz Khān was split between his heirs, his descendants the, Ilkhāns, faced hostility from both the Mamlūks in Egypt and their own cousins of the Golden Horde to the north. This situation encouraged them to approach Europe as possible allies. Europe, meanwhile, was facing losing its remaining Crusader holdings, and was eager to respond. The Ilkhān leader Hülegü initiated contact in 1262, through a letter to King Louis IX.⁹ From then

7 de Rachewiltz, "Prester John", p. 67.

8 Morgan, *The Mongols*, pp. 181-183.

9 Morgan, *The Mongols*, pp. 183; J. A. Boyle, "The Il-Khans of Persia and the princes of Europe". *Central Asiatic Journal*, pp. 25-40.

until into the fourteenth century, they continued negotiations, with numerous letters from both sides exchanged. The goal negotiated was a combined operation against the Mamlūks, a European crusading force acting at the same time as an Ilkhān invasion of Syria. If the Ilkhāns took Syria they would give Jerusalem to the Europeans. While the plan appealed to both sides, the difficulty of communicating and arranging joint actions in that time prevented any plan coming to fruition. Even when the Ilkhāns converted to Islam in 1295, a fact that seemed to go unrecognised in Europe, the basic strategic considerations did not change. Not until a Mamlūk-Ilkhān peace treaty in 1322 did the Ilkhāns lose interest in an alliance with Europe. The fall of Acre to the Mamlūks in 1291 did not eliminate European desire to strike a blow against their enemies; however, it reduced their ability to act in the Middle East. As the fourteenth century progressed, contacts became more about commercial relations pursued by merchants from the Italian states, and missionary activity directed by the Vatican.

The next Asiatic conqueror to be courted by Europeans as an ally against Islam, this time in the late fourteenth century, was Tīmūr-i Lenk, known in Europe as Tamurlane. This was ironic because Tīmūr, although descended from Mongol stock, was a fierce Muslim, and although his personal behaviour was more based on the pre-Islamic steppe tradition, he maintained a public piety and respect for Islamic religious figures. He rose to power fighting in the name of Islam against the nomadic, pagan people of northern Chagatai Khānate.¹⁰ But in his time, Europe and the Byzantine Empire were being threatened by the expanding Ottoman Turks. Another saviour was sought, and Tīmūr as a great war-leader fit the role admirably. Venetian and Genoese trading colonies on the Black Sea offered him tribute and asked for help against the Ottoman Turks. Ottoman Sultan Bayezid and Tīmūr, who as leaders of the two great powers in the Middle East were natural rivals, conducted several years of skirmish and bluff before they conclusively battled at Ankara in July 1402.¹¹ The battle was a great victory for Tīmūr, and Sultan Bayezid was captured. As an effect of the Turkish defeat, the Ottoman assault on the remnants of the Byzantine Empire was halted, and

10 Roemer, CHI, "Tīmūr in Iran", pp. 43-46, 51-57;

11 Debate as to whether the date was July 20th or 28th covered in Hilda Hookham, *Tamurlaine the Conqueror*, (London, 1962), p. 150.

Constantinople stayed in Christian hands for another half-century. Tamurlane's fame spread throughout Europe as the conqueror of the Turks and the saviour of Constantinople. Embassies were exchanged with Spain, France, and England, and European merchants came eager to trade with the new conqueror.¹² The most notable emissary of this time was Ruy González de Clavijo, ambassador from Henry III of Castile and Leon. Clavijo wrote a detailed account of his journey and stay at Timūr's court, which is a font of information about Timurid society. His narrative, written in 1406, was very popular and many copies circulated around Europe.¹³ Tamurlane the literary character, as a contradictory figure who conducted many massacres and atrocities, but who also helped save Christendom from the Turks, continued to capture Europe's imagination; evidenced by (among other works) Christopher Marlowe's play *Tamburlaine the Great*, written in 1587.

The legend of Prester John pressed its influence on all these encounters. This influence was felt either explicitly: when new forces were believed to be the embodiment of the priest-king, or indirectly: as the legend encouraged Europe to hope for an eastern saviour and to pursue Christian evangelism in the east. Eastern rulers, such as the Ilkhāns or Timūr, fit a western archetypal role established by the Prester John legend. Diplomatic contacts were at their most intense at times of defeats for the Christian forces, when fear drove them look for the desired rescuer. Between these defeats, the contacts established turned to other concerns, such as commerce and religion, which thrived in times of lessened anxiety. But here too the legend of Prester John made an impact. The idea of an eastern Christian kingdom, coupled with the presence of Nestorian Christians in courts of many of the rulers, encouraged European religious leaders to seek converts in the east, even when the realistic prospects for success were minimal. This pattern, in which contacts established for military alliance in times of threat developed into commercial and religious pursuits, also marks relations with the Safavids.

12 Adam Knobler, "The Rise of Timūr and Western Diplomatic Response, 1390-1405", *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 3rd Series, Vol. 5, No. 3, (Nov., 1995), pp. 341-349.

13 Le Strange, Guy, trans., *Clavijo; Embassy to Tamerlane 1403-1406*, The Broadway Travellers series, (London, 1928). Discussion of publication history in the Introduction, pp. 20-21.

Emperor Charles V and Shah Ismā'īl I: The Opening of Relations

Shah Ismā'īl had diplomatic contacts with European powers right from the start of the Safavid dynasty period.¹⁴ Venice had prior diplomatic relations with Persia during the reign of Uzan Husan (1453-1478), and sent an envoy, Constantino Lascari, to Persia in 1502, while Venice was at war with Ottoman Turkey.¹⁵ Lascari brought information about the new ruler back to Europe. Although the Venetian-Turkish war was resolved before an alliance could be formed, Venice and Persia continued to have trade relations and occasional diplomatic exchanges throughout the decade.¹⁶ Ismā'īl also had contact with the Vatican, with the Knights of St. John on Rhodes, and received an envoy from King Louis of Hungary.¹⁷ They discussed the possibility of a military alliance against the Turks; however, these plans were interrupted in 1514 by the Persian defeat at the Battle of Chaldiran. Meanwhile, Portuguese sailors seized control of the island of Hormuz at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, which put them into direct contact with Shah Ismā'īl.¹⁸ But two decades into the sixteenth century and the reign of the Safavid Dynasty, there had been no direct contact between the Safavids and what was becoming arguably the most powerful family in Europe, the Habsburgs. The Habsburg rulers were informed of Persian affairs and even included in alliance plans by the Popes. Emperor Charles V raised the alliance issue himself with German nobles of the Holy Roman Empire at a meeting of the Reichstag in 1524.¹⁹ But direct contact between the two houses did not occur until Ismā'īl took the initiative to contact Charles.

14 Ismā'īl was crowned in Tabriz and declared "Twelver" Shi'ism the state religion in 1501, see Savory, Roger, *Iran Under the Safavids*, Cambridge, 1980, pp. 25-27.

15 Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453- 1600*, (Wiesbaden, 1968), p. 41-43, For Venetian relations with Uzan Hasan see pp. 16-31.; Rota, Giorgio, "Diplomatic Relations Between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice, an Overview", in *The Turks*, Hasan Celâl Güzel, C. Cem Oğuz, and Osman Karatay, eds., vol. 2, (Ankara, 2002), p. 580-581.

16 Rota, "Relations Between Persia and Venice", p. 581.

17 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 44, 50-56; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts with Persia, 1350-1736" pp. 382.

18 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", pp. 380-381.

19 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p.63.

Shah Ismā'il composed letters to King Louis II of Hungary - with whom he had prior contact - and to Emperor Charles V in late summer 1523, as he was preparing an attack against the Turks the following year.²⁰ These letters were entrusted to Maronite Friar Petrus de Monte Libano, who had previously undertaken other missions for the Shah and the Patriarch of Antioch. Petrus first took the letters to Rome, where they were translated from Persian to Latin in October 1523.²¹ Petrus travelled to Hungary to visit King Louis, then back to Germany and on to Spain in June 1524 to meet Charles V, following the movements of Charles' itinerant court. Thus, Charles did not receive the letter until almost a year had passed since it was written. Charles received Petrus with honour, but was not interested in pursuing the Turkish question until after he concluded the ongoing war with François I of France.

Shah Ismā'il began his letter to Emperor Charles V with a long, religious greeting.²² In the midst of this introduction, which seems at first to be a prayer praising God, Ismā'il sprinkled lines designed to elicit feelings of commonality with Charles: he said God has honoured them both to be kings and therefore they are closer than brothers; he described Charles as wearing the crown of Emperor Constantine who brought Christianity to the Empire, with the subtext that Constantine's city is now held by the Turks; and he prayed for God's protection of those kings who punish the wicked and the heretics, suggesting an obligation for Charles to punish the heretic Turks. While this opening appears to be the standard religiously themed, flattering greeting which open most royal letters of the age, it reveals Ismā'il as a subtle manipulator and quite knowledgeable of western history and theology.²³

20 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 382; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 63.

21 The date of this letter is stated incorrectly with the Hirja year 924, corresponding to A.D. 1518, in Lanz, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.* But Neck, "Diplomatische Beziehungen zum Vorderen Orient unter Karl V." and Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", argue that this is wrong and the proper date, as backed by a Persian publication of the letter by Falsafi, *Tārīkh-i ravābīt*, pp. 163-164, as Shawwāl 929, or 13 August – 10 September 1523 A.D. See Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 382, note 1.

22 Lanz, Karl, *Correspondenz des Kaisers Karl V.*, (Leipzig, 1844). Vol. 1, No. 29, pp. 52-53.

23 The rhetorical techniques used by Ismā'il's chancellery are discussed in Colin P. Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran: Power, Religion and Rhetoric*, (London, 2009, 2012), pp. 46-58. This letter demonstrates many of these techniques.

After the greeting, Ismā'il then continued to the heart of the matter. He said that he planned to attack the Turks in April and he "most vehemently" implored Charles to do also at the same time.²⁴ If they attacked together, they should rid themselves of their enemy, he wrote. Ismā'il then chastised the Christian kings for warring among themselves. He said he marvels at this, because it will encourage the Turks. He informed Charles that he has written to the King of Hungary, asking him to join in the attack. Ismā'il acknowledged that letters cannot easily be sent between them, since the Turks control the seas (the eastern Mediterranean); therefore not to expect another letter beyond this one. He ended with a screed against the Turks, warning that they are not to be trusted. In the midst of excoriating the Turks, Ismā'il wrote, "But he who forsakes a partner will be punished greatly by God."²⁵ While this could be part of his warnings that the Turks do not honour their treaties, it could also be seen as a challenge to Charles not to shrink from the partnership with Persia.

In his letter to Louis Jagiellon of Hungary, Ismā'il covered the same points, but with a different tone.²⁶ The Shah knew that Hungary did not want to start another war, and so he highlighted their past relationship in order to gently coax the Hungarian king to join. Ismā'il warned, correctly it turned out, that the Turks would soon attack Hungary and thus it would be better for Louis to fight the war on his own terms and with Persian allies. In contrast, Ismā'il was more forceful with Charles V. Where with Louis he coaxed and reasoned, Charles he challenged to action. With both of these letters Shah Ismā'il showed that he urgently wanted an alliance. But he was let down by both his envoy as well as his own unrealistic schedule. Once Petrus had stopped in Rome, travelled to Hungary, then searched for the peripatetic Emperor across Germany, he did not deliver the letter to Charles until after the proposed date for action had passed. Even if Petrus had gone straight to Charles in the autumn of 1523, this would have left Charles little time to raise an army for a new military undertaking. The plan was unrealistic from the start, even without the logistical

24 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, Vol. 1, No. 29, pp. 52-53.

25 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, Vol. 1, No. 29, pp. 52-53. "Qui autem defecerit socium eumque deseruerit a deo optimo maximo puniatur."

26 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 64.

complications which prevented it from proceeding. However, by sending his letter to the Emperor, Ismā'īl initiated a relationship between dynasties that would continue over following years.

Charles V did not reply to the Shah's letter for half a year after the Battle of Pavia, where his Imperial army defeated the French. Once Charles did reply, the proposed date for action was over a year past and Shah Ismā'īl himself was dead. Ismā'īl died in May 1524 and Charles did not write his reply until August 1525. But news of Ismā'īl's death was not received in Europe, so Charles' 1525 letter, and also his 1529 follow-up, were addressed to Ismā'īl rather than his successor Ṭahmāsp I.²⁷

In August 1525, Petrus was sent back to the Safavid court with Charles V's reply. Charles begins the letter by explaining his delay in responding.²⁸ He wrote they had reason to doubt the authenticity of the Shah's letter, since it did not contain certain customary signatures and seals; therefore he waited in hope of receiving additional contacts. This may indeed have been a concern - the early sixteenth century saw many false ambassadors and imposters appearing at the courts of Europe claiming to be from Prester John or lost Jewish kingdoms.²⁹ But Charles received Petrus graciously in the court, which seems to undermine his statement of doubt regarding the envoy's authenticity. He then continued in the letter to his other excuses, which were potentially more important in determining his actions. He wrote that he was sick for many months, and, most critically, that he was at war with the King of France. He described at some length the treachery of the French attack, their vast number of troops, and the seriousness of the situation, but how he was able to win with the grace of God. By the weight of text, the French war was the primary factor delaying Charles' response. "But now Christians have peace," Charles wrote after describing his victory, "...and nothing remains such that we cannot satisfy the

27 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 65; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 382.

28 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V.*, Vol. 1, No. 75, pp. 168-169.

29 Imposters and the concerns they raised for Renaissance courts is examined by Miriam Eliav-Feldon, *Renaissance Impostors and Proofs of Identity*, (Hampshire, 2012), for diplomats particularly see Chp. 3, "False Ambassadors, Fabulous Lands", pp. 68-96.

common desire to oppose the Turks.”³⁰ He concluded that he longs for nothing more than to join their strength in war against the common enemy. But he then abruptly ends the letter and says no more.

Charles did not propose any dates or ideas about possible actions. He did not give any indication about how such a project could be organised. He stated that he did not receive the letter in time for the April 1524 offensive, but he made no counter-proposal. The majority of his letter is taken up with excuses for not replying sooner, followed by a short statement in general terms professing enthusiasm for fighting the Turks. He does make one brief comment about sending back the envoy (Petrus) so Ismā'il can understand the state of Charles' council of war. Perhaps Petrus was briefed with more details about possible plans, which he was to convey personally. However, no instructions to Petrus remain, in contrast to the later mission of Balbi (see below), so we must not read too much into this. More likely, Petrus, who was a monk not a military man, would be able to confirm his stay in the Imperial court, explain the delays, and convey Charles' friendship. Charles had other reasons for not wanting to make tangible promises of action against the Turks. He admitted in a letter to his brother Ferdinand the following year that he was more concerned with affairs in England and France, and that he feared action against the Turks would poison his relations with Pope Clement who would see such activity as a threat to the Pope's own power by strengthening the Imperial position in Italy.³¹ Charles may also have had religious qualms to allying with a non-Christian power; he told his brother that he was loath to negotiate a settlement with the Turks because of their religion.³² What remains is that the 1525 letter offered not much beyond excuses and ambiguous promises. It did, however, complete the contact between the two courts and thereby establish grounds for further diplomacy in the future.

30 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, pp. 168-169., christianorum paci iam...nihil reliqui esse, quin possimus communi desiderio adversum Turcam satisfacere.

31 Paula Sutter Fitchner, *Ferdinand I of Austria*, (New York, 1982), p. 49.

32 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 92.

Dynastic Changes

Persian Developments

The later half of the 1520s held political changes in both Persia and Austria. As mentioned above, Shah Ismā'īl, the charismatic founder of the Safavid dynasty, died in 1524. His son and heir, Shah Ṭahmāsp, was only ten years old at the time.³³ For the following ten years a regency of various Qizilbāsh amirs ruled the Safavid state. This period was marked by infighting, political treachery, and occasional civil war as the leaders of various Qizilbāsh tribes vied for supremacy within the state and influence over the young Shah. During this time, Persia was faced with challenges from both the Uzbegs and the Ottomans. But at the same time, any diplomatic visitors arriving in this period would have found no single authority in the country with the power to speak for the whole of the state; thus the initiatives of this time were almost doomed to certain failure from the start.

On the death of Shah Ismā'īl, the chief of the Rūmlū Qizilbāsh tribe assumed the guardianship of the young Ṭahmāsp, citing testament of the late Shah and challenging the previous Ustājilū and Shāmlū tribes' dominance of state offices.³⁴ He was supported by the Rūmlū, Takkalū, and Zū'l-Qadar tribes. Tense manoeuvrings led to a triumvirate rule between the Rūmlū chief, his Takkalū supporter, and the powerful Ustājilū *amir*. However the Ustājilū's were marginalized from the beginning, and Ustājilū lands and titles were parcelled out to supporters of the other two rulers. By spring 1526, this situation led the Ustājilū to rebel, and battles were fought between this tribe and others. The country was plunged into chaos and the diversion of military forces encouraged the Uzbegs to raid the north-east frontier. The Ustājilū were defeated and their leader killed but troubles were just beginning. Sultān Takkalū

³³ Savory, Roger, *Iran Under the Safavids*, (Cambridge, 1980), p. 51.

³⁴ For the following on the regency see: Savory, *Iran under Safavids*, pp. 50-56; Roemer, CHI, vol. 6, chp. 5 "The Safavid Period", pp. 233-235; Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 26-27.

convinced the young Shah that the co-regent Div Sultān Rūmlū was the real cause of unrest, and so in July 1527 on a signal from Ṭahmāsp, Div Sultān Rūmlū, the original regent, was killed. The Takkalū *amir* then assumed leadership of the country and slighted the other tribes in favour of his own. He went so far as to deny assistance when the Shāmlū governor of Herat was besieged by the Uzbegs. In 1530-31 Takkalū and Shāmlū forces clashed in the royal camp. The Takkalū leader was killed and in the aftermath the exasperated Ṭahmāsp, who was now old enough to assert some authority on his own, ordered the execution of the entire Takkalū clan. Although some Takkalū were able to prove their loyalty and escape slaughter, the tribe was never again a force in Safavid politics. Then Husayn Khan, the previously mentioned governor of Herat, began a Shāmlū regency. However, Husayn Khan repeated his predecessor's mistakes: favouring his own tribe above all the others and denying the Shah a role in governing. By 1533, he had aroused Shah Ṭahmāsp's suspicions. The Shah was now old enough to assume his own authority and had Husayn Khan executed, ending the period of regencies.

The infighting between the most powerful families in the land weakened Persia substantially and opened it to invasion from both Ottomans and Uzbegs. The Safavid dynasty was in peril of disintegrating after the first generation, as had the previous century's dynasty of Uzun Ḥasan and many others before and after. But while the Qizilbāsh tribes vied with each other for influence over the regime, all were dedicated to the idea of Safavid rule. The Irani administrative officials continued their support for the dynasty as well, continuing to work with the Qizilbāsh in the 'Safavid Project'.³⁵ None disputed Ṭahmāsp's right to inherit his father's crown. As Andrew Newman describes the episode,³⁶

"The civil war which raged for more than a decade after Ismail's passing did not reflect serious serious questioning of the legitimacy and authority of the Safavid house itself but was in the main a struggle...to construct a new hierarchical alignment of those interests around Ismail's son."

35 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 29-31.

36 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 26.

Austrian Developments

Meanwhile, in Austria dynastic changes transpired that would affect the region for centuries. In the early sixteenth century there were two ruling families in Christian south-central Europe: the Habsburgs, whose origins lay in Austria but whose fortunes had grown to include much of Europe; and the Jagiellons, who were related to the Polish-Lithuanian dynasty and who were elected in 1490 to fill the vacant kingships of Hungary and Bohemia. The head of the Habsburg family was Emperor Charles V, whose vast holdings included Spain and its New World colonies, the Netherlands, Germany and Italian states. These lands were too much for Charles to rule on his own, so provinces were given over to the administration of other family members in his name. His younger brother, Ferdinand, was given the Arch-ducal title to the Austrian “inherited lands”. A double marriage was arranged between the two houses by Emperor Maximilian I, grandfather of Charles and Ferdinand. Ferdinand married Anne Jagiellon, sister of King Louis of Hungary and Bohemia, and Louis married Maria Habsburg, sister of Charles and Ferdinand. A mutual succession pact was part of the marriage deal, such that if either line were to become vacant the other family would inherit the thrones.³⁷ This marriage was just one of many Maximilian arranged for his children and grandchildren, but it soon reaped major benefits for the Habsburgs.

In 1526, Süleyman the Magnificent led the Ottoman army into Hungary.³⁸ King Louis Jagiellon struggled to meet this threat, for he ruled a country torn by internal conflicts. Much of the aristocracy opposed his presence as a foreign king, and refused to support his call to arms. The peasantry was still resentful after a 1514 rebellion had been brutally suppressed, and cared little about defending the ruling class. Ferdinand in Austria tried to rally help for his Hungarian neighbour from Bohemia, Germany and his Imperial brother Charles, but religious and social divisions meant that little

37 Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. C. A. Simpson, (London, 1994), p. 136; Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, pp. 13-20.

38 Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, p. 156. V. J. Parry, *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, ed. M.A. Cook, (Cambridge, 1976). p. 81.

assistance was forthcoming.³⁹ Louis was left to face the Ottoman invasion with only a small army of feudal levies – the *insurrectio*. The Battle of Mohàcs on the 29th of August 1526 destroyed the Hungarian army and, while fleeing after the defeat, King Louis was killed.

On learning of Louis' death, Ferdinand moved quickly to secure his inheritance of the thrones formerly held by the childless Louis. Although the marriage agreement offered inheritance to Ferdinand, both countries had traditionally elective monarchies; the agreement would mean nothing without the consent of the noble estates. He first settled the question of Bohemia and its attached territories through a combination of legal arguments, promises to support local privileges, and outright bribes.⁴⁰ He called on the nobles' loyalty to the old monarchy through his wife Anne; appealed to those who desired a stronger monarch and who hoped for better ties to the Empire through his brother Charles; and he agreed to uphold the 1438 religious *Compactata*, which established liberties for the Czech Utraquist church, something the nobles feared other candidates might not. Ferdinand secured his unanimous election by the Bohemian estates on 23 October 1526. The Hungarian succession, however, was much more difficult. A Transylvanian nobleman, János Zapolya, had already led a 'national party' of nobles demanding a native king during the reign of Louis.⁴¹ Zapolya now moved to assert his own claim to the throne, and had himself crowned by a splinter group of the Hungarian estates on 10 November 1526.⁴² Ferdinand denounced this move as illegitimate, and tried to undermine Zapolya's reputation, since Zapolya and his forces had missed the battle at Mohàcs. With the active assistance of his sister, the widowed Maria, Ferdinand made promises and paid bribes to any of the Hungarian nobility who would support him. He had himself elected at another meeting of the Hungarian estates, this time on the 17th December. With two elected kings the situation remained unstable into 1527, as both sides tried to distribute privileges and make constitutional arguments trying to rally supporters. Many nobles, in the meantime, flowed back and

39 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, pp. 49-50.

40 Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, pp. 158-159; Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, pp. 53-58.

41 Transylvania was at this time a part of Hungary.

42 Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, p. 159; Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 60.

forth between the two parties seeking the best deals for their own fortunes. Finally, Ferdinand had enough and, against the wishes of his brother Charles, moved into Hungary with his own troops. Several of Zapolya's former adherents now turned to Ferdinand's side as he moved through the kingdom. Zapolya was defeated on the 20th of August 1627, and fled back to his power-base in Transylvania.⁴³ Ferdinand had secured the Hungarian crown, but Zapolya remained a difficulty, and Hungarian loyalty continued to be a problem throughout the history of the monarchy until its dissolution in 1918.

By uniting the Austrian 'inherited lands' with the kingdoms of Bohemia and Hungary (which included many attached provinces such as Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia, and Croatia) Ferdinand substantially increased Habsburg holdings. Their interlocking borders also created a substantial power bloc in south-central Europe. Ferdinand became a king in his own right, no longer holding power only from his brother. Traditionally, the split between the Austrian and Spanish branches of the House of Habsburg dates from this moment. But now, by adding these new lands the Habsburgs were directly on the front line of Ottoman expansion. Zapolya turned to the Turks, allying his Transylvanian lands to the Ottoman Empire with hopes of one day regaining the Hungarian crown. Ferdinand's new country was weak and loyalties were still questioned. It was clear that Süleyman would soon return to continue his conquests. Thus Habsburg diplomacy to find potential allies assumed a new urgency.

A New Round of Diplomacy

The two Habsburg brothers differed on their approaches to anti-Turkish strategy. Ferdinand thought that defending the Hungarian territory he had won and extending western rule to all of Hungary was the best way to defend the interior of western Europe from Ottoman expansion. His elder brother Charles, on the other hand, was

⁴³ Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 64; Winkelbauer, Thomas, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht, Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg in Kofessionellen Zeitalter*, Vol. 1, (Vienna, 2003), p. 125-128.

more focused on the Mediterranean and Italy where his own ambitions lay, and viewed the Hungarian situation as an unwelcome diversion.⁴⁴ This underlying difference in views would plague Habsburg efforts for the rest of the century, but it did not completely foreclose cooperation, particularly on diplomatic issues.

When, in early 1529, word came to Ferdinand from the envoy in Constantinople that the Ottoman Sultan was preparing a large-scale invasion in the west - an invasion which would culminate in October with the siege of Vienna - Ferdinand searched for troops and aid from his various allies. The resources of his own lands, even though now greatly enlarged, were limited. The German members of the Holy Roman Empire, while sympathetic and nervous about further Ottoman gains, were embroiled in the religious disputes of the Reformation; the Protestant nobles withheld their troop commitments demanding clarification of religious rights. His brother Charles also did not send any troops; in fact, he asked Ferdinand to send troops to Italy. But Charles did intervene diplomatically. He sent embassies to various courts begging aid for Ferdinand, which helped move the German Protestants to release their troops.⁴⁵ As a part of this initiative, Charles also sent an embassy to Persia in the form of the diplomat Jean de Balbi.

Balbi was a nobleman and Knight of St. John who had held military command and diplomatic missions for the Emperor before. He was familiar with the Levant, which would be of great advantage in his travels, and he was personally interested in the mission.⁴⁶ Charles sent with Balbi a letter addressed to Shah Ismā'il, whom Charles still did not know was dead. This letter greets Ismā'il and introduces Balbi. He calls Balbi, "...a valiant soldier, a noble of our hall, a Caesar among men, and a faithful friend..." Balbi was to explain Charles' position to the Shah and the letter said, "We beg of you to trust that the things he has to say comes in our name..."⁴⁷ The rest of his

44 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 81.

45 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, pp. 80-84. Winkelbauer, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 128-129.

46 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 66.

47 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, Vol. 1, No. 113, pp. 292-293.

message he trusts to Balbi to deliver in person, and Charles detailed what Balbi should say in his instructions.

Balbi's oration was to begin with again offering explanations for the delay upon receipt of the 1524 letter from Shah Ismā'il. These were much the same as listed in the August 1525 reply sent with Petrus de Monte Libano. However, he added that Charles had received rumour that Shah Ismā'il had died, and that they waited, hoping to determine if this news was reliable.⁴⁸ Indeed, this would have been at the time of Ismā'il's actual death. However, this issue was not mentioned in the 1525 letter, and the 1529 letter is addressed to Shah Ismā'il. So, even if the court had received news of Ismā'il's death in 1524, they did not believe it five years later and seems unlikely to have been the major factor in delaying action on Charles' part. At most, the rumour introduced further confusion into a situation where Charles was more focused on other matters anyway. Charles then had Balbi describe the situation in Europe since 1525. He said how Charles had defeated the King of France, and then released him in anticipation of producing a united front against the Turks. But at this point, France had formed alliances with other European powers, including Venice, and were working together with the Turks against Charles. He also described how the Turks killed the King of Hungary, and how Charles' brother now held that crown and faced Turkish invasion. The point of this litany of problems was to show, "Such have been our hardships and those of our esteemed brother that we have found little opportunity anywhere else to work together on the enterprise against Turkey."⁴⁹ But now they were united in a plan to face the Turks, and wish to embark on a joint effort with the King of Persia. However, Charles listed his plan for this endeavor as, "...to pass with all our forces and powers into Italy."⁵⁰ Charles differed with his brother Ferdinand, who was facing invasion through Hungary, and while Charles saw fighting France, Venice, the Turks and other allies as all part of his same struggle, it is not likely the Persians would have agreed. He then exhorted the Shah to stand up to the Turks,

48 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, Vol. 1, No. 114, pp. 293-296.

49 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, p. 294. "Tellement que pour les empeschemens susdicts et de nous et de nostredict frere nauons peu trouuer l'opportunité deslors, de tendre en lemprince contre ledict Turcq."

50 Lanz, *Correspondenz Karl V*, p. 294. "de passer avec toutes noz forces et puissances en Ytallie"

avenge their usurpations, and join forces so that together they may have victory. The instructions ended by telling Balbi to frequently update the court with reports of his journey and any useful news he may hear along the way.

Balbi's trip was filled with difficulties and adventures, which he detailed in a series of letters to the court. He sailed from Venice, through Cyprus, and reached Aleppo on the 16th of August 1529. Balbi reported on civil unrest along the Turkish-Persian border, and of rebellious attitudes in several Syrian towns recently incorporated into the Ottoman Empire. Balbi was able to take advantage of these sentiments. The Governor of Aleppo had been assigned to take his troops to observe Persian troops along the border, and they took Balbi along with them so that he may reach the Persian border. However, when the troops from Aleppo learned that the Persians were not preparing to invade Ottoman territory but were putting down rebellions in their own territory, they returned to Syria and Balbi went with them, afraid to cross the dessert border alone. In Amman, Balbi contracted with a caravan to cross the border, but then he fell ill. By February 1530, he wrote that he was back in Aleppo, sick and penniless. Here he was taken in by a Venetian merchant, Andreas Morosini, who let Balbi recover in his house, lent him money, and gave him a horse so that he may undertake the journey again.⁵¹ Balbi eventually made his way to Baghdad and tracked down the Shah for an audience. We do not have a detailed account of Balbi's eventual audience with Shah Ṭahmāsp, or of his return journey. However, Ṭahmāsp was not adverse to an alliance, and this was demonstrated in his response to two other Habsburg diplomats sent by Charles' brother Ferdinand.

Diplomacy of Shah Ṭahmāsp and Archduke Ferdinand of Austria

After the mission of Jean de Balbi, initiative in diplomatic relations with the East passed from Emperor Charles V to his brother Ferdinand. It is at this point that a

51 Morosini was arrested by Ottoman agents for assisting Balbi and for writing his own letter given to Balbi to deliver to Shah Ṭahmāsp, tried for treason and killed. See Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 68.

specifically “Austrian” diplomacy with Persia truly begins.

Sometime in 1529, as the Ottoman army was marching into Hungary, Ferdinand dispatched two envoys to the Shah: Pietro de Negro and Simon de Lillis.⁵² Pietro de Negro originally came from the Levant and after a trade mission to Europe came into the service of King Ferdinand.⁵³ Not much is known about Simon de Lillis: the report of his mission indicates he was from Dalmatia.⁵⁴ Little information about these missions has survived, neither Instructions nor Credentials, only a single report of each written after the mission was concluded.⁵⁵

Pietro de Negro reported that he met with Shah Ṭahmāsp in Babylon (Baghdad). This meeting must have taken place before the end of May 1530 when the Shah was in Mesopotamia, because he soon left to face the threat on the Uzbek border.⁵⁶ At this time, Ṭahmāsp would have been 16 years old, and while he was beginning to participate in government, he was not yet fully in control of policy. So presumably he spoke with the approval of his regents. Ṭahmāsp replied to Pietro's oration that his country had no peace treaty with the Turks and that he was willing to stage a joint attack with King Ferdinand.⁵⁷ When Ferdinand attacked into the Turkish lands in Hungary so would Ṭahmāsp attack into Syria. Ferdinand should provide a ship with supplies, then Persian troops in Egypt could attack the Turks as well. Considerable time was devoted to explaining the actions of “Sulphi Can”, which must refer to Zū'l-Faqār Beg Mausillū, whose revolt in Baghdad was the reason Ṭahmāsp was in Mesopotamia in then first place.⁵⁸ This Qizilbāsh tribal leader had rebelled and sided with the Ottomans, had made statements declaring Persian neutrality in the Ottoman-Austrian fight, and had claimed the Turkish army in Hungary were within their

52 Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen zum Vorderen Orient unter Karl V.” *Mitteilungen des Österreichischen Staatsarchivs* 5 (1952), p. 72 and 85-86; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 70-71.

53 Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, p. 85, note 112.

54 Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, p. 86.

55 Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, pp.85- 86.

56 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 70.

57 HHStA, *Aufzeichnungen, Feb 1531*, Türkei I, Karton 2; reprinted in Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, p.85.

58 Roemer, CHI, “Safavid Period”, pp. 236-237.

rightful territory. However, by the time Pietro arrived, Zū'l-Faqār had been murdered and Ṭahmāsp made a point of denying his statements. Finally, Ṭahmāsp invited another envoy in the future, suggesting that they take a safer route through Russia, and that future envoys bring items from their country. This last piece is a subtle request for diplomatic gifts. It seems that the two 1529 envoys from Ferdinand did not bring any presents for the Shah, and although they were still graciously received, it was perceived by the Safavid court as a faux-pas.

The second envoy, Simon de Lillis, departed from Prague and travelled overland through eastern Europe to reach the Safavid capital of Tabriz.⁵⁹ He stayed in Tabriz for two months waiting for the Shah who was with the army, and eventually journeyed to Baghdad to meet him. Simon's report claims Ṭahmāsp was besieging Babylon (Baghdad) which was held by his brother who had handed it over to the Turks, while in reality this would have been the incident involving Zū'l-Faqār.⁶⁰ (Ṭahmāsp did fight against his rebellious brothers Sām Mīrzā and Alqās Mīrzā, but this occurred later.) Simon presented his credentials, which were translated by a Portuguese visitor to the court. Once again, the court marvelled that an envoy arrived with no gifts, but again he was received graciously anyway. Ṭahmāsp stated that he wished to remain constant and steadfast in his friendship with King Ferdinand. He promised to provide military assistance, “provided they [the Austrians] quickly prepared and moved against the Turk.”⁶¹ He promised to act on the plan his father, Ismā'il, had presented to Charles, and as he had presented at more length to Simon's colleague Pietro. One final note in the report, available because of Simon's travel route through Russia and the Caucasus, was that the King of Georgia prayed that Ferdinand would advance against the Turks and that the city of Trapezntum (Trabzon) was ready to rebel against the Turkish rulers.

59 Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, p. 72; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 71.

60 Roemer, CHI, “Safavid Period”, pp. 236-237.

61 HHStA, *Aufzeichnungen, Feb 1531*, Türkei I, Karton 2; reprinted in Neck, “Diplomatische Beziehungen”, p.86.

The receipt of these envoys' reports was heartening to King Ferdinand and Emperor Charles as they faced continued war. During the time the envoys were away, Vienna had withstood siege in 1529 but the threat of a return of the Turkish army still remained.⁶² The Habsburg siblings continued to disagree over strategy towards the Turks: Ferdinand wanting a bold offensive to regain all of Hungary, while Charles and their sister Mary urged negotiation and defensive operations.⁶³ The reports from Persia by Balbi, Pietro and Simon had some influence in altering the Emperor's position, along with signs of increased military preparations within Turkey. In 1531 Charles sent messages to the German Diet urging support for Ferdinand, and pledging unspecified aid himself. In April 1532, Charles appeared at the Diet in Regensburg in person and helped raise an army from the German princes.⁶⁴ This army, led by the Emperor in person, was ready to confront the advancing Süleyman. But the Ottoman army was delayed at a small fortress and with the season getting late Süleyman decided to turn back the invasion. The German, Bohemian, and many other forces in the Imperial army then deserted; they were willing to help stop a Turkish invasion but were not willing to help Ferdinand conquer more Hungarian territory.⁶⁵ Charles also withdrew his support, leaving Ferdinand with only a small force and forcing him to enter negotiations with the Sultan. As this was happening, confusing rumours came through Venetian ambassadors in Constantinople about a peace-treaty between Ṭahmāsp and the Sultan.⁶⁶ Although these rumours were false – there were Persian ambassadors in Constantinople but they resolved no treaty and were, in fact, on the brink of war – they contributed to an air of doubt in European courts about continuing the conflict with the Turks at that time. Ferdinand agreed to a truce with both Zapolya and the Turks in December 1532, which freed Süleyman to turn his military attention towards the Persians.⁶⁷

62 Winkelbauer, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 128-130; Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, p.185, 189.

63 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 91.

64 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 95-98.

65 Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*, p. 189; Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, p. 99.

66 Neck, "Diplomatische Beziehungen", p. 72; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 72.

67 Fitchner, *Ferdinand I*, pp. 100-101.

Ṭahmāsp in Persia faced two decades of hostility from the Ottoman Turks, with three direct invasions: the first in 1533-1535, the following in 1548-1549, and the third in 1553-1555. The first of these occurred because Süleyman sensed weakness in the position of the young Shah. Ṭahmāsp had been in the east fighting the Uzbeks, and many of the Qizilbāsh leaders, who provided the bulk of his military strength, were rebellious. Ṭahmāsp could muster only a small force to face the Ottoman invasion, so he turned to a scorched-earth strategy, which deprived Turkish army of supplies. The Turks captured Baghdad and Tabriz, but lack of supplies forced them to retreat from Tabriz to Baghdad, where they negotiated an armistice. Baghdad remained in Ottoman hands henceforth, except for a small period in the seventeenth century, but the Safavids recovered their capital Tabriz and most of their territories south-west of the Caspian Sea.⁶⁸ One effect from Ottoman control of Baghdad, as well as their gains in the Levant made during the 1520s, was to effectively close the overland route between Europe and Persia. Thereafter, diplomats would have to either journey by sea around Africa or through Russia and the Caucasus, or travel incognito through enemy territory.

Persia faced the Turkish invasion with no European assistance. In 1535 Charles captured Tunis in an effort to halt the attacks of Hayrettin Paşa Barbarossa upon Habsburg Mediterranean shipping. But this action was directed against an Ottoman Mediterranean ally; Barbarossa evaded capture and soon returned to raiding, and it did not have much influence on land actions in the east.⁶⁹ But once Ṭahmāsp concluded the 1535 armistice, Süleyman, under the urging of the King of France, was again to war with Mediterranean Europe. In response to a 1537 Ottoman attack on Venetian Corfu and the southern Italian coast, an alliance of the Pope, Emperor Charles V, King Ferdinand, and the Venetians in February 1538 formed the “Holy League”.⁷⁰ Ferdinand included help from Ṭahmāsp in his war planning for the Holy

68 Adel Allouche, *The Origins and Development of the Ottoman-Safavid Conflict (906-962/1500-1555)*, (Berlin, 1983), pp. 137-140; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", Chp. 5, pp. 240-242.

69 Roger Crowley, *Empire of the sea: The Final Battle for the Mediterranean, 1521-1580*, (London, 2008), pp. 56-64.; John F. Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the 16th Century*, revised edition, (London, 2003), p. 92.

70 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 76-77.

League, and he mentions the Persians in several letters of 1537. The specific references to the Persians seems to indicate there was some contact at this time; however, there now exist no Imperial or Austrian records of any embassies. It is possible Ferdinand was drawing conclusions from the previous missions of Pietro de Negro and Simon de Lillis.

In 1538, the Venetian Michele Membré was sent on an embassy to the Shah.⁷¹ He was commissioned by Venice, but he represented the interests of all of the Holy League members. Membré travelled in disguise as a Georgian merchant through the Crimea and Caucasus to reach Persia. He met with Shah Ṭahmāsp multiple times. In 1540, while Membré was staying in Ṭahmāsp's camp, Venice concluded a separate peace with the Ottoman Sultan. When Ṭahmāsp learned of this, he was angry; he dismissed Membré and sent him back to Venice with a letter complaining about their duplicity. However, the letter was not entirely negative and it leaves open the possibility of future cooperation. One interpretation of the letter's tone is that Ṭahmāsp realized that the other powers of the League, including the Habsburgs, were still at war with the Turks, and although Membré directly represented Venice, Ṭahmāsp knew word would pass to the other parties. Ṭahmāsp still hoped for cooperation with the other forces, even if Venice withdrew. He may have even sent a letter with Membré to Charles V, although this is now lost.⁷² Another interesting feature of Ṭahmāsp's letter is the lack of hostile religious rhetoric, unlike that in his letters to the Ottomans, indicating that despite his religious scruples, Ṭahmāsp was willing to downplay religious differences with Christian Europe in and emphasize the issue of legitimate sovereignty in order to secure western assistance.⁷³ Membré wrote a long account of his journey, *Relazione di Persia*, which includes many details of life in sixteenth century Persia, and it was one of the first such books to document the realities of Safavid Persia to Europe.

71 Michele Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia* (1539-1542), trans. A. H. Morton, (London, 1993), introduction p. x; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 78-79.

72 Membré, *Mission to the Lord Sophy*, trans. Morton, introduction, pp. xxi-xxiii.

73 Mitchell, *The Practice of Politics in Safavid Iran*, p. 91.

The Ottomans continued to fight on one border at a time throughout the following decades, despite continued desire of both Habsburg and Persian rulers to arrange an alliance that would result in a two-front war. Major fighting took place in Hungary from 1541 to 1546, during which the Turks captured much of Hungary and forced Ferdinand into a treaty agreeing to pay an annual tribute of 30,000 gold florins to Constantinople.⁷⁴ Süleyman then invaded Persia multiple times, once in 1548 accompanied by Ṭahmāsp's disloyal brother Alqās Mirzā.⁷⁵ Ṭahmāsp fought in the way he did before, with scorched-earth and poisoned wells, where the Turkish army might take territories but were unable to hold them. Peace was finally signed at Amasya in 1555, which held between Safavids and Ottomans for the next 30 years. The Turks made minor gains, but Persia retained most of her lands. However, due to the perceived threat to Tabriz, which had been occupied several times, Ṭahmāsp moved the Safavid capital to Qazvin.⁷⁶ During all of the conflicts, Shah Ṭahmāsp and the Habsburg brothers Charles and Ferdinand maintained occasional contacts.⁷⁷ They exchanged letters but conducted no major embassies. As before, each side hoped to win an alliance for joint action against their common foe, but also as before, local concerns dominated decision making, and the Ottomans were allowed to face each side in turn.

Maximilian II's Diplomatic Initiative

Ferdinand's son and Charles V's nephew became Holy Roman Emperor in 1564 as Maximilian II, and he initiated a new attempt at Persian diplomacy.⁷⁸ This effort eventually came to naught; it failed due to the difficulties of travel, the competing interests of European courts, and the external pressures on the Austrian rulers which doomed so many of their Persian diplomatic efforts. Hence, Maximilian's diplomacy is

74 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 189-190; Winkelbauer, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 133-134.

75 Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*, pp. 62-64; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", pp. 242-243.

76 Savory, *Iran Under the Safavids*, p. 64.

77 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 82-85.

78 Paula Sutter Fitchner, *Emperor Maximilian II*, (New Haven, 2001).

illustrative in its failures. At the same time, examining its nuances reveals an evolving attitude to the Safavid state.

During his father's life, Maximilian complained about the 1562 truce Ferdinand concluded with the Turks. Maximilian thought that it gave too many concessions, and in particular he disapproved of the payment of an annual tribute to the Ottoman Sultan. Once he came to power, Maximilian delayed payment of the tribute, citing excuses such as the insecurity of the border regions risking the payments falling to bandits.⁷⁹ His action of halting the payments may have been motivated by both displeasure over the treaty terms, as well as the parlous state of Imperial finances, but it was clear that it would soon lead to renewed conflict with the Ottomans. Other issues were raising tensions with the Ottomans: the Transylvanian leader John Sigismund Zápolya, a nominal vassal to the Sultan who also had designs on the Hungarian crown, began attacking castles in Hungary in 1564. Maximilian replied to this assault with an army which pushed Zápolya back. An armistice was reached by March 1565, but it drew protests from Constantinople about the treatment of their vassal.⁸⁰ In 1565 Süleyman was preoccupied with the siege of Malta, but skirmishes occurred along the Hungarian border, and it was clear that a major military action would soon take place there.⁸¹ Therefore, Maximilian began diplomatic efforts to prepare a force to meet the expected invasion.

Maximilian wrote in his diaries of his plans to assemble a grand coalition to fight the Ottomans. He hoped this coalition would include in addition to his Austrian forces, contributions from the Holy Roman Empire; the Papal States, Venice and other Italian states; Spain; and including Persia attacking the Ottomans on the opposite border.⁸²

79 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, p. 123.

80 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, p. 124.

81 On the siege of Malta see: Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys*, pp. 191-207; Crowley, *Empires at Sea*, pp. 93-195.

82 HHStA, *Tagebuch Maximilian II*, Familienakten Kart. 88, Heft 1-3.

The Turkish court was considering Persia in their war planning. The 1555 peace treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids, along with the perceived weakness of Persia in light of developing succession disputes convinced the Turks to turn their attention towards Europe in the 1560's.⁸³ However, the Ottoman court was concerned the Persians might invade if the whole army was engaged in Europe, and debated whether to leave troops on the Mesopotamian border so as not to be surprised by a Persian attack. These concerns were reported back to Maximilian by the Imperial Ambassador in Constantinople, Albert von Wyss, who recommended to the Emperor and to the King of Portugal that they negotiate with Shah Ṭahmāsp to form the offensive alliance that the Turks feared.⁸⁴

The first official mention of plan for a new Persian alliance came in an opinion paper from the Papal Nuncio to the Imperial court, Cardinal Zaccaria Delfino, in August 1565.⁸⁵ Delfino recommended pursuing a diplomatic mission to the Shah sponsored jointly by the Emperor, the King of Spain and the Pope. In a series of letters between Maximilian and Philip II through that October the two Habsburg monarchs agreed to send a delegation with credentials and presents to the Shah in the following year.⁸⁶ Through the winter Maximilian discussed details with his brothers and with Delfino, such as whether the alliance should be offensive or defensive, and if one party would be allowed to make peace without the other. The other European powers were affraid that involving the Persians may incite the Ottomans and constrain their ability to make peace after the Malta campaign, and, therefore, delayed the start of the diplomatic mission through negotiations while they clarified the Turkish intentions.⁸⁷

On the 8th of March 1566, Jacob Drapper was appointed as the Imperial

83 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 85.

84 Wertheimer, E., *Zur Geschichte des Türkenkriegs Maximilian II 1565 und 1566*, Vienna, 1875; cited in Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 86.

85 HHStA, *Opinio Reverendissimi Cardinalis Delfini*, 19 August 1565, Persica I, Konv. 2, 13-22.

86 Friedrich Edelmayer, ed., *Die Korrespondenz der Kaiser mit ihren Gesandten in Spanien*. Vol. 1, (Vienna, 1997), p. 217, 437.

87 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 87-88; Rudi Matthee, "Distant Allies: Diplomatic Contacts Between Portugal and Iran in the Reign of Shah Tahmasb, 1524-1576", in *Portugal, the Persian Gulf and Safavid Persia*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Jorge Flores, (Louvan, 2011), pp. 237-238.

ambassador for the Persian mission. Drapper was a merchant from Pera who performed other missions in service of Maximilian.⁸⁸ The instructions for Drapper were composed on advice from Delfino, with a note added personally by the Emperor. Maximilian emphasized that since the Pope, the King of Spain and the Emperor agreed to a league, the Christian leaders can no longer pull out, and also that the Turks fear a European-Persian alliance. Drapper's instructions were to travel to Spain, where the King of Spain would arrange travel details with the Portuguese. They would travel by sea to the Portuguese outpost of Hormuz. After arriving in Hormuz, the Portuguese would announce their arrival to the Persians, interpreters would be hired, travel passes would be obtained, and then they would travel to the court of the Shah. Once there they should remain for a time, then return to report to the Emperor. King Philip of Spain was to arrange for gifts, which should be, "costly and of the best quality," for presentation to the Shah.⁸⁹

The instructions set out the arguments for a Habsburg-Safavid alliance, so that Drapper could present these arguments to the Shah. Maximilian argued the case for an alliance in more detail than either Charles V or Ferdinand. It emphasised two main points: the traditional friendship between the Habsburg and Safavid houses; and the hostility of the Turks to both countries.⁹⁰ In Maximilian's own handwriting, an added note mentions the contacts between their parents (Ferdinand and Charles with Ismā'il).⁹¹ Even though these contacts were infrequent and achieved little, Maximilian could point to them as an existing friendly relationship in order to create a sense of affinity with Shah Ṭahmāsp. He also repeatedly connected the Austrian house with his cousins, the Spanish Habsburgs, who had more extensive dealings with the Persians; once again, this was used to create the feeling of an ongoing relationship.

However, the bulk of the argument was about the common danger from the

88 For instance, Drapper undertook a mission to Naples while waiting for the Persian mission to get under way. Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 90; Matthee, "Distant Allies", p. 238.

89 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, Persica I, Konv. 2, f. 38 ff.; Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 88-89.

90 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 88.

91 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 40 v.

Turks. It highlights lands lost by Austrians, Spanish and Persians to the Ottomans, then proposes to jointly recover them. It mentions that the Turks have been free to act on one border or another as they choose, but if the Persians enter into an alliance with the western powers the Turks will no longer have such freedom of action. Also, it warns that treaties with the Turks are not to be trusted. Nothing is to be had in agreements with the Turks but "fraud and deceit", and they set the time which they desire to break the peace.⁹² Maximilian's representatives in Constantinople were aware of the treaty Ṭahmāsp concluded with the Turks in 1555, and therefore this final piece of the argument was an effort to undercut any hesitance to action on the part of the Shah due to loyalty to the 1555 agreement. The argument concludes with the notion that by acting together the three powers will reduce their losses and soon have victory.⁹³

If Ṭahmāsp agreed to his offer, Maximilian promised he and the King of Spain would not make a separate peace with the Turks. Maximilian offered to pay a war subsidy to Persia if they were involved.⁹⁴ If the Shah did not agree to go to war, then Drapper was to ask him to undertake any other actions which might hinder the Ottoman war effort in the west, such as moving Persian troops internally and sending messages to the Turks about border disturbances; anything which might bring "doubt and suspicion" to the enemy and so "divide and diminish" his forces by making the Turks leave troops to watch the Persian border.⁹⁵

Maximilian even proposed exchanging permanent ambassadors with the Persian court, as was beginning to be done between European courts. Specifically, since there would be both an Austrian and a Spanish ambassador on the journey, if an alliance was agreed, one of the ambassadors should return home to report on the agreement and the other should stay at the Persian court to coordinate activities. It

92 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 40 r., "fraudes et imposturas".

93 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 42 rv.

94 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 43 v.

95 HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 44 v, 45 r.

was left up to the ambassadors to figure out amongst themselves who would stay in Persia once they were there. Also, Persian representatives were invited back to the Habsburg courts, accompanying the returning ambassador. Unlike in previous exchanges, details of military action, such as dates for attacks, were left up to the ambassador to negotiate with the Shah as appropriate.⁹⁶

From his first moments of considering the Persians as part of the alliance, through carefully setting out the reasoning for his plans, to suggesting the exchange of residential ambassadors, Maximilian treated the Persians more like an equal power than had been done before, or indeed, would be done afterwards. Previous contacts had been tentative and treated the Persians as foreign, outside the normal functions of European diplomacy. But in this effort, they were to be brought within the evolving diplomatic system. The ambassador was given more autonomy to negotiate based on conditions found in the receiving court. The full argument for action was presented so that the Shah may make up his mind. In part, this was done to increase the chance for a successful negotiation, but it also was a recognition of equality in the relationship and a willingness to treat the Safavids as a house with equal status to the major European powers.⁹⁷

Jacob Drapper received these instructions in early March 1566, then he and Dietrichstein, the Imperial ambassador in the Spanish court, set about enacting them. At the end of the month, Dietrichstein wrote the Emperor that King Philip agreed with these plans. But then the difficulties started. By mid-April, Dietrichstein had to inform the Emperor there were two problems: the Spanish could not find an ambassador of their own to accompany Drapper; and the yearly Portuguese ship to Hormuz, on which they were to travel, had already departed. In principle, the Portuguese supported the mission, and they had designated an ambassador of their own to accompany the mission, but they were unwilling to provide another ship to carry the ambassadors. The Portuguese jealously guarded their trade monopoly

⁹⁶ HHStA, *Instructio Jacobo Drappero*, f. 44 rv.

⁹⁷ Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 89 - 90.

through Hormuz and were reluctant to cooperate with the Spanish, even after the 1580 union of the crowns. Also, the Portuguese and the Ottomans had come to a truce after a series of sea battles in the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, and the Portuguese feared upsetting the balance. Because of these problems, the mission would have to be delayed until the following year.⁹⁸

Meanwhile, the expected invasion came in July 1566. Süleyman personally led the Ottoman army one last time to besiege the fortress of Szigetvár.⁹⁹ Maximilian led the gathering Imperial army out of Vienna to Hungary on early August, but this move was motivated more to keep the rowdy soldiers from plundering the homes of Vienna than out of any plan for action. After sitting indecisive in Hungary for almost two months, Maximilian decided to lay siege to the Turkish held fortress of Esztergom. He was confident that Szigetvár could hold out, but was mistaken, as the fortress fell to the Ottoman army on 8 September. Although Süleyman died during the siege, Maximilian's campaign fell apart. At Esztergom, the multi-national Imperial army turned on itself: Hungarians, Germans, Italians and others got into fights over short supplies and national animosities. Troops mutinied over lack of pay. In mid-October the army collapsed entirely; units disbanded and troops returned home. A small attack on the Transylvanian fort Székesfehérvár with the remaining forces also ended in defeat, and by late October, Maximilian ordered the remains of his army back to border defences while he himself was taken back to Vienna with heart palpitations.¹⁰⁰

After this ignominious failure some of Maximilian's advisers counselled peace negotiations to bring an end to the war: notably Schwendi, Maximilian's top military commander; and Duke Albrecht of Bavaria. The Emperor himself fell into depression and indecision. He wanted to carry on with his plans, but felt betrayed by his commanders and nobles.¹⁰¹ Dietrichstein took the initiative to restore the Persian

98 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 90; Mathee, "Distant Allies", pp. 239-240.

99 Winkelbauer, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 135; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 190.

100 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, pp. 128-131.

101 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, pp. 131-133.

diplomatic effort, writing to the Emperor from the Spanish court in November about the usefulness of a Persian alliance. Around this time Maximilian began writing in his diary again about contacts with the Shah. In late November, word reached the Habsburg courts over the death of Süleyman, who had led so many Ottoman challenges to Europe. Philip II, through Dietrichstein, encouraged the Emperor that Süleyman's death provided a good opportunity for a Persian alliance. Philip had his ambassador in Portugal find more information about the Persian-Portuguese relationship, and about the situation in Persia generally. With this encouragement, Maximilian had decided by the end of December to pursue another attempt at a diplomatic mission to Persia.¹⁰²

In the first days of January 1567 Maximilian and his advisers organized the new mission. This time, Michael Černović was to be the ambassador, since Drapper had become ill and could not continue the mission. Černović had previously served on Imperial delegations to Constantinople, and was currently working as a translator and “Imperial spy” in Venice. In the previous year, Cardinal Delfino had recommended Černović accompany Jacob Drapper as a second ambassador on the aborted mission of 1566.¹⁰³ Černović wrote a letter to Maximilian dated the 1st of January 1567 where he expressed his enthusiasm and opinions for a Persian diplomatic mission in the new year. He pointed out that he was familiar with Oriental affairs, and that he has studied the reports of prior Venetian ambassadors to the Safavids and Uzun Ḥasan. Among Černović's suggestions was to send an annual annuity to the Shah instead of a single large gift, and an unlikely scheme whereby a rebellious Ottoman prince, who had fled to Ṭahmāsp's court would, be handed over to the Emperor.¹⁰⁴ Černović also asked for a letter from the Emperor addressed to 'the Son of the Shah', in case Ṭahmāsp was to die before the mission reached his court, as had happened with Charles V's reply to Shah Ismā'īl. Maximilian sent official instructions and credentials to Černović in January, including the letter to the Son of the Shah. These brief instructions authorised Černović to do what was necessary to secure an alliance, and they included the

102 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 90-91.

103 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, p. 91.

104 HHStA, Černović to Maximilian II, 1 Jan. 1567, Persica I, Konv. 2, f. 63-65.

lengthier instructions previously given to Jacob Drapper. However, this time the no offer of a subsidy was made, and the promise to never conclude peace without the Persians was dropped.¹⁰⁵

However, in the early months of 1567, as Černović was making preparations to depart, further moves towards peace negotiations were made within the Ottoman and Imperial courts. The new Sultan, Selim II, wanted to resolve a peace treaty so that he could turn his attention to securing his own throne at home. Many of Maximilian's advisers were encouraging peace negotiations. The 1566 campaign shook the confidence of many soldiers to fight under Maximilian's leadership, and exhausted the Imperial treasury. Many of the Empire's nobles had not paid their contributions already promised; soliciting more for a new campaign would be even more difficult.¹⁰⁶

Meanwhile, religious tensions in Europe were rising and threatening the internal peace of the Empire. Philip II determined in 1566 to take a harder line with Protestants in the Netherlands. The Netherlands were nominally part of the Holy Roman Empire, but traditionally were run by the Spanish branch of the Habsburg family. Spanish crackdowns there agitated the German Imperial nobility, who turned to Maximilian demanding protection, calling upon his reputation for religious moderation. This conflict put Maximilian in a difficult political situation which would demand more of his attention and limit his political influence for other matters.¹⁰⁷ “Religious matters in the Netherlands will only get worse,” Maximilian wrote in his diary in late 1566.¹⁰⁸ It was clear to many at the court that he should clear other conflicts to concentrate on this new situation.

Because of these difficulties, Maximilian was convinced by his advisers to

105 HHStA, Maximilian II to Černović, Jan 1567, Persica I, Konv. 2, f. 69-70.; HHStA, Maximilian II to “den Sohn des Schahs”, Persica I, Konv. 2, f. 105.

106 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, pp. 131-133.

107 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, pp. 156-172.

108 HHStA, *Tagebuch Maximilian II*, f. 6.

delay the Persian mission from March until at least September. This would provide an opportunity to begin peace talks with the Turks and see what potential there was for an agreement. Černović was to go to Portugal and wait while the peace talks began. Maximilian still wished to pursue an alliance with the Persians, but he had to do so in a way that would not jeopardize negotiations with the Turks. He floated an idea where the King of Portugal would sponsor the diplomatic mission. But the final end of the diplomatic effort came in March 1567, when Dietrichstein informed Maximilian that King Philip of Spain was not willing to see the mission turned over to the King of Portugal. Philip had designs on the Portuguese throne, an ambition he achieved a few years later, and so he guarded against handing any additional authority to the Portuguese. Therefore, this final attempt to proceed was scrapped.¹⁰⁹ Talks with the Ottomans progressed and a treaty restoring the status-quo was signed in February 1568.¹¹⁰ The diplomatic mission joining Persia to Europe, for which Maximilian had so hoped, never even departed European shores.

Even though Maximilian's diplomatic effort never made it to Persia, there are indications that the anticipated combined attack on the Ottomans would never have materialized. Sources both European and Safavid suggest that, in his later years, Ṭahmāsp became passive and seldom left his palace.¹¹¹ This inactivity would be an indication that Ṭahmāsp would not wish to undertake a new war effort against his old enemy. However, Andrew Newman among others refutes such reports, indicating that Ṭahmāsp was active in leading military actions against the Uzbeks and putting down local revolts.¹¹² But this activity is not a sign that Ṭahmāsp would have been disposed to go to war against the Ottomans. In the decade between 1556 to 1566 Ṭahmāsp fought several wars against the Uzbeks and one against the Mughals to retake Qandahār (Kandahar). His military attention was focused to the east. With the

109 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 92-93; Mathee, "Distant Allies", p. 239.

110 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, p. 133; Winkelbauer, *Ständerfreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, p. 137.

111 Vincentio d'Alessandri described Ṭahmāsp as sequestered in his palace, ignoring affairs of state. *A narrative of Italian travels in Persia, in the fifteenth and sixteen centuries*, ed. and trans. Charles Grey, (London, 1873), pp. 216-225. Also, Qummi, *Khulasat al-Tavarikh*, and Junabadi, *Rawzat al-Safaviyya*, cited by Andrew Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 38.

112 Newman, Andrew J., *Safavid Iran*, pp. 38-39. Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", pp. 244-250 describes and assesses events of the later years of Ṭahmāsp's reign.

Ottomans he actively maintained good relations after the 1555 Treaty of Amasya. He returned Prince Bayazid, who had sought refuge at the Safavid court after rebelling against his father Süleyman, to agents of his father. Most notably, in 1567, right at the time Maximilian hoped Ṭahmāsp would join in the war, Ṭahmāsp sent a delegation with lavish presents to the newly crowned Sultan Selim II. These gifts included Ṭahmāsp's famous copy of the *Shahnameh*, a richly illustrated work considered the high point of Iranian miniature painting.¹¹³ Ṭahmāsp invested considerable effort and expense in maintaining the peace treaty with the new Sultan. Therefore, even if Maximilian's ambassadors had made it to Persia, it is unlikely they would have successfully forged an offensive alliance.

Later Sixteenth Century Conflicts with the Ottomans

Throughout the 16th century, the Ottoman Turks had fought a series of wars with both the Safavid Persians on their eastern border and the Christian European nations to their west. However, the Ottomans managed to be at an active state of war with only one or the other at any particular time. Avoiding a two front conflict was a major concern of Ottoman foreign policy.

After securing peace with Austria over Hungary, the Sultan turned his attention in 1570 to the sea and the conquest of Venetian-held Cyprus. In response, the Papacy, Spain, and Venice came together to form a 'Holy League'.¹¹⁴ Emperor Maximilian was invited to join the league, but he declined. He was still wounded, in both resources and pride, after the 1566 campaign. He worried that the league would fall apart and he would be left to face the Turkish armies on land with no support.¹¹⁵ Indeed, his fears were justified. Although the Battle of Lepanto was a substantial naval victory for the Europeans in 1571, the Holy League fragmented after and the Turks

113 Martin B. Dickson and Stuart C. Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh*, (Cambridge, MA, 1981), Vol. 1, pp. 270-271.

114 Crowley, *Empire of the Sea*, pp. 212-239.

115 Fitchner, *Maximilian II*, pp. 198-190.

recovered their naval strength quickly.¹¹⁶ Borders in the Mediterranean settled into fairly well-defined spheres of influence, with the ever-present commerce raiding sanctioned by each side that never reached the level of full warfare. Much the same situation held along the land frontier in south-east Europe, where border warlords led raids on neighbouring opposing settlements, but never mounted full-scale invasions.¹¹⁷ Thus the European powers were free to turn their attention to internal arguments – the Spanish Armada, the Revolt of the Netherlands, and the Counter-Reformation – while the Ottoman Turks could turn their attention towards Persia.

There existed several causes for tensions between Persia and the Ottomans at the time. Shi'a populations in eastern Asia Minor felt more sympathy for the Shi'a Safavids than for the Sunni Ottomans, and the Safavids encouraged these co-religionists in acts of rebellion. The borders between the Ottoman and Persian lands were ill-defined due to the mountainous terrain and were a haven for thieves and raiders, and were a source of disputes. Control of the allegiance of minor states in the Caucasus was a major concern for both sides, since these allies could give an important strategic advantage in the region. The Ottomans had entered into a diplomatic friendship with the Sunni Uzbeks on Persia's eastern border, and encouraged them to attack Safavid territory. Meanwhile, the Russian were expanding their borders southward to the Caspian sea, and had entered into trade relations with the Persians, which could put a wall of hostile states between the Ottomans and their Uzbek allies. And, as always, the Turks were aware that Europe desired to use Persia as a threat to counteract Ottoman freedom to act in the Mediterranean.¹¹⁸

When Ṭahmāsp died in 1576, various tribes of the Qizilbāsh Turcomans, the original source of the Safavid dynasty's support, contended with Iranian and rising

116 Account of the battle in: Crowley, *Empire of the Sea*, pp. 264-286; analysis of strategy and effect in Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys*, pp. 235-264.

117 Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean*, trans. Sian Reynolds, (London, 1973), p. 1165ff; and Andrew C. Hess, "The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History", *Past and Present*, 57, (Nov. 1972) pp. 53-73.

118 Parry, *Ottoman Empire*, p. 111; Allouche, *Ottoman-Safavid Conflict*, pp. 148-151.

Georgian factions at court to place their own candidates on the throne. Ṭahmāsp left several children, but no clear heir. Ḥaidar, Ṭahmāsp's son by a Georgian wife, was supported by several factions, but a coalition of opponents murdered him before he could be crowned. Instead, they supported Ismā'il, son of Ṭahmāsp by a Mawsillu Qizilbāsh wife. He was declared Shah Ismā'il II in August 1576, but his reign was short, bloody and contentious. Ismā'il had many potential claimants to the throne, including his half brothers and cousins, killed or jailed. He also tried to institute Sunni Islam, which alienated him from his subjects who had now embraced Shi'ism. Within a year, Ismā'il was dead under uncertain circumstances; however, few possible successors remained. Ismā'il's brother Muḥammad Khudābanda, who had been passed over in the succession because he was partially blind, was crowned in 1578, but his power was weak and many factions in the country were rebellious.¹¹⁹ The Ottomans, watching the disarray in their eastern neighbour, saw the opportunity to strike and attempt to remove the Persian threat.¹²⁰

This Ottoman-Persian war lasted from 1578-1590, and while the Ottoman's operations were laborious and expensive they achieved continual success against the Persians. The Persians used their standard 'scorched-earth' tactics leaving no supplies for the Ottoman armies, then employed their light horsemen to raid Ottoman supply convoys, leaving the Ottomans often hungry, ill-equipped and harassed. However, the Persians were not able to stand up to the Ottoman field armies; the Persian efforts could make the Ottoman's advance costly but could not halt it. Disarray in the Persian political sphere contributed to their difficulties, as competing tribes would defend their own territories but not support their neighbours, and certain nobles refused to send their required levies of troops. Thus, the Ottomans made slow and costly, but steady gains. Their first major objective was the subjugation of Georgia – which was a tributary and major ally of the Persians, but which was itself divided in a succession dispute. The Ottoman general Mustafā Pasha won a series of battles in 1578 allowing passage into the area, but then they spent the following years from 1579 to 1584

119 A. J. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 41-49; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", pp. 250-253.

120 Parry, *Ottoman Empire to 1730*. p. 113.

consolidating their hold on Georgia and constructing fortresses to defend it. Meanwhile, another Ottoman army under Osmān Pasha fought a series of battles along the western shore of the Caspian Sea; however, he had insufficient forces to conquer Shirvan and found himself surrounded and isolated until reinforcements arrived in 1582. With this force he was able to defeat the Persians in a battle on the River Samur, capture Shirvan Daghistan, and reassert Ottoman control over the Crimean Tartars who had been refusing to send requested assistance. In 1585-1588 the Ottoman objective was Azerbaijan and the city of Tabriz. Osmān Pasha seized the city, which had once been the Safavid capital, but then he died in the course of a retreat after further fighting. The Ottomans had to hold the captured cities Tabriz, Tiflis, and Erivan from Persian counter-offensives, but while their garrisons were severely reduced, they held on until new re-enforcements arrived. The loss of Tabriz was a grave insult to the Safavids, since it was the centre of their homeland, but they were not able to muster the strength to recapture it. The final years of the war saw Ottoman campaigns against Kara-Bagh and the western provinces of Persia: Luristan and Hamadhān.¹²¹

The Habsburg court watched events of the Ottoman-Persian war with interest. In 1585 it commissioned a report on the progress of the war. This was based on information from their agents in Constantinople as well as from other merchants and travellers.¹²² The court also held an Italian book on the history of the wars of the Turks, including those with the Persians.¹²³ Although there was no intent to intervene in the conflict, Habsburg officials wanted to keep abreast of developments in the war, knowing they may soon face the Ottoman armies themselves.

The ongoing Safavid political unrest led in 1587 to the overthrow of Muḥammad Khudābanda in favour of his son 'Abbās. The Ustājilū Qilizbash clan which

121 The conduct of the war is described in C. M. Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus*, (London, 1973), pp. 43-95.; and Parry, *Ottoman Empire to 1730*, pp. 114-115.

122 HHStA, *Persisch-türkischen Krieg 1585*, Handschriften, Weiß 935, fol. 47r-51r.

123 HHStA, *Libro della guerra con Turchi 16 Jht.*, Handschriften, Blau 308.

championed 'Abbās felt the young prince would be easy for them to control, but they were soon proved wrong as he turned out to be a strong and independent-minded ruler.¹²⁴ Shah 'Abbās was faced at the start of his reign with the Ottoman invasion in the west, a new Uzbek invasion of the eastern provinces, and dissension and factional violence within his own country. He judged that he had to make peace with the Ottomans whatever the cost, so that he could deal with the problems at home first, then see off the Uzbek invasion. In 1590, he concluded a treaty that ceded to the Ottomans the city of Tabriz and the territories of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Shirvan, Luristan and Hamadhān. It was a humiliating treaty, but one that he felt necessary for the very survival of the Safavid kingdom. 'Abbās used the security of peace on the Turkish border to enact political reform curbing the power of the tribal factions, then reorganized the army and, from 1598-1602, retook territory seized by the Uzbeks.¹²⁵

In the midst of Persia's war and political chaos, Pope Gregory XIII sent an emissary, Vecchietti, to get up to date information on Persia, its military, and chances for an alliance against the Ottoman Turks. Vecchietti reported back in 1587 that the country was weak, the Shah was manipulated by tribal leaders and did not have control over much of the country, that the treasury was empty, and that the military had only limited forces and little artillery or fortifications. Those forts they had were weak and undermanned, and against Turkish artillery, Vecchietti wrote, they were "no different than dust before the wind."¹²⁶ Ironically, shortly after Vecchietti left Persia, Shah 'Abbās assumed the throne and began to remedy the problems Vecchietti described. However, Vecchietti did not observe this change, and his report concluded that Persia was in no condition to be of military assistance to the West. Vecchietti's negative report did not inspire European leaders to take up arms, although he himself remained convinced that the West should intervene to save Persia from total defeat; if they did not, then soon the Turks would turn to their west and invade Hungary.¹²⁷

124 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 50. and D. Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797*, (London, 1988).

125 Parry, *Ottoman Empire to 1730*, p. 116. and Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 52-55.

126 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", pp. 385-386. Vecchietti's report was published by Horatio F. Brown in *English Historical Review*, Vol. VII (1892) pp. 314-321; quote from Brown, p. 318. "che la polvere contro al vento."

127 Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, pp. 112-114.

On this last point, at least, Vecchietti proved prescient, for as the Ottoman-Persian war drew to a close new tensions developed along the Ottoman-Habsburg border. The frontier *kleinkrieg* (little-war) of raids and counter-raids between Muslim *ghāzi* and Christian marcher lords was intensifying. Hasan Pasha, the *beglerbeg* of Bosnia, conducted large raids into Croatia in 1591 and 1592, systematically attacking the border fortresses. The Habsburgs responded and met Hasan's 1593 raid with a large force which attacked Hasan as he was besieging Sisak. Hasan's force was destroyed; a reputed eight to ten thousand Ottoman troops were slain or drowned trying to flee across the Kulpa River, with Hasan himself among the dead. This humiliation was the event that caused Sultan Murad III to agree with the hawks among his advisers who had been urging him since 1590 to declare war on Austria.¹²⁸

Thus, in 1593, the Ottomans declared war on Habsburgs. The Grand Vizer led an army of the Janissaries and regular battalions accompanied by a large number of Tartars. The Turkish move was welcomed by the Habsburg court, now centred around Emperor Rudolf II in Prague. They saw signs of decline in the Ottoman Empire embodied in the fat, gluttonous sultan Murad III, and they expected the war to lead to the Ottomans' collapse.¹²⁹ The Austrians countered the Turkish advance with a larger army, made up of forces gathered from across the Habsburg's far-flung lands: Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Germans, and Belgians, as well as mercenaries from across Europe. In the first year of the war the Austrians captured fortresses at Esztergom and Visegrad, and hopes were raised that they would soon capture Buda, the historic capital of Hungary. But a Turkish counter-offensive took the important Imperial fortress of Győr, and showed that the war would be a tougher, drawn-out affair.

128 Parry, et al., *Ottoman Empire to 1730*. p. 116. and Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism*, p. 217.

129 Bérenger, *History of the Habsburg Empire*. p. 246.

Chapter Three

Rudolf, 'Abbās, and the Long Turkish War

In this chapter, we examine the events spanning the end of the sixteenth century and the start of the seventeenth. At the turn of the century, Rudolf II was the Habsburg Emperor, Shah 'Abbās I ruled in Persia, and war persisted between the Ottoman and Austrian forces in Hungary. This time saw several diplomatic initiatives between the two countries. These built on previous attempts to form an alliance and progressed further than earlier efforts. They were perhaps the best chance for achieving joint military action against their common foe than any time before or after: for a time both states were at war with the Ottoman Empire simultaneously; and both rulers were enthusiastic about foreign contact and cooperation. Both showed interest in foreign cultures, as opposed to some other more insular or religiously dogmatic members of their dynasties. Their diplomats made efforts to improve understanding of the foreign culture. Ultimately, circumstances and misunderstandings prevented a military alliance from succeeding. As is demonstrated here and argued in detail in Chapter Five, this time was a turning point which served to change the relationship of Persia with Austria and the rest of Europe throughout the seventeenth century. In the next chapter, we will see how the relationship continued in spite of the failures of this decade, due to the new projects which began at this time.

Character of the Rulers

Rudolf II became Holy Roman Emperor in 1576, and soon after moved his court to Prague, which under his rule became an artistic and cultural centre. He has been described more by legend and cliché than by careful history: an erratic madman shut away in his castle, a patron of the arts bankrupting the country with his art collection, or a mystic interested more in alchemy and magic than affairs of state. While each of

these views has a certain grain of truth, late twentieth-century authors, such as R.J.W. Evans, have argued Rudolf manifested a unified world-view related to his late-Renaissance environment.¹ Rudolf was educated at the court of his Spanish cousins; he retained some of their ceremonial formality, but he rejected their militant Counter-Reformation Catholicism. While a devoted Catholic, he adhered to the idea of *irenicism*, seeking a re-unification of Christian faith through reason and compromise. This religious idea was part of a larger philosophy in late-Renaissance thought seeking a harmonious world-order within the diverse items of nature.² This philosophy drove many of Rudolf's activities: from his collection of natural curiosities, bringing together the diversity of nature; to his support of arts and scholarship, studying and representing the universal order; to his politics, where he tried to maintain peace between the numerous, ever-more belligerent factions in Central Europe. That he was not always successful in his projects resulted from his personal limitations and the growing belligerence and dogmatism of central-European society.

"Rudolf II's political programme was simple" wrote Bérenger, "internal peace and the resumption of the Turkish War with a view to reconquering Hungary and so adding to the glory of the House of Austria and recovering the lustre of the Imperial title."³ His irenicist outlook led him to attempt to maintain peace in the Empire by balancing confessional factions. As Emperor over all the various princes and peoples of the Empire, he wished to be seen as above the fray of sectarian dispute. However, after 1600, the 'Spanish Party' of Tridentine Catholics gained the upper hand in the court, which led to disastrous effects on foreign policy.⁴ Opposing the Turks had been the justifying mission for the Habsburg monarchy, and the court encouraged the publication of propaganda excoriating the traditional enemy.⁵ Nonetheless, on the

1 R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his world*, (Oxford, 1997; originally published 1973), pp. 1-4; Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. C. A. Simpson, (London, 1994), pp. 242-243.

2 R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy, 1550-1700*, (Oxford, 1979), pp. 32-33. Evans, *Rudolf II*, Chapter 3, 'The Religion of Rudolf', pp. 84-115.

3 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 245.

4 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 244-245; Evans, *Rudolf II*, pp. 40-42, 68-70.

5 Evans, *Rudolf II*, pp. 40-42; Paula Sutter Fitchner, *Terror and Toleration: The Habsburg Empire Confronts Islam, 1526-1850*, (London, 2008), pp. 46-58.

advice of border general Lazarus von Schwendi, Rudolf did not take advantage of the 1576-1590 Ottoman war with Persia to launch his own strike; instead, he built up fortifications and allowed Hungarian villages time to recover.⁶ When he did go to war, it became in his mind a struggle to final victory where no compromise was possible. His Imperial dignity demanded no less.

He defended the unique majesty of his office, leading him to conflict with the Pope, potential marriage partners and his own courtiers. He demanded to be a part of decision making, even when incapacitated with ill health, thus bringing government to a halt. His sense of dignity also led him to become a great patron of the arts, amassing a spectacular collection of Renaissance master-works through his purchasing agents across Europe and with many more produced in his workshops. He sought to make his collections the most extensive in Europe, in part from his own love of art, and also to reflect the greater glory of the Imperial position.⁷

His personality was also prone to darkness. Physically, he suffered from ill-health, with major illnesses in 1581 and many times after 1600. Mentally, he was prone to bouts of 'melancholy', when he withdrew from public in fits of depression and occasional rage. Whether he was clinically 'mad' is hard to determine, since many of the reports of his madness are from parties interested in exaggerating his incapacity. He was clearly troubled, and after a major breakdown in 1599 he often avoided audiences and public appearances.⁸ Rudolf had lofty political and intellectual goals, and while he succeeded in maintaining peace within the Empire and inspiring one last flourish of Renaissance humanist creativity, he lacked the physical and mental strength to carry out his policies to the full.

Shah 'Abbās came to the Persian throne in 1587 as a result of a coup against his

6 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 245-246.

7 Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann, *The School of Prague: Painting at the Court of Rudolf II*, (Chicago, 1988), p. 16-25; Evans, *Rudolf II*, p. 176-183.

8 H. C. Erik Midelfort, *Mad Princes of Renaissance Germany*, (Charlottesville, VA, 1994), pp. 125-140.

father in a precarious time for the Safavid dynasty. Invasions were coming from both east and west, and the Qizilbāsh tribes were fighting with each other while ignoring the summons of the central government. 'Abbās moved quickly to stamp his authority and bring needed reform to society. He could not deal with the Turkish invasion with the disorganised and fractious military he then had, so he made a distasteful peace with the Ottomans to give himself time to enact reforms. He executed or disinherited several Qizilbāsh amīrs, particularly those who had been involved in the murder of his brother Ḥamza.⁹ 'Abbās reorganised the military, expanding the role of regular, standing troops under his direct control and decreased reliance on the Qizilbāsh feudal forces that had originally brought the dynasty to power. As his historian, Eskander Beg Monshī, described:¹⁰

Because of the rivalries of the Qizilbash tribes had led to all sort of enormities, and because their devotion to the Safavid royal house had been weakened by dissension, Shah 'Abbas decided to admit into the armed forces groups other than the Qizilbash.

'Abbās created a fighting force out of what was previously a small group of royal retainers, the *ghulām*, or king's slaves, made up of Muslim converts from Christian areas such as Georgia and Armenia. 'Abbās created a corps of musketeers, the *tūfangchī*, recruited from Iranian peasants, who were drilled to oppose the Turkish Janissaries. He also expanded the artillery and created a separate corps for it, the *tūpchī*. These reforms helped provide a regular military force strong enough to oppose that of the Turks, concentrate military authority under the central power of the Shah, and broaden the coalition of military power to more segments of Safavid society. However, paying for the new troops required more funds directly from the royal treasury, so 'Abbās had to reform the country's finances as well by taking more lands into direct royal control, often stripping them from rebellious feudal lords. These moves served hand-in-hand with the military reforms to strengthen the central authority of the Shah.¹¹

9 Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", Vol. 6, Chp. 5, p. 264, 268; Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, (London, 2006), pp. 50-72.

10 Iskander Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, trans. Roger M. Savory, (Boulder, 1978), Vol. I, p. 527; Uruch Beg Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, ed. Guy Le Strange, (New York, 1973), p. 52, 209.

11 Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, (Costa Mesa, 2001), pp. 160-176; Laurence Lockhart, "The Persian Army in the Safavi Period", *Der Islam*, 34 (1959), pp. 91-93.

As a person, Shah 'Abbās possessed an energetic character and a lively intelligence. A Carmelite missionary reported:¹²

['Abbās is] of medium height, rather thin than fat, his face round and small, tanned by the sun, with hardly any beard: very vivacious and alert, so that he is always doing something or other. He is sturdy and healthy, accustomed to much exercise and toil: many times he goes about on foot.

Later, the Carmelite Father Thaddeus reported: "He is very clear-sighted, and it is sufficient when discussing business to drop a hint for him to understand everything; and he penetrates to the smallest of niceties."¹³ 'Abbās could be friendly and jovial, but he also had a quick temper. His biographer commented:¹⁴

The character of the Shah contains some contradictions; for instance, his fiery temper, his imperiousness, his majesty and regal splendor are matched by his mildness, leniency, his ascetic way of life, and his informality.

He would quickly dispatch judgement, sometimes administered by his own sword, and nobles accused of corruption or oppressing the people were as likely as any to face his wrath. His harsh justice had a positive effect on commerce; governors were held responsible for clearing the roads of bandits allowing caravans to pass more freely.¹⁵ 'Abbās enjoyed meeting foreign visitors to the country, and he would engage them in discussions of politics, philosophy, religion and warfare. He showed great interest and support for the arts, although not to the obsessive level of Rudolf. During his reign new techniques were developed in pottery and rug-making, both of which had economic benefits in exports. Especially advancing during his reign was painting, which saw a new style led by Āqā Rizā, Rizā 'Abbāsī, and Shafī Iṣfahānī combining European influences with tradition Persian miniature styles.¹⁶ Shah 'Abbās also took a special interest in architecture. He moved the Safavid capital from Qazvīn to Isfahān. For the new capital he commissioned new buildings, filling his city with spectacular

12 *A Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*, [H. Chick, trans. and ed.](London, 1939), p. 158.

13 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 285.

14 Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. 1, p. 529.

15 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 158-159; Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago, 1974; orig. pub. Copenhagen, 1973), pp. 68-73.

16 Sheila Canby, "Farangi Saz: The Impact of Europe on Safavid Painting", in *Silk and Stone: The Art of Asia*, The Third Hali Annual, (1996). pp. 46-59; Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", pp. 274-275; Basil Gray, CHI, "The Arts in the Safavid Period", Vol 6, Chp. 16b, pp. 902-903.

palaces, mosques and public spaces which developed traditional Islamic architecture in a new Safavid style which has impressed visitors with its beauty ever since.¹⁷

These two rulers, Rudolf and 'Abbās, would engage with one another in a series of diplomatic exchanges more than any of their predecessors. They had many similarities, such as their interest in the arts and their steadfast determination to confront the Ottomans, but 'Abbās possessed the energy, balance and mental stability needed for accomplished kingship which Rudolf lacked. They held each other in respect. The Augustinian and Portuguese envoy De Gouvea reported that Shah 'Abbās so "respected the Emperor for waging war on the Ottomans that he kept a portrait of him at the entrance to his bedroom."¹⁸ The backdrop of this war drove their relationship, while even in the midst of war the relationship was expanding into new areas of cooperation beyond the military.

The Long Turkish War

The war between the Austrians and the Ottomans that started in 1593 carried on until 1606. In the Austrian nomenclature it became known as the 'Fifteen Years War' or the 'Long Turkish War' (*Lange Türkenkrieg*).

Since the last war in the 1560s, both sides had built fortifications along the border. Geoffrey Parker described a 'military revolution' which started in the early sixteenth century in Italy which comprised three related aspects: greater use of firepower, the *trace italienne* style of fortification, and larger army sizes.¹⁹ Defences in

17 Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", p. 270; Robert Hillenbrand, CHI, "Safavid Architecture", Vol. 6, Chp. 15b, pp. 774-789.

18 Antoine di Gouvea, *Relation des grandes guerres et victoires obtenues par le roy de Perse Cha Abbas*, trans. from Portuguese, (Rouen, 1646), p. 424.

19 Geoffrey Parker, *The military revolution: Military innovation and the rise of the West, 1500-1800*, (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 6-44, summary p. 43.

Hungary showed all three of these developments.²⁰ These new defences were sophisticated forts, with mutually supporting positions built with the latest military technology. Therefore the main activity of the war was the siege of these forts. Such sieges took most of the campaigning season, leaving little chance for exploitation of any successes. Each siege was costly in terms of casualties and expense, but resulted in little territory gained. The time-line of the war is a catalogue of these sieges: the Turks take Raab in 1594, the Austrians take Gran in 1595, the Austrians reconquer Raab but fail to take Buda in 1598, and so on.²¹

The Imperial army was made up of troops from all over Europe. All of the far-flung Habsburg empire was represented: Hungarians, Italians, Czechs, Germans, and Belgians. But mercenaries came from across the continent and Britain as well. The civil wars in France were ending, and Spain was unable to consistently pay its troops fighting in the Netherlands, so veterans of these conflicts were looking for employment. The Turkish war served as a training ground for many leaders of the later Thirty Years War, such as the Catholic general Tilly. It also saw the development of the system of war entrepreneurs which would play such a role in that later war.²²

Only one large field battle was fought. In 1596 at Mező-Keresztes, the Ottomans who had just captured Erlau ran into the Imperial army sent to relieve the besieged city. The Ottoman army was nearly defeated, for the swampy terrain limited the mobility of their light cavalry. But when the Imperial mercenary troops stopped to plunder the Turkish camp, a final costly Turkish charge routed the Imperial army. This battle was late in the year and winter forced the Turkish army to withdraw, resulting in little profit from their victory. The Imperial army, by the ill discipline of

20 see Géza Pálffy, "The Origins and Development of the Border Defence System Against the Ottoman Empire in Hungary", pp. 49-54; József Kelenik, "The Military Revolution in Hungary", pp. 117-160; and Klára Hegyi, "The Ottoman Network of Fortresses in Hungary", pp. 163-193; all in *Ottomans, Hungarians, and Habsburgs in Central Europe: the military confines in the era of Ottoman conquest*, eds. Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, (Leiden, 2000).

21 V. J. Parry, *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, ed. M.A. Cook, (Cambridge, 1976), p. 116, 119.

22 Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy, A History of the Thirty Years War*, (London, 2009), pp. 83-84; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 247.

their irregularly paid troops, lost its best chance to inflict a serious defeat against the Turkish army.²³

Perhaps of greater strategic importance than events on the battlefield were political shifts in the provinces of Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia. These provinces had been tributaries to the Ottomans, but in 1594 they declared support for the Habsburgs. This defection caused great concern for the Ottomans, who both lost supporters and faced a large hostile territory on the flank of the main war theatre. The three territories worked together to defeat Turkish attempts at invasion, but conflicting interests caused antagonisms between them and with the Habsburgs.²⁴ Zsigmond Bártory, the Prince of Transylvania, wished to resist the Turks, press his claim to the throne of Hungary, and restore Hungarian claims to Wallachia and Moldavia. The Habsburgs asserted a claim to the Hungarian lands based on the marriage treaty with the King of Hungary before he died at the Battle of Mohács in 1526; however, their claim was disputed by the nobility of Hungary and Transylvania. Michael of Wallachia wished to expand his own territories, and to this end his army overran Transylvania in 1599, and Moldavia in 1600, bringing Polish intervention against him. Michael was murdered in 1601 on orders from an Imperial commander, after which for a time it was unclear who was in charge in the region. Meanwhile, Imperial efforts to control Transylvania by confiscating estates and appointing German and Italian officials, and to spread the Counter-Reformation by restricting Protestant religions in Hungary and Transylvania, brought resentment by the locals of the Habsburgs. In 1604 Transylvania, under the new leadership of István Bocskai, the former military leader under Bártory, abandoned the alliance with the Emperor and agreed to support the Ottomans once more. Bocskai managed to combine support from the disaffected Hungarian nobility who were tired of the war and unhappy with the abusive actions of Imperial generals, with the support from the *hajduks*, free peasants of the border areas who provided a valuable military asset to whoever held their loyalty. Bocskai was crowned Prince of Transylvania and King of Hungary by

²³ Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism*, pp. 146-150; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 248.

²⁴ Parry, *Ottoman Empire to 1730*. p. 118-119; Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, (Vienna, 2003), Vol. 1, p. 144.

the Turks in 1605. This swung the balance of power back to the Ottomans at a time when their strength was failing and was a serious blow to the Habsburgs.²⁵

All sides in the conflict were suffering and ready for a way out of the fighting. The Hungarian nobility was tired of warfare on their lands and afraid of Ottoman overlordship. They indicated that they would be willing to come back to the Habsburg fold in exchange for peace and religious concessions. Ottoman territories were riven with revolts and they faced an invasion from 'Abbās on the Persian front as well. Ottoman messengers made tentative peace overtures from 1604. Pressure on the Imperial court was strong enough such that Rudolf authorised his brother, Archduke Matthias, to begin peace negotiations. These led to the Treaty of Vienna on 23 September 1606 between the Habsburg government and the Hungarian aristocracy. It returned Hungary to the Habsburg crown, but granted independence in many areas of finance and religion, and confirmed Bocskai as Prince of Transylvania in exchange for him renouncing the crown of Hungary. Soon thereafter, in November 1606, came the Peace of Zsitva-Torok with the Ottomans. It ended the annual tribute to the Porte from the Emperor and established the two rulers as equals, but it established the border much as it was at the start of the war.²⁶ Rudolf was not satisfied with the treaties; he thought they gave away too much. However, the nobility was ready for an end to the war, and Archduke Matthias led them in opposition to Rudolf. It took a few more years of inter-dynastic conflict to firmly establish the peace.²⁷

First Contact: Warkotsch in Moscow

The first contact between Emperor Rudolf and Shah 'Abbās took place in 1593 in

25 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 249-251; Parry, *Ottoman Empire to 1730*, p. 120; and Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 145-147.

26 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 251-253.

27 Herbert Haupt, "From Feuding Brothers to a Nation at War with Itself", in *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City*, ed. Eliška Fučíkova, et al., Skira, 1997, pp. 238-248; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 253-256

Moscow. In early 1593, as it became obvious war was approaching, Rudolf sent diplomats throughout Europe to rally support. He hoped to create another Holy League to stand united against the Turks, or at least secure contributions towards the enormous cost of the war. One of these diplomats was Nicholas von Warkotsch, who was sent to Russia. Warkotsch was a minor noble in the service of the Habsburgs. He was sent to Russia first in 1588, then again in 1593 and 1594.²⁸ The Russians had their own history of conflict with the Ottoman Turks and so were potential partners. This potential was seen by both the Austrians and the Persians, who maintained regular contacts with their northern neighbour, and who encouraged Russia to attack the Turks in the years while 'Abbās saw to internal problems.²⁹ Warkotsch found the Russians unwilling to go to war with the Turks, but they did agree to send the Austrians valuable furs, the Russian coin in international trade, as a donation to the cause. They also introduced Warkotsch to the Persian ambassador in Moscow.

The Persian ambassador to Moscow, named by Warkotsch as Azi Khosrov, was asking his Russian hosts to meet the Imperial ambassador as soon as Warkotsch arrived in the city.³⁰ Encouraged by the then-regent Boris Godunov, the Habsburg and Persian ambassadors met in Moscow during 1593 and discussed the Turkish issue. Warkotsch reported, "I have also come across the ambassador to Moscow of Shah 'Abbās... We had useful discussions with each-other about ways of wrecking Turkish power."³¹ Warkotsch explained that the Persian Shah had repeatedly tried to build an alliance against the Turks, but it has always been prevented when war draws near. He continues, "Now that the Shah has his ambassador here, he once more reminds me of his frank offer." The Persian ambassador spoke of joining in an effort with the Holy Roman Emperor, the Russian Tsar, and "other potentates" in an alliance against the Turks in the war that may come.³² The Russians were not interested in a three-way

28 Anonymous, *Des Römischen Kaisers Gesandten Niklas Von Warkotsch Reisen Nach Moßkwa: In Den Jahren 1589, 1593 Und 1594*, (Germany, 1840, reprint 2011), p. 1.

29 Rudi Matthee. "Anti-Ottoman Concerns and Caucasian Interests: Diplomatic Relations Between Iran and Russia". In: *Safavid Iran and her Neighbors*. Ed. by M. Mazzaoui. (Salt Lake City, 2003), pp. 101–128.

30 HHStA, Warkotsch to Rudolf, Russland I, 3 (1589-1595), Konv. 4 (1593), fol. 10.

31 HHStA, Warkotsch to Rudolf, Russland I, 3 (1589-1595), Konv. 4 (1593), fol. 5v.

32 HHStA, Warkotsch to Rudolf, Russland I, 3 (1589-1595), Konv. 4 (1593), fol. 10.

alliance, other than taking a few specific fortresses along their frontier, but they did facilitate contact between the Austrian and Persian representatives.³³ This meeting provided Europeans with some of the first information about the new shah.

There are no remaining records indicating additional meetings between Austrian and Persian ambassadors from 1593 until 1600. Such a thing must have been contemplated, since Rudolf continued to imagine a grand alliance and Europe had been hoping for an alliance with Persia to fight the Ottomans throughout the century. Additional diplomatic missions were sent from Prague to Russia - Warkotsch returned the following year 1594 to inquire about the promised contribution and he brought back to Prague a large a Russian embassy with a the gift of furs. In 1597, Abraham von Dohna became the Imperial ambassador to Moscow and the newly-crowned Boris Godunov. Von Dohna advised a later embassy to Persia; however, it is not known if he met with any Persians while he was in Moscow.³⁴ Then in 1600, in the midst of the war, Anthony Sherley inserted himself into the picture.

The Sherley Expedition

The Sherley brothers were sons of English minor nobility, and they made careers for themselves as adventurers, mercenaries, occasionally pirates, trading on their family name and connections to travel the world seeking opportunities. Anthony Sherley and his younger brother Robert were in charge of a mercenary band assembled to fight in the Ferrara succession crisis of 1597, but they were out of work by the cessation of hostilities. While looking for work in Venice, Anthony Sherley heard there may be opportunities for trade or combat in Persia. At this time he met a Persian trader in Venice who told him of the noble character of Shah 'Abbās. Sherley also met a Christian born in Turkey named Angelo who had travelled around the Middle East,

33 J. P. Niederkorn. *Die europäischen Mächte und der 'lange Türkenkrieg' Rudolfs II*, (Vienna, 1993), pp. 455-457.

34 J. P. Niederkorn. *Die europäischen Mächte und der 'lange Türkenkrieg' Rudolfs II*, pp. 457-459.

including the Shah's court, and who spoke many languages and who would act as an interpreter. With these contacts, Sherley decided to mount an expedition to Persia to seek what profit and honour he could find. With a band of 26 others, they travelled across Ottoman-controlled Syria and Iraq disguised as merchants.³⁵

Sherley and company were welcomed warmly by Shah 'Abbās. Anthony Sherley and 'Abbās had many conversations during his stay in Persia, where they discussed religion, geography, history, and warfare, a favourite topic of the Shah.³⁶ As a military commander, Sherley was able to advise 'Abbās on the organization of his army, although the extent of his influence has been exaggerated by some authors.³⁷ The shah appointed Anthony Sherley to go to Europe and speak on the shah's behalf to the heads of various states to enlist support of the European powers against the Turks. 'Abbās had just concluded a successful campaign against the Uzbeks, and so was beginning to ponder returning to war against the Ottomans, and he may have been considering sending an embassy to Europe when Sherley showed up offering his services.³⁸ Whatever the case, he set out with his band for Europe via Russia, along with a Persian ambassador, Ḥusain 'Alī Beg Bayāt, and his own suite of secretaries and servants. Exactly who was in charge of the expedition was a subject of dispute between Sherley and Ḥusain 'Alī Beg, and would create ongoing problems for the mission. Robert Sherley was left behind in Persia as a hostage, although in time he became a trusted member of the shah's court.

By October 1600, the diplomatic party reached Prague. They entered the city to great fanfare, much to the delight of Emperor Rudolf, who always loved spectacle and the exotic. 300 horsemen led by Rudolf's Chamberlain escorted 12 coaches which were sent to carry the travellers from the Star Palace into the city. Ambassadors to the

35 D. W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, (Ithaca, 1967), pp. 74-94.

36 E. Denison Ross, *Anthony Sherley, His Persian Adventure*, (London, 1933), pp. xix-xxii, This book also contains extracts of A. Sherley's own *Relation*, p. 135-139. *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 160.

37 R. M. Savory, "The Sherley Myth", *Iran*, Vol. V, 1967, pp. 73-81.

38 Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, pp. 827-826; Uruch Beg Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, pp. 232-233.

Imperial court from various countries around Europe joined with the procession. Soldiers lined both sides of the street and many citizens of Prague turned out to watch. Rudolf observed the procession from a window in the castle.³⁹

A week after their arrival, the ambassadors had an audience with the Emperor. Sherley's mission, and its suggestion of help in the Ottoman war, thrilled Emperor Rudolf, although other members of his court were puzzled by it. "Why is an Englishman pushing efforts against the Turks when England was aligned with the Turks?" they wondered, and concocted many complicated explanations. Sherley was actually *persona non grata* in Elizabeth's England at the time, but this was not appreciated by the suspicious Imperial courtiers.⁴⁰ The Venetian ambassador in Prague wrote that the other European embassies, "do not much trust this Embassy." He was unimpressed with Sherley's alliance plan, writing, "Grand schemes, impossible to accomplish."⁴¹ The Spanish ambassador worried that the Shah wanted to trade directly with Germany, cutting out Hormuz, Portugal, or Venice as middlemen.⁴²

Meanwhile, Rudolf's advisers debated how to respond to the embassy. The commission given to Anthony Sherley instructed him to negotiate with the Emperor and the Christian Princes concerning war against the Turks, "Against whom ['Abbās] would at present begin to wage war, if only he would be assured that all the burden of the war shall not fall on his shoulders." 'Abbās exhorted European nations to attack the Turks on many fronts, to not make treaties or trade agreements with the Turks, and even if they were unable to join the fight to "remain spectators and covert supporters." Specifically, he wished the cooperating nations not make a separate peace without consulting other members of the alliance: "it will not be legitimate for any of those participating to abandon general hostilities against the Turks, whether by an armistice or some terms of truce or some peace direct, and against the assent of all."

39 Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, p. 275; Franz Babinger, *Sherleiana*, (Berlin, 1932), p. 19.

40 Steensgard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 225-226.

41 Piero Duodo, quoted in Babinger, *Sherleiana*, p. 19. "*Questi non si fidano molto di tale Ambasciata.*"

42 Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 125.

He asks that an ambassador be sent from the Emperor and other princes, and expresses a desire that they stay resident in Isfahan. In exchange, 'Abbās promised to protect and allow freedom of worship to Christians in his lands and to welcome traders from European nations.⁴³ While the language of the commission indicates it was composed by Sherley rather than 'Abbās, related documents maintain the essence was what the Shah intended, and this is the basis on which the embassy negotiated. Despite the advantages offered, the Imperial court was wary about agreeing to the full program as presented. After a month of consideration, Rudolf signed a carefully worded reply. This letter expressed in general his pleasure at receiving the embassy, his acceptance of the offer of friendship, and promised to pursue the war with the Turks with vigour. However, it assiduously avoided agreeing to the interminability of the cooperation and the refusal to make a separate peace. While the reply sounded enthusiastic, it avoided limitations on future actions.⁴⁴

The expedition stayed several months in Prague during which, one member reports, "they entertained us sumptuously." They were shown the Emperor's armoury, jewel-house, galleries, and wild animal cages.⁴⁵ Once they departed in February, the mission eventually travelled on to Rome, where long simmering tensions between Sherley and Ḥusain 'Alī Beg finally boiled over and the two split company. The Persian went on to visit Spain and Portugal, while Sherley pursued other projects. The mission was not the great success that had been hoped, and they were actually denied entry by several countries. But it had succeeded in capturing the imagination of Emperor Rudolf, if no other rulers. It also caught the public's imagination, and in the following years several members of the expedition published accounts of their travels which were widely read in several languages. In addition to the accounts by the European travellers, a book was authored by one of the Persian entourage, Uruch (Ūlūg) Beg Bayāt, who converted to Christianity, took the Christian name Don Juan, and stayed in Spain. These many accounts make this expedition one of the best

43 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 72-73.

44 Steensgard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 226; Gouvea, *Relation*, pp. 423-424.

45 Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, p. 277. Living expenses for the diplomats in Prague covered in HKA, Reichsakten, Fz. 169b, r.Nr. 152, fol. 702-707; NAČR, Karton 779 SM, Packet G 4/1a fol. 38-40.

documented in the period, although disagreements and conflicts between the members mean that even with this documentation it is not always possible to determine everything that happened. Since the Sherley embassy has been widely examined, here I confine my examination of it to the above summary and turn attention to subsequent events which are not so well covered.

The Kakasch/Tectander Embassy to Persia

Emperor Rudolf was excited by the possibilities suggested by Anthony Sherley's embassy. Rudolf, who was facing the strain of his ongoing war of attrition with the Ottoman Turks, was happy to enlist Persian assistance; to this end he sent a diplomatic party with a reply. The embassy, under the leadership of Ambassador Stephan Kakasch, left Prague on the 27th of August, 1602; they arrived in Moscow in November that year. In spring of 1603, they sailed down the Volga and over the Caspian Sea, arriving into Persia on the 8th of August, 1603. There, most of the party became ill and Ambassador Kakasch died on the 25th of October, 1603. His secretary Georg Tectander completed the mission, meeting Shah 'Abbās in Tabriz on the 15th November 1603. After spending some time with 'Abbās and the Persian army in Armenia, in early 1604 Tectander started the journey home in the company of a Persian ambassador. They travelled back through Russia and arrived in Prague at the end of 1604.

Rudolf chose Stephan (István) Kakasch de Zalánkemény to head this embassy. He was a Hungarian from Slan-Kamen on the Serbian Danube who had experience working as a diplomat and court official, and who was available for a difficult and dangerous mission. Kakasch for many years had worked for the princes of Transylvania. In the 1590s he was Secretary to Transylvania's Prince Zsigmond Báthory, and in this role he was used as a diplomat on account of his knowledge of many languages. He became one of the trusted confidants of Prince Báthory and the

personal secretary of his wife, the Austrian princess Maria Christine, one of whose handmaidens Kakasch married. He was sent as a diplomat to the London court of Queen Elizabeth and to the court of the Polish king in Krakow. Later, after Zsigmond had abdicated in favour of his cousin Andreas, in September 1599 Kakasch was sent on an important mission to Emperor Rudolf II. The Báthory dynasty was under threat and the Imperial general Basta was supporting their rival. Rudolf sent him back with an answer for Andreas Báthory after making him wait in Prague for two months. In the meantime, Voivoda Micheal of Walachia had deposed Prince Andreas Báthory and taken over Transylvania. Only by an appeal to the Transylvanian Estates was Kakasch allowed to return to his home in Klausenburg. With the fall of the house of Báthory, Kakasch lost his patron and was unemployed. In the beginning of year 1601 he was forced to sell his house and property in Transylvania and emigrate. He appealed for a position to Emperor Rudolf, who happened at the time to be looking for an ambassador to Shah 'Abbās in Persia, and so Kakasch was given the commission.⁴⁶

Stephan Kakasch brought with him on the journey two assistants. One was named Georg Agelast, about whom little else is known. The other was Georg Tectander, who acted as Kakasch's secretary and who was to play a much larger role in the embassy and who left the primary accounts of the journey.

When he departed on the diplomatic mission, Georg Tectander was a 21 year old scholar from the Sudetenland part of Bohemia. He came from a family of Lutheran scholars and pastors. His Grandfather, who is mentioned in the Forward to his travel account, was born Martin Zimmerman in 1506, but later changed his family name to Tectander. He was a student of Luther and Melanchthon, and was ordained by Luther in 1539. From 1547 he was a pastor and superintendent of the Consistory in Meissen, then in 1558 became the Pastor Primarius in Zittau. He published several scholarly

46 Dorothea Müller-Ott, 'Introduction', *Eine abenteuerliche Reise durch Russland nach Persien, 1602-1604*, by Georg Tectander, (Tullin, 1978), pp. 6-8; also Iskra Schwarcz. ' "Iter persicum" Tectanders und sein Russlandbild'. In: *Russland, Polen, und Oestereich in der Fruehen Neuzeit. Festschrift fur Walter Leitsch zum 75 Geburtstag*. (Vienna, 2003) , pp. 198-199.

works, including a catechism and a respected herbalist manual.⁴⁷ Tectander's father Martin studied at the University of Leipzig and in 1580 became the pastor of Gabel (Jablonné), in Bohemia. There he fathered two sons, Heinrich and, in 1581, Georg.⁴⁸ Through his family connections, Georg Tectander was educated at the Gymnasium in Zittau and then the University of Leipzig.⁴⁹ He was recommended for the position of Secretary to the diplomatic mission in a letter to the President of the Hofkammerer from a Doctor Kramer who had taught Tectander at university.⁵⁰ Tectander was thus a well educated young man, from a respected although non-noble family, embarking on his first job out of university.

Tectander published his account of the journey, and his books are the main source of information about events of this embassy. There are some related documents in the Austrian archives, especially letters Kakasch wrote from Moscow, but these do not cover the conclusion of the mission and the meeting with Shah 'Abbās. For this we must rely on Tectander's accounts. He published three editions of his work. The first was published in Leipzig in 1608.⁵¹ In Tectander's introduction to this first edition, he dedicates the work to his friend and patron, the Saxon ambassador to the Imperial court, Johann Georg Gödelman. After hearing Tectander's stories of his journey, Gödelman convinced Tectander to write his account for publication. This first edition is a simple narration of the events of the journey, with little detail or explanation. A year later, Tectander produced a longer account, which was published in Altenburg in 1609.⁵² The second edition has expanded text, providing details and observations on the lands and cultures he visited. It also contains illustrations, the Latin text of Tectander's oration to Shah 'Abbās, the instructions to Tectander from Kakasch

47 Cornelius Stempel, *Reformation und Konfessionalisierung im oberlausitzischen Zittau. Vergleichende Aspekte*, (Munich, 2006), pp. 73-75.

48 Schwarcz, "Iter persicum", p. 199.

49 R. Wolkan, 'Vorwort', *Georg Tectanders von Gabel Reise nach Persien. Neudruck der Ausgabe vom Jahre 1610*. (Reichenburg, 1889), no page numbers.

50 Georg Tectander, *Iter Persicum, Kurtze doch außführliche und warhafftige beschreibung der Persianische Reiß:...* (Altenburg in Meissen, 1610), p. 2.

51 Georg Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung der Reis von Prag aus... bis an den Königlichen Hoff in Persien:...* (Leipzig, 1608). Republished as *Eine Abenteuerliche Reise Durch Russland nach Persien, 1602-1604*, ed. Dorothea Müller-Ott, (Tullen, 1978).

52 Georg Tectander, *Iter Persicum, Kurtze doch außführliche und warhafftige beschreibung der Persianische Reiß:...* (Altenburg in Meissen, 1609).

shortly before the ambassadors death, and several endorsements including some in verse. Although it was intended to be a deluxe version of the book the production was cheaply done. The paper is thin, and although the print is easily legible, in places it is not well inked, and the dies show holes and excess ink spots. The illustrations, prominently advertised on the title page, are not especially tied to the text; they are mostly of eastern European cities which were passed through in the first few pages. They appear to have been adapted from plates the publisher already had on hand. Despite these shortcomings, the expanded text is of great value. Tectander describes details of life in Tabriz, northern Iran, and Armenia, where he spent time with the Shah's army. He describes the architecture, religious practices, and reactions of the people to the Shah's re-conquest. This is the earliest published description of Persian culture written in the German language, and while there are other European testimonies of Shah 'Abbās' court, this one is distinguished by witnessing the army in the field and describing north-western Iran. A third printing was published in 1610, again in Altenburg, which reproduced the 1609 version with its expanded text.⁵³ Most of the references below are to this 1610 edition.

The Journey

The diplomatic party set out from Prague on the 27th of August, 1602.⁵⁴ Since Ottoman lands lay along the direct routes between the Austrian lands and Persia, and because of the war these could not be crossed, the diplomats had to travel through Russia then down to the Caucasus to Persia. Along the way they stopped in Moscow and several other regional capitals to discuss the war situation. Tectander gave their route passing through the following towns: Schweinitz and Bretzlaw in Silesia, Wartenburg, Welon (Wieluń), Chyestacoa (Częstochowa), and Crackow (Kraków) in Poland, Warsaw, Grodna and Vilna (Vilnius) in Lithuania, Orsa (Orsha, Belarus) and Smolensk in

53 Georg Tectander, *Iter Persicum, Kurtze doch außführliche und warhafftige beschreibung der Persianische Reiß...* (Altenburg in Meissen, 1610). Republished as *Georg Tectanders von Gabel Reise nach Persien. Neudruck der Ausgabe vom Jahre 1610.* ed. R. Wolkan, (Reichenburg, 1889).

54 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 2.

Russia, before reaching Moscow.⁵⁵

As they travelled through Wartenburg, they stayed on the 2nd September with Abraham von Dohna, an old acquaintance of Kakasch who had served as an Imperial diplomat to Moscow. Von Dohna had consulted with Rudolf in the planning for this mission, and he might have been selected to lead the mission himself except that he was very ill. Von Dohna discussed with Kakasch plans for the mission and gave Kakasch a letter for the Grand Duke of Moscow.⁵⁶

They continued on their way, passing through cities in Poland, Lithuania, and into Russia. Along the way they met with local rulers, who were known to Kakasch from his days as a diplomat in Poland. Their way east was slowed by poor roads, bad weather, and a Plague outbreak.⁵⁷ Tectander described several instances when entering into new territories, despite having pass-letters from the Emperor, they were forced to wait for several days to receive permission from the local ruler to continue their travel. They then had to negotiate their way past bands of Cossacks who claimed not to recognise the Emperor.⁵⁸

On the 9th November they reached Moscow; “Praise God” exclaimed Tectander.⁵⁹ They were given food and a place to stay provided by the Grand Prince, Boris Godunov.⁶⁰ A week later, on the 17th of November, Kakasch had an audience with the Grand Prince.⁶¹ Kakasch reported on his meetings in a series of letters written

55 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 3-10.

56 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 4; Schwarcz, “*Iter persicum*”, p. 200.

57 Schwarcz, “*Iter persicum*”, p. 200.

58 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 4-15.

59 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, pp. 15-16.

60 'Grand Prince of Moscow' is an equivalent to 'Tsar of all Russias' at this time, Grand Prince being the older title. Tectander and other seventeenth century Germans tend to use the term Grand Prince (*Großfürst*) so I use it here.

61 In the 1609 and 1610 editions of Tectander's book the date is given as 27 November, but in the 1608 edition it is given as the 17th. The first edition agrees with the date given by Kakasch in his letters to Prague. Iskra Schwarcz examines the contradiction and concludes it is a printing error in the 1609 and 1610 editions. Schwarcz, “*Iter persicum*”, pp. 200-201.

in Moscow to the Hofkammerpräsident Wolf Unverzagt in Prague. While Tectander described the splendour and gold of the Moscow court and the beautiful clothes of the Grand Prince and his son, Kakasch reported on the more substantial issues of the meeting. He made a list of requests: that the Grand Prince provide pass letters through his and neighbouring lands and a guide to lead them, that he write to the Sultan of Astrakhan and request a ship be provided for crossing the Caspian Sea, that someone might help Kakasch learn a bit of the Persian language, that one of the servants be allowed to return to Prague with a letter detailing their progress, and that the Grand Prince give them clearance to continue their travel and help with travel expenses.⁶² Godunov provided them with most of what he asked and more. He paid all their expenses travelling in Russian ruled lands thorough Astrakhan. He also provided two additional servants. Importantly, he gave seven bundles of sable furs and other items as gifts for the Shah.⁶³ He also wrote his own letter to Shah 'Abbās, to be delivered by the diplomatic party. Godunov recognised Russia's growing rivalry with the Ottoman Turks. He had no desire to enter into an open war, especially since his own political situation at home was tenuous. However, he generously aided Rudolf's war efforts; if he could encourage an effort by two of the Ottoman's greatest rivals to jointly fight the Turks, it would keep the Turks occupied away from the Crimea and Russia's southward expansion. Generous support of the diplomatic mission was much less expensive than facing a war of his own.

After staying a month in Moscow the group departed on the 7th of December. They travelled by sled through Vladimir and on to Cassan (Kazan) on the Volga River, arriving Christmas Eve. In Kazan they waited out the winter until the Volga thawed.⁶⁴ On the 11th of May, 1603, they boarded a fleet of seventy Russian ships which were sailing down the Volga to Astrakhan. These sailed down the river through the lands of the Crimean Tartars, who were allied with the Ottomans and technically were at war with Austria; the Tartar Khan had withdrawn personally from the fighting by 1603 but Tartar forces still participated. The Khan had just renewed peace treaties with

62 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 32-38. Kakasch to Prague, HHStA, Persia I, Konv. 3, fol. 3-4, 7-9.

63 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 37-38. "7 Zimmer Sobeln" where 1 Zimmer = 40 pelts.

64 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 61-63.

Godunov and it was through the Russian's protection that the travellers were able to pass safely.⁶⁵ They arrived in Astrakhan at the end of May, and then spent two months making preparations and purchasing supplies to sail across the Caspian Sea to Persia.⁶⁶

In July, they set sail on a ship of a Persian merchant trading across the Caspian Sea. On board, in addition to the diplomatic party were people of various other nationalities, including a Pole named Christoff Pawlowsky, as well as Russians, Tartars, and Turks. Tectander reported speaking with them in a variety of languages, but, on instruction from Kakasch, not mentioning their diplomatic mission. While at sea they ran into a severe storm. After much difficulty they landed on the 8th of August 1603 at Langeran (Langorūd), in the Province of Gilān on the Persian shore of the Caspian Sea.⁶⁷

The Embassy in Persia

Although now in Persia, the group's troubles were just starting. Now they had to make contact with the Shah for permission to travel within the country. The diplomatic group stayed on the Gilān coast, "in poverty and misery", for ten weeks. Tectander described Gilān as "pretty and jovial", but the climate was "very warm and, because it was near the sea, unhealthy". The party had little food and only bad water to drink. While the local Persians did grow grapes, Tectander was dismayed that they did not make wine from them, and thus the travellers were left drinking the local water. Everyone in the group became sick from the conditions, and Tectander's Polish friend from the ship, Pawlowsky, soon died.⁶⁸ Eventually, this sickness would claim the lives of all the party, save Tectander.

65 Karl Max Kortepeter. *Ottoman Imperialism During the Reformation: Europe and the Caucasus*. New York University Studies in Near Eastern Civilization. (London, 1973). pp. 176-180.

66 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 65.

67 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 73-74; Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, pp. 46-47.

68 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 74-75.

The town of Langorūd was not their intended destination, but merely where their ship was forced aground in the storm. Once they landed, Kakasch sent a messenger off to the capital Isfahan announcing their presence and seeking clearance and instructions. However, "as fate would have it," Tectander said, 'Abbās was not in the capital. At that time he was with the army marching to retake Tabriz. Fortunately, the Papal representative to Persia, Francisco di Costa, was in Isfahan and heard of the party's plight. Di Costa wrote to Shah 'Abbās, whereupon 'Abbās sent Robert Sherley, who was now working in the Shah's service, to collect the travellers.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, their situation was turning desperate. Already weakened from the travail of the stormy sea passage, they soon succumbed to sickness, which was aggravated by the lack of supplies and the hot, humid climate which did not agree with the constitution of central Europeans. As they were stricken ill, it became difficult to move to another, perhaps healthier location. When they did move, Tectander reported they carried the sick Kakasch with great difficulty to a town only two miles away. Once they became ill they were stuck, and for most, their fates were sealed.

Once Robert Sherley arrived, he brought Kakasch, Tectander and the other assistants towards Tabriz. However, after only two miles they stopped in the town of Lanzan (Lahījān), on account of Kakasch's weakness. Kakasch lay there for three days before dying on the 25th of October. They buried him, "under a tree at our lodging," Tectander reported.⁷⁰

Before his death, Kakasch summoned his assistants Tectander and Agelast, told them what was in the Emperor's letter of instruction, and asked them to faithfully carry out the mission. Tectander reproduced Kakash's last instructions in his 1609 and 1610 editions. The ambassador first asked them to bury him with Christian songs and prayers. Next, he gave them the letters from the Emperor and Grand Prince Godunov, and asked them to continue carrying the letters to the Shah. He also described the

⁶⁹ Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 76.

⁷⁰ Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 77; Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, pp. 49-50.

sable pelts and other gifts. Then he asked, when they return home that they go to the town of Botzen in Tyrol, where they will find his wife. They should inform her of his death and have her divide his possessions, including providing for his black valet. They should bring these instructions to the Imperial Paymaster and the Hoffkammer President who should see that they are rewarded. He gave them a letter for the Papal Ambassador Di Costa and told them where they may find in his baggage some money to live on. Finally, he enjoined them to be loyal to God and His Imperial Majesty and told them he will pray for God to protect them and bring them success.⁷¹ Tectander presented these instructions in his book as Kakasch's official will, dictated to his secretary who wrote it down. The original document does not survive, other than in Tectander's text. Once returning home Tectander was involved in a legal dispute concerning the legitimacy of Kakasch's final instructions, so it was in his interests to portray them as official as possible.⁷² However, several passages read like the words of a dying man making his peace with the world, so it is likely these were his actual words.

Kakasch requested the local official of the town of Lahījān, named as Mahomet Schephi, to open the ambassador's diplomatic chest upon his death. Inside were the sable pelts, his clothing, and a small amount of money. The official recorded all the contents and sent the list to the Shah. He provided a donkey to transport the sables to the Shah. Tectander took Kakasch's clothes, since he did not have dress of a quality suitable for addressing the Shah as an official Imperial representative.⁷³ They then departed with Robert Sherley the next day, continuing on towards Tabriz. After 5 days travel, the remaining members, the two Russians and the Pole sent by Boris Godunov, and George Agelast, the other German servant of Kakasch, became too sick to continue. They were left behind and died a few days later. Robert Shirley was also called to other duties, leaving Tectander, "all alone in great sorrow and worry."⁷⁴ A young Persian boy with a donkey was sent to guide Tectander to Tabriz. Tectander

71 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 78-82.

72 NAČR, Karton 779 SM, Packet G 4/1a, fol. 44-51.

73 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 82-83.

74 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 85.

hired a Persian translator named Murath who spoke Russian, since Tectander could speak some Russian himself. He had to provide the translator clothes and other needs and pay him weekly, but at least he could communicate.

Tectander arrived at Tabriz on the 15th of November, a week after the city fell to 'Abbās' army after several weeks of siege.⁷⁵ The recapture of Tabriz was one of 'Abbās' primary goals ever since signing the 1590 treaty. Tectander was tired and weak with fever when he arrived, but because he was told the Shah was not staying long in the city he dressed and hurried to the palace. Tectander found Shah 'Abbās in the palace of Tabriz surrounded by "other of his lords and officials of the land".⁷⁶ Tectander described 'Abbās as dressed less well than the others, which matches other descriptions of his plain dress habits.⁷⁷ In fact, Tectander at first did not recognise the Shah, until an old Persian gentleman took Tectander by the hand and led him to 'Abbās. Tectander kissed the Shah's hand and fell to the ground, then 'Abbās bid him to stand. Tectander did not have his interpreter with him, and he worried how he would make his presentation. However, in the court was a Swiss man, apparently a refugee from religious conflict in Switzerland, who had taken up a position in the Shah's court, and he was able to translate from Latin to Persian. Tectander then told how his lord had been sent by the Emperor, about how they had become ill and all the others had died, and that he was charged with delivering the letters. These had to be fetched from the house where Tectander was staying, then 'Abbās was presented with the letters from Emperor Rudolf and the Grand Prince of Moscow along with Kakasch's oration. These were translated into Persian by the Swiss man⁷⁸

Tectander related the following anecdote from his court appearance. After 'Abbās inspected the letters, a Turkish prisoner was brought out and made to kneel on the ground before 'Abbās. A servant brought out two ornamental swords, handed the

75 Capture of Tabriz described in Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, pp. 829-833.

76 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 86-87.

77 For example, Father John Thaddeus in *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, Vol. I, p. 285.

78 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 88-89.

first to 'Abbās, who cut the head off the Turk. Next, 'Abbās called for Tectander to come forward and kneel. The servant handed 'Abbās the second sword. Tectander feared his own life was to be forfeit, and he wondered if there was something in the Emperor's letter that was offensive to the Shah, or if he himself had inadvertently given insult. But 'Abbās laughed and presented him the second sword with a short speech about how the Christians should fight their common Turkish enemy.⁷⁹ Tectander's story fits with other stories, from western visitors and from Persian sources, which indicate 'Abbās had a wicked sense of humour, and he frequently used dramatic and often violent gestures to emphasise his authority.⁸⁰

On the third day after Tectander's arrival in Tabriz, 'Abbās led his army out towards Armenia. Tectander went along in the entourage, riding a "beautiful Arabian horse" given to him by 'Abbās.⁸¹ The army moved through Marant (Marand), Nachszschirvam (Nakhchivan), and Sulpha (Julfa), all of which fell to 'Abbās' army without a fight. Tectander describes the people along the path of the army welcoming Shah 'Abbās and liberation from the Turks with singing and dancing in the streets.⁸² The Persian army then proceeded to siege Irvan (Yerevan), where Turks held out in the fortress.⁸³ Along the journey and at Yerevan, Tectander spent more time conversing with Shah 'Abbās, often dining at his table. Tectander called 'Abbās, "a friendly and jovial Lord."⁸⁴ He mentioned one incident when he was sitting on a carpet on the ground near the Shah. Tectander was dressed in his best clothes, as appropriate for a meeting with the Shah, while 'Abbās was dressed in a simple shirt. A prisoner was brought over, fell to the ground and kissed Tectander's foot, thinking he was the Shah. This evoked laughter from 'Abbās and the court.⁸⁵ Tectander did not reveal the

79 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, pp. 57-58; Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 90-91.

80 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 69-72; Eskander Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. 1, p. 529.

81 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 92.

82 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, p. 60; Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 94-98; Vardapet Arakel of Tabriz describes Shah 'Abbās' passage from an Armenian perspective, *The History of Vardapet Arakel of Tabriz*, trans. George A. Bournoutian, (Costa Mesa, CA, 2005-2006). vol. 1, pp. 24-25.

83 Eskander Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, pp. 833-836, 843-846.

84 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, p. 64. "ein freundlicher und lustiger Herr".

85 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 118-119.

topics of conversation he had with 'Abbās, however, it is known that the Shah liked to engage western visitors in debate on religion and philosophy and inquire about European geography and politics.

Near the end of 1603, 'Abbās determined to send a reply to Emperor Rudolf, updating him on the progress of the campaign. He gave Tectander permission to return home and sent with him a Persian envoy, named by Tectander as Mechtichuli Beeg (Mehdī Quli Beg). At the departure audience, 'Abbās said he heard that the Turks were making peace offers to the Emperor and asked Tectander to urge Rudolf to make no peace with the Turks. The Persian army, he said, was taking lands and fortresses from the Turks, and this would hurt their ability to make war in Hungary.⁸⁶ 'Abbās presented Tectander with gifts of 900 Reichs Talern in gold coins, a Persian-style sword, the horse mentioned above, and "kingly Persian clothes which he himself ('Abbās) wore on his body."⁸⁷ Tectander was being honoured; the clothes were part of a Persian tradition of *keḷ'at*, opulent clothes given from Shah's wardrobe as a sign of respect. The money, given in part to cover his travel expenses, and the sword were to become part of a legal dispute once Tectander returned to Prague. Some members of the Imperial Court insisted since he was not the official ambassador he must hand over the gifts he received; Tectander appealed to the Emperor in order to keep them, arguing that he had been duly deputised by Kakasch and he had carried out the duties of an ambassador.⁸⁸ There is not a record of how the dispute was concluded; however, the evidence is that Rudolf was favourably inclined toward Tectander. In a later letter to the Shah, Rudolf commends the Shah for his treatment of Tectander: "We are told by a servant that our delegate died on the journey, and that he [Tectander] was received humanely ... which for us was pleasant and a delight."⁸⁹ So it is likely that Rudolf ruled in Tectander's favour and allowed him to keep the gifts bestowed by 'Abbās.

86 HHStA, Heinrich von Logau to Barvitius, Persica I, Konv. 3, 16 v.

87 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, p. 117. Willem Floor, "Keḷ'at", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Vol. XVI, Fasc. 2, pp. 226-229, online edition pub. (May 2013).

88 HHStA, Tectander to Rudolf II, Persica I, Konv. 3, fol. 18-23; NAČR, Karton 779 SM, Packet G 4/1a, fol. 44-51.

89 Rudolf II to Shah 'Abbās, Oct. 1605, in J. Hammer, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. IV, p. 675.

The journey back to Prague was no less arduous than before. To avoid a Turkish held fortress and the snow-covered mountains of the Caucauses, Tectander and Mehdi Quli-beg took a ship across the Caspian Sea from Azerbaijan toward Astrakhan. But the ship wrecked on a small island in the sea, and the envoys were forced to walk across the sea-ice to land. In spring they made the way up the Volga, then to Moscow. While in Moscow they rendezvoused with Heinrich von Logau, the Imperial ambassador to Russia who was just arriving in Moscow. Together they had an audience with the Grand Prince. Then they journeyed on to Narva, took a Swedish ship to Stettin, and returned to Prague at the end of 1604.⁹⁰ Tectander finished his mission by reporting to Emperor Rudolf on 8 January 1605.⁹¹

Significance

In terms of diplomatic outcomes, the Kakasch/Tectander mission had very little significance. Actions in neither Persia nor the Holy Roman Empire were altered through this diplomacy. By the time Tectander delivered Rudolf's letter, Shah 'Abbās had already embarked on his war against the Ottomans. The embassy did little to change the course of the Persian advance, nor did Tectander negotiate any significant strategy. Once Tectander returned to Prague his report was certainly considered by the court; however, his conveyance of 'Abbās' requests for greater Christian efforts came to nothing, since by 1605 the war situation was turning bad for the Imperial forces and other concerns predominated.

'Abbās had long planned to attack the Ottomans, and in 1603 an opportune time had come. Already in 1602, 'Abbās promised the Augustinian friar Antonio De Gouvea that he would attack the Ottomans before De Gouvea left Iran.⁹² 'Abbās had dealt with the internal stability of his kingdom, then faced the Uzbek threat on his eastern border; now he could turn his full attention to the Ottomans. Disaffection with

⁹⁰ Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 123-144.

⁹¹ HHStA, Tectander to Rudolf II, Persica I, fol. 18.

⁹² John M. Flannery, *The Mission of Portuguese Augustinians to Persia and beyond (1602-1747)*, (Leiden, 2013), p. 59.

the war in Hungary and the economic difficulties it brought led to revolts in Asia Minor against the Ottoman government. This weakness in the Ottoman Empire gave 'Abbās an advantage in attacking soon.⁹³ The specific opportunity to attack occurred in September 1603, when a Kurdish chief rebelled against the Ottoman governor of Tabriz. The governor went out with most of his troops to put down the rebellious vassal, leaving the city virtually undefended. The Kurdish chief sent a letter to 'Abbās informing him of the situation, and 'Abbās seized the chance to assemble his troops and march on the lightly defended city.⁹⁴ Thus, 'Abbās made his decision to attack before receiving Rudolf's letter. Indeed, it was 'Abbās' departure with the army that led to Kakasch and the rest waiting on the shore of the Caspian Sea for so long.

One result of the embassy was that the arrival of an official emissary with a reply from the Emperor encouraged 'Abbās to think that he could rely on Christian cooperation more than turned out to be the case. When Ḥusain 'Alī Beg returned in 1602 he conveyed Rudolf's promise to prosecute the war in Hungary against the Ottomans until he achieved victory.⁹⁵ Tectander's arrival fulfilled the Emperor's promise to send an ambassador, and his offer of friendship from Rudolf further encouraged 'Abbās that he could count on Christian cooperation. 'Abbās had heard rumours that the Turks were offering peace negotiations to Rudolf, but Tectander's arrival eased his fear that he would be left fighting alone.⁹⁶ This encouragement could help to explain the vociferousness of his feeling of betrayal at the Treaty of Zsitvatorok. As will be shown later in this chapter, Rudolf's wishes and Tectander's diplomacy counted for little in the peace treaty between the Austrians and the Ottomans.

Arguably of greater significance than the diplomatic outcomes were the

93 V. J. Perry, *History of the Ottoman Empire*, p. 120, 103-131.

94 Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, pp.827-828; Colin Imber, "The Battle of Sufiyan, 1605: A Symptom of Ottoman Military Decline?" in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 2012), p. 92.

95 Gouvea, *Relation*, pp. 423-424.

96 HHStA, Heinrich von Logau to Barvitius, Persica I, 16 v.

cultural contacts between central Europe and Persia. In a direct way, the travellers interacted with people in other lands, and the universally human tragedy of Kakasch succumbing to a fatal disease would certainly have exposed at least a few of the local Persians to the humanity of the Christian west. Such sympathy can be seen in the actions of the Mayor of Lahījān where Kakasch died. But it was Tectander's books that left the most lasting legacy, giving a German audience a glimpse of Safavid Persia and other eastern countries.

Travel Writing

While literature has always contained travellers' tales, during the Renaissance, first-hand accounts of travel to foreign lands became an important genre. By the sixteenth century there was at least some effort to separate fact from fiction. Editors like Hakluyt excluded the fantasies of John Mandeville, while Francis Bacon encouraged travellers to write to provide the foundations of scientific and philosophical studies.⁹⁷ Tectander's books contributed to this growing tradition. While there were many forms of travel writing, Renaissance literature scholar William Sherman says, "By the end of the sixteenth century, however, the most characteristic form was the 'report' or 'relation', which combined a chronological narrative of movements and events with geographic and ethnographic observations."⁹⁸ This was exactly the form of Tectander's books, especially the revised editions. Since Tectander was well-educated and from a scholarly family, it is probable that he was familiar with this literary trend and perhaps he revised his initial, more narrative account to better fit the 'relation' form. Sherman goes on to say, "The narrative voice in these texts could be either strongly first-person (as with Coryate) or strongly third-person (as with Harriot)."⁹⁹ Interestingly, Tectander combines both of these in his writing.

97 Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. eds. Hulme and Youngs, (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 2-4. Cambridge Companions Online <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CCOL052178140X>.

98 William H. Sherman, "Stirrings and Searchings (1500-1710)", in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*. eds. Hulme and Youngs, Cambridge, 2002, p. 30.

99 Sherman, "Stirrings and Searchings", p. 30.

The narrative structure of Tectander's writings projects an arc of his personal growth. The first half of the book is written almost exclusively in third-person, with Tectander as an almost invisible narrator. Kakasch is the actor; Tectander merely reports. Occasionally he uses the subject 'we', as in, "Thereafter the second day we came to Breslau," but in these cases Tectander is just one of the group, not an agent in his own right.¹⁰⁰ More often he attributes group activity to Kakasch, as in, "By the following 11th September the Imperial Ambassador had ridden through Masovia, Lithuania, and White Russia," or simply reports the actions of, "mein Herr...".¹⁰¹ This writing reflects Tectander's role as secretary, not decision-maker. The crisis came when they land in Gilān and everyone else dies. Tectander is alone, thus he is forced to become an agent. His language shifts to first-person. The subject is now Tectander, as in, "I announced to him in Latin...".¹⁰² He begins to describe his inner thoughts, such as his uncertainty and then fear at his first audience with 'Abbās, something not present in the earlier section. As he travels back with his Persian companion he again writes his sentences with 'we', but this is not the passive 'we' of the earlier section. Now he is active in making decisions and the rest of the entourage is following his lead. He has grown from passive adolescence at the start of the journey to active agency at its end.

This arc of personal growth is most clear in the first edition of his book. The later editions are more heavily edited and much more description is added amongst the basic narrative. However, his own development can be sensed in his cultural descriptions of the later editions. In Persia he is acutely aware that he is alone; he is the outsider observing a functioning culture going about its business. He describes what he sees without imposing value-judgement. He reports on mosques and religious services, funeral rites, and other religious issues, as well as dining habits and foods. He transcribed the *adhān* call to prayer as best he could and he wrote about people washing their face and hands before praying. At times he admits he was not able to

100 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, p. 3, "Hernachter den andren tag seynd wir gen Breßlaw".

101 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, p. 6, "Folgens den 11 Septembris ist der Keyserliche Legatus per Masoviam, Lithvaniam & Albam Russiam gereiset".

102 Tectander, *Kurtze und warhafftige beschreibung*, 1608, p. 55, "Ich ihme auff Latein vermeldet...".

see certain things, and either that he is reporting what he was told or that he just does not know.¹⁰³ This contrasts with his description of the Tartar nomads around Astrakhan. There he was clearly judgemental. He wrote that they did not grow crops to make bread, they did not use coins, and that they sold their family members for sheep and horses. He called them a "barbaric people" and concluded, "In summary, it is a very wicked and untrustworthy race."¹⁰⁴ At the time of his encounter with the Tartars, Tectander was still a servant in a group of westerners. He was free to compare their ways with his own culture because he was still surrounded by his own cultural group. Only after he went through the crisis of losing his cultural group was he forced to recognise his position as an outsider. As he grew in agency he also gained the possibility of objectivity.

Tectander's travel account became overshadowed by much more exhaustive treatments by others later in the century. However, when it was published it was a valuable glimpse for the German-speaking world into the culture of the east. The fact that it went through three printings indicates that it was met by a receptive audience. Even today, although it is not as well known as the later works by Olearius or Chardin, it remains valuable for its look at Shah 'Abbās on campaign.

Persian Ambassadors in Prague

By 1603, Shah 'Abbās had determined the time was right to start his war with the Ottoman Empire. The ongoing war in Hungary had led to financial strains, internal revolts and a decline in loyalty of Ottoman troops; to 'Abbās these troubles signalled that the Ottoman adversary had been weakened to the point where his revived Persian army could reclaim the territory lost in the previous war.¹⁰⁵ He was very interested in obtaining Christian cooperation in confronting the Ottomans with a multi-front

103 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 100-112 for his observations on Persian life, as well as other comments throughout his text.

104 Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, 1610, pp. 67-72.

105 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 230-236; Parry, *History of the Ottoman Empire*. pp. 120-122.

threat, and to this end he launched a major diplomatic initiative to the countries of Europe. Over the course of 1603, at least seven Persian ambassadors were dispatched to Europe, an unprecedented effort in the European-Persian relationship. Among these embassies were: *Allah Verdi Beg*, who was accredited to the Spanish court but went by sea no further than the Portuguese colony in Goa, who returned him with their own representative after discussing trade matters but not the war; *Bastam Qulī Beg*, who was sent to the Pope accompanied by the papal representative Miranda, but he died on route to Europe; *Hasan Beg*, who was sent to France, but he was denied admission by the French king who was allied with the Ottomans, and he eventually ended up in Prague; and *Zainal Khān Shāmlū*, and later, *Mehdī Qulī Beg*, who were sent to Emperor Rudolf's court in Prague.¹⁰⁶

The Persians Visit Prague

Zainal Khān Shāmlū departed Persia sometime in mid-1603 and did not arrive in Prague until July 1604, thus his travel overlapped that of Kakasch and Tectander. He embarked while Kakasch's party was travelling through Russia, and did not arrive until after Tectander had already met with 'Abbās. Neither party was aware of the other until they arrived at their destination, and so the letters each bore could not address issues brought by the other. This was one more example of the limitations on East-West diplomacy imposed by the distance and difficulty of travel at the time.

Zainal Khān arrived with his entourage in Prague on the 19th of July, 1604 to much fanfare. He and his party of 30 servants were given an escort of over one thousand men, mounted and on foot.¹⁰⁷ Reports liken the arrival and procession across town to a parade. Certainly, the Habsburg monarchs were noted for the use of elaborate processions to express their power. The exotic, foreign nature of the embassy would have elevated Zainal Khān above other more mundane ambassadors

¹⁰⁶ Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 237-242.

¹⁰⁷ Franz Christoph Kevenhiller, *Annales Ferdinandeï*, vol. VI, (Leipzig, 1721), p. 2821.

as an opportunity for a spectacle.¹⁰⁸

The Persians met Emperor Rudolf a week later on the 26th of July, when they were received in the palace. A small clash of cultures occurred when the Persians entered and sought to show their respect to the Emperor. The ambassador tried to kiss Rudolf's foot, in the Persian fashion of showing subservience to the ruler. At first Rudolf was shocked, and withdrew his foot, offering his hand instead for the ambassador to kiss. Then the Persian servants were admitted and they came forward on all fours, and Rudolf allowed them to kiss his foot. The Papal Nuncio remarked, "This form of respect raised a smile from His Majesty, who hadn't been seen to smile in public for twenty years."¹⁰⁹ The exchange obviously made an impression because several observers narrate the event.¹¹⁰ Zainal Khān had a short, but pleasant audience with the Emperor. The Persians presented Rudolf gifts of carpets and silk. It appears nothing of substance was discussed at this first meeting, for the reports describe "exchange of pleasantries" and "magnificent entertainment", without mentioning discussion of political topics. However, after the meeting with the Emperor concluded, the ambassador had a more substantial meeting with Ferreri, the Papal Nuncio. The two discussed several topics in this meeting. They covered Papal relations with Persia, where Ferreri expressed a desire to see more Catholic orders established in Persia. They also discussed the lack of an Imperial representative in Persia, in contrast with the Vatican and Spain which had sent semi-permanent representatives. Ferreri informed Zainal Khān that an Imperial ambassador, Kakasch, was under way. Finally, the Persian ambassador complained that the Spanish King promised to go to war with the Turks, but he had not done so yet.¹¹¹

The Persians were housed in a residence owned by the innkeeper, Georg

108 *Die Prager Nuntiatur des Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland*. Ed. by A. O. Meyer. Vol. IV. 3. (Berlin, 1913), no. 259, p. 181.

109 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 264d, p. 185.

110 Victor von Klarwill, ed., *Fugger News-Letters: First Series*, trans. Pauline de Chary, (London, 1924), p. 270.

111 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 264d, p. 186.

Mayer. Mayer provided housing in Prague for a number of foreign ambassadors. He kept detailed records of expenses, but then spent the next ten years trying to obtain his promised compensation from the court.¹¹²

Zainal Khān wanted to deliver his message to the Emperor, obtain a reply and quickly depart for home; however, things in the Imperial court did not move so quickly. Shah 'Abbās had requested a promise that the Christians would keep fighting the Turks, and that they would consult 'Abbās before making peace. This would be in line with the minimal expectation for a military alliance, and would not allow the Turks to shift all their forces away from Hungary to face Persia. But Rudolf and the court were hesitant to make this promise. The war was putting a strain on Imperial resources. Already there were tentative offers of peace coming from the Ottomans, and some in the court were encouraging these offers to be accepted.¹¹³ Rudolf was indecisive, as ever, and the court was divided. Already by the 9th of August, Zainal Khān was requesting that he be given leave to return home.¹¹⁴ But the Emperor kept postponing his departure. Instead, Rudolf arranged many activities for the ambassador, such as troop reviews and banquets.¹¹⁵

Eventually, word came from Moscow that another Persian diplomat was on his way to Prague; this was Mehdī Qulī Beg travelling with Tectander.¹¹⁶ Zainal Khān's departure could be postponed until they heard the news from the new envoy.

Mehdī Qulī Beg arrived in Prague on the 20th of December, 1604. Hasan Beg, another Persian ambassador who had been sent to France but was denied entry, also arrived in Prague earlier in that month. They were all housed in the same quarters

112 HKA, Reichsakten, Fz.194, r.Nr. 177; Fz. 194, f. 116; Fz. 169b, r.Nr. 152, f. 698-714.

113 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, pp. 191-193.

114 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 272d, p. 197.

115 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 275b, h, pp. 204, 208.

116 HHStA, Heinrich von Logau to Barvitius, Persica I, 16-17; Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 304c, p. 231.

with Zainal Khān, their entourages completely filling the guest-house.¹¹⁷ Thus, for a while the Prague court hosted three Persian ambassadors, which pleased Rudolf, who was always eager to demonstrate the superiority of the Imperial court. Mehdī Qulī Beg had an audience with Rudolf on the 8th of January, 1605 where he presented a letter from 'Abbās detailing his progress in the war, the capturing of Tabriz and 57 other places. He gave Rudolf gifts including several elaborate Persian shields, covered in silk with Persian inscriptions, which helped emphasise the military nature of the embassy.¹¹⁸ He explained to Rudolf that after the conquest of Armenia, 'Abbās had treated the Christians there well and bestowed rich gifts on the Armenian church. In the days after the official audience Mehdī Qulī Beg met with the heads of the court diplomatic and intelligence services.¹¹⁹ Ferreri hosted all three ambassadors to dinner, and he reported Mehdī Qulī Beg was particularly friendly towards the Catholic religion, while the other two were more restrained.¹²⁰ Ferreri also spoke with an Armenian member of Mehdī Qulī Beg's party about the conditions and 'Abbās' treatment of the Armenian Church. Ferreri hoped the Pope would send a Catholic archbishop to take charge of the Armenian Church.¹²¹

During the winter months the ambassadors could be easily delayed because the weather was not appropriate for travel, but come spring they were begging to be given leave to return home. Rumours circulated they would depart without formal leave. Rudolf kept postponing their departure while he and the court pondered how to reply.¹²² Rudolf also hoped to send an emissary of his own with the returning Persians, but arrangements for this mission were delayed. Meanwhile, in 1605, the military situation was turning quite bad for the Imperial forces. Stephan Bocskay was now in charge in Transylvania and switched allegiance to the Ottomans. In addition to its own strategic value, this move also caused unrest in many Hungarian areas. The

117 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 337, p. 258; no. 344e, pp. 264-266.

118 These shields are now in the collection of the *Livrustkammaren*, The Royal Armoury in Stockholm, after they were taken in the Thirty Years War. Inventory numbers: 10607, 10608, 7032, 7084.

119 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 344e, pp. 264-266; no. 356, p. 274; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 239.

120 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 382c, p. 316.

121 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 382e, p. 317.

122 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 240.

Turks took advantage to conduct an offensive which recaptured the fortresses of Visegrad and Esztergom, thus erasing the main Imperial strategic gains from the war.¹²³ Ferreri speculated that Rudolf was waiting for a victory he could report to the Shah before sending the Persian ambassadors home.¹²⁴

Many voices in the court and the nobility were calling for a peace settlement. Members of the Habsburg family, led by Rudolf's brother Mathias, supported the peace faction and threatened to remove Rudolf as Emperor if he did not support negotiations with the Turks. But there were also equally strong proponents of continuing the war, notably the papal nuncio Ferreri, and perhaps the personal feelings of Rudolf himself. Rudolf contacted Anthony Sherley in Italy to ask for advice in responding to the Persian diplomacy. Sherley provided analysis of events, forwarded information he obtained from the English ambassador in Constantinople regarding famines and riots occurring in Turkey, and generally encouraged Rudolf to keep fighting. After an exchange of letters, in July of 1605 Rudolf brought Sherley to the court in Prague.¹²⁵ Throughout the summer of 1605, while these debates were carried out, the Persian ambassadors were kept waiting in Prague.

Finally, on the 31st of October, 1605, the Persians had their farewell audience. Ferreri also attended the audience and bid them farewell. Rudolf gave the ambassadors gifts worth 12,000 florins, although Ferreri does not mention what those were. Rudolf also gave them a letter for Shah 'Abbās professing his intentions to continue fighting the Turks and to send an embassy the following year. He also expressed these assurances to the ambassadors personally. Ferreri describes, "The Persian ambassadors were released full of hope for the war."¹²⁶ However, despite his assurances, on the same day Rudolf gave instructions to start peace negotiations with the Turks.¹²⁷

123 Kortepeter, *Ottoman Imperialism*, pp. 188-204.

124 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 382e, p. 317.

125 Letters in HHStA, Handschriften Weiß 290, Band XI; see also Franz Babinger. *Sherleiana*, Berlin, 1932, pp. 35-37; Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 431b, p. 378.

126 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 602. p. 555.

127 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 601c, e, pp. 552-554; no. 602. 555; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 240-241.

The Persians faced a long and difficult trip home. Two of the ambassadors travelled to the Baltic then over the sea to Russia; the other travelled overland through Poland and rendezvoused with Carmelite missionaries, before meeting the others in Moscow. The trip was made all the more difficult by the political unrest in Russia following the death of Boris Godunov in April 1605. They were detained in Kazan and Tsaritsin along with a part of the Carmelite mission, and did not reach the Caspian Sea to sail for home until August 1607. Zainal Khān was refused passage through Russia and returned home by a different route. He visited the Netherlands and arrived home via a ship from Portugal shortly before May 1609.¹²⁸ By the time the ambassadors returned home, news had already made the messages they carried obsolete. Rudolf was forced to sign the Peace of Zivta-Torok in November 1606, breaking his promises to Shah 'Abbās.

After their return, the two ambassadors sent to Rudolf's court went on to high positions in the service of Shah 'Abbās. Mehdī Qulī Beg was reported by the Carmelites in 1609 to have, "come into great favour and been made *Head Gatekeeper* and lieutenant of 'Alī Qulī Khān..."¹²⁹ Zainal Khān had an even more illustrious career. He was an ambassador to the Moghul court of Jahangir, he successfully led a defence of Baghdad against a Turkish attempt at recapture, and for that he was promoted to Commander-in-Chief of the army (*ishīk-āqāsī-bāshī*). However, he was executed along with many other high officials of 'Abbās' court when 'Abbās' grandson Safi became Shah in 1629.¹³⁰

Activity of the Prague Court

The difficult diplomatic situation in which the Imperial court found itself in 1605 occasioned evaluation of the goals and potentials of their diplomatic contacts,

128 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 107-112; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 241-242.

129 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 169.

130 Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 74, 200-201; Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, p. 1194, 1172, 1283, 1309.

including, since it was pushed to the fore by the presence of the ambassadors, the Persian diplomacy. The main decision facing the court was whether to continue the Turkish War or seek peace terms. Many military, diplomatic and domestic considerations pushed towards seeking an end to the war. Against this had to be weighed the potential for gains to be brought about by a new military alliance with Persia.

Unfortunately, the records from Rudolf's court are incomplete. After his reign the court moved to Vienna, and most of the records from his period were moved as well. Many were lost in this process. Other records remained in Prague, a city which suffered during the Thirty Years War, once again resulting in more records lost. The result is that records from Rudolf's court are uneven; some documents exist while others are missing in an almost random fashion. Details of court debates are therefore difficult to piece together and must rely on tiny bits of evidence.

In addition to the Imperial court records, another type of official records are reports sent from other diplomats in Prague to their homes. Perhaps the most important of these is the letters of the representative from the Vatican. The correspondence of Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, the Nuncio from 1603-1606 is especially extensive and detailed. It covers all aspects of events in the court, and helps reveal the activities there in the absence of many of the court documents. Ferreri reports frequently about the Persian ambassadors, both on their activities in Prague and issues raised by them for the court. Ferreri spent much time with the Persians, taking it upon himself to become their unofficial host, and frequently inviting them to dinner.¹³¹ He had his own particular interests he raised with them. He wished to see the establishment of a Carmelite mission in Isfahan, and to further this goal he introduced Zainal Khān to Carmelite missionaries in hopes that they could travel back to Persia together.¹³² He was also concerned about the spread of Calvinists into Persia, and he urged Shah 'Abbās through his diplomats to allow only Christian churches approved

¹³¹ Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 275h, p. 208.

¹³² Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 268a, p. 193.

by Rome into his lands, and asked Rudolf to stop Calvinist missionaries from travelling.¹³³ Ferreri was keen to see the war against the Turks continued, and thus he was delighted at the prospects of an alliance with Persia. He worried that the Sultan makes peace offers, "...to separate the Kaiser and the Shah, for both united are too much for him."¹³⁴ Ferreri was a powerful influence at the heart of the court, and he had personal interest in the Persian embassy, so his reports are some of the best records of the Persian visit.

The Habsburg court had many divisions and opposed interest groups, for instance: Protestants versus Catholics, moderate Catholics versus staunch Tridentine Catholics, regional lords versus centralised monarchy, different regions and nationalities versus each other. The interplay of these different loyalties often created unlikely alliances as groups looked to maximise their current self-interests. The question of continued war or negotiated peace with the Turks was no exception. The Protestant Hungarian lords supported the Catholic Archduke Matthias over his more moderate brother on the peace negotiations because they felt they could leverage their support to get concessions from Matthias. The art of ruling the multi-ethnic, multi-religious Holy Roman Empire came down to balancing these different interest groups. After 1600, as Rudolf became more reclusive, he was increasingly outmanoeuvred in these negotiations.

One great division that coloured all other issues in the court was the feud between Emperor Rudolf and his brother Archduke Matthias. Matthias was ambitious and always looking for ways to increase his personal power; Rudolf was proud of his office, introverted and increasingly paranoid about threats to his power. Their contrasting characters set them out for conflict. As Herbert Haupt writes, "During the Turkish Wars, Rudolf's long-standing mistrust of his brother Matthias evolved into

133 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 276, p. 210.

134 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, p. 193. "er will Ks. und Schah trennen, da ihm beide vereint zu viel sind."

open enmity and hatred."¹³⁵ Matthias looked for ways to undermine his brother's power. In 1600, when Rudolf's mental state was at its most erratic, Matthias called together the other Archdukes in the town of Schottwien to discuss the Emperor's sanity and prepare possible moves to replace him.¹³⁶ Despite Rudolf's mistrust, he put Matthias in charge of the military for the Turkish war, a role for which he proved to be ill-suited. After his inept leadership led to the military stalemate and his sanctioning of Counter-Reformation forces contributed to the crisis in Transylvania and Hungary, Matthias took advantage of the situation to support efforts towards a peace settlement against the wishes of his brother.¹³⁷ The dispute between the brothers would be a fulcrum around which the discussion of peace talks would rotate.

Supporters of the peace initiative included a variety of court officials and military leaders, as well as many people from other social classes. Wolf Unverzagt, the President of the Aulic Council, was called by Ferreri a leader of the peace party. Ferreri accused him of delaying shipments of weapons to the army in order to undermine the military situation.¹³⁸ However, Ferreri may have been mistaken, since Unverzagt was usually a close confidant of Rudolf and an opponent of the more militant Bishop Khlesl on many religious matters.¹³⁹ Unverzagt's support of the peace initiative may have been a principled stance on what he thought was the best advice he could give his Imperial patron in the situation, rather than more devious political manoeuvring. Khlesl, on the other hand, was the Bishop of Vienna, a supporter of the Counter-Reformation who intrigued to increase Catholic control over politics and education, and the architect of Archduke Matthias' policies.¹⁴⁰ Khlesl pushed his protégée Matthias into the peace process in order to increase their joint power, even though that meant defending the same Protestant nobles he usually fought against. The court Steward, Fürstenberg was also pressing for the peace process. Ferreri complained that Fürstenberg and Unverzagt wrote to the Curia accusing the Pope of

135 Haupt, "Feuding Brothers", p. 238.

136 Midelfort, *Mad Princes*, pp. 131-132 ff.; Evans, *Rudolf II*, p. 60.

137 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 248-249.

138 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, p. 192.

139 Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 61-62.

140 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 237.

undermining their peace work with his financial support for the war.¹⁴¹ General Tilly, who found fame in the Thirty Years War but who was at this time commander of the Imperial artillery, was also an advocate of seeking peace. He wrote repeatedly to the Emperor complaining of the condition of the army and the lack of discipline of the soldiers. These conditions, he argued, required the Emperor to make peace quickly.¹⁴² Other military leaders expressed similar worries, as did Serra, the Nuncio in Vienna. He wrote, "One expects the coming of peace, because the Emperor with the Hungarian nobility, and the Sultan with the Persian war, are both in need of a rest."¹⁴³

In addition to some of the high nobility, other members of Austrian society expressed their displeasure with the war and its demands. In the late sixteenth century taxes had already been raised to pay for the construction of the frontier defences. With the outbreak of war, in 1595 the government decreed a 'levy of the tenth man', which required one man out of every ten volunteer for military service and the remaining nine in the village pay for his support. After the defeat at Mező-Keresztes in 1596, to this was added 'the levy of the fifth man'. At that point, the demands on the peasantry were too much for them to bear and they organised themselves, selecting both political and military leaders. While the political representatives brought their grievances to Rudolf and Matthias, other bands pillaged a few castles. The rebels were soon violently put down and Catholic authorities used the opportunity to implement Counter-Reformation policies, but the message was received and Matthias rescinded the 'fifth man' levy.¹⁴⁴

On the other side of the issue were various advisers who saw an opportunity to defeat the Turks decisively. Ferreri was clearly one of these; the tone of his letters make clear he hopes the Emperor will continue the war and that he finds

141 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 304a, p. 229.

142 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 264b, pp. 184-185; 267e, p. 192.

143 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 598b, p. 548.

144 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 205-206; Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 45, 97; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 482, illus. p. 51.

contemptuous those advocating peace negotiations.¹⁴⁵ However, Ferreri despite his access had limited influence over Rudolf, since the nuncio represented the Vatican, which Rudolf jealously perceived as a rival to Imperial power.¹⁴⁶ More influential was the court secretary Andreas Hanewaldt, who was a trusted adviser and who argued that those proposing peace negotiation be treated as traitors.¹⁴⁷ The Pope and the Spanish King both opposed peace talks.¹⁴⁸ Both contributed funds to its prosecution, although the Spanish King never committed troops despite frequent suggestions. Pope Clement VIII was an enthusiastic supporter of the war, and he tried repeatedly - albeit unsuccessfully - to persuade other nations to join a Holy League alliance. His death in March 1605, followed by the quick death of his successor Leo XI, threw Church support into disarray just at the critical decision time. General Basta seems to have defied the trend of military leaders pushing for peace talks. The peace-leaning Serra described him as "disgruntled" by the negotiation and "not so peaceful".¹⁴⁹ However, his views were tempered, for he also advised the Emperor that the province of Transylvania was bringing less than 100,000 Taler but cost over 360,000. He was more pragmatic, dedicated as a soldier to continue fighting but recognizing the difficulties.

At the centre of these swirling arguments sat Rudolf. His personal feelings inclined him to continue the fight; however, it was his crown that was under threat. As the arguments intensified, Rudolf appears to have suffered another bout of depression in the spring of 1605. He kept petitioners waiting for hours while he hid away in the castle. He told his confessor Pistorius, "I know for certain that I belong to the devil."¹⁵⁰ He also accused Matthias and his advisor Khlesl of bewitching him.¹⁵¹

The Persian entry into the the war stiffened Rudolf's opposition to the peace effort. The Papal nuncio noticed a change in the court's mood in response to the news

145 for instance: Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 601e, pp. 553-554.

146 Evans, *Rudolf II*, pp. 87-88.

147 Herbert Haupt, "Feuding Brothers", p. 239.

148 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, p. 192.

149 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 598c, p. 548.

150 Midelfort, *Mad Princes*, p. 137.

151 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 399c, p. 322; 413b, p. 364.

of 'Abbās' attack on Tabriz. In a letter to Matthias, Rudolf explained his opposition to the peace talks. In addition to stating his mistrust of the Turkish negotiations and the help expected from other European rulers, Rudolf highlighted the Persian war effort and their desire to combine with Christian powers against their enemy as a chief reason for his opposition.¹⁵²

Rudolf contacted Anthony Sherley for advice on responding to the Persian ambassadors. Since parting from his Persian embassy, Sherley had been an agent for the Spanish and Scottish kings in Venice. He had been arrested in Venice over a dispute with a Persian silk merchant, and he was ordered to leave the city in 1603, although he convinced officials to extend the time he stayed.¹⁵³ In 1604, Rudolf corresponded with Sherley through a number of letters. In these letters, Sherley passed to Rudolf information from the English ambassador in Constantinople. He described difficulties faced by the Ottoman government due to the war, such as their shortage of funds, revolts in the countryside and riots and famines in Constantinople. He passed on information about the mobilization of troops and even when the armies departed for the front.¹⁵⁴ This correspondence frightened the Venetians, who were in fear of jeopardizing their important Turkish trade, and in December 1604, Sherley was finally expelled from the city.¹⁵⁵ He continued to write from Ferrara. Then in June 1605, Rudolf brought Sherley to Prague as a personal adviser. His arrival was much noticed: the English ambassador Sir St. Lesieur wrote, "Sir Anthony Shurley came to Prague the 2. of June by poste from Messina...it is said, the Emperor sent for him." and Ferreri stated that Sherley was there to advise the Emperor on a reply to the Persian ambassador.¹⁵⁶ It is clear that Sherley believed the Emperor should continue the war effort. He writes that he hopes to see the Turkish mosques despoiled and the Turks

152 HHStA, Rudolf to Matthias, Türkei I, 88, Juli-August 1604, fol. 134f; Jan Paul Niederkorn. "Zweifrontenkrieg gegen die Osmanen", In: *Mitteilungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung*, 104 (1996), p. 320.

153 Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, pp. 148-160.

154 Original letters in HHStA, Handschriften Weiß 290, Band XI.

155 Babinger, *Sherleiana*, p. 34; Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, pp. 163-164.

156 Babinger, *Sherleiana*, p. 35, citing Public Record Office (London): News Letters, Germany, etc., no. 41; Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 431b, p. 378.

completely defeated.¹⁵⁷ After consulting with the Emperor, Sherley was given a new commission - to oppose Turkish interests in Morocco.¹⁵⁸

Cultural Exchange

While the diplomatic goal of the Persian's embassy was not in the end successful, their stay in Prague did provide an interesting example of cultural contact. Zainal Khān spent over a year in Prague, while Hasan Beg and Mehdī Qulī Beg were in the city for many months; thus they had ample time to observe the city and its culture as well as meet and make an impression on the people living there.

The citizens of Prague were fascinated by the exotic foreigners. Many people turned out to see the entrance to the city of Zainal Khān in 1604, as well as Sherley, Ḥusain 'Alī Beg and their entourage in 1600. Most of the ambassadors' dealings were with select members of the court; however, the populace at large was aware of their presence from such public events. Sales of travel books, such as that by Tectander, show that there was an interest in foreign lands, at least among the educated parts of the population.

Members of the court society had direct contact with the Persians. The ambassadors were invited to and hosted dinners with members of the court, including the Emperor on at least one occasion.¹⁵⁹ One of their most frequent visitors was the papal nuncio Ferreri. He had numerous meetings and dinners with them, and he introduced them to other figures in the Catholic Church. There was considerable Church interest in setting up Catholic missions in Persia, so the Church personnel involved with that effort were eager of the opportunity to make Persian contacts and

157 Anthony Sherley to Rudolf, Ferrara, 26 January 1605, HHStA Handschriften Weiß 290, Band XI. fol. 161-162.

158 Babinger, *Sherleiana*, p. 37-51; Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, pp. 193-198.

159 von Klarwill, ed., *Fugger News-Letters*, pp. 270-271 ; Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 267e., p. 193.

learn about the country. Ferreri hoped the missionaries could travel back to Persia in the company of the Persian ambassador when he returned.¹⁶⁰ Another visitor was the scientist and court-physician Jessenius. He wrote a book on Zoroastrianism, and already established an interest in Persian history, which he, no doubt, was eager to discuss with the Persian ambassadors.¹⁶¹

The source for recording some of the social events of their stay, including the banquet with the Emperor, was the Fugger News-Letters. The Fugger family headed a trading and banking enterprise with vast interests throughout Europe and around the world. To inform their business decisions they collected reports from their agents in various important cities about the events occurring there. These reports covered whatever the agents deemed to be of interest: “political, financial, or even of a local nature.”¹⁶² These reports, together with reports of the long-running broadsheet *Neue Zeitungen*, were collected in the business headquarters at Augsburg, which regularly supplied Count Fugger and other clients with updates of current events.¹⁶³ The collection survives intact, and as such, provides a window into events of early-modern Europe. The Persian embassies to Prague were one such event covered in the Fugger News-Letters. They describe the arrival and audiences of both Zainal Khān and of the Sherley mission. These reports are written in a more journalistic style than the court or nuncio reports. They mention the ambassadors intentions to conclude an alliance with the Emperor, and certainly the war with the Turks receives due attention in other reports as it certainly affects the Fuggers' business decisions. However, more of the reports on the Persians are devoted to their dress, their manner, and their public activities. For instance, one report details the banquet when the Emperor attended. The Emperor offered a toast and passed the Persian ambassador Zainal Khān a large goblet of wine, but the ambassador refused this on account of his religious restrictions. Rudolf was gracious, complemented the ambassador on his religious

160 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 273, p. 201; 275h, p. 208.

161 Evans, *Rudolf II*, p. 137.

162 von Klarwill, ed., *Fugger News-Letters*, Forward by H. Gordon Selfridge, p. ix.

163 von Klarwill, ed., *Fugger News-Letters*, Forward by H. Gordon Selfridge, pp. xxvi-xxxii.

The portrait engravings were produced by Aegidius Sadeler, the court engraver. He was born around 1570 in Antwerp to an artistic family - his father was an art dealer and his two uncles were engravers. His early career took him to Frankfurt, Munich and Rome where he worked with several artists who subsequently worked for Rudolf's court: Joris Hoefnagel, Hans von Aachen and Joseph Heintz the Elder. Once these artists moved to the Imperial court, they recommended Sadeler to the Emperor; in 1597 he was appointed to the court himself, where he became the most illustrious engraver of his time.¹⁶⁷ Sadeler's portrait of Zainal Khān matches a painting for Emperor Rudolf by Esaye Le Gillon; however, the attribution on the print indicates that the image was made from a life drawing by Sadeler. It is probable that Zainal Khān did one sitting for both Le Gillon and Sadeler at the same time.¹⁶⁸ The portrait shows Zainal Khān wearing an Persian-style clothing, including an elaborate silk robe, and a turban. The engraving bears inscriptions in both Latin and Persian stating the ambassador's name and titles and that he was the representative of Shah 'Abbās to Emperor Rudolf II. The portrait of Mehdi Quli Beg was made from a life-drawing by Sadeler, and a hand-drawn sketch of his for this engraving still exists. It likewise shows him in his native dress and holding an eagle on his hand as a symbol of power. It also bears inscriptions in Latin and Persian of his name and function.

The portraits reveal several things about the ambassadors' reception in Prague. The first point is the very existence of the portraits, not just as a single painting, but as a copperplate print. Copperplates were made for wider distribution of the image, so obviously there was interest in circulating their image more widely. Interest could come from both above and below. Above, from the Emperor who encouraged the

167 Sadeler's early career covered in Dorothy Limouze, "Aegidius Sadeler, Imperial Printmaker", *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 362, (Spring 1989), pp. 3-7; Fučíková, "Rudolf II as Patron and Collector", *Rudolf II and Prague*, pp. 20-21.

168 *Prag um 1600: Ausstellungskatalog. Kunst und Kultur am Hofe Rudolfs II*, ed. Kulturstiftung Ruhr, (Essen, 1988), no. 37, p. 121; Sadeler's preparatory sketch in Fučíková, *Rudolf II and Prague*, p. 437, #I.229.



Fig. 3. Portrait of Soliman, Pasha of Ofen, Turkish Commander, from Wikicomons.



Fig. 4. Allegorien auf die Türkenkriege: Kriegserklärung vor Konstantinopel, by Hans von Aachen, from Wikicommons.

distribution of the portraits to publicise the importance of his court as host to international visitors. He did this by the granting of a *privilegium*, a form of copyright that was granted to certain artists.¹⁶⁹ Since the Emperor retained the original painting, allowing prints to be made and granting *privilegium* to enable their production indicates a desire for them to be seen by a wider audience. The demand from below clearly existed since copies of the prints were sold. The portraits show the ambassadors in their Persian style of dress, which emphasises their exotic nature. However, they are also depicted as pleasant, friendly, and noble men - the type of men one can trust to make deals with. This image is a contrast to portraits of Turks, who are also portrayed in Asian dress, but who are pictured as scowling and with darkened eyes and often holding weapons (figs. 3 and 4).¹⁷⁰ Another point of interest is the Persian text on the bottom of the prints. No one in Prague could read Persian; Negroni had to be brought from Vienna specifically for his knowledge of the language in order

169 Dorothy Limouze, "Engraving at the Court of Prague", in *Rudolf II and Prague: The Court and the City*, ed. Eliška Fučíková, et al. (Skira, 1997), p. 174.

170 *Prag um 1600*, no. 44, pp. 124-125; Hans von Aachen, "Allegory on the declaration of war before Constantinople", painting in Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna, reprinted in Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 143.

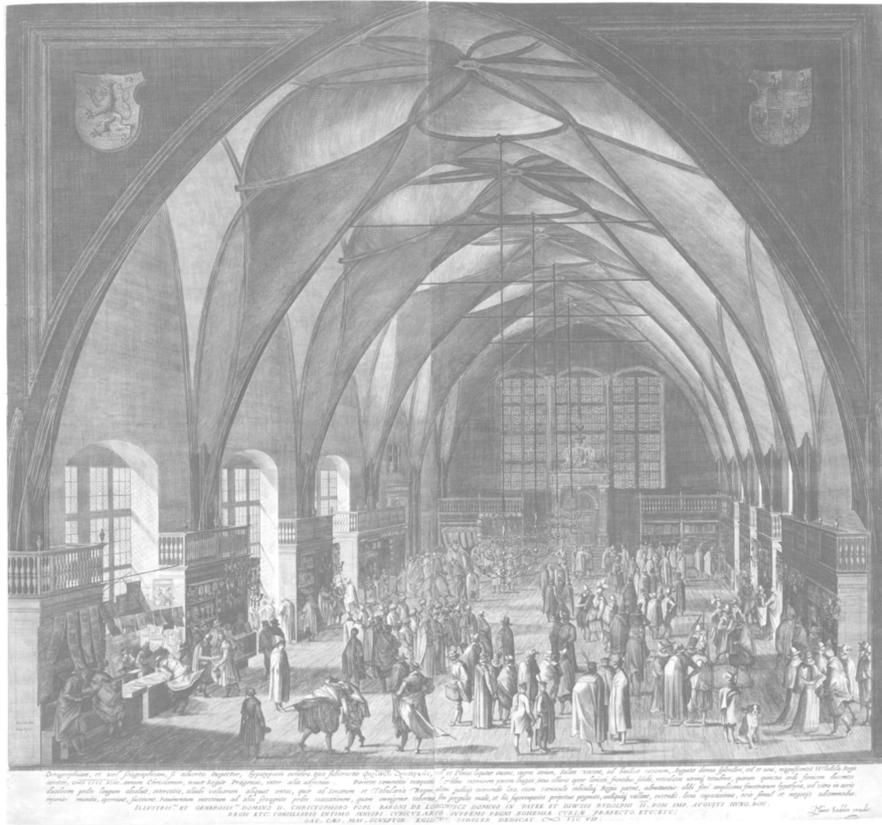


Fig. 5. Great (Vladislav) Hall in Prague Castle, by Aegidius Sadeler, © British Museum.

to read the letters sent from 'Abbās. Yet Sadeler went to considerable effort to include the Persian inscription on the copperplate engravings. Once again, this feature emphasizes the exotic nature of the subject, and also reveals an interest in the foreign by the audience. Sadeler had to work directly with the Persians to get the text, which he would have copied from their calligraphy since he did not know the language himself. These points emphasize the interest which the Persians aroused in the people of Prague.

Sadeler's picture of the Great (Vladislav) Hall in the Prague Castle shows this busy space at the heart of the Imperial government (fig. 5). Amongst the crowds of courtiers, petitioners and servants depicted in the hall is the Persian delegation. This image indicates that the Persians would have been regularly seen by many people, at

least those with access to the palace. This image was made 1607, two years after the ambassadors had departed. And yet, Sadeler remembered them well enough to depict them as tiny details in the image. The print was dedicated to Chief Justice Christoph Lobkovic, who had a particular interest in Eastern affairs.¹⁷¹ Thus, the inclusion of the Persians may have been made by Sadeler as an effort to please this patron. Also, it shows that their presence stuck in the minds of the people of Prague.¹⁷²

The interest in contact with foreign culture ran both ways; the Persians also demonstrated an interest in learning about western culture. Shah 'Abbās issued instructions to the ambassadors sent in 1603 to follow the local customs. He wished to give no chance to offend potential allies, as well as desiring to learn more about western ways.¹⁷³ Ferreri was particularly impressed that Zainal Khān was satisfied to eat fish on Fridays, in accordance to Catholic doctrine. He compared Zainal Khān favourably with Ḥusain 'Alī Beg, the diplomat with the Sherley expedition, who insisted on having meat.¹⁷⁴ The Persians were interested to observe European technology and report techniques that could be of use back home. Uruch Beg, who wrote about the 1600 embassy as Don Juan of Persia, remarks on observing water- and windmills used for mining and milling in Saxony, comparing them with Persian techniques.¹⁷⁵

The Persians took advantage of their time in Prague to buy items not available in Persia. Specifically mentioned by Ferreri is that they bought clocks.¹⁷⁶ Persia had long manufactured water-clocks, but mechanical clocks were a relatively new introduction and there were few people in the country who understood their workings. In the late fifteenth century Muḥammad Ḥāfeẓ Iṣfahānī obtained a

171 Evans, *Rudolf II*, ill. 14.

172 For details about the composition of the image see Limouze, "Aegidius Sadeler, Imperial Printmaker", pp. 9-11.

173 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 240.

174 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, p. 193.

175 Parviz Mohebbi, *Techniques Et Ressources En Iran Du 7e Au 19e Siecle*, (Tehran, 1996), p. 146; Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, p. 271.

176 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 267e, p. 193.

mechanical clock from a European traveller and wrote a book about its workings. But after him there were no other native clock-makers for three centuries; a few Europeans were recruited by the Shahs to repair their clocks. Clocks were considered rare and valuable items, and were used as diplomatic gifts on account of their great value.¹⁷⁷ The 'other items' bought may have included paintings, since there was developing in Persia at this time a taste for western art, and several paintings by artists from Rudolf's court ended up in Persia.

The ambassadors also took the time to observe local activities. The Emperor arranged for Zainal Khān to view a review of troops heading to the Turkish front. The ambassador reported being satisfied with the order of the troops, but not with their number.¹⁷⁸ Ferreri arranged for the Persians to witness a Catholic mass in the Jesuit church, tastefully hidden behind a screen so as not to offend the congregation with the presence of non-believers.¹⁷⁹ This act, in particular, demonstrated the ambassadors genuine interest in learning about the culture they visited. This mass was not an official state function nor directly related to their primary mission, like the troop review. Instead, this was an opportunity to observe cultural practices. They had refused other activities on religious grounds, such as refusing to drink wine at the Emperor's toast. These religious refusals had not caused great offence, so certainly the ambassadors could have gotten out of attending mass on religious grounds if they had so desired. That they attended shows their interest, both personally and in following the Shah's orders to observe local customs.

Rudolf's Reply and its Aftermath

On the 31th of October, 1605, Rudolf gave the Persians permission to depart for home and a reply letter to Shah 'Abbās. In the letter Rudolf expressed his intention to

177 Willem Floor, "Clocks", *Encyclopædia Iranica*, Vol. V, Fasc. 7, pp. 713-718, online edition updated October 21, 2011; Mohammad Reza (Farhad) Nourbakhsh, "Iran's Early Encounter with Three Medieval European Inventions (875–1153 AH/1470–1740 CE)", *Iranian Studies*, 41:4, (2008), 551-553.

178 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 275h, p. 208.

179 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 382c, p. 316; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 240.

continue the war against the Ottomans and to send an ambassador to Persia the following year.¹⁸⁰ Neither of these promises were kept.

An expedition was in preparation during 1605 to send Wratislaw von Dohna as an ambassador to Persia. He was a cadet member of the extensive Dohna family who had holdings across central Europe, and he was related to Abraham von Dohna, who had been the Imperial Ambassador to Russia and who was mentioned by Tectander when his expedition visited von Dohna's estate. Wratislaw von Dohna began making preparations for the journey. He apologized to the Emperor for an eight month delay in the preparations.¹⁸¹ The reason for this delay he did not explain, however, his brothers later write about financial difficulties which may be related. One explanation for the wait the Persians were made to endure before receiving their departure permission was that Rudolf wanted to send an ambassador of his own with them on their return journey. This eight month delay would fit the time-frame of the Persian's wait. However, as has been shown, this would have been just one of several reasons why the Persians were kept waiting for an answer. Eventually, they were dismissed with the expectation that Wratislaw von Dohna would follow soon after. Then, before he could embark, Wratislaw died.¹⁸² The planning for the embassy was lost and another was never started.

As for the promise to continue the war, on the same day that the Persian ambassadors were handed the letter Emperor Rudolf authorised official peace negotiations with the Turks.¹⁸³ His brother Matthias was delegated to lead the negotiations. These talks led to the Peace of Zvita-Torok, completed before the Persians reached home.

180 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 240. A copy of the letter is in the Vatican archives, Fondo Borghese II: 152, ff. 61-62.

181 Wratislaw von Dohna to Rudolf II, HHStA, Persica I, Konv. 3, f. 23/2-23/4.

182 HKA, Fz. 194, f. 7. Wratislaw's brothers write of his death and ask to recover the money he spent in preparations.

183 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuntiatur Ferreri*, no. 601b,c, p. 552-553, no. 602c, p. 554; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 240-241.

Unofficial peace talks had been held between the two armies for quite some time already. Since 1604, the Ottomans were looking for a way to get out of the dragging conflict in Hungary so they could turn their full attention towards 'Abbās' invasion. Archduke Matthias encouraged these contacts and regularly sent a representative to discuss terms with the Turkish commanders. While Rudolf knew of these negotiations, he had not given them official approval and he frequently criticized the terms discussed.¹⁸⁴ But in October 1605, he relented and gave the contacts official authorisation. In Ferreri's opinion, "The Emperor on no account wants to conclude a peace with the Turks."¹⁸⁵ Instead, Ferreri thinks Rudolf only approved the peace talks as a concession to the court peace party, to gain time for the situation to improve.¹⁸⁶ While Rudolf's personal feelings might be to carry on with the war until an ultimate conclusion, he was pressured by his advisers and the deteriorating situation. Ferreri reported that Rudolf was depressed over the Hungarian rebellion and that he would speak to no one about the authority granted to Matthias to conduct negotiations.¹⁸⁷

The negotiations progressed, and by June 1606 an agreement was reached with the Hungarian nobility. Royal Hungary (that portion not under Ottoman control) returned to Habsburg sovereignty; however, its finances would remain separate, civil and military offices within Hungary would go exclusively to Hungarians, and the Hungarian Diet would elect a palatine as head of government. Also, the nobility, the royal towns and soldiers in the military frontier were given freedom to choose their religious denomination, although this right did not extend to the peasantry who had to follow their local lord. In addition, István Bocskai, who had lead the uprising, was confirmed as Prince of Transylvania, which provided him double legitimacy since this was also recognized by the Ottomans.¹⁸⁸

184 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 257a, p. 180, no. 264b, p.184, no. 267e, p. 191, and others.

185 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 601e, p. 554.

186 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 602, p. 555.

187 Meyer, *Die Prager Nuniatur Ferreri*, no. 601e, p. 554.

188 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 251-253; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

Then, with the Hungarians acting as mediators, Matthias negotiated a settlement with the Turks - the November 1606 Peace of Zsitva-Torok. The treaty established the border much as it was at the start of the war, with only minor adjustments. It contained many symbolic conditions which indicate a decline of Turkish power. Official recognition of the Habsburg rank as Emperor was made by the Ottomans for the first time, where the treaty stated that, "both should address the other as Emperor, not just as King."¹⁸⁹ The annual tribute to the Sultan was replaced by a single "gift of honour"; no other payments would be expected. Also, both sides were obligated to attempt to keep the peace, reining in raids by their border vassals. The treaty was established for 20 years, but was subsequently renewed several more times.¹⁹⁰

Although Matthias had delivered a settlement, it bothered Rudolf that he had not conclusively defeated the Turkish enemy and therefore had fallen short of his own imperial standards. He regarded the treaties as a personal betrayal and treason against the Imperial crown. Rudolf reluctantly ratified the treaties on 9 December, but looked for an opportunity to abrogate them. He hoped the German Reichstag scheduled for 1608 would provide him the funds needed to raise a new army and resume the Turkish war. Then, the death of Bocskai on the 29th of December, 1606 gave him the chance to annul the Treaty of Vienna.¹⁹¹ The Turks were wary of standing down their military and the Hungarian nobles were threatening resumption of rebellion. Archduke Matthias saw an opportunity to seize power and placed himself at the head of the Hungarian nobles. At a meeting in Pressburg (Bratislava) during February 1608, an alliance of the noble orders of Hungary, Upper and Lower Austria formed under Matthias' leadership to preserve the privileges granted in the Treaty of Vienna and maintain the peace with the Turks. When in April 1608 Rudolf refused to sign the final peace treaty with the Turks unless they vacated three border forts - a condition

189 Article 2, cited in Karl-Heinz Ziegler, "The Peace Treaties of the Ottoman Empire with European Christian Powers", in *Peace Treaties and International Law in European History*, ed. Randall C.H. Lesaffer, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 345.

190 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 253; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 147; Karl-Heinz Ziegler, "The Peace Treaties of the Ottoman Empire", pp. 345-346.

191 Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 147.

the Sultan would certainly reject - Matthias, with prompting from his adviser Khlesl and beholden to his noble supporters, decided to attack. Matthias and the Hungarian nobility felt that Rudolf had shown his inadequacy to rule by endangering the peace. Rudolf thought the treaty gave away too much to the Turks and that the plotters were traitors.¹⁹²

Facing this revolt, Rudolf looked for supporters. The Reichstag, torn by conflicts over confessional disputes, recessed in the middle of April without considering his request for money to resume the Turkish war. The Bohemian nobility was willing to support Rudolf in exchange for guarantees of religious liberties. Rudolf agreed to their 25 point demands in what became the Letter of Majesty in 1609. By late May, Matthias' army of 20,000 faced Rudolf's army of only 4500 just 25 miles from Prague. But the show of support from the Bohemian nobility was enough and brought Matthias to negotiations. The brothers agreed that Matthias would become King of Hungary as well as controlling the ancestral provinces of Upper and Lower Austria. Matthias would also become Rudolf's heir for the Kingdom of Bohemia. Rudolf would keep the crown of Bohemia and the title of Emperor. But he was also obligated to sign the peace treaties ending the Turkish war.¹⁹³

Meanwhile, Shah 'Abbās was becoming disillusioned with the promises of European military action. The other nations of Europe were not forthcoming with action against the Turks and the Empire made peace despite their promises.

'Abbās had already heard about the peace treaty through his spies in Constantinople before his ambassadors returned. When the missionaries who travelled across Russia with the ambassadors gave 'Abbās a letter from the Emperor, 'Abbās replied, "the Emperor had lost his kingdom, one of his people having taken it

192 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 253-255; Haupt, "Feuding Brothers", pp. 238-241.

193 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 255-256; Haupt, "Feuding Brothers", pp. 242-247; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Vol. 1, p. 147

from him..., and he no longer had any power (left), and so had made peace with the Turks contrary to promises several times made."¹⁹⁴ To the Portuguese Augustinian De Gouvea, 'Abbās called the treaty of Zsitva-Torok, "this infamous peace."¹⁹⁵ 'Abbās reacted as if the peace treaty was a personal betrayal. Rudolf had specifically not agreed to irrevocable cooperation nor to consult the Shah before making peace when such was proposed by Ḥusain 'Alī Beg and Anthony Sherley in 1600. He was not violating the norms of international diplomacy.¹⁹⁶ However, Rudolf did repeatedly communicate his intention to continue fighting and led 'Abbās to believe he would no matter what happened. The receipt of Tectander as an envoy would have furthered such perception. The arrival of letters with his returning diplomats implying a continuation of the fight after the peace treaty was already signed seemed too much of an insult to 'Abbās. All the while, the Pope and the King of Spain kept talking of an international league to war with the Turks in the Mediterranean, although no such league ever materialized. 'Abbās did not give up entirely on the idea of a military alliance - such a development would be too valuable to his own endeavours to ignore, but he no longer placed much faith in European promises of military action.

When Zainal Khān returned to Persia, after his long stay in Prague and then his trip through the Netherlands and Spain, he wrote ill of the European leaders. In his report, he wrote in pessimistic language about an alliance of the European nations with Persia. He warned 'Abbās that the professions of friendship were false and that they wanted the Turks and Persians to destroy one another along with the Muslim religion. This accusation was unfair to Rudolf, who seemed genuinely interested in the Persians but who was trapped by circumstances from carrying out his plans, but it could be true of the Spanish king who was much more religiously bigoted. When 'Abbās saw this letter he is reported to have said, "You shall see what a fire I shall light alight in Christendom within two years."¹⁹⁷ The Carmelites missionaries described this point as the time he turned his mind towards taking Hormuz from the Portuguese.

194 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 123.

195 Gouvea, *Relation*, p. 424.

196 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 241.

197 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 169.

Although it took 'Abbās thirteen years to accomplish the capture with English help, he started taking territories along the coast from which Hormuz was supplied.

'Abbās' war effort against the Turks went well and he recaptured much of the lost Persian territory. 'Abbās won a major victory over the Ottoman army at the Battle of Sufiyan in 1605.¹⁹⁸ He had less need for European military assistance. He derided the Christian kingdoms for their passivity. The Carmelites wrote, "now that he has won so many battles over the Turks he does not care (a jot) for the Christian Princes and publicly mocks them."¹⁹⁹ As an example of such, when the missionaries asked to build a church, 'Abbās replied, "were the Christian Princes to make war and capture a single goat from the Turks, he would give them both site and church."²⁰⁰ Instead of military cooperation, he turned his attention more to trade and economic issues. The war effort was very expensive. Since 'Abbās reorganised the army, the new musket-armed infantry forces were under the direct control and pay of the Shah. While this gave 'Abbās greater authority and less reliance on the fractious Qizilbash tribes, it also meant 'Abbās needed new sources of income to pay this expense.²⁰¹ One source of revenue traditional under the shah's control was the export of silk. Thus, 'Abbās looked for ways to increase silk exports to Europe. Anthony Sherley helped devise a plan where caravans carrying silk and other Asian exports would be routed to Hormuz for shipment over-sea to Europe, instead of travelling over-land through Ottoman controlled territories to ports on the Mediterranean. This plan would bring more income to the Shah, and divert tariff money from Ottoman coffers.²⁰²

In 1609 Robert Sherley toured Europe as an official representative of Shah 'Abbās. Among his missions were to promote the Persian silk trade, to continue to encourage joint military action against the Turks, and also to find out what had

198 Imber, "The Battle of Sufiyan", pp. 93-98; Monshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. II, 886-893.

199 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 164.

200 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 177.

201 Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, pp. 133-137, 160-176.

202 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 264-270.

happened to his brother Anthony. Robert Sherley was well received in Prague by Rudolf, who knighted Robert.²⁰³ Sir Robert delivered a letter to the Emperor from 'Abbās. The letter greets Rudolf with professions of great friendship, but it contains little substance and thinly conceals 'Abbās' disappointment in Rudolf's broken promises.²⁰⁴ Rudolf sent back a reply in 1610. But by this time Rudolf had little real power and his health was failing. All he could do was return the professions of friendship and offer hopes that in the future Europe would join Persia in action against their common foe.²⁰⁵ Rudolf's time was passing, and with him so was the chance for an alliance against the Turks. In his wake relative peace would be maintained along the Turkish border under the framework of the Peace of Zvita-Torok, but under the more militantly Catholic Emperor Ferdinand II the Empire itself would be torn by the violence of the Thirty Years War.

203 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts with Persia", vol. 6, p. 390.

204 HHStA, 'Abbās I to Rudolf II, 1 Persien, Konv. 3, fol. 24, 25.

205 HHStA, Rudolf II to 'Abbās I, 1 Persien, Konv. 3, fol. 26.

Chapter Four

The Seventeenth Century: Expanded Relations

In this chapter, we examine how the relationship between Austrian Habsburgs and Safavid Persians evolved in the seventeenth century. In the previous chapter, it was seen that the efforts towards a military alliance, which had dominated the relationship through the sixteenth century, failed at the start of the seventeenth century and left the Persian Shah disheartened about military cooperation with Europe. After the first decade of the seventeenth century, with the failure of the anti-Ottoman alliance attempt, relations between Austria and Persian turned to different matters. Throughout the seventeenth century, issues of trade and religion became as or more important as military matters. As the century progressed the Habsburgs brought Persia into the early modern diplomatic system which had been developing in Europe during the previous century. The changes in the relationship show that a turning point was passed at the start of the century, as will be argued in Chapter Five. In chapter Six, it will be shown how the diplomatic relations and trade projects that were begun in the seventeenth century flourished in later centuries during the post-Safavid age.

With an expanded agenda of different issues covered by their diplomacy, the various issues often overlapped and coincided. Therefore, it is more appropriate to treat these topics thematically, rather than strictly chronologically as in previous chapters. Below is a summary of the main events that occurred in in each country which formed the background to their diplomatic contacts.

Summary of Events

The Safavids continued warring with the Ottomans sporadically for the first third of

the century. There were periods of armistice, but at least low-level confrontation along the border was almost constant. Shah 'Abbās I captured Baghdad in 1623, and the city was held by the Safavids for 15 years. By 1639, the two sides reached a comprehensive peace with the Treaty of Zuhab, after which peace was maintained between them for the rest of the period.¹ 'Abbās I also put pressure on the Portuguese outpost of Hormuz, and in 1622 his forces ejected the Portuguese from the island with the help of the English.² After the removal of the Portuguese, the English and later the Dutch trading companies became major commercial forces in Persia, trading manufactured goods from Europe and India as well as spices from Asia for Persian silk.³ It is traditionally thought Safavid power gradually declined over the latter half of the seventeenth century, until their defeat by Afghans in 1722. Certainly there was a reduction of military strength in the Safavid army, although once peace was made with their primary opponent, the Ottomans, there was less need for a large army. Some scholars, particularly Andrew Newman, have argued that based on measures of cultural output and domestic tranquillity, there was no decline until just before the 1722 fall.⁴ While Rudi Matthee eschews the traditional conception of decline, he points out various fiscal and political weaknesses in Safavid society which undermined the dynasty's ability to respond to a crisis, such that when the end came the collapse seemed sudden and complete.⁵

The Habsburg Emperors of the seventeenth century, Ferdinand II (reign 1619-1637), Ferdinand III (1637-1657), and Leopold I (1657-1705), were more dogmatically Catholic than their relatively tolerant predecessors. Worries that Ferdinand II would erode Protestant privileges led to the Bohemian Revolt and the start of the Thirty Years War in 1618. The conflict, which devastated much of central Europe, started

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- 1 Ernest Tucker, "From Rhetoric of War to Realities of Peace: The Evolution of Ottoman-Iranian Diplomacy through the Safavid Era", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, eds. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 1012), pp. 81-89.
 - 2 Niels Steensgard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago, 1974), pp. 340-343, and preceding.
 - 3 Steensgard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 367-411.
 - 4 Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, (London, 2006), pp. 2-9.
 - 5 Rudi Matthee, *Persia in Crisis: Safavid Decline and the Fall of Isfahan*, (London, 2012), pp. xxii-xxx, *passim*.

over religious liberties, but became a struggle between the Habsburg dynasties of Austria and Spain against the Bourbon dynasty of France. The Treaty of Westphalia ending the war decreased the authority of the Emperors in the German territories, but as there was no other legitimate alternative, they continued to maintain considerable influence.⁶ Legally, a distinction was drawn between Imperial diplomacy, authorised by the Reichstag, and diplomacy carried out by the Emperor on his own initiative; however, in practice, much international diplomacy was conducted from the Viennese court alone. This time also saw the growth of standing committees to oversee foreign affairs as part of a shift towards bureaucratization of the Imperial government.⁷ The Habsburg rivalry with France continued and Austria's involvement in the feud increased as France sought to extend its influence into Germany. Following the death of Rudolf II, Vienna became the permanent capital of the Empire and the city expanded.⁸ While Austria was engaged with war in Europe, peace was maintained on the Ottoman border. The Peace of Zsitva-Torok was renewed several times through the mid-century. Later in the century, the Ottomans again threatened, and in 1683 laid siege to Vienna. This invasion was defeated by a coalition of forces led by the Polish king. Afterwards, the Austrian army continued with a string of victories that began to push the Turks out of Hungary.⁹

Diplomatic Courtesy

One category of correspondence was diplomatic courtesy. This category covers contacts made for the purpose of maintaining the relationship between the counties, not for any particular issue. This includes things like congratulatory messages,

6 On the power of the Emperor after the war see: Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy, A History of the Thirty Years War*, (London, 2009), pp. 751-758, 773-778; R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy: 1550-1700*, (Oxford, 1979), pp. 275-308. On the war generally see: Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*; Ronald G. Asch, *The Thirty Years War: The Holy Roman Empire and Europe, 1618-48*, (Basingstoke, 1997).

7 Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden, 1648-1740*, (Bonn, 1976), pp. 10-24.

8 see John P. Spielman, *The City and the Crown: Vienna and the Imperial Court 1600-1740*, (West Lafayette, 1993).

9 John Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna*, (Edinburgh, 2000, first published 1964); Thomas M. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, (Albany, NY, 1967); Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Enemy at the Gate*, (London, 2008).

expressions of friendship, and exchange of diplomats. Europe in the sixteenth century had seen a defined culture develop around diplomatic activities. Resident ambassadors, empowered to represent the interests of their sovereign on any issue which may arise, replaced envoys who were sent to act on one specific instance. Among their many duties, resident ambassadors carried out many of the courtesies such as attending coronations and weddings previously assigned to special 'embassies of ceremony'.¹⁰ In the seventeenth century, the Habsburgs gradually extended these diplomatic conventions to their dealings with Persia.

Following the death of Shah 'Abbās I in January 1629, his grandson was crowned as his successor, taking the name Şafī I.¹¹ A year later, on the 22nd of March 1630, the Emperor Ferdinand II wrote a letter of congratulations to the new Shah. Ferdinand wished that Şafī and his country "enjoy many years of contentment and happiness," and he hoped that the two nations may continue to be friends.¹² Nothing of substance was discussed in this letter, merely well-wishes and platitudes. However, it must be compared to the situation a century prior, when Emperor Charles V was still addressing letters to Shah Ismā'īl five years after the Shah's death.¹³ The 1630 letter demonstrates that in the intervening century, western knowledge of and communications with the Safavid court dramatically improved. Within a year, Emperor Ferdinand learned of the coronation of a new Shah and was committed enough to the relationship between their countries to send a letter for no other reason than to maintain that relationship.

After Shah 'Abbās II succeeded his father Şafī as Shah in 1642, there proceeded another exchange of congratulatory friendship letters. This is shown by a letter from the new Shah to Emperor Ferdinand III which clearly replied to a currently non-extant letter from Ferdinand. The Shah thanked Ferdinand for his letter and said he

10 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, (London, 1955), p. 250.

11 Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", vol. 6, p. 279.

12 HHStA, "Ferdinand II to Şafī, 22 March 1630", Persica I, Konv. 4, fol. 7.

13 *Barbara von Palombini, Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453- 1600, (Wiesbaden, 1968)*, p. 65; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", Vol. 6, p. 382.

welcomed their friendship. He wished the Emperor luck and happiness, and "...may you sit with Allah in Paradise." He mentioned one Pādri Pāvlō, presumably a missionary priest of the type the Habsburgs often employed as diplomats, who had apparently been introduced in the earlier letter. 'Abbās said as long as the friendship between the rulers endures, the Padre will be allowed to remain in the Safavid kingdom and will have a residence at the expense of the Shah. The Padre will be accepted as the Emperor's ambassador and will be granted audience with the Shah.¹⁴ While this letter was written in the name of the newly crowned Shah 'Abbās II, it must be remembered that 'Abbās II was only ten years old at the time of his coronation (and this letter was written within a year of that date).¹⁵ Therefore, it was actually the court bureaucracy, in particular, the powerful Grand Vizer, Sārū Taqī, who was responding with this profession of friendship. The relationship between the courts was not only a friendship between two rulers, it was considered an important aspect of foreign policy, an international relationship worth maintaining.

Examples like those above indicate the changing circumstances of the seventeenth century. There were several reasons for the increase in diplomatic courtesy contacts. Improvements in transportation, diplomatic practice, and the geopolitical situation eased communication and allowed letters to be exchanged without mounting a major expedition. Thus, letters with no other purpose than the maintenance of the relationship were practical. Letters could be presented by the resident representative already on site. Increased knowledge of events in the other country allowed officials to respond in a timely way to major events. These improvements were furthered by long periods of peace with the Ottoman Empire. The time-consuming and dangerous journeys of the previous century in order to avoid Ottoman territory could largely be replaced with the shorter route across Turkey or the Levant. Constantinople became a meeting point for representatives from East and West. Both the Austrians and the Persians had resident representatives in

14 "Abbās II to Ferdinand II", in L. Fekete, *Einführung in die Persische Paläographie: 101 Persische Dokumente*, (Budapest, 1977), #94, pp. 521 - 524.

15 Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", p. 288.

Constantinople, and they were in contact with each other.¹⁶ Letters were able to be passed between them.

The diplomatic courtesy correspondence also indicates the normalising of the relationship between Habsburg and Safavid courts. In the previous century, the relationship was focused on the single issue of the Ottoman threat. Therefore, contacts were only made when one side or the other was contemplating military action. However, as new issues were added to the relationship, it became seen by both sides as important to maintain a regular state of contact and friendship between the courts, such that when such issues arose they could be dealt with more easily.

Austria maintained an official representative to the Safavid court resident in Persia through most of the seventeenth century. This was usually a church official who had other religious duties, however, they were recognised as authorised to speak for the Austrian government. The seventeenth century Habsburg Emperors identified strongly with Catholicism, indeed, Leopold I had been educated for a career in the Church until his older brother died leaving Leopold the heir-presumptive. The Habsburgs sponsored missionary activities by the religious orders, especially the Jesuits, which combined preaching the Catholic religion and promoting Habsburg policy, the two of which were merged in the mind of the Emperors.¹⁷ Persia did not maintain regular representatives in Europe, but this was part of a general reduction of diplomatic activity on their part throughout the century, and not a reflection of lack of concern about European affairs.¹⁸ They did, as shown in the second example above, respond quickly and magnanimously to Austrian contacts. So both sides can be said to be committed to furthering their countries friendship and maintaining their relationship through diplomatic courtesies.

16 Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht: Länder und Untertanen des Hauses Habsburg im konfessionellen Zeitalter*, (Vienna, 2003), Vol . 1, pp. 426-427.

17 Examples of such activities in Evans, *Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 419-432.

18 Matthee, R. "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy During the Reign of Shāh Sulaymān I (1077-1105/1666-94)", in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami, (Princeton, 1998), p. 149.

Trade

A growing arena of contact between Persia and Europe in the seventeenth century was trade. Trade was an important aspect of Safavid diplomacy: merchants often accompanied Safavid diplomatic missions and the purpose of many diplomatic missions was to establish trade relations. This was all part of the bargaining and gift-giving which was the foundation of Iranian politics. Several European states also promoted trade as part of their foreign policy. However, the European style of mercantilism with contracts and corporations sometimes clashed with the middle Eastern style of continual negotiations and private dealings, leading to misunderstandings and conflict.¹⁹ In the first half of the century, the Austrian Habsburg administration, unlike some other European governments, did little to promote international trade itself. It did, however, authorise trade missions by Austrian and German merchants. Eventually, once they realised the money other rulers were making they created an office to encourage commerce.²⁰ These efforts were not as successful as Dutch and English companies, but they did expand contacts between Habsburg lands and Persia and they set the stage for expanded trade in future centuries.

Safavid Trade Policy

Trade became an important aspect of Safavid political and international policy in the seventeenth century. As Matthee describes in his monograph *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran*, Safavid society was in the process of evolving from a tribal-nomadic society to an urban-bureaucratic order.²¹ Although the early Safavid shahs had taken limited steps to encourage commerce in their empire, it was Shah 'Abbās I who intertwined political legitimacy with revenue.²² In order to wrest control of the state

19 Matthee, Rudolph P., *The Politics of Trade in Safavid Iran: Silk for Silver, 1600-1730*, (Cambridge, 1999), p. 69, 232-234.

20 Paula Sutter Fichtner, "Trade", in *Historical Dictionary of Austria*, 2nd edition, (Lanham, Maryland, 2009), p. 303.

21 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 62-63.

22 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 66.

away from tribal Qizilbash leaders and build the power of the central government, 'Abbās raised his own military units and court servants, loyal only to the Shah, not provided by feudal leaders.²³ These reforms required cash with which to pay the new professional troops, as well as to maintain a growing centralized bureaucracy. Thus, commerce and trade became an important aspect of maintaining the central state. Political power remained tied primarily to the military and then to the land, but revenue was important to maintain the elements of power. Likewise, merchants required state protection, and benefited from the policing and *caravanserais* provided by the central government.²⁴ A symbiotic relationship developed between the two elements of society: political-military and merchant, although they remained separate institutions. Mercantile success did not typically lead to positions of political power, but it did give the merchant classes access to and influence upon the political elite.²⁵

Persia was a land with few resources desired by the external world with which to trade for the desired income. It derived some income from tolls on goods crossing the continent, since the country lay at the crossroads of many Asian trade routes. Shah 'Abbās I also tried to encourage the growth of craft industries, bringing in potters from China to develop a local porcelain industry and promoting the manufacture of carpets in royal workshops for export to Europe.²⁶ But by far the most important export product was silk. Silk had been linked with Persia since ancient times, through the Silk Road which crossed its lands from China as well as by indigenous production as described by Herodotus. From the time of the Mongolian invasion, the provinces of Gilan and Manzadaran became centres for silk production.²⁷ The importance of these silk producing provinces was demonstrated in the 1590s when 'Abbās quelled rebellious Qizilbash forces in these regions and turned

23 Willem Floor, *Safavid Government Institutions*, (Costa Mesa, 2001), p. 137; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", pp. 263-266.

24 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 68; *Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia*, (London, 1939), p. 174; Rüdiger Klein, "Caravan Trade in Safavid Iran", in *Etudes Safavides*, ed. Jean Calmard, (Paris, 1993), pp 305-318.

25 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 73-74.

26 Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, (London, 2006), pp. 62-63, 67; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", p. 274.

27 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 15. Linda K. Steinmann, "Shah 'Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade 1599-1629", *Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, (1987), pp. 69-70.

them into crown domains under loyal *ghulam* viziers.²⁸ European interest in Persian silk grew in the later sixteenth century as European manufacturing and wealth increased; however, the real growth occurred as Levant companies looked for products to replace the spices which began to be imported direct from east Asia by the Dutch and English East India companies.²⁹ This shift fortuitously occurred just as Shah 'Abbās was seeking increased sources of revenue, and the Persians were happy to fill the demand. However, in the long run, Persians overestimated their silk's worth on the world market. In the second half of the seventeenth century, new sources for silk were opened in India and China which offered higher quality and lower prices. The later Safavid administrations were slow to react to changing circumstances, continuing to demand high prices and restrictive contracts, and so lost much of their income.³⁰ While the European companies wanted to pay for silk with in-kind trade of goods such as spices and manufactured wares, the Persians were interested primarily in cash payment. As Iran had no source of gold or silver, they needed to receive these metals, and tried repeatedly to restrict export of bullion. This set up repeated conflicts with the European traders who, especially in the latter part of the century, wanted to sell their goods and take cash from the country in order to invest elsewhere.³¹

Perhaps the most audacious attempt by the Persian rulers to control the export of silk and its revenues was in 1619, when Shah 'Abbās I created a royal monopoly on silk exports. His decree was that producers must sell to crown agents and foreign exporters must buy from the crown. In practice, however, the Armenian merchants could buy raw silk direct from the farmers by paying a tax on the goods.³² The monopoly allowed 'Abbās to set the price for silk and obtain more revenue. It offered foreign buyers high but stable prices and came at the time when new outlets opened on the Persian Gulf. But it angered farmers and the Armenian merchants. 'Abbās'

28 Iskandar Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, (Boulder, 1978), Vol 2, pp. 634-7, 693-8; Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 77.

29 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 24-25.

30 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 202.

31 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 151, 160.

32 Steinmann, "Shah 'Abbas and the Royal Silk Trade", pp. 68-74; Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 100-105; Steensgard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 377-381.

grandson and successor, Shah Şafî, abolished the monopoly soon after his accession in 1629. Persian chronicles describe it as an example of the new Shah's benevolence and link it with other measures taken at the start of his reign. However, modern scholars demonstrate how the influence of the Armenians with certain court officials was important in changing the policy.³³ Despite ending the royal monopoly, the court still heavily influenced trade. It was still the largest purchaser of raw silk, and used the power to set tolls and taxes to coerce foreign buyers to deal with them rather than independent agents. For instance, the Dutch company had a contract which exempted their goods from tolls, but a succession of Safavid administrations ruled that the deal only applied to silk they purchased from the Shah; if they purchased elsewhere, then the goods they brought in as exchange would be subject to punitively high taxes.³⁴ After 'Abbās I, later Safavid Shahs were less involved in the details of commerce. However a series of Grand Viziers and court officials took up the task of representing Persian trade interests.³⁵ Over time these officials became more subject to corruption. Through placing short-term and personal gain over long-term growth, they contributed to a decline in Safavid funds in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries when state instability meant increased revenue would have been useful.³⁶

Silk was exported from Persia along several routes, whose relative importance varied with time. These were: overland to the Levant, from ports on the Persian Gulf, up the Volga through Russia, and over the Black Sea.³⁷ Each route had advantages and disadvantages. For example, the Levant ports were reached through Ottoman territory, which was subject to being closed during wartime, and which paid tolls to the enemy. In the sixteenth century most silk exports passed through the Levant carried by Venetian and other Mediterranean shippers to Europe, while the Portuguese engaged in trans-oceanic trade from Hormuz on the Persian Gulf. In the

33 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 119-121; Steensgard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 386.

34 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 132, 149, 157, 234-235; Steensgard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 391-393.

35 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, p. 129.

36 Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 240-241.

37 Edmund M. Herzig, "The Volume of Iranian Raw Silk Exports in the Safavid Period", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 1/2, (1992), p. 62; Matthee, *The Politics of Trade*, pp. 47-55.

first half of the seventeenth century, supremacy in trade transferred to the English and Dutch companies, who exported silk from Bandar Abbas on the Persian Gulf after the English helped Shah 'Abbās I eject the Portuguese from Hormuz in 1622.³⁸ Later in the century, the Levant ports regained their importance once a lasting peace was established between the Safavid and Ottoman empires, and the route through Russia became more practical after Russia emerged from its "Time of Troubles" and established firmer control over the lower Volga region. Throughout the period and on all the routes Armenian family firms were constant agents and middlemen. Austrian and German efforts were only ever a small portion of the total trade. But Austrian traders formed a part of the larger Levant trade and pioneered the Black Sea route, while a German effort prefigured the Russian route, although too early for it to be commercially practical.

Olearius and the Holstein Trade Mission

In the 1630s, as the Thirty Years War ravaged much of the German Empire, the Duke of Holstein Frederick III sponsored a trade mission to Persia through Russia in an attempt to capture some of the European silk trade away from the maritime powers. With approval from the Emperor Ferdinand II, the mission set out in late 1633, travelled to Moscow where they were delayed in negotiations with the Tsar, then sailed down the Volga River and over the Caspian Sea to Persia. There they met Shah Şafī I in Isfahan in 1637, and returned again through Moscow and arrived back in Germany in 1639.³⁹ The difficulty of the journey and the expensive transit fees showed that the venture could not be commercially successful. However, inclusion in the mission of the scholar Olearius made the expedition a cultural and scientific success, as his detailed observations and writings brought to Europe a wealth of information about Persian lands and peoples.

38 Samuel Purchas, *Purchas his Pilgrimes*, (Glasgow, 1905), pp. 348-353; Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 331-343.

39 Gerhard H. Weiss, *In Search of Silk: Adam Olearius' Mission to Russia and Persia*. The James Ford Bell Lectures, No. 20, (Minneapolis, 1983). timeline and map pp. 20-21.

Numerous nations were interested in developing overland Persian trade through Russia, because of the distance and expense of sea-travel around Africa or the tariffs imposed by the Ottomans for transport to the Mediterranean. England, the Netherlands, France, Denmark and Sweden had all tried, but failed, to establish trade across Russia.⁴⁰ But Holstein held several advantages which led Duke Frederick III to believe he might be successful where the other, larger powers had failed. Otto Brüggemann, a Hamburg merchant, had proposed the venture to Duke Frederick and sold the idea to raise Holstein into a powerful trading centre for silk based on these advantages. The Duchy's location on the Jutland peninsula gave it ready access to the Baltic and North Seas, as well as rivers by which to distribute silk products into Europe. Duke Frederick had familial connections with the Kings of Denmark and Sweden, whose cooperation would be needed for the venture. Meanwhile, he managed to maintain his country's neutrality during the Thirty Years War and remained in favour with the Emperor Ferdinand II, as Holstein was one of the largest meat suppliers to the Empire after others had been devastated by war. Frederick also cultivated good relations with the Russian Tsar, who had denied transit permission to other nations. Brüggemann was sent to Moscow with a gift of 12 cannon in 1632, just as Russia was preparing for war with Poland. The Tsar was also invited to send recruiting agents to Holstein to enlist soldiers. Holstein held another advantage in Moscow over the greater powers in that it was a small state, and so was unlikely to encroach on Russia's territory or independence. So it was thought the Tsar might be willing to grant rights to Holstein that he was unwilling to give to others.⁴¹ The Shah was also expected to receive the mission favourably since Brüggemann's brother-in-law was the Shah's clock-maker and a respected figure in the Persian court.⁴² All these advantages appeared to give trade based from Holstein a chance where others had failed.

40 Samuel H. Baron, transl. and ed. *The Travels of Olearius in Seventeenth Century Russia*. (Stanford, 1967), p. 5

41 Baron, *Travels of Olearius*, pp. 7-8.

42 Schuster-Walser, Sibylla, *Das Safawidische Persien im Spiegel europäischer Reiseberichte (1502-1722)*, (Baden-Baden, 1970), p. 53

Territories of the Holy Roman Empire were expected to receive permission of the Emperor to enter into foreign treaties, until after 1648 when this requirement was modified in the Peace of Westphalia.⁴³ A representative of Duke Frederick had an audience with Emperor Ferdinand II in mid-1633 to gain the Emperor's approval for the expedition. As per the Emperor's request, he put the request from the audience in writing in the form of two letters dated July and August 1633.⁴⁴ He promoted the expedition as a way to damage the income of the Turks, as well as bring new income to the Empire and the House of Austria.⁴⁵ Although relations with the Ottomans remained peaceful for much of the 17th century following the treaty of 1606, the Turks were still perceived as a threat. Plans to cut the income they made from taxes on trade through their Mediterranean ports, as earlier explored by Robert Sherley, were understood as popular with the Emperor. The representative outlined route plans for the trade - over the Baltic Sea and through Moscow - and how imported goods will be distributed to other cities in the Empire. He promised to "convey the Emperor's good wishes" to the rulers of Persia and Moscow, although what he hoped to achieve by this promise was to receive letters giving Imperial endorsement to the operation. He also suggested sending a gift of "several hundred thousand" Reichsdollars to the King of Persia so that the King will continue his war with the Turks.⁴⁶ This gift would help win the King of Persia's favour for the trading company and further the Emperor's foreign policy goals at the same time. In a follow-on letter, Duke Frederick agreed to obey conditions requested by the Emperor: the mission would promote the Emperor's interests abroad, and the Emperor would have the right to charge tolls on foreign goods. In exchange, the Duke's company alone had the right to sell all goods brought into Germany from Persia.⁴⁷ Emperor Ferdinand also provided the requested letters to the Shah of Persia and the Grand-duke of Moscow.⁴⁸ In his

43 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 284; Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, p. 777.

44 HHStA, "Johan Adolff Veithaus to Emperor Ferdinand II", July 1633, Persica I, Konv. 4, f. 14-16; and 25 Aug 1633, f. 17-19.

45 HHStA, "Veithaus to Ferdinand II", July 1633, f. 14.

46 HHStA, "Veithaus to Ferdinand II", Persica I, Konv. 4, July 1633, f. 15.

47 HHStA, "Veithaus to Ferdinand II", Persica I, Konv. 4, 25 Aug 1633, f. 17-19.

48 HHStA, "Emperor Ferdinand II to Magno Duci Moscovia", 29 August 1633, Persica I, Konv. 4, f. 19-20; "Emperor Ferdinand II to Regi Persaren", 29 August 1633, f. 21-22.

letter to the Shah, Ferdinand introduced Duke Frederick and his emissaries, asked that they be received in friendship, and explained the advantages of trade through Moscow in that it would harm their common adversary.⁴⁹

Duke Frederick III of Holstein-Gottorp was a talented diplomat who was able to maintain peaceful relationships with Denmark, Sweden and the Emperor throughout the Thirty Years War. As a noble of the Holy Roman Empire he was a vassal of the Emperor; however, he held the territory of Schleswig from Denmark. He also had family relations to the Danish crown and connections to Sweden, including a marriage alliance of his daughter to the Swedish King. Although he was entangled with several opposing factions, he was able to walk the tightrope of neutrality through the Thirty Years War through his diplomatic skill. He thought of himself as a modern, enlightened ruler who was dedicated to maintaining the security of his people and improving their fortunes. He was also devoted to the arts of peace: culture, letters and learning, and he was himself a genuine scholar.⁵⁰ As such, he charged his embassy with not only negotiating trade with the rulers of the countries they visited, but also with gathering information on their lands and peoples.⁵¹ For this purpose he enlisted the scholar, Adam Olearius.

Olearius was born in 1603 in the German principality of Anhalt. His father was a tailor named Adam Oelschläger, but when he entered the University of Leipzig he adopted a Latin name - Olearius, as was custom among scholars of the time. He was known as a gifted student, and after obtaining his degree in 1627 he was made a part of the university's Faculty of Philosophy. He had broad scholarly interests; he was well versed in the classics and languages, but he also was interested in the natural science and mathematics. He had some early publication of his research in physics and astronomy. However, when the Thirty Years War engulfed Saxony, he was forced to

49 HHStA, "Emperor Ferdinand II to Regi Persaren", 29 August 1633, Persica I, Konv. 4, f. 21-22.

50 Rumohr, Henning von, *Schlösser und Herrenhäuser im Herzogtum Schleswig*, (Frankfurt, 1968), pp. 147-148.

51 Baron, *Travels of Olearius*, p. 11.

abandon his scholarly work. In 1633 he was invited into service of the Duke of Holstein, perhaps through the intercession of Danish friends at the Holstein court. His linguistic skills, detailed powers of observation and writing abilities made him an excellent choice for the scientific mission in the embassy.⁵²

The embassy departed their assembly point of Hamburg on the 6th of November 1633, and on the 9th of November took to the Baltic Sea from the port of Travemünde. In addition to the ambassadors and counsellors the mission contained cooks, servants, watchmakers, musicians, boat builders, soldiers and other attendants - numbering almost 300 people at times.⁵³ They sailed across the Baltic Sea to Riga and Reval, where they waited for several months, to coordinate their activities with a Swedish mission and to await an opportune time to arrive in Moscow. When they finally arrived in Moscow on the 14th of August 1634, they were graciously received by the Tsar, but he demanded far more payment for trade to cross his territory than they were authorised to agree. The leaders of the mission went back to Holstein to consult with the Duke, while the rest of the mission stayed in Reval.⁵⁴ The second journey began with the ambassadors surviving a shipwreck in the Baltic Sea. But they joined the rest of the mission and eventually returned to Moscow on the 28th of March 1636. After concluding business in Moscow they travelled to Nizhni Novgorod then travelled down the Volga in ships built on the river by the company's ship-builders. Travelling down the Volga they passed through territory only loosely controlled by Moscow, and they faced raids by Cossacks and Tartars. From Astrakhan they sailed across the Caspian Sea, but they landed in Derbent when a storm destroyed several of their smaller ships and their flagship arrived damaged on the shore. Arriving in Persia in December 1636, they stayed for several months in Shamakhi (Şamaxı, Azerbaijan), waiting for permission to travel on to Isfahan. While in Shamakhi, Olearius studied Persian culture, and learned the Persian language from a young mullah who wanted to

52 Baron, *Travels of Olearius*, pp. 11-12; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, pp. 9-10.

53 Adam Olearius, *Vermehrte, neue Beschreibung der muscowitischen und persischen Reyse*, 1656, reprinted as *Moskowitzische und Persische Reise*, ed. Eberhard Meißner, (Berlin, 1959), Book 2, Chp. 1, pp. 37-39. Hereafter cited as Olearius, *Reise*; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 8.

54 Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, pp. 9-10, gives an outline of the journey.

learn German.⁵⁵ This knowledge was useful when they received permission to travel on to Isfahan, where they arrived on the 3rd of August 1637. They were received enthusiastically by Shah Şafî, and treated to numerous entertainments such as feasts and hunting expeditions. However they also faced troubles from other foreign embassies, such as the Dutch who saw them as trade rivals, and Indians who were insulted by a member of their retinue and besieged the house where the German embassy was staying.⁵⁶ They reached some general agreements about trade with the Shah, but produced no specific deal, in part because of interference by other European trade agents. When they began the return journey in December 1637, it was becoming clear that the planned trade would not be economically viable. The difficulties and expenses faced by the team were just too great. Some of the embassy returned home to Gottrop on the 15th of April 1639, while the rest paused in Reval and returned at the end of July. On return, Otto Brüggemann, who had originally conceived of the expedition, was put on trial by the Duke of Holstein and executed for mismanagement and other offences during the trip.⁵⁷

Although the Holstein party was received graciously by the Shah, little headway was made on their trade objectives. Brüggemann reported on his return to Duke Frederick that the Persians offered nothing but "promises, politeness, and hopes".⁵⁸ In part, the attitude of the Persians and the failure of the agreement were precipitated by Brüggemann's proposals. Brüggemann asked for a monopoly on the export of Iranian silk in exchange for an anti-Ottoman alliance. He also required the Shah to expel all Dutchmen from Persia.⁵⁹ The Shah and his advisers would never agree to such a deal. It was not in the Shah's interest to become tied to a single monopolistic exporter. A competitive market increased income for suppliers and provided multiple routes of export. Just a few years prior the Dutch had tried to corner the Persian silk market by purchasing all produced, but for simple economic

55 Olearius, *Reise*, p. Book 4, Chp. 16, 259; Book 5, Chp. 10, 434; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 29.

56 Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, pp. 30-31.

57 Olearius, *Reise*, p. Book 6, Chp. 11, 508, 509; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, pp. 35-36.

58 Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, pp. 141-142.

59 Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p. 141; Ferrier, "British-Persian Relations", p. 225.

reasons this effort had failed.⁶⁰ It was also a danger to Persian sovereignty to be tied to one single foreign power. The Shah would not seriously consider expelling a group of foreign merchants who brought income to the crown, unless there was sustained provocation and the promise of greater profits to come.⁶¹ The personal conduct of Brüggenmann was also not suited to that of a diplomat and trade negotiator. He frequently engaged in open debauchery and insulted his hosts; he tarnished the reputation of Holstein and in his position committed some other serious malfeasance. Once he saw that trade negotiations were not productive, he devised a plan, in which he tried to involve Russia to seize the silk-producing regions from Persia.⁶² This behaviour led to Brüggenmann's trial and execution upon his return to Holstein, and it certainly contributed to the failure of the trade mission.

After the end of the mission, Olearius spent the next eight years preparing his voluminous notes for publication. In 1643 he was appointed court mathematician, librarian and counsellor to the Duke, a position which supported him while writing about his travels.⁶³ His first account was printed in 1647 as *Oft begehrte Bescheibung der Newen Orientalischen Reise (Frequently Requested Description of the Recent Journey to the Orient)*. A second, substantially enlarged edition was published in 1656 as *Vermehrte, neue Beschreibung der muscowitischen und persischen Reyse (Extended, New Description of the Journey to Moscow and Persia)*. This second edition was to become the standard, and was frequently reprinted and translated throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Olearius' account was not merely a narrative of the journey; it was much more detailed and systematic than Tectander's account, described in Chapter Three. In addition to the story of their travels, he included observations of the lands and peoples they visited. He gave detailed descriptions of the cities the expedition passed through: Ardibil, Qazvin, Qom, Kašan, Isfahan and Rašt. He described political and religious institutions, as well as the lives and habits of ordinary people, such as their clothing, food, housing and customs. While his objectivity is

60 Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 375-376.

61 Such as with the Portuguese on Hormuz in 1622. Steensgaard, *Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 286-343.

62 Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 34; Baron, *Travels of Olearius*, p. 10.

63 Baron, *Travels of Olearius*, pp. 12-13.

sometimes questionable - for instance, he refers to the Persians' "false prophet Muhammed" - his encyclopaedic observations are invaluable.

Olearius made especial contributions to understanding the geography of Persia. He began describing the land as such:⁶⁴

The soil, where the land is flat and does not have mountains, is arid, coarse and mixed through with red stones. There is nothing but thistles and shrubs, which where there is no wood they gather and use for cooking-fires. But in the valleys that run out of the mountains, where most of their villages lie, it is green and fruitful; they know that it is the mountains that are the source of streams.

He then goes on to describe the animals and plants, then customs of the people who live there. He states in the preface that he intends to "correct the ancient geographers" and more recent authors who copy from them; "errante uno, errant omnes" – if one errs, all err.⁶⁵ On his accompanying map he is the first to depict the Caspian Sea in its correct orientation, with its long axis running north-south. Ptolemy had depicted it in his *Cosmographica* with the long axis running east-west, and it had been depicted so ever since. Olearius corrected this and defended against criticism of his depiction by reference to his observations and data.⁶⁶

Shah Şafî arranged for a reciprocal mission to visit Holstein, and this rendezvoused with the returning Germans at the Russian border. Along the way the Persian ambassador was offended by cultural differences of the lands they travelled through. For example, he was bothered by a group of women in Narva who were hoping to see his wife, and he called them all whores for allowing themselves to be seen so openly. Olearius remarked that, "He wanted to judge our customs by his own," but also observed that many of the Europeans were similarly puzzled by the customs in Persia.⁶⁷ However, both missions made it to Gottrop, where the Persians were

64 Olearius, *Reise*, Book 5, Chp. 2, p. 394.

65 quoted in Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 13.

66 Elio Brancaforte, "Mapping the Regnum Sophorum: Adam Olearius's Representation of the Safavid Empire (1647)", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, p. 304. Cyrus Alai, *General Maps of Persia*, (Leiden, 2005), pp. 135-139, plates 97-99.

67 Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 36.

received with as much splendour as the little Duchy could manage. The Persians presented Duke Frederick with an elaborate letter from Shah Şafi hoping for continued friendship, and the gift of several bolts of silk.⁶⁸ This gift, which draped a few rooms of Gottrop Castle, was the only shipment of silk to come from the trade endeavour. Six Persians wished to stay in Germany, in part to escape the cruelty of the ambassador, and they converted to Christianity and were given sanctuary by the Duke. These men included the embassy's secretary, Hakwirdi, and his son. Hakwirdi became a good friend of Olearius, and helped him confirm details about the Persian chapters in his book. The two collaborated on translating Saadi's *Golestan* into German, and this work had considerable influence on German poets for the next century. The son went on to become a famous gunsmith in service to the Elector of Saxony, adopting the name Hans Georg Farss.⁶⁹

Thus, the trade mission from Holstein to Persia was a failure on its own terms. However, because of the work of Olearius and other cultural contacts, the lost trade is insignificant next to the understanding and appreciation of Persian culture brought to central Europe.

Vienna and the Oriental Trading Company

Since the middle ages Vienna was a centre for trade, sitting as it does on one of the major European waterways - the Danube. Viennese trade was primarily with Hungarian and Balkan territories along the lower Danube, transferring goods further up the river into Germany. Most European trade with Asia was conducted by Venice and other sea powers, Asian goods travelling through the Levant over the Mediterranean, or over the ocean around Africa in the case of Portugal. Vienna was only involved as a local centre of distribution of the lucrative Asian trade. The 16th

68 Faridun Vahman, "Three Safavid Documents in the Record Office of Denmark", in *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in Honor of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami, (Princeton, NJ, 1998), pp. 178-180, trans. of letter in Appx. A, p. 181; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 36.

69 Olearius, *Reise*, Editor's Afterword, p. 511; Weiss, *In Search of Silk*, p. 37.

century expansion of the Ottoman Empire and the subsequent wars further restricted Vienna's mercantile activities.⁷⁰

The 1606 Treaty of Zsitva-Torok between the Habsburgs and Ottomans, and especially its 1615 renewal established conditions for trade between Austria, Turkey and the east. The treaty guaranteed freedom of trade between the two Empires. It also set a low rate of tolls on this trade. For merchants from Austria, the Holy Roman Empire or the Spanish Netherlands travelling under the Emperor's flag, border tolls were established at 3%. A tax rate of 2% was set on trading agents residing in the Sultan's lands, and these agents were guaranteed travel unhindered on land and water.⁷¹ These rates compare favourably to those paid by merchants of other nations; rates varied with time, place and participants, however they could be as much as 10% to 12%.⁷²

For the first half-century this new trade was conducted by intermediaries. The court requested the opinions of traders from Vienna and around the Empire in 1615 about the possibilities of implementing the trade opened by the treaty's provisions. The merchants emphasized the necessity of re-establishing trade between Vienna and Ottoman territories. However, they did not see it necessary to set up direct trade relations and recommended that this trade be conducted by intermediaries. They also strongly opposed Turkish traders setting up a market in Austria.⁷³ Instead of directly trading with the Ottomans, Viennese merchants used Hungarian, Serbian and Armenian traders as agents to import goods. These goods included Asian items such as tobacco, carpets, sponges, pepper and ginger as well as beef cattle raised on the lower Danube.⁷⁴ Although this trade was conducted with agents in Ottoman

70 Spielman, *The City and the Crown*, pp. 5-17; Fichtner, "Trade", in *Historical Dictionary of Austria*, p. 303.

71 Herbert Hassinger, "Die erste Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie 1667--1683". *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschafts- Geschichte*, Vol. 35, (1942), p. 6.

72 Steensgaard, *Carracks, Caravans and Companies*, p. 65.

73 Lajos Gecsényi, "A Memorandum Presented by the Merchants Living in Vienna Regarding East-West Trade (1615)". *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaria*, Vol. 61, (2008), p. 53.

74 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 7.

territories, many of these items originated in Persia and were simply trans-shipped through Ottoman lands. There were a variety of reasons for this indirect approach, including religious and cultural biases against Turks with whom they had so recently been at war, as well as practical problems of not having established relationships with Asian merchants.

Several trends served to increase trade through Vienna over the first half of the seventeenth century. The Thirty Years War blocked the Hanseatic and Dutch town from trading safely into southern Germany. More of this market could be covered by trade through Vienna up the Danube.⁷⁵ While during the war the volume of Viennese trade with the east was reduced, primarily because of inflation and the expulsion of Protestant craftsmen in the counter-reformation, after the war's conclusion it picked up with increased markets. Under pressure from merchants, the court began reforming medieval anti-luxury and clothing laws which restricted what different social classes could own and wear. While these did not disappear entirely, the number of separate categories was reduced and the restrictions were eased, allowing more people to purchase silk and other luxury goods.⁷⁶ After the war Vienna emerged as the chief city of the Empire, and thus the courtiers who flocked to the city made it the largest market for luxury goods in central Europe.⁷⁷ Therefore, interest grew in conducting more Asian trade from Vienna itself.

After the 1663-1664 war between the Austrians and Ottomans, the terms of the 1615 treaty were renewed for another 20 years, including the trade terms.⁷⁸ Emperor Leopold I, encouraged by certain Austrian businessmen and Czech financiers, became aware of the revenue other European states were generating from mercantilism. He created an office - the *Kommerzkollegium* - to encourage commerce and reform the predominantly agricultural economy.⁷⁹ Johann Joachim Becher was appointed to head

75 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 7 - 9.

76 Winkelbauer, Thomas, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, Teil 1, pp. 460-463.

77 Spielman, *The City and the Crown*, Chp. 5, p. 122.

78 Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 323.

79 Fichtner, "Trade", in *Historical Dictionary of Austria*, p. 303; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 300.

this office and advise the Emperor on the economy (and also alchemy). Becher and his colleagues set the direction of the Austrian economy for almost a century, despite being opposed by court nobility who were disturbed by these upstart commoners.⁸⁰ Becher pushed several imaginative ideas, including setting up silk farms in Lower Austria, building a craft-house to train and employ the indigent of Vienna, and reforming the restrictive policies of the guilds. He also encouraged redirecting the luxury laws to tax luxury goods coming from European sources outside the Empire, as a way of striking at the hostile French, who supplied many luxuries, and also as a way of encouraging development of local manufacturing.⁸¹

In 1665, Becher, who also advised the Princ-elector (*Kurfürst*) of Bavaria, brought to the attention of the court that a group of Bavarian businessmen were interested in establishing a silk manufacturing factory.⁸² The company needed a source of raw silk, as well as support from Austrian merchants. The interested parties held discussions that established Bavaria wanted a silk weaving company, Vienna wanted a Danube trading company, and developing manufacturers in southern Germany wanted markets for their goods. These various interests came together to form plans for a company with directors and investors from Vienna, Bavaria, and other Habsburg lands such as Bohemia and Lower Austria. The directors included notables such as Hofkammerpräsident (Finance Minister) Sinzendorf, and several other figures of the Austrian and Bavarian courts.⁸³ However, they faced opposition from the Hofkriegsrat (War ministry), who objected to their engaging in contacts with the "arch-enemy".⁸⁴ The Hofkriegsrat cited a 1544 law forbidding the trade of arms with the "enemies of Christianity". This opposition delayed, but could not halt the formation of the company. In spring of 1667 the company was granted provisional

80 Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 163-164; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, p. 445-456; Pamela H. Smith, "Alchemy as a Language of Mediation at the Habsburg Court", *Isis*, Vol. 85, No. 1, (March 1994), pp. 13-14.

81 Herbert Hassinger, "Johann Joachim Bechers Bedeutung für die Entwicklung der Seidenindustrie in Deutschland", *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, Vol. 38, (1949), p. 210-213; Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, p. 460-46; Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 276.

82 Hassinger, "Johann Joachim Bechers Bedeutung", pp. 212-218.

83 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 11-12.

84 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 14. "*Erbfeind*"

status and could begin preparations, and by summer of 1668 was granted full privileges by the court. Approval was provided by the Hofkammer, of which one of the company directors, Sinzendorf, was the leader. The charter granted to the company in 1668 specified that it was to operate, "like the East Indian Company of Holland". It was to be, "In all things free and independent and subject to no one other than His Imperial Majesty." It was given permission to import and export goods from Asia, and to run manufacturing sites.⁸⁵ The importation of silk products required alterations to the luxury laws, which, since 1518 had restricted importation of silk clothes.⁸⁶ The company was given additional privileges to get it started: for one year it could transport goods through Austrian Erblande territories toll free, and the toll for shipping over the Hungarian border would be at half-rate.⁸⁷

In July 1667, Consul Lelio de Luca led a flotilla of 9 ships down the Danube on an introductory mission for the company. They called on the local rulers along the route down river and over the Black Sea to Constantinople: Ofen, Belgrad, Adrianople, making trade agreements and demonstrating their wares.⁸⁸ By February 1668, they had reached Constantinople. While negotiating with Ottoman officials, de Luca also invited representatives from Persia who were in the city to meet with him. He even suggested that he could go to Persia with samples of the company's goods. He made no such trip, but trade arrangements were made with the Persians anyway. He reported to Vienna that it would be possible to purchase not only finished luxury items in Constantinople, but also raw material, both silk and cotton, sent from Persia through Armenian middlemen. This raw silk could supply the manufacturing industry growing in Bavaria and Austria. For this deal the company would need more investment. He reported that it was possible on the Persian side to make a "Fundamental Commitment" if the company had participation from the Empire and the Emperor himself to provide capital.⁸⁹

85 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 15; Fichtner, "Trade", *Historical Dictionary*, p. 303

86 Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit und Fürstenmacht*, p. 460.

87 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 15.

88 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 16ff.

89 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 19.

The *Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie* (Vienna Oriental Trading Company) began true trading missions with two shiploads sent down the Danube in May 1668. Another two ships followed in November of that year, and continued at intervals for the next 15 years. The exports to the east contained textiles, brass and iron ware, raw tin and sheet metal, and wood crafts.⁹⁰ In Constantinople markets the company faced competition from other European nations who were already established there, such as France and the Netherlands. The Viennese company had to compete on price, which it could do because of the agreement on lower tolls.⁹¹ On return, the vessels imported Asian items, mostly cloth but also oils and oranges, to Vienna. Since Serbian and Armenian merchants were already selling Asian carpets, blankets and tobacco in Vienna, the company focused the largest part of its imports on luxury items which were fashionable with courtly residents in the imperial capital city. These included cotton veils, Persian wool and silk cloth, taffeta, linen, and Turkish cloth dyed in many colours. The company also bought some raw Persian silk and silk yarn to experiment in silk cloth manufacturing. In the early years, the company did not travel to Persia to buy Persian goods directly; instead, they bought from Armenian middle-men in Constantinople, although that eventually changed.⁹²

In 1678, the Austrian company established direct contracts between themselves and Persian merchants. The company brought goods "over the Black Sea" from Trabzon. They were searching for lower tolls on goods shipped across Turkey by Armenian middle-men.⁹³ Around this time, foreign merchants in Vienna were accused of spying for the Ottomans, charges which were promoted in the Court by the company. All Serbian and Armenian merchants were ejected from the city.⁹⁴ The concurrence of these events indicates a possible concerted effort by the company to seize direct control of Austrian foreign trade. Meanwhile, the Armenian silk traders

90 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 20; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 301.

91 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 18.

92 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 22; Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, p. 301.

93 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 50, see note 156.

94 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 39.

were beginning to ship their consignments through Russia, after being allowed by the Tsar to trans-ship goods through Russia in 1676, reducing their supplies in the Constantinople markets.⁹⁵ This mix of motivations, whether or not it was part of a planned effort, resulted in the first direct trade contacts between Austria and Persia.

Although the company started with hopes of financial rewards, during the 1670s the company faced many types of difficulties, economic, political, international and natural. An imbalance between more imports and less exports left the company forced to pay for Asian goods with silver rather than reciprocal trade goods. This outflow of silver strained the company's finances and worried the Court.⁹⁶ The prices of silk in Europe fell during the 1670s due to growing supplies of Indian silk.⁹⁷ Politically, the company was caught in a struggle between the Hofkammer, which wanted to increase revenues and whose ministers were personally linked to the company, and the Hofkriegsrat, which worried about trade with the Turkish enemy and restricted exports of valuable metal goods.⁹⁸ Although the Ottomans were at peace with Austria during this decade, they warred with Poland and Russia, and these wars endangered shipping on the lower Danube and gave the Hofkriegsrat more license to limit the company's activity.⁹⁹ Finally, plague hit the region in 1679, which dampened trade and killed the company's Constantinople resident representative.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the company was already in a precarious state when in 1683 the Turks invaded Austria and besieged Vienna.¹⁰¹ It could not survive the halt in trade brought by the war, and its assets were sold in liquidation two years later.¹⁰² However, its legacy was the first commercial contacts between Austria and Persia, and in the future these contacts would expand. At the end of the series of wars in which Austria pushed the Turks out of Hungary, the treaty of Passarowitz in 1718 stipulated the rights of Imperial subjects to trade freely on the Black Sea and Danube, and specifically guaranteed protection of

95 Mathee, "Politics of Trade", p. 197.

96 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", pp. 23-27.

97 Mathee, "Politics of Trade", p. 202.

98 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", pp. 14, 20-21, 50-51.

99 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 37.

100 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", pp. 50-51.

101 For more on the 1683 war see: Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna*; Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*.

102 Hassinger, "Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie", p. 52.

trade with Persia. In the nineteenth century trade between the two nations grew considerably, and Vienna became one of the most important centres for trade of Persian carpets.¹⁰³ The groundwork laid by the first Vienna Trading Company made the later commerce possible.

Religion

Another subject of contact between Austria and Persia was over religious issues. European Christian missionaries had been visiting Persia since the late thirteenth century when they met the tolerant religious policies of the Il-Khānids.¹⁰⁴ This missionary activity increased in the seventeenth century under the reign of 'Abbās I. Several areas within the Safavid sphere were traditionally Christian, notably Armenia which had an ancient indigenous Christian tradition as well as ties to the Roman church. Both Austrian and Persian courts had strong religious identities: the seventeenth century Habsburgs were proponents of Counter-Reformation Catholicism, and the Safavids were promoters of Shi'a Islam. While these contrasting religious devotions may seem to be a source of conflict, they also provided reasons for contact between the two governments. Issues which gave rise to discussions included: recommendations for appointments to religious offices, advocacy for the activities of religious communities such as building of churches and teaching of lessons, and criticism of perceived oppression of religious minorities. In many of these cases, the secular officials would use their friendly state relations to smooth over problems which began in religious circles. These contacts occurred on a background which included Habsburg support for the counter-reformation, conflict within the Armenian church over affiliation with Rome, and changes in the hierarchy of Safavid Shi'ism.

103Helmut Slaby, "Austria", *Encyclopedia Iranica*. Online Edition, (2005, 2012).

104Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 373.

Habsburg Religion

The Habsburgs of the seventeenth century were devoted to the Catholic church and incorporated their Catholic piety into their Imperial identity.¹⁰⁵ The Habsburg family had always remained Catholic, even in the sixteenth century when most of population of their realms converted to some form of Protestantism. However, Ferdinand I, Maximilian II, and Rudolf II were all to degrees moderate about their faith, irenicist in outlook, and tolerant of other confessions. As R.J.W. Evans summarised: "As for the dynasty, its Humanism outran its Catholicism."¹⁰⁶ But in the wake of the Council of Trent, 1563, Catholic forces from the Vatican, Jesuit and other orders, and the Spanish branch of the Habsburg family began a gradual effort to revive a more dogmatic Catholicism in the lands of the Austrian crown. Although it took fifty years to develop, the effort succeeded when a new identity for the dynasty emerged in the reigns of Mathias and his adviser Bishop Khlesl: a strong Catholic identity with a distinct Austrian flavour, "revivified by the example of the Counter-Reformation, ... yet never identical with it."¹⁰⁷ The dynasty's new ideology was solidified by the militantly Catholic Ferdinand II. He had been educated by Jesuits in his mother's native Bavaria to advance the re-establishment of Catholicism. As Archduke of Styria, he had vowed to turn his lands into a desert rather than rule over heretics, and to this end he forced conversion or exile on all his Protestant subjects.¹⁰⁸ As Emperor he equated Protestantism with disloyalty, and used military force during the Thirty Years War to subjugate Protestant parts of the Empire.¹⁰⁹ It was left to Ferdinand III and Leopold I to complete the religious unification, and while the Treaty of Westphalia ending the Thirty Years War legalized some forms of Protestantism in the Empire, it also gave the Habsburgs the constitutional backing to enforce Catholicism in the lands they directly controlled. For the Habsburgs, this process was both a moral and political necessity: moral in that as princes they were responsible for the souls of their

105Anna Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, Translated by William D. Bowman and Anna Maria Leitgeb, (West Lafayette, IN, 2004), p. 1.

106Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 1-20, 39.

107Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 41-45, 59.

108Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 238-239.

109Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, p. 68.

subjects and they genuinely believed they were saving the people from heresy, and political because in their state with diverse nations and cultures, a common religion provided an element of unity whereas religious exceptionalism could be used to express social discontent.¹¹⁰

In the new Habsburg ethos, the family received its mandate to rule from God and it was their duty to promote Catholic worship by display of their own piety. Anna Coreth highlighted this sense of piety in her book *Pietas Austriaca*. She describes their sense of destiny: "In sum, the House of Austria at the zenith of its influence and power believed that its power constituted a mission entrusted to it by God alone... They were also convinced that their right to leadership had constantly to be earned anew by fidelity to the piety of their ancestors."¹¹¹ Ferdinand II was well known for his personal piety - attending two masses each day, marching in processions in the pouring rain, rising at four o'clock each morning for an hour of prayer. His virtue was widely promoted by his Jesuit confessor, Lamormaini, who portrayed Ferdinand's religious devotion as an example for the Counter-Reformation and helped set the dynasty's new ideology.¹¹² Ferdinand II's descendants carried on from him, creating public religious rituals from their private devotion and using such rituals to sanctify and legitimise their rule. Habsburg piety was devoted to the Roman Catholic church, but with a unique Austrian emphasis. They particularly emphasised the ritual of the Eucharist, as well as veneration of Mary as the Immaculate Virgin. All the Emperors regularly made pilgrimages to the Marian shrine at Mariazell, and Mary was declared the supreme commander - *generalissima* - of the Imperial Army, with her image featured on their battle flags.¹¹³ The Habsburgs were devoted to the idea of a unified Catholic Church, but they often conflicted with the Vatican. The Pope was a rival for power and the Habsburg religious fervour threatened Vatican control of ceremony. The two cooperated, but it was, as Evans characterised, "a balance struck in practice between

110Bérenger, *Habsburg Empire*, pp. 304-311.

111Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, p. 22.

112Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 72-73.

113Coreth, *Pietas Austriaca*, pp. 6-7, 52.

two uneasy allies, each manoeuvring to assert itself as the dominant power."¹¹⁴ In addition, the Habsburgs great European rivals, the French, were also Catholic, but the French court was seen as secular and worldly. The distinct *pietas austriaca* served to distinguish them from the other Catholic powers.

Armenian Religion

Armenia had an ancient Christian tradition dating back possibly to the first century of the Christian era, and certainly to the year 301 when Armenia became the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as the state religion.¹¹⁵ Their indigenous church remained independent of the Roman and Byzantine church hierarchies. The Armenian church valued its independence and maintained minor doctrinal and liturgical differences from the others. But as a small nation in a dangerous part of the world, some of the leaders saw the utility in forging closer links with the more powerful western cultures. The Byzantine church treated the Armenians poorly, as heretics and schismatics, despite various attempts by the Armenian church leaders to reach an understanding. At the time of the Crusades, the Armenians began to develop links with the Catholic church and the Crusader states. Prince Leo of Cilician Armenia sought a royal crown from the Holy Roman Empire, and for this to happen, his religious leader negotiated an accommodation with the Catholic church. This was achieved in 1198, when King Leo I was crowned by a representative of Emperor Henry VI.¹¹⁶ While the political and religious hierarchy sought union with the Catholic church, the clergy and population were not so inclined - they neither wished to change the traditions with which they were familiar nor give up their accustomed independence. The accommodation with the Cilician king did not bring about a union, but it opened the door to greater Catholic church activity. Missionaries produced a few converts which created a small Catholic diocese in Armenia.

¹¹⁴Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 134-137.

¹¹⁵Vahan M. Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, (New York, 2008, first published 1958), pp. 269-270.

¹¹⁶Charles A. Frazee, "The Christian Church in Cilician Armenia: Its Relations with Rome and Constantinople to 1198", *Church History*, Vol. 45, No. 2, (June 1976), pp. 166-184.

Throughout the middle ages Armenia was divided by the various empires that competed over the region. Through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the Armenian church was divided and in confusion, with multiple claimants to leadership and corruption in the hierarchy.¹¹⁷ In the Safavid era, the Counter-Reformation in Europe gave new impetus to Catholic missionary efforts, and they used the disorder in the Armenian church to their advantage. The seventeenth century Habsburgs with their Catholic identity naturally tried to support the Catholic efforts in Armenia. Shah 'Abbās I uprooted and moved the entire Armenian city of Julfa, which had become an important centre of trading families, to Isfahan during the war with the Ottomans in 1604. While the immediate goal was a 'scorched-earth' strategy to deny resources to the enemy, the move also complemented his plans to gain control of the silk trade.¹¹⁸ New Julfa, a suburb of Isfahan, became an important site for exile Armenian culture and trade activity. This community was given protection and encouragement during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I, but under later shahs they were not as privileged.¹¹⁹ Also, a renaissance in Armenian culture took place during the seventeenth century. Contacts with Europe produced a surge of Armenian language books, first printed in Europe and later locally. Armenian leaders who were opposed to the increased missionary efforts also determined to school their clergy in western-style subjects of logic, rhetoric and philosophy so as to better resist the entreaties of the missionaries. They enlisted many of these European missionaries to help start the schools for creating the new educational tradition.¹²⁰

117Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, p. 288-289.

118Vartan Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan: The Armenian Community of Isfahan, 1587-1722", Chp. 2 in *Armenians of Iran: the paradoxical role of a minority in a dominant culture*, edited by C. Chaqueri (Cambridge, MA, 1998), pp. 37-39; *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 99-100; Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, trans. Roger M. Savory, Bk II, pp. 859-860; Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, pp. 84-86.

119Gregorian, "Minorities of Isfahan", pp. 39-46.

120Harry Jewell Sarkiss, "The Armenian Renaissance, 1500-1863", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. IX, No. 4, (December 1937), pp. 437-442; Kurkjian, *A History of Armenia*, p. 289-290.

Safavid Religion

The Safavid regime was always concerned with religion since its founding from a militant Sufi order and the conversion of the country to Shi'ism. Ismā'īl I's own religious background mixed elements of Shi'a, Sunni, and heterodox traditions and the titles he claimed reflected Shi'a, Sufi, cultural Persian and even Christian traditions.¹²¹ At the time Ismā'īl declared Shi'ism to be the state religion, few in Iran even understood what the tenants of Shi'ism to be. The eclectic nature of Persian religion just before the Safavid rise included Shi'a elements such as admiration of 'Alī and the Twelve Imams, and Ismā'īl was able to use these features to ease the conversion process. In the early stages it was often enough for one to declare his allegiance to 'Alī and his descendants to be accepted as a convert, although groups that held to orthodox Sunni practices were sometime ruthlessly suppressed.¹²² The early *Qizilbāsh* followers of Ismā'īl I were inspired in their military zeal by millenarian religious ideas, and many saw Ismā'īl as the return of the Mahdi. As his reign progressed, Ismā'īl and subsequent rulers tried to root their legitimacy in more orthodox Shi'ism and restrain their hard to control early supporters. Early Safavid religious posts were tied to the dynasty and dominated by 'clerical-notables', scholars from aristocratic families. Since many of these families owed their status to descent they traced to the Prophet it was easy for them to adapt to new regime in respect to adoration of the house of the Prophet. These 'clerical-notables' held land and had served as administrators in pre-Safavid governments, and so they were quickly incorporated into the bureaucracy of the new dynasty.¹²³

The Safavids also invited in foreign Shi'i scholars, the *fuqahā*, from Syria, Bahrain and elsewhere, to improve Persian knowledge about their new religious profession and to cultivate ties to the rest of the Shi'i world. These Arab religious

121Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 13-15; Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", pp. 193-200.

122Said 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*, (Chicago, 1984), pp. 105-107; Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", p. 194.

123Newman, *Safavid Iran*, pp. 15-17; Arjomand, *Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pp. 122-129.

professionals had no ties to a particular state and no attachment to administrative, economic, or political concerns. They had a different outlook to the 'clerical-notables', and they were not welcomed by nor did they respect the indigenous clerical estate. They formed a rival religious structure which was more orthodox, less amenable to mysticism, folk traditions, or philosophical speculation. They were what Colin Turner calls 'externalist' in orientation - holding that being a good Muslim was a matter of following the laws and commandments of Islam, and in Twelver Shi'ism, the rulings of the *fuqahā* as representatives of the Imam.¹²⁴ While the policy of the early Safavids had vigorously suppressed Sunnis and organised Sufi orders which might challenge Safavid rule, they were tolerant, and even supportive of, individual Sufi preachers and minority religions such as Christians and Jews. The repression of rival religious groups was more a matter of politics than religion; the groups which met with disapproval, such as the Nuqtavi (*Nuqtawiyyah*) who were destroyed by Shah 'Abbās I, were ones who preached a change of rulership as part of a millenarian movement and organised followers into a force which could challenge the dynasty.¹²⁵ After all, the Safavids themselves had emerged from just such a movement. Individual heterodox preachers and minority groups did not pose a political threat and so were not a concern for the dynasty. In fact, to broaden the support for the ruling coalition and secure cooperation of important groups such as Armenian traders, the Safavid rulers made donations to support popular festivals and even the building of Christian churches. However, as the seventeenth century progressed, the foreign jurists and their Iranian students gained more power. They wrote texts denouncing Sufi ideas, popular traditions, singing, and philosophy - concentrating education exclusively on *hadīth* (sayings of the Prophet), *fiqh* (religious legal rulings), and *tafsīr* (Qur'an commentary). Although from early in the dynasty *fuqahā* were appointed as prayer leaders in mosques and religious officials in cities, they did not have much entry into the top offices through the reign of 'Abbās II. Shah Suleyman renounced 'Abbās II's secular orientation and allied himself closer to religious sources of legitimacy, but he strove to keep a balance between the two religious factions - obtaining respect for

124Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran*, (Richmond, Surrey, 2000), pp. 72-96; Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 24; Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pp. 129-132.

125Arjomand, *Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pp. 198-199; Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, p. 100.

defending Shi'ite orthodoxy while maintaining support for popular folk traditions. However, the dogmatic party was gaining the upper hand during his reign, and they became dominant under his successor Sultān-Husayn. The *fuqahā* Muhammad Bāqir Majlisi was especially influential through his numerous writings and his public positions given to him by Shah Suleyman. He preached a rigorously orthodox and externalist form of Shi'ism which became the dominant dogma in Persia.¹²⁶ Unlike the earlier times when dissension was viewed as a threat only if it threatened the political establishment, the orthodox jurists wanted to stamp out all dissenting ideas. Sufis, philosophers, and minority religions came under increasing pressure.¹²⁷

Piromalli

Paul Piromalli was a Dominican missionary who worked in Etchmiadzin, Armenia during the 1640s. He was appointed by the Armenian Patriarch, Philip of Aghbak (patriarchate 1633-1655) to teach logic, rhetoric and philosophy in the newly-founded monastery school in Etchmiadzin. His appointment was part of Philip's program to reform the Armenian church by incorporating western learning in order to give the native church the intellectual tools necessary to stand up to Catholic missionaries.¹²⁸ It is uncertain whether Piromalli knew of Patriarch Phillip's agenda, but he seized the opportunity to develop the school and promote Catholic doctrine.

In 1645, Piromalli travelled to Isfahan to preach and teach to the Catholic Armenian population there. Piromalli requested a letter of support from Emperor Ferdinand III, and the writing of such a letter was recommended to the Emperor by the Hofkriegsrat.¹²⁹ Ferdinand did write to Shah 'Abbās II on the 22nd of April 1645, asking the Shah, "in the spirit of friendship and goodwill," to allow Father Piromalli to

¹²⁶Turner, *Islam Without Allah?*, pp. 148-186, 249-252.

¹²⁷Arjomand, *Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, Chp. 5, especially pp. 151-159.

¹²⁸Sarkiss, Harry Jewell, "The Armenian Renaissance, 1500-1863", *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. IX, No. 4, December 1937, p. 440.; Malachia Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia*, trans. G. Marcar Gregory, (London, 1912), p. 81.

¹²⁹HHStA, "Hofkriegsrat to Ferdinand III", Persica I, Konv. 4, fol. 64.

preach to those of the Catholic faith and to teach in the school. He requested that Piromalli be allowed to live in Isfahan and given protection of the city.¹³⁰ At the same time, the Emperor wrote to Piromalli, informing him of the letter to the Shah and encouraging him in his work.¹³¹

After a time in Isfahan, Piromalli returned to Rome. He was influential in creating the first complete printed Armenian Bible, on which he collaborated with his friend from Etchmiadzin, Oskan Erevantsi, and over which he exercised influence to bring the Armenian text more in line with the Catholic Bible.¹³² In 1655, Piromalli was appointed the Catholic Bishop of Nakhchiwan (although he did not arrive in Armenia until 1657). His appointment was not without controversy; his appointment came at a time of increased tensions between the New Julfa Armenians and the western missionaries in Isfahan. The Carmelites in Isfahan were afraid that Piromalli, known for evangelising Catholic doctrines to the Armenians, would exacerbate the conflicts between Catholic and Orthodox Armenians. They wrote, "He is of a temperament far too violent and vehement, and had been the cause of great ill-feeling and repugnance of the Armenians for us..."¹³³ Before setting out for his new post, Piromalli spent time in Vienna, where he gathered support from the Imperial court, and published a text of theology arguing against certain Armenian doctrines. Once again, with backing from the Hofkammer, the Emperor wrote to Shah 'Abbās II in 1656 endorsing Piromalli's appointment.¹³⁴

Piromalli became bishop at a time of increasing difficulties for Christians in Safavid lands, which will be examined in more detail below. It appears that he maintained cordial relations with the Armenian Patriarch, despite the worries expressed by the Carmelites. As pressures were mounting on all Christians in the

130HHStA, "Ferdinand III to 'Abbās II", Persica I, Konv. 4, fol. 66.

131HHStA, "Ferdinand III to Piromalli", Persica I, Konv. 4, fol. 65.

132Vrej Neressian, *The Bible in Armenian Tradition*, (London, 2001), p. 32.; Aikin, Morgan, and Johnson, "Piromalli, Paul", *General Biography*, Vol. 8, (London, 1813).

133*Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 381.

134*Quellen zur Geschichte Afrikas, Asiens, und Ozeaniens im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv bis 1918*, ed. Leopold Auer, (Munich, 1986), p. 40.

Safavid lands, the goodwill of a Catholic leader with strong connections to western powers may have proved more important to the Armenian Christians than doctrinal disputes. After nine years as Bishop of Nakhchiwan, Piromalli returned to Italy. He published several books on languages, including a Latin-Persian dictionary, and several books and dictionaries on Armenian.¹³⁵

Arachiel

Arachiel Vartapiet was named Archbishop of Erivan by the Pope in 1661. Arachiel himself, along with several other supporters, asked Emperor Leopold for a letter of recommendation for the new Archbishop to the Shah.¹³⁶ This Leopold provided in the form of two letters: one to the "King of Persia" and one to the "Prime Minister of the King of Persia".¹³⁷

To the King of Persia, Shah 'Abbās II, Emperor Leopold wrote that it was their mutual obligation to consult with each other about relatives or friends; to that end, he is commending the newly appointed Archbishop of Armenia as a praiseworthy subject. He wrote that he earnestly appealed to the Shah to allow the Archbishop to preach to Christians settled in Armenia and who have freedom of religion. The freedom of religion phrase is especially diplomatic, as it indicates that Arachiel is not there to convert Muslims to Christianity and it emphasizes the traditional freedom of religion granted to the Armenians - something the Habsburgs wished to see upheld. The Emperor asked the Shah to uphold for the Christians of Armenia and all living there protection from violence and freedom to peacefully attend to their religion. Leopold frequently references the past relationships between his and the Shah's ancestors, attempting to contextualise his requests as part of an established tradition of cooperation.¹³⁸ To the Prime Minister, who would be at this time the *vizier*, Mirza

135Aikin, et al., "Piromalli, Paul", *General Biography*.

136HHStA, "Leopold to 'Abbās II" Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 5; Auer, ed., *Quellen im Staatsarchiv*, p. 40.

137HHStA, "Leopold to 'Abbās II", "Leopold to Prime Minister or Persia", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 11, 12-13.

138HHStA, "Leopold to 'Abbās II", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 11.

Muhummad Karaki, Leopold wrote much the same things, only with a more business-like, less personal tone. He wrote that he presents the Archbishop of Armenia and a companion to the King of Persia, Medea and Armenia, along with letters begging for their protection. He once again refers to the history of friendship between the Emperor and the King of Persia. The Emperor wrote he puts his authority behind the Archbishop and wishes that he is secure and free.¹³⁹ With these two letters, Leopold hoped he could help gain the Shah's backing and ease the Archbishop's term in office.

In 1669, Arachiel personally travelled to Europe to seek help for his Catholic congregation. His Catholic church in Erivan had been demolished by Persian officials, as part of the ongoing dispute between the Catholic and Armenian Christian populations. He met Pope Clement IX in Rome, and petitioned other European leaders for assistance, including Emperor Leopold and the King of Poland. Pope Clement wrote to Shah Sulaiman in strong tones requesting the Shah keep Catholics, "safe and secure against the plots and harm from schismatics, who are constantly raging against them...with savage ill-will."¹⁴⁰ Emperor Leopold wrote slightly more circumspectly, asking that Arachiel be allowed to rebuild the church and that his community be protected from the violence of their rivals so that they may live quietly.¹⁴¹

Piomalli and Arachiel were just two examples of Christian missionaries for whom the Habsburg Emperors intervened with the Shahs. There were several other cases, for instance: in 1655, Ferdinand III wrote to the Shah of Persia, the Khan of the Uzbeks, and the Mughal Emperor on behalf of three Jesuit missionaries travelling to central Asia; in 1663, Leopold I wrote to Shah 'Abbās II recommending Antonio Tani as the head of the Dominican mission. In most of such cases, someone, be it the Pope, the head of a religious order, or another concerned European noble, would ask the Emperor to lend his support to the candidate with the Shah. Sometimes, a council of the court bureaucracy, the Hofskriegsrat or the Hofkammer, would add an

139HHStA, "Leopold to Prime Minister of Persia", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 12-13.

140*Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 412-413.

141HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 36.

endorsement. The Emperor would then write to the Shah, and as a fellow ruler ask that the mission be accepted in the country or that their grievances be heard.¹⁴² The Habsburgs' well-known reputation for their support of the Catholic religion as well as their friendly relations with the Persian Shahs brought to them many religious figures seeking assistance in Persia.

Persecution

At times, Christians in the Safavid realm faced various degrees of oppression from the government and the Shi'ite clergy. These events were often manifest as pressure to convert to Islam, and were applied in a number of ways, especially economic. The Habsburgs, as self-styled defenders of Catholic Christianity, were asked and were happy to intervene in these situations, using their diplomatic relationship in an attempt to lessen the pressure on Safavid subject Christians.

Shah 'Abbās I issued a decree near the end of his reign that any Christian in his realm who converted to Islam would inherit all of his family's property over any claims of his other Christian relatives. This law fell particularly harshly on the Armenian population with its family-owned trading networks. 'Abbās I soon cancelled his decree after outcry from the Armenian traders and western diplomats, but the law would be revived on a number of occasions in later years.¹⁴³

Shah 'Abbās II, under the influence of his Vizier Khalīfa Sulṭān, renewed the inheritance law. The Shah himself was known for being respectful of other religions, especially Christianity, and a number of Christians rose to important positions within his administration.¹⁴⁴ However, the local Christians despised his Vizier; the head of the

142 *Quellen zur Geschichte Afrikas, Asiens, und Ozeaniens im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv bis 1918*, ed.

Leopold Auer, (Munich, 1986), pp. 39-42.

143 Matthee, *Politics of Trade*, p. 88; *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 288.

144 Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", p. 294.

Carmelite mission described him as, "...a bigoted Muhammadan, and antagonistic to Christianity."¹⁴⁵ Conservative Shi'a jurists had been agitating for greater influence in response to the perceived liberalism of the court.¹⁴⁶ Armenians and other Christians were expelled from Isfahan to outside the city limits, and pressure was brought to bring their conversion, including reviving the inheritance law.¹⁴⁷ This pressure was carried out not only in Iran, but in Safavid controlled Armenia as well.

Christian leaders in Iran and Armenia appealed to Europe for help. The Papal Nuncio at the Vienna court brought the matter before Emperor Leopold in 1658. He asked the Emperor to write an official letter to the King of Persia asking for a retraction of the law, and he stated that the matter is of such importance to the faith to be worthy of his imperial dignity.¹⁴⁸ Leopold responded with an eloquent letter to Shah 'Abbās II. In it, he reminded the Shah of the long friendship of their countries and that the word of the Persians had been respected since ancient times. He described how Christians have loved his predecessors benevolence and have been friendly towards their rule. But, he wrote, he has heard how Christians face various persecutions. In particular he mentioned how those who deny their faith assume all their kindred's wealth. Leopold asked: "Abrogate this edict so all may have protection of the law, so Christians may piously exercise their faith, and so they can die in tranquillity." He concluded by asking the Shah for a recognition of their friendship with a demonstration of mutual good-will, and ended with the humble "I confess to beseeching."¹⁴⁹

Letters from the Emperor, the Pope, and some other Christian princes did not succeed in the annulment of the inheritance law; however, they did have an effect which for a while improved the fortunes of Christians. According to a 1669 report to

145 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 353.

146 Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", p. 294. Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, pp. 185-186, 200-201; Newman, *Safavid Iran*, p. 86.

147 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 366. Gregorian, "Minoities of Isfahan", p. 45; Roemer, CHI, "Safavid Period", p. 303.

148 HHStA "Sekretär der Nuntiatur in Wien to Leopold", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 87.

149 HHStA, "Leopold to 'Abbās II", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 85-86, 89.

the Sacred Congregation for Promulgation of the Faith, "the King of Persia ordered that all governors should be removed from their posts and that the people of the diocese should be placed under his own immediate control. As a result of such decision the Christians are spared the ill-treatment the governors used to inflict on them by heavy impositions...The ease with which they can become apostates has been counteracted, seeing that at present, in order to take possession of the property of relatives apostates must appear before the king and bring with them sixty witnesses."¹⁵⁰ It would seem 'Abbās II found a way to balance his personal religious tolerance and the demands of friendly western dynasties such as the Austrians, with the pressures of conservative religious forces in his own country. There was plenty precedence since the time of 'Abbās I for Safavid rulers taking provinces under their personal control, and by doing so, 'Abbās II could ease the treatment of Christians while not angering the Shi'ite jurists by abrogating the law.

Later years saw yet more issues of Christian oppression addressed by the Habsburg court. In 1680, Emperor Leopold wrote to Shah Sulaimān commending the Carmelite order, whose mission had been open in Isfahan for most of the century, and asking that they be allowed to continue their work.¹⁵¹ Again, in the 1690s, Leopold writes to Shah Sultan Husain where he asks the new Shah to protect Christians in his realm.¹⁵² The late Safavid Empire became increasingly hostile to Christians and other minority religions, and concerns over this persecution led the Austrian rulers to use what goodwill they had in their relationship to try to ameliorate the situation.

As these examples show, issues of religion became an important arena of discussion between the Habsburg Emperors and the Safavid Shahs. The Habsburgs were willing to lend their support to Christians and especially Catholics, in Safavid territories, by drawing upon their history of friendly relations between Austria and Persia. They were able to smooth the way for certain religious figures to take up posts

¹⁵⁰*Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 412.

¹⁵¹HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 41.

¹⁵²HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 3-6, 15.

in Safavid territory and they could try to lessen the discrimination felt by minority religions. However, their influence was limited because the relationship was with the Shahs, not with the Shi'ite religious figures. While the Shahs may have valued continued good relations with foreign rulers, the religious figures who pushed for a harsher enforcement of Shi'a Islamic rule were not so concerned. Sympathetic and powerful Shahs, such as 'Abbās I and II, could find ways to heed Habsburg pleas and protect minority religious concerns, while the later Shahs, who were less involved with governing, did little to restrain the religious tensions despite Habsburg requests.

Cultural Exchange

Through the course of their interactions by trade and diplomacy, the cultures of Europe and Persia learned more about one another.

Safavid-era Persians had a mixed attitude towards foreign cultures. It was a mixture of "aloofness and fascination", as Rudi Matthee titled his paper on Safavid attitudes towards the west. Islamic orthodoxy looked down upon the Christian foreigners, and official documents make little mention of European visitors.¹⁵³ Safavid attitudes held that they were the heirs of a grand, ancient culture, that their lands held most everything they needed, and that foreign merchants should be grateful for the opportunity to come to Iran and purchase their goods. They had little need to adapt their culture to the outsiders.¹⁵⁴ Alongside this "official" attitude of superiority, there is evidence of a curiosity over European culture and interest in what it had to offer. Many of the Shahs, most notably 'Abbās I, but also his successors, enjoyed talking with European merchants and missionaries.¹⁵⁵ Europeans were quizzed about developments in technology and science.¹⁵⁶

153Iskander Beg Munshi hardly mentions the numerous visits to Shah 'Abbās I, except for the English assistance in expelling the Portuguese from Hormuz. *History of Shah 'Abbas the Great*, trans. Savory, pp. 981-982; see Matthee, "Aloofness and Fascination", 1998, pp. 226-227 for more examples.

154Matthee "Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 241-244.

155Matthee "Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 229-232; *Chronicle of Carmelites*, pp. 249-254.

156Matthee "Aloofness and Fascination", pp. 235-237.

Perhaps the field where European influences had the most impact was in painting. Over the course of the seventeenth century, introduction of European prints and illustrated books and the clothes of visiting Europeans themselves, led to Persians developing a taste for European art. Safavid artists developed a hybrid style, the *farangī-sāz*, or "Europeanised" tradition. Starting with Rizā 'Abbāsī (d. 1635), a leading artist in the court of 'Abbās I, this school adapted European subjects, colour-palatte, and techniques to the traditional Qazvin miniature style. Riza's followers, such as Muḥammad Qāsim, Muḥammad Yūsuf, and Afzal al-Ḥusainī developed this style through the 1640s and 50s, which introduced European influences on Persian art much as the Chinese influenced Persian art of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. They introduced such techniques as shading and thicker lines, but retained the Persian use of space rather than European perspective. The painters depicted figures in European dress, first in portraits of foreign visitors but then adapted to more stylised scenes. And they adopted European subjects, introducing such exotic and forbidden items as female semi-nudity, dogs, and wine drinking. Some of these paintings were copied from specific European prints which found their way to Persia through trade, while others were original works drawing inspiration from the increased knowledge of European art. But all combined European ideas with the traditional Persian idiom to create a body of work unique to the later Safavid period, and which exercised a continuing influence on later Iranian arts.¹⁵⁷ Many of the Safavid artists, including those mentioned, also designed patterns for the textile trade. Adaptation of European floral motifs into an Asian style in this field held a clear profit motive of appealing to the European export market.¹⁵⁸

While most of the European influence came from French and especially Dutch artists, some may be traced directly back to the artistic community of Emperor Rudolf II's court. Rudolf assembled artists from all over Europe at his Prague court, and after

¹⁵⁷Sheila Canby, "Farangi Saz: The Impact of Europe on Safavid Painting", in *Silk and Stone: The Art of Asia*, The Third Hali Annual, (1996). pp. 46-59; Basil Gray, CHI, "The Arts in Safavid Times", Chp. 16(b), pp. 900-902, 905-909.

¹⁵⁸Gray, CHI, "The Arts in Safavid Times", pp. 902-903.



Fig. 6. Tyrolean Landscape, by Roelandt Savery,
Engraving by Aegidius Sadeler,
©State Hermitage Museum



Fig. 7. European-style Landscape,
by 'Alī-Qulī ibn Muḥammad,
©State Hermitage Museum

his death, when many of these artists returned to their home countries, they carried with them the developments in the arts created in his multicultural studios. Important in the world-wide spread of Rudolf's court art was Aegidius Sadeler, the engraver who created portraits of the Persian ambassadors in Prague, and who made many engravings of paintings from Rudolf's court. Prints from these engravings were later sold by his relative Marco Sadeler in the Netherlands, and from there exported by Dutch traders around the world.¹⁵⁹ One pair of works clearly shows the connection between Rudolf's court and later Persian art. The Persian artists 'Alī-Qulī ibn Muḥammad painted a European landscape scene in 1649 showing houses, a mill and a bridge over a river. This miniature was copied from an engraving by Sadeler of a landscape painting by Roelandt Savery, as established by L.T. Gyuzalyan. Savery was an important developer of European landscape painting who worked for a decade at Rudolf's court, and this particular painting was one of a series based on Tyrolean and Bohemian scenes done under Rudolf's employment. While 'Alī-Qulī's work is clearly a copy of Savery's original, the Persian's work does not use European Perspective and shading, but instead employs elements from the Persian miniature style. 'Alī-Qulī also added elements not present in the original, such as a cross atop one of the buildings

¹⁵⁹Dorothy Limouze, "Aegidius Sadeler, Imperial Printmaker", *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin*, Vol. 85, No. 362, (Spring 1989).

and a boar in the right foreground corner, perhaps to make the scene look more identifiably 'European' to Persian viewers.¹⁶⁰ This one identified example was probably joined by others, since much of the Sadeler print catalogue was produced while in Emperor Rudolf's service, and these would be among the art exported to Persia. Therefore, Rudolf's artistic interest was affecting Persian artistic styles through the seventeenth century many years after Rudolf's own death.

Safavid culture adopted European influences in art and use of technologies such as clocks and printing.¹⁶¹ Austrians were also interested in Persian culture. Austrians were drawn especially to Persian books and literature.

The intellectual interests of the Habsburg court inspired a curiosity about Persia among Austrian intellectuals. Dedication to alchemy contributed to this interest, so often what was attractive to scholars about Persia was an ancient and mythologized version of the country where Zoroastrian magi held secret wisdom.¹⁶² However, these esoteric interests did inspire study and travel which brought knowledge of the real place. Another more practical concern which inspired study of eastern cultures was the ever-impending threat of the Turks. The need for interpreters for the legates to the Ottoman court led to courses in Oriental Languages at the University of Vienna and the foundation in 1674 of the Sprachknaben-Institut for language training. Two different dictionaries of Arabic, Persian and Turkish languages were published in Vienna about this time. Although these projects remained small during the seventeenth century they started a tradition of oriental language study in Vienna which flowered in later centuries.¹⁶³

160Piotrovsky, M. B. and Pritula A. D., eds. *Beyond the Palace Walls; Islamic Art from the State Hermitage Museum, Islamic Art in a World Context*, National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh and State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, 2006, p. 133, prints p. 134; Gyuzalyan, L. T. *Eastern miniature, depicting western landscape in Central Asia and Iran*, Leningrad, pp. 163-169.

161Mohammad Reza (Farhad) Nourbakhsh, "Iran's Early Encounter with Three Medieval European Inventions (875–1153 AH/1470–1740 CE)", *Iranian Studies*, 41:4, (2008), 551-553.

162Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 33-34, 436-439; Evans, *Rudolf II*, also discusses the Habsburg intellectual milieu.

163Tremblay, X. and Rastegar, N., "Austria ii. Iranian Studies in", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online edition, (2005, 2011).

The Imperial Library in Vienna developed a collection of Persian books. Much of this collection was acquired by Sebastian Tegnagel, the Imperial Librarian from 1608 to 1636. Tegnagel studied oriental languages at university in Heidelberg, and this specialised knowledge was one reason he was hired as an assistant by the first Imperial Librarian, Hugo Blotius. As the assistant librarian he helped catalogue the large Greek and Latin holdings as well as the few Turkish and other oriental texts owned by the Imperial Library.¹⁶⁴ On Blotius' death, Tegnagel became the chief librarian. He pursued his interest in oriental languages by expanding the Imperial holdings with texts purchased from other European libraries where he had extensive contacts, and from Imperial representatives in Constantinople. For instance, he wrote to a colleague at the Leiden Library, "I am inflamed with an incredible zeal for the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish languages, and I seek from everywhere material to assist my further education in them."¹⁶⁵ Tegnagel convinced Emperor Matthias to assign to the library a Turkish slave of Baron Siegfried Preiner and provide funds for his upkeep so that the Turk could transcribe Turkish, Persian, and Arabic texts, and thus the Imperial Library built up a large collection of manuscripts. Tegnagel also built a large personal book collection, covering many Middle Eastern languages. On his death in 1636, these volumes were bequeathed to the Imperial Library.¹⁶⁶ While Tegnagel was more familiar with Turkish than Persian, he contributed a number of important Persian texts to the Imperial Library. Perhaps the most significant of these is the oldest extant New Persian manuscript in Arabic script, a copy of the pharmacopoeia *Ketāb al-abnia wa'l-ḥaqā'eq al-adwia* by Abu Maṣūf Mowaffaq Heravi, which was produced in 1056.¹⁶⁷ Tegnagel was one of the leading scholars of oriental languages in Europe at the time, and he was able to convince several Emperors (he worked for Rudolf II, Mathias, and Ferdinand II) to support his work expanding the collection of eastern books in the Imperial Library.

164Josef Stummvoll, *Geschichte der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, (Vienna, 1968), pp. 129-139.

Tremblay and Rastegar, "Austria ii." *Encycl. Iranica*.

165Stummvoll, *Geschichte Nationalbibliothek*, p. 138.

166Stummvoll, *Geschichte Nationalbibliothek*, pp. 142-145.

167Tremblay and Rastegar, "Austria ii." *Encycl. Iranica*.

Anti-Ottoman Alliance, Again

Through the middle of the seventeenth century, peace maintained on the Ottoman borders with both Austria and Persia. After the active pursuit of an anti-Ottoman alliance, which dominated relations between Austrian Habsburgs and Safavid Persians in the sixteenth and first decade of the seventeenth centuries, the military alliance drifted out of concern and the other issues mentioned above became prominent. The treaty of Zvita-Torok established a peace on the Austrian-Ottoman border which held for 60 years, and the military attention of the Emperors was focused for much of that time on the Central European conflict, the Thirty Years War. The Safavids continued wars with the Ottomans for a few decades, trading possession of Baghdad, but their disappointment with the failure of European alliances led them to conduct the wars on their own, without actively seeking European help. The Peace of Zuhāb between the Safavids and Ottomans, concluded in 1639, was scrupulously followed by both sides, held for almost a century until the Safavid collapse, and set the border between Iran, Iraq, and Turkey which, with minor adjustments, holds through today.¹⁶⁸

Towards the end of the century the Ottoman Empire again looked for expansion into Hungary at the expense of the Austrian Habsburgs. The Ottomans and Habsburgs fought a brief war in 1663-4, shortly before Shah Sulaimān's accession to the throne. This action was concluded before the suggestion of an alliance could be sent to Persia. In addition, the new Shah was anxious to maintain peace during his transition, so little became of it.

The greater crisis occurred in 1683, when an Ottoman offensive led to the siege of Vienna. Emperor Leopold was attempting to negotiate an extension to the 20-year treaty which ended the 1664 war. He was more concerned about French designs for Germany. The Ottoman court sensed weakness, and were informed of the Habsburg distraction by disaffected Hungarian Protestants. French agents in Constantinople

¹⁶⁸Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy", p. 148-149.

encouraged the Ottomans to attack Austria, although distrust between the French and Ottoman courts prevented them from launching a joint operation. Still, when the attack came, the Habsburg forces were unprepared and the Ottoman army advanced to the walls of Vienna, while Leopold and his court fled to Linz. The defenders of the city withstood two months of siege but were facing a final assault on the breached walls when a relieving army arrived. On the 12th of September 1683, a multi-national army from Poland, the Holy Roman Empire, and surviving Austrian forces defeated the Ottoman besiegers and pushed them back from Habsburg lands. In continuing battles over the following years Austrian armies pushed the Ottomans out of all Hungary and Transylvania.¹⁶⁹

At this time Emperor Leopold was desperate to find allies. He sent a series of letters to the Shah through the envoy Sebastian Knab. Knab was appointed as the new Archbishop of Nakhichevan by the Pope in 1682, and while on his way east to take up his new post he stopped in Vienna. There he asked for the Emperor's help in setting up a Dominican convent in Isfahan and offered his services as the Emperor's representative to the Safavid court.¹⁷⁰ By the time Knab left Vienna, the spring attack was obvious, and so he carried letters to the Shah asking the Safavids to join in an attack on the Ottomans.¹⁷¹ Later, once the target of the attack became obvious and Vienna was under siege, Leopold sent more desperate letters, which caught up with Knab in Poland. "My city of Vienna is devastated by sword and flame," writes Leopold, as he describes the siege, but, "with the military assistance of the Holy Roman Empire and Poland" he hopes to resist.¹⁷² More letters followed in December and in 1684, after the siege was broken and the Turkish army was in retreat.¹⁷³ Leopold tried to convince the Shah to join in a campaign to roll back Ottoman gains. He promised the Shah a chance to regain Baghdad as the Emperor retakes all of Hungary. He presented the

169John Stoye, *The Siege of Vienna*, (Edinburgh, 2000, first published 1964); Thomas M. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, (Albany, NY, 1967); Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Enemy at the Gate*, (London, 2008); John P. Spielman, *Leopold I of Austria*, (London, 1977), pp. 42-44, 103-111.

170Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy", p. 157; *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, p. 417, 422.

171HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 54-55.

172HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 60-61.

173HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, Konv. 5, fol. 62-63, 69-70.

endeavour to Sulaimān as a chance to regain the lands held by his ancestor, Shah 'Abbās I.

But Shah Sulaimān was not interested in military action. To Knab, the Shah replied "he did not see any greater advantage joining [an anti-Ottoman coalition] than living in peace with his neighbours."¹⁷⁴ In reply to a letter from the Pope carried by Knab, the Shah wrote, "A long time ago this dynasty, following the precepts of justice, concluded peace with the monarchs of those realms (i.e. the Turkish)."¹⁷⁵ The envoy from the Swedish King, Frabritius, reported the Shah replying, "My forbears made peace, and I have confirmed and formalized this for all eternity. Cursed be the one who will first draw the sword again...We let ourselves be prompted by the Christian powers to greatly distract the Turks, but then the Christian powers made peace without so much as mentioning us once."¹⁷⁶ It is notable that here, nearly 80 years and four generations of rulers after 'Abbās I and Rudolf II, The Safavid Shah was still referring with offence over the Austrian 1606 Peace of Zvita-Torok. Sulaimān was criticized by the European representatives for his lack of personal leadership - one missionary wrote, "his object and world is nothing else than wine and women."¹⁷⁷ But he had to calculate the state of the Safavid army and the chance of an anti-Safavid coalition by the Ottomans, Uzbeks, and Muhgals.¹⁷⁸ Sulaimān apparently was moved by the heroism and drama of the story of the relief of Vienna, and it is reported he had a translated account of it read to him many times.¹⁷⁹ However, sympathy for the Austrians' plight was not enough to motivate abandonment of a policy successful in maintaining his realm.

In September 1686, Leopold wrote to the Shah informing him of progress in the war against the Turks and highlighting the capture of Buda, the capital of Ottoman

¹⁷⁴Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy", p. 160-161.

¹⁷⁵*Chronicles of the Carmelites*, p. 423.

¹⁷⁶Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy", p. 160-161.

¹⁷⁷*Chronicles of the Carmelites*, p. 421.

¹⁷⁸Matthee, "Iran's Ottoman Diplomacy", p. 161-162; *Persia in Crisis*, pp. 133-135.

¹⁷⁹*Chronicles of the Carmelites*, p. 421.

Hungary, earlier that month.¹⁸⁰ It was clear that Shah Sulaimān had no intention of breaking his treaty with the Ottomans. Nevertheless, Leopold continued to write on the matter, at the urging of his court, throughout the following decade as the Austrians continued to wage war with the Ottomans in Hungary.

Conclusion

The seventeenth century saw an expansion in the topics covered in the relationship between the Austria and Persia. Although the question of a military alliance did not completely disappear, it became a minor issue except for the brief time of great emergency for the Austrian monarchy. Instead, issues of trade and religion came to the fore. This represented a maturation of the relationship, from a single issue to the normal interchange of nations. It also revealed the Habsburgs treating the Safavids as equal status to themselves. Each dynasty had multiple interests and both sides could work together on those interests, even when they disagreed, by maintaining a friendly relationship.

¹⁸⁰HHStA, "Leopold to Shah", Persica I, f. 86-89.

Chapter Five

How the Relationship Changed and the Alliance Failed

Over the previous three chapters, we observed the growth and evolution of the diplomatic relations between the Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians. Those chapters explained how they first made contact in order to cooperate against their common enemy, how that alliance effort failed in the early seventeenth century, and how the countries maintained contacts but pursued new avenues of cooperation after that point. In the next two chapters we examine several questions raised in the previous chapters in more detail. The events described in the previous chapters form the data with which to answer the questions in these chapters.

In this chapter, we examine several questions surrounding the change of focus in the relationship, and ask how and when it came about. In Chapter Three, it was claimed that the first decade of the seventeenth century represented a turning point in the relationship; here we examine that claim in more detail. We look beyond the Austrian-Persian relationship to examine the international context at the time, in which the interactions of Austria and Persia formed one component. We see that changing attitudes on all sides helped bring about a change. The relationship was originally focused on military cooperation against their common enemy, but that effort never produced an alliance. We also examine why the alliance effort failed; several problems made such an alliance difficult and the combination of them doomed the endeavour. In comparison, the French and Ottomans managed to arrange an east-west coalition targeting the Habsburgs, and the contrast with this more successful alliance can help highlight the problems for the Austrian-Persian effort.

The Turning Point of the Relationship

As has been seen in the previous chapters, the relationship between the Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians changed over the two centuries of their interaction with regards to the topics and issues covered by their diplomacy. The critical time in the evolution of the Persia's dealing with Austria, and indeed also Persia's dealings with the rest of Europe, occurred in the decade 1600-1610. This is when they came closest to forming the military alliance which had dominated their diplomacy over the sixteenth century. Both countries were at war with the Ottoman Empire at the same time, the first time the Ottomans had faced a two-front war. But this decade was also the time when the dream of an alliance failed. Following the major effort expended at the start of the decade, it became clear that an alliance was not practical. After that, emphasis in the relationship turned to other topics.

The major event leading to this change, as described in Chapter Three, was the failure of the Austrian-Persian alliance and the Peace of Zsitva-Torok. However, this event did not take place in isolation. The Persian ambassadors dispatched to Prague were just a part of a larger diplomatic effort by Shah 'Abbās I to connect with all the European leaders. Particularly important was the diplomacy with the Spanish and Portuguese, who at that time were jointly ruled by Philip III of Spain. Several Persian embassies were sent to the Pope, who replied through the offices of missionaries sent to Persia.¹

After this decade both Safavids and Habsburgs changed their attitudes. Friendly relations and cooperation still remained important to both, but the emphasis changed. As seen in Chapter Four, issues of trade and religion came to dominate their contacts. The changes in attitudes resulted from both reaction to the events of the first decade and adaptation to changing circumstances in each country.

¹ Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago, 1973), *passim*.

Papal and Spanish Diplomacy

The Papacy had a long history of diplomacy with Persia, but the start of the seventeenth century saw an increase in their activity. Anthony Sherley presented to Pope Clement VIII in 1601 a proposal from Shah 'Abbās I wherein Persia would form a Confederacy with the princes of Europe, who would act under the Pope's leadership, to fight the Turks. Ambassadors from the Pope and the other princes were invited to Isfahan, and 'Abbās would send representatives to Rome and the other European capitals. He described "defensive war" as unsatisfactory, presumably a reference to the war Emperor Rudolf was fighting in Hungary, and urged the Europeans to take offensive actions. The plans for European action he left up to the European princes, although he suggested Syria or Palestine would be suitable places for action. In exchange, Shah 'Abbās would provide privileges and protections for Christian preachers in his realms, and require all Christians in his territories to submit to the leadership of the Catholic church.²

Pope Clement VIII replied to Shah 'Abbās in a letter which expressed his happiness at friendly relations, and described the war led by Emperor Rudolf - of which the Shah was already familiar. Most of all, the letter expressed enthusiasm at the possibility of Shah 'Abbās becoming Christian.³ The Pope mistook the Shah's curiosity about religions and his willingness to make concessions as an interest in conversion. The conversion of several members of the Persian embassy, including Uruch Beg who took the Christian name Don Juan of Persia, furthered the impression that Persia was ripe for conversion.⁴ The editor of *The Chronicles of the Carmelites in Persia* attributes this misunderstanding to reports from a Portuguese priest who visited Persia, Francisco da Costa.⁵ However, the notion that Persia might convert to

2 *Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*, (London, 1939), pp. 76-78; Franz Babinger, *Sherleiana*, (Berlin, 1932), pp. 26-29.

3 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 82-84.

4 Uruch Beg Bayāt, *Don Juan of Persia*, translated and edited by Guy Le Strange, (New York, 1973), On the conversions see pp. 33-36, 286-287, 292-293, 299-308.

5 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 80-81; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts with Persia, 1350-1736", pp. 388-389.

Christianity was a rumour that had perpetually come up in Europe since the stories of Prester John in medieval times. During the decade, several tracts were published purporting to describe Shah 'Abbās' conversion, and these were popularly received because they justified efforts at forming an alliance to a public filled with sermons vilifying the Muslim infidel.⁶ But wherever the impression came from, the Pope's belief that Shah 'Abbās might convert coloured the Papal reaction to the Persian overture.

Pope Clement VIII sent two ambassadors to Persia, the priest da Costa and a layman Diego de Miranda. These two envoys quarrelled with one another on their journey. Each presented himself as the single representative to the Shah, and they behaved disrespectfully in front of the Shah. In one incident, Miranda produced the letter from his pocket, for which the Shah chided him to treat it with respect and not pull it from his behind. They made a poor example of Christian diplomacy, and 'Abbās had Miranda sent home as soon as possible.⁷ At about the same time, a group of Augustinian friars were sent by the Archbishop of Portuguese Goa to deliver a letter from King Philip III of Spain and Portugal, and to establish a convent in Işfahān. They made a much better impression than Miranda, and spent much time in the Shah's company. He then allowed them to set up their convent and even paid to help build a church. One of this group was Antonio de Gouveia, who who made several journeys between Persia and Spain for King Philip, and wrote two books describing them.⁸

Shah 'Abbās sent his ambassador Bastam Quli Beg to the Pope as part of his 1603 diplomatic initiative, travelling along with Miranda when he returned. The Ambassador died along the journey, but the letter he carried was eventually delivered to the Pope. In it, 'Abbās again expressed his desire for friendship and cooperation,

6 Adam Knobler, "Pseudo-Conversions and Patchwork Pedigrees: The Christianization of Muslim Princes and the Diplomacy of Holy War", *Journal of World History*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Fall, 1996), pp. 194-195.

7 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 90-93; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 389.

8 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 92-94; Rudi Matthee, "Gouveia, Antonio De", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, originally published 2002, updated 2012.

and his respect for the Christian community. He said that he awaited the return of his earlier Ambassador - Ḥusain 'Alī Beg who travelled with Anthony Sherley - and implied that he expected Ḥusain to return with concrete plans for military cooperation.⁹ 'Abbās was likely disappointed when he received replies with no concrete military plans, only vague promises of encouraging European rulers to act, and offers to send him priests to help him learn about Christianity. In a later letter to the Pope carried by Robert Sherley, Shah 'Abbās criticized the European countries for fighting among themselves instead of joining to fight the Turks. He urged the Pope to force them to forget their rivalries, induce the King of Spain to invade Cyprus, and persuade the Emperor, the King of Poland and others to make similar attacks.¹⁰ When the Carmelite mission met the Shah, 'Abbās is reported to have told them,

put it plainly to the Pope that unless action were taken, and the Christian Princes made war on the Sultan of Turkey, he (the Pope) should not afterwards complain if the King of Persia used harsh measures with Christians from Europe.¹¹

After this time, Shah 'Abbās began to act less favourably to the Christian missionaries visiting Persia.

'Abbās wanted military action, and was willing to act hospitable to Christian missionaries to secure what he wanted. The Pope wanted religious conversion, and was willing to encourage military cooperation among the European ruler in order to achieve what he wanted. The two were fundamentally pursuing different goals, although in their diplomatic language each led the other to believe they were aligned. The idea had been planted with the Habsburgs and the Papacy that Persia was a site for religious activity, and afterwards religion was to play an increased part in their diplomacy, as we have seen.

9 Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 238; *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 94-96; Full Persian text of letter in: L. Fekete, *Einführung in die Persische Paläographie*, (Budapest, 1977), No. 34, p. 469-475.

10 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 390; *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 147-149; D.W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, (Ithaca, 1967), pp. 226-228.

11 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 179.

Meanwhile, Spain and Portugal also were having difficult relations with Shah 'Abbās. After the fighting in Hungary concluded, a new plan was conceived, originally by Anthony Sherley then pursued by his brother Robert, to blockade Ottoman ports on the Mediterranean and divert the silk trade through Hormuz.¹² Shah 'Abbās was supportive of this idea, but despite lengthy negotiations it never came about. The Portuguese Council of India opposed the idea, as they derived a great deal of income from Turkish ships in the Red Sea paying protection money.¹³ Discussions continued, but to 'Abbās it became just another promise of action that the Europeans did not deliver.

In 1609, 'Abbās sent another Persian diplomat, Dengīz Beg Rūmlū, along with the Augustinian Gouveia to the Spanish King, to discuss, among other things, the plan for diversion of the silk trade. They brought with them bales of silk which were to be sold on behalf of the Shah as a test of the market, but instead they gave them to the Spanish King as a gift. On their return to Persia, Shah 'Abbās had Dengīz Beg executed. According to observers, his execution was because he gave the silk to the King of Spain without receiving a gift of equal value in return. It might also have been caused by the fact Dengīz Beg treated members of his embassy badly and several converted to Christianity and stayed in Spain, or that Shah 'Abbās was trying to impress a visiting Turkish ambassador and intimidate him into signing a treaty. Either way, 'Abbās questioned Gouveia over which of the items he had brought to the Shah were gifts and which were payment for the silk. Gouveia thought quickly and divided the gifts into presents and payment. But the Shah was not happy, claiming that the spices offered as payment were worth much less than the silk, and demanded Gouveia pay the difference. With Gouveia in disgrace and fearing for his life, he fled Isfahan to Hormuz and eventually back to Portugal.¹⁴

12 Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 264ff.; Davies, *Elizabethans Errant*, p. 209.

13 Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 92.

14 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 203-206; Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 292-294; Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", pp. 391-392.

An ongoing source of conflict between the Persians and the Spanish was the island of Hormuz. It had been ruled by the Portuguese, and after the union of the crowns was a Spanish territory, but it was run by a corrupt and abusive Portuguese administration. Shah 'Abbās complained repeatedly about abuses to the Persian traders and the coastal population. The Carmelite missionary Father Simon reported charges that Persian merchants were forced to buy products they did not want at inflated prices; that the Portuguese seized horses and goods from the Persians; that the Portuguese refused to pay the ancient tribute due from the King of Hormuz, who was now a Portuguese puppet; and that Muslim children were taken from ships, put in convents and were forcibly raised as Christians.¹⁵ The Persians steadily increased the pressure on Hormuz throughout the first two decades of the seventeenth century. In 1601, they took Bahrain, previously a dependency of the King of Hormuz. Then, when complaints about the actions of the Hormuz captains were not addressed, they captured the island of Qeshm, from where Hormuz obtained drinking water. In 1614, the town of Gamrūn (later named Bandar-e 'Abbās), on the mainland facing Hormuz, was conquered by a Persian force under the Sultan of Shiraz, who certainly would not have acted without the Shah's approval. Throughout the whole series of incidents, the Spanish government remained remarkably imperceptive of the growing troubles, despite being warned by several diplomats, and the Portuguese captains continued their abuses. Diplomats were sent to 'Abbās to demand the return of captured islands and payment of tariffs when 'Abbās was looking for gestures of conciliation. The Shah's increasing anger reached a climax in 1622, when the English East India Company helped his troops invade and capture Hormuz itself.¹⁶

Change in Persian Attitudes

After the large effort expended on diplomacy at the start of the decade and the lack of

15 *Chronicle of the Carmelites*, pp. 102-104.

16 Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 250-252, 296-297, 312-323, 340-343; Luis Gil, "The Embassy of Don García de Silva y Figueroa to Shah 'Abbas I", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, edited by Willem Floor and Edmund Herzeg, (London, 2012), pp. 162, 166-170.

results, Shah 'Abbās became disillusioned with western military promises. While he remained open to cooperation, 'Abbās no longer trusted the Europeans to keep their word. While the Austrian treaty with the Ottomans was a large influence on his change in attitude, it was not the only contributor. The Spanish Habsburgs made a string of promises about military actions, but they never delivered. The Pope continually promised to raise a league of European countries against the Ottomans, but he was unable to exhort them to action. While these other issues contributed, the most conspicuous failure to 'Abbās was the 1606 Treaty of Zsitva-Torok. 'Abbās saw this as the Austrians making a separate peace and he took it as a betrayal. As shown in Chapter Three, Rudolf had no choice but to agree to the peace. If he did not he would have lost his throne, and his successor Matthias would have signed the treaty anyway. Rudolf's actions were never meant as a personal betrayal. However, when assessing the impact on their relationship, arguments justifying the treaty based on the Imperial political situation are not as relevant as Shah 'Abbās' perceptions. The treaty impacted relations between the two courts for a long time afterwards.

'Abbās resolved to make his military strategy more self-reliant. From the start of his reign, he had already begun reforming his army: reducing reliance on Qizilbāsh tribal horsemen, expanding the use of musket-armed infantry loyal to himself, and building up the artillery. But partway through the critical decade, once he had inflicted some defeats on the Ottomans and after the Austrians made their own peace, 'Abbās began to concentrate more on trade and less on military affairs in dealings with the West. Through trade, he could acquire funds to build up his own military rather than hope for direct military assistance from Europe. He discussed plans with the Sherleys and other diplomats to re-direct trade away from Turkish controlled ports. It was also during this time that he determined to seize the Portuguese outpost of Hormuz.¹⁷ This move would give him more control over Persia's commerce, opening the country to other trading partners rather than being dominated by the Portuguese and Spanish. His swing to emphasizing trade coincided with the rise of the large western trading companies, such as the English East India Company and the

¹⁷ *A Chronicle of the Carmelites*, (London, 1939), p. 169; Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, p. 252

Dutch VOC. The companies provided an outlet for the silk and other goods that 'Abbās wished to sell, whereas before there would have been little choice but transport them to Turkish Mediterranean ports. It took more than decade to accomplish his plans, culminating with the 1622 capture of Hormuz, but his thoughts of such a project began in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

Change in Habsburg Attitudes

After Emperor Rudolf II died in 1612, his successors were more interested in religious matters than in eastern military actions. Tensions within the Empire were high between the religious denominations, and, for Emperor Matthias and his adviser Klesl, the first priority was to restore Imperial authority. They renewed the temporary treaty of Zvita-Torok into a more lasting agreement with the Ottomans, in order to concentrate their efforts on the Empire and Imperial succession. Since neither Rudolf nor Matthias had any children, bargaining over the succession resulted in just one viable candidate, Archduke Ferdinand of Styria, a cousin of Rudolf and Matthias. The Styrian Habsburg line was more devoutly Catholic, and Ferdinand had already demonstrated his willingness to enforce Catholicism in his territories. Once Ferdinand was confirmed as Matthias' heir, Protestant worries over his reign amplified the religious tensions, and led to the revolt in Bohemia and the start of the Thirty Years War.¹⁸

Habsburg military attention was now focused on Europe and the Thirty Years War, not on the Turkish frontier. Thus, they had little interest in building a military alliance with Persia. Instead, their stronger religious identity led them to promote the interests of Catholic Christianity. Where there were Christian minorities, the seventeenth century Habsburgs saw it as their duty to defend Christian interests.¹⁹

18 Peter H. Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy, A History of the Thirty Years War*, (London, 2009), pp. 68-73, 239-266; R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy*, (Oxford, 1979), pp. 44-45, 57-67.

19 Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 424-433.

Because their Christian sentiments were so well known, they were asked repeatedly to intervene when Christian communities needed something from the Safavid government, as seen in Chapter Four. Also, after the ravages of war the economy needed to be rebuilt. The administration under Leopold sought to shift the economy from primarily agricultural to one more reliant on industry and trade.²⁰ As demonstrated in the previous chapter, this shift led Austrian merchants to reach out to the east for trading opportunities.

Therefore, both sides turned away from the military alliance and towards other types of contacts. The priorities of both dynasties changed. These changes occurred at the same time and were the results of events in the first decade of the seventeenth century.

Why Did the Alliance Fail?

Throughout the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, both Habsburgs and Safavids wanted a military alliance, but it never happened. The Ottomans were allowed to only fight on one front at a time, managing their foreign policy to avoid splitting their forces. Two explanations can be found in the literature for why the alliance between Europeans and Persians was never realised. I will propose a third. Clearly, the truth involves a mixture of all three explanations. But, as each highlights different issues, they are worth examining individually.

²⁰ Wilson, *Europe's Tragedy*, pp. 795-806; Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. C. A. Simpson, (London, 1994), pp. 295-303.

1. *Distance and Difficulty of Travel*

Distance and difficulty of travel is an explanation found in many works which discuss European-Persian relations. In some works it is cited almost as a truism without much examination. Examples from otherwise excellent works include Laurence Lockhart in the *Cambridge History of Iran*, who writes, "The reason of this failure...was the extreme difficulty of making and retaining close contact between East and West with a hostile Turkey in between."²¹ Also, Bérenger in the *History of the Habsburg Empire* writes, "As for coordinating effective military action, whatever the Safavids' deep-seated hatred of the Ottomans, this proved a quite unrealistic fantasy given the obstacles to communications between Ispahan and Prague."²² Certainly, in the early modern era it was very difficult for diplomats to travel between Europe and Persia. This difficulty was clearly shown in the accounts of travellers examined in the previous chapters. It would take a year or more to send a messenger one way, and then another year at least for a reply. Often, the situation would have changed by the time a message arrived. Sometimes the message never arrived, as several ambassadors died on their way. Obviously, the difficulty of travel hindered cooperation.

There were three possible routes between Europe and Persia, each had its own difficulties. These were: overland through Syria and Iraq; by sea to Hormuz around Africa, usually by way of settlements in India; and through Russia and across the Caspian Sea.

The first route, overland, was the most direct, but in the early sixteenth century the region was captured by the Ottomans. The route already had dangers from bandits and the desert environment, and once it was controlled by a hostile power it was almost impossible. The Sherleys travelled to Persia this way, disguised as

²¹ Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 374.

²² Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire 1273-1700*, trans. C. A. Simpson, (London, 1994), p. 247.

Levantine merchants; however, they were not official representatives of any country. For a diplomat pursuing military action against the controlling power it would be far more treacherous. Emperor Charles V's envoy Jean de Balbi travelled this route with much difficulty and treachery, and a Venetian merchant who helped him was executed by the Ottomans.²³ Afterwards, the direct route was not used by official delegates, although letters could sometimes be passed by merchant caravans.

The second route, by sea, was well established in the sixteenth century and was used by Spanish and Portuguese. Once a year a Portuguese fleet, the *Carreira da Índia*, left Lisbon in early spring, passing around the Cape of Good Hope to East Africa, to catch the summer monsoon winds across the Indian Ocean to the Portuguese outpost at Goa. To reach Persia, one usually waited until the winds shifted in September then sailed from Goa to Hormuz, the Portuguese stronghold at the mouth of the Persian Gulf. The voyage took most of a year, if all the winds and currents were caught properly, and a round trip took three years. The Portuguese had a monopoly on this route during the sixteenth century, until they were challenged in the seventeenth century by the rise of the English and Dutch trading companies.²⁴ Maximilian II of Austria tried to use this route for his embassies, but coordination with the Portuguese proved to be a stumbling point.

The third route, through Russia, down the Volga river, and over the Caspian Sea, covered a longer distance and crossed Tartar lands that were only loosely controlled by the Russian Tsar. It was a difficult journey in the best of times, as shown in Tectander's and Olearius' accounts. The journey took a minimum of several months, usually most of a year, and was restricted by the freezing of the Volga during the winter. At times of instability in Russia it became far more hazardous, as evidenced by the experiences of the Persians and Carmelites setting out from Prague

23 See Chapter Two of this thesis, and Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453- 1600*, (Wiesbaden, 1968), p. 68; Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 22-42, 60-67.

24 K.M. Mathew, *History of Portuguese Navigation in India*, (Dehli, 1988).

in 1605. Russian and Armenian traders had contact along this route between Moscow and Persia, and the English explored it in 1561 as a route for Western European trade.²⁵ It was not until the late years of the seventeenth century that practical trade developed along this route. It was the primary route between Austria and Persia for diplomatic missions merely because it seemed less difficult than the alternatives.

The difficulty of communicating around a hostile Ottoman Empire certainly hindered coordinated actions between Austria and Persia. Furthermore, in the mid-seventeenth century, when both countries were at peace with the Ottomans, contacts became more frequent, reflecting the greater ease of communication once Ottoman territory did not have to be avoided. However, the difficulty of communication over long distances cannot be the only reason for the alliance failure. Throughout the period in question, several European states, including the Austrians' Spanish cousins, maintained globe-spanning empires and trade endeavours. The Spanish conquest and administration of colonies in the New World, the Portuguese trade network throughout the Indian Ocean and missionary activity up to Japan, and the opportunistic gains of the Dutch and English against the established Iberian powers all show that it was possible in the sixteenth century to coordinate activities despite distance and communication difficulties. Therefore, we must look for additional explanations for the failure of an Austrian-Persian military alliance.

2. Exploiting Turkish Respite for Other Issues

Using the diversion of Turkish attention to pursue other matters is an explanation that was developed in Palombini's book, *Bündniswerben Abendändischer Mächte um Persien*. Many times she highlights how both Persia and the European powers allowed the other to fight the Ottomans alone, despite their frequent wish for an alliance. Both

²⁵ Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", pp. 383-384.

must bear the responsibility for allowing the Ottomans to fight one front at a time. Repeatedly, one side would make peace, and then Ottoman aggression would turn to the other. The new target would work for an alliance; but the other party, newly at peace with the Turks, would prefer to take the opportunity to deal with other issues - such as internal politics, or conflicts on other borders - rather than plunge back into another Turkish war. Both the Europeans and the Persians followed this pattern. Andrew Hess makes much the same point in a paper looking at the aftermath of the Battle of Lepanto, noting how the victorious European nations each turned their attention to other issues, allowing the Ottomans to recover from the defeat.²⁶

The preceding chapters are full of such examples. As seen in Chapter Two, Archduke Ferdinand made peace with the Ottomans in 1533, and left Shah Tahmāsp to face an Ottoman invasion alone the following year, while Ferdinand dealt with religious issues in Germany regarding the Reformation. In 1578, the Ottomans again invaded Persia, while the 'Holy League', which was recently victorious at Lepanto, broke apart and pursued other goals: Venice resumed their lucrative trade with the Ottomans; King Philip II of Spain focused on winning the empty throne of Portugal and then fighting the Dutch and English; and the newly crowned Emperor Rudolf II built border fortifications in Hungary. Emperor Charles V did not even reply to Shah Ismā'il's first message until he concluded his war with France. On the Persian side, it was shown in Chapter Three how Shah 'Abbās I dealt with reorganising his government and fighting the Uzbegs for a decade while Emperor Rudolf II was at war. These are just a few examples of the pattern repeated for more than a century.

Although cooperation might have benefited both Europeans and Persians, both turned to other immediate problems when given the chance. A period of war on the Ottoman's other border was used as a respite from the conflict, rather than an opportunity to combine to strike a decisive blow. The immense difficulties seen in the

26 Andrews C. Hess, "The Battle of Lepanto and Its Place in Mediterranean History", *Past and Present*, No. 57 (Nov., 1972), pp. 66, 69-72.

Ottoman Empire for the few years from 1603, when both Austria and Persia were at war at the same time, demonstrates how decisive a combined offensive could have been if cooperation had been achieved. Yet both sides focused on their immediate problems, allowing the Turkish threat to remain for centuries. As so often happens throughout history, short-term pressures were prioritized over long-term concerns. Each side wanted allies when they were facing the immediate threat, however they were unwilling to take the initiative and commit to unforced action in order to support the other.

3. *Difference of Diplomatic Styles*

Here I present another explanation, which complements the others by highlighting an element which they are missing. When contacts between European and Persian diplomats did occur, cultural misunderstandings limited their success. Each culture had a different style of diplomacy. When one side did not present themselves in the way the other side expected, it limited the results that could be expected.

This effect is often subtle. Both sides were welcoming to foreign diplomats. Minor mistakes of protocol were usually forgiven and sometimes the source of amusement - for instance Rudolf II's amusement when the Persians tried to kiss his foot, or the Persians humour at Tectander's inability to sit cross-legged.²⁷ Never did a misunderstanding result in a complete breakdown of relations, even during the Spanish and Portuguese clumsy attempts before the seizure of Hormuz.²⁸ The problems of cultural difference were not simply one side making a mistake out of

27 Both events described in Chapter Three; *Die Prager Nuntiatur des Giovanni Stefano Ferreri, Nuntiaturberichte aus Deutschland*. Ed. by A. O. Meyer. Vol. IV. 3. (Berlin, 1913), no. 264d, p. 185; Victor von Klarwill, ed., *Fugger News-Letters: First Series*, trans. Pauline de Chary, (London, 1924), p. 270; Georg Tectander, *Iter Persicum*, (Altenburg in Meissen, 1610), p. 118.

28 Luis Gil, "The Embassy of Don García de Silva y Figueroa to Shah 'Abbās I", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, eds. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzeg, (London, 2012), pp. 161-180; Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 312-323.

ignorance which offended the other. Each court knew they were dealing with foreigners who did not know their ways, and they were willing to overlook such matters. The problem was that a difference in styles led to a difference in expectations. What was being promised was understood differently by the participants. These problems of expectations and interpretations slowed progress, and, when combined with the other problems of distance and divergent interests examined above, these proved fatal to the goal both sides desired.

Eastern diplomacy was often conducted by men of high noble standing. The Persian chronicles are full of accounts of princely delegations. One example is the embassy sent by the Mughul ruler Jahāngir (reign 1605-1627) to Shah 'Abbās, which was led by the Mughul nobleman Khan 'Alam.²⁹ The names of the ambassadors sent to Europe indicate they were often from the leading Qizilbāsh tribes repeatedly instrumental in Safavid politics: the Shāmlū, the Rūmlū and others. The Safavids sent diplomats with noble pedigrees as a way of showing respect to the recipient of the mission, and, conveniently, sometimes as a way to remove potential powerful political figures from the local scene temporarily. The European ambassadors were not always as high-born. Frequently ambassadors were drawn from the minor nobility or educated commoners. The higher nobility of the Empire were not interested in facing the rigours of foreign travel, whereas ambitious men from the middle social ranks looked to foreign service as a way to advance their careers into court circles to which they would not otherwise have access.³⁰ Both branches of the Habsburgs often used religious figures as diplomats.³¹ From the Habsburg perspective this policy made

29 Clara Cary Edwards, "Relations of Shah Abbas the Great of Persia, with the Mogul Emperors, Akbar and Jahangir", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 35, (1915), pp. 255-264; Iskander Beg Munshi, *History of Shah 'Abbas*, trans. Savory, Vol. 2, p. 1190-1193

30 When Klaus Müller writes about the high nobility's role as diplomats he is referring to resident ambassadors in Europe, not those undertaking dangerous journeys to eastern lands. Müller mentions there were diplomats of all social classes, but a look at the ambassadors to Persia indicates these were from the lower echelons. All classes were interested in advancing future careers. *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden, 1648-1740*, (Bonn, 1976), pp. 180-195, 355.

31 Qualifications for diplomatic service included either military or church experience. Those drawn from the church, called *geistliche Gesandten*, included the use of Cardinals as the representative to Rome, as well as other lesser roles, such as those in Persia. Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen*, pp. 199, 249.

sense, because promotion of Catholicism worldwide was a major feature of their policy. However, it caused annoyance to the Muslim Safavid Shahs. In response to the Spanish policy of using Augustinian friars as ambassadors, 'Abbās complained to King Philip III to stop sending all these priests and send "some gentlemen of note" instead.³²

Gift-giving was an established part of both European and Islamic diplomacy, but with subtle differences. European gifts were part of a protocol system which established each ruler's status in the hierarchy of states. Ornamental, artistic, or religiously-significant items were preferred gifts; the expense of a gift may be significant, but it was the artistry or taste, the presentation, and the symbolism of the gift which was important in establishing the position of the giver and receiver.³³ In the ancient Middle East there was a long tradition of gift-giving, which on the rise of Islam generated lengthy debate among scholars about how to accommodate this tradition to Islamic principles and avoid the appearance of bribes. An opinion was offered by the respected jurist ash-Shaybânî that gifts to the leader from foreign rulers should be considered war-booty and property of the community.³⁴ Although this opinion was not always followed, it coloured the practice around gift protocol, so that gifts were used as public signs of the power of the ruler to care for and enrich his people. In Safavid practice, gifts to the Shah were paraded publicly, each individual piece carried by a separate bearer. A greater emphasis was laid on the monetary value of gifts, and on reciprocity in value. Gifts to the Shah from his subjects were used as a form of taxation and their value was carefully assessed, while gifts to foreign rulers were viewed as part of business transactions.³⁵ Slight differences in tradition led to several misunderstandings. Archduke Ferdinand's first two ambassadors to the Safavid

32 Lockhart, CHI, "European Contacts", p. 392.

33 William Roosen, "Early Modern Diplomatic Ceremonial: A Systems Approach", *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (Sep., 1980), pp. 452-476 ; Suzanne B. Butters, "The Uses and Abuses of Gifts in the World of Ferdinando de' Medici (1549-1609)", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance*, Vol. 11 (2007), pp. 243-354 .

34 Franz Rosenthal, "Gifts and Bribes: The Muslim View", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 108, No. 2 (Apr. 15, 1964), esp. pp. 135, 138-139.

35 Anthony Cutler, "Significant Gifts: Patterns of Exchange in Late Antique, Byzantine, and Early Islamic Diplomacy", *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies*, 38(1), (Winter 2008), pp. 79-101. Rudi P. Matthee, "Gift Giving IV - In the Safavid Period", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, originally published 2001, updated 2012.

court, Pietro de Negro and Simon de Lillis, did not bring gifts for the Shah, as described in Chapter Two. The oversight could have been because Ferdinand saw the Persian ruler as outside the hierarchy of European rulers and thus not part of their system of giving. While the mistake was forgiven, the ambassadors were chided by Shah Tahmāsp. Confusion over the silk given to the Spanish King by Dengīz Beg led to the execution of the Persian ambassador and disgrace of the European envoy, as described earlier in this chapter. Shah 'Abbās embarrassed the succeeding ambassador by demanding an accounting of what was a gift and what was payment for the Persian silk, and then arguing that the value of the Spanish gifts were less than the Persian silk.³⁶ In both examples, misunderstandings over gift protocol added friction to the relationship at times of critical negotiations.

Europe at this time was developing new rules for diplomacy.³⁷ Expectations for diplomats behaviour were being codified. Credentials became important; for instance, the Safavid ambassador to Charles V was held for a year before given an audience because they could not verify his credentials. So while the Europeans enjoyed seeing the exotic eastern diplomats, the effectiveness of eastern diplomats was reduced because they did not properly fit into the developing bureaucratic system. Europe's system of permanent or resident ambassadors was evolving at this time, but these were not yet universal. Such an idea could have been valuable in a situation like with Persia, where communications took so long; but the idea was not fully established nor was it extensively used by the Austrians in the 16th century. In the 17th century they did start appointing resident representatives at the Safavid court, but by that time pursuit of an alliance was no longer the top priority.

The Persian diplomatic tradition, with its greater emphasis on personal authority and trustworthiness, was more likely to consider a statement of friendship as a pledge to action; whereas the more bureaucratic European tradition required

36 Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution*, pp. 70, 292-293.

37 Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy*, (London 1955).

detailed plans and legal terminology if it was to be binding. This statement is a simplification of both sides, but it expresses the divergent tendencies between them. It was another difference in style that led to misunderstandings. For example, in Chapter Two we saw how Shah Ismā'il wrote to Charles V saying simply 'attack in this year', and expected that to be enough of a plan. In Chapter Three, Shah 'Abbās proposed friendship and joint action to Emperor Rudolf II, and Rudolf meticulously avoided promising never to enter peace negotiations with the Turks. However, 'Abbās, reading with his Persian perspective and not a European legal outlook, received Rudolf's enthusiastic reply and then his return embassy and inferred the deal was agreed. Neither side was wrong; neither was being naive. They were simply interpreting the exchanges from different cultural backgrounds and reaching different conclusions about promises made.

Combining Effects

The difficulty in communicating over long distances hindered efforts to form an alliance. However the participants may have been able to overcome this difficulty if they had tried. A simple agreement between Persia and various European powers to attack on all fronts in a common year, and to continue the pressure until a clear victory had been achieved, would have put the Ottoman Empire in considerable peril. However, because the different cultures negotiated in different ways they could not reach an agreement, and because they preferred to attend to other issues while the Ottoman military was occupied elsewhere, they did not seriously try to reach such an agreement. It took a century of fruitless attempts for the frustration of failed alliance offers to outweigh the hope of what could be achieved if such an alliance was successful. In the first decade of the seventeenth century the frustration reached a tipping point. The Treaty of Zsitva-Torok was the final signal that Persia and the Habsburgs were not able to set aside their local issues and finalize a military alliance. With that realization, they diverted their energies to other issues.

The French-Ottoman Alliance

It may be instructive to compare the failed attempt at an Austrian-Persian alliance with the more successful French-Ottoman alliance of the same era. The French maintained a functioning military alliance with the Ottoman Empire throughout much of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. From the time of their conquest of Constantinople in 1453, the Ottomans had been involved in European diplomacy. They regarded themselves as the rightful heirs of the Roman legacy, by right of conquest of the Byzantine capital, and, therefore, that they were an integral player in European affairs. Various Italian states requested their intervention when threatened by a dangerous neighbour. Ottoman involvement in European politics was generally accepted at the time, although complaints about 'treating with infidel' were used in the propaganda by the opponents of those who sought assistance. When Charles V came into his inheritance of the many Habsburg lands and looked to assemble a 'universal monarchy', it left the King François I of France feeling surrounded and threatened. When Charles was elected Holy Roman Emperor over François, the French king turned to the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman, whose imperial goals of dominating the Mediterranean also ran against Habsburg power, as a counterweight to Charles' expanding power. After François was taken captive at the Battle of Pavia in 1525, the French established contact with the Ottomans, which led to an official embassy to Constantinople. The French requested Süleyman attack the Habsburgs, "claiming that if the imprisoned François were forced to agree to Charles V's terms it would 'make him [Charles] master of the world'."³⁸ Süleyman responded favourably to the embassy, and the following years saw the first siege of Vienna and increased naval fighting between Spanish and Ottoman fleets. Following Charles' 1535 capture of Tunis, when he was being hailed by some as the defender of Christianity, François sent a new ambassador, Jean de la Forest, to the Sultan. La Forest became the first in a

38 Christine Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel, The Ottoman and French Alliance in the Sixteenth Century*, (London, 2011), p. 36; quoting Ernest Charrière, ed. *Négociations de la France dans le Levant*, (Paris, 1848), Vol. I, pp. 112-115; also, De Lamar Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy", *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, Vol. 116, No. 4 (Winter, 1985) pp. 452-453.

long series of French resident representatives in Constantinople. He negotiated a commercial treaty which gave some exclusive trading rights to French flagged vessels, and he encouraged the Ottomans to attack the emperor. The Ottoman fleet wintered in the French port of Toulon in 1543, so as to spend more of the campaigning season in the Western Mediterranean. Under François' successors the alliance continued: the French fleet sometimes wintered in Ottoman ports, their fleets frequently operated together, and the French continued to encourage Ottoman action against the Habsburgs. The alliance continued, with a few breaks, throughout the seventeenth century, when the French were important in convincing the Ottomans to besiege Vienna in 1683.³⁹

The French and Ottomans were more successful in forming a West-East alliance than were the Austrians and Persians. Several differences in the situations allowed for easier French-Ottoman success, and these reasons all relate to the reason for the Austrian-Persian failure given above.

The difficulties of travel and communication were less severe for the French and Ottomans than they were for the Austrians and Persians. The Mediterranean provided a natural highway between France and Ottoman territories. This route allowed them to communicate and send ambassadors relatively quickly and safely compared to the difficult journeys required between Austria and Persia. While the Spanish fleet patrolled the Mediterranean and would certainly stop a French courier if given the chance, the nature of sixteenth century galleys meant they were capable of short bursts of speed but unsuited to prolonged chase.⁴⁰ Thus, ambassadors could travel past the enemy with relative ease, especially compared to the difficulty Austrian agents had crossing the intervening Ottoman land to Persia, with its bandits and

39 Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel*, pp. 23-48, 114-140; John F. Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys: Changing Technology and Mediterranean Warfare at Sea in the 16th Century*, revised edition, (London, 2003), pp. 59, 137; J. C. Hurewitz, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System", *Middle Eastern Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 2, (Spring 1961), p. 145; Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy", pp. 455-457.

40 Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys*, pp. 209-232, esp. p. 218.

Ottoman patrols. Simply the possibility for faster and safer communication made the French-Ottoman alliance more viable, but the Mediterranean also provided an arena for joint action that the Austrians and Persian did not have. The Ottoman and French fleets operated together in raids, and each fleet made use of the other's ports to extend their range. Since Persian and Austrian armies were too widely separated, there was nothing they could do to coordinate other than fight on different fronts at the same time, facing the Ottomans with a choice of where to deploy their forces. Conversely, the French and Ottomans had the chance for real cooperation. This advantage offered the opportunity for tangible planning, making it more likely each side would stick to their commitments.

The French did take advantage of Ottoman military action distracting Habsburg attention in order to rest their own forces, although this did not disrupt their relationship as much as the problem affected the Austrian-Persian relationship. For example, in 1538 an Ottoman attack on Venetian Corfu led to an alliance of Venice, Charles V and the Pope. This was the same Holy League that sent Michele Membré to Persia, as described in Chapter Two. François I feared this league would be turned against him, so he made peace with Charles V and let the League fight the Ottomans. François sent a special ambassador to Süleyman to notify him, "in the most favourable way possible about his peace with Charles in order to preserve the friendship of the sultan." After the Ottomans defeated the Holy League at Preveza, the League split apart and the French ambassador helped negotiate a treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Venice.⁴¹ But French use of Ottoman action against their enemies as a respite for themselves did not damage their relationship. Süleyman saw value for his own ends in sowing dissension in Europe; even the potential of an alliance with the French helped his cause. As he correctly observed, the two countries remained in close contact and would work together again in time. The Habsburgs faced greater problems with this issue in their relationship with Persia. The Persians were less understanding of such interruptions, and, due to the difficulty in communicating,

41 Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel*, pp. 40-41; on the Battle of Preveza see Guilmartin, *Gunpowder & Galleys*, pp. 57-71; on Michele Membré see Palombini, *Bündniswerben*, 76-82.

negotiations to achieve further cooperation in the future were difficult. Once a chance was lost it was easy to imagine another would not come again. The Habsburgs also tried to assemble broad coalitions, with Austria, Spain, Venice, the Pope and various German states. Any of these forces could pull out at any time, deciding to avail themselves of the respite provided by the others occupying Ottoman attention. Such unstable coalitions looked poor alliance partners to the Persians.

Although the French and Ottomans were susceptible to misunderstandings based on differences in diplomatic styles, these were managed. They did come from different diplomatic traditions: French in the European tradition and Ottomans based on the Islamic tradition. However, the Ottoman Empire had more extensive contact with Europe and was more familiar with European diplomacy than the more easterly Persians. After the capture of Constantinople, the Ottomans thought themselves heirs to the Eastern Roman Empire; they considered themselves a European power. Their lands included south-east Europe and the population included many southern European Christians. Plus, they had extensive dealings with western European countries, including the French specifically. In the late fifteenth century, Sultan Cem contested with his brother, the Ottoman Sultan Bayezid, and when he lost he fled to Europe where he was held as a prisoner by the French kings. Cem was used as a pawn in Mediterranean politics and as an excuse to launch an attack on the Ottoman Empire. Because of this, the Sultan Bayezid sent ambassadors to France to negotiate Cem's return; there he made an offer, which was not accepted at the time, to ally with French King Charles VIII against France's enemies.⁴² Venice and the other Italian states had complicated relations with the Ottomans, with the Italians both desiring trade, but feeling threatened by Ottoman expansion. In the sixteenth century all the European powers established permanent ambassadors in the Ottoman capital, although France was the first to do so. The Ottomans were therefore quite aware of developments in European diplomacy, and they could have sent return resident ambassadors if they wished. However, the sultans felt the unilateral system served to acknowledge Ottoman superiority, and it forced the Europeans to remain in Constantinople only on

⁴² Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel*, pp. 82-113.

the sultan's tolerance.⁴³ The Ottoman administration, although founded on Islamic traditions, absorbed many European practices, adapted them, and created a hybrid system of government unique to their Empire.⁴⁴ Greater familiarity helped reduce misunderstandings and misplaced expectations. When François I made a separate peace with Charles V, bringing the joint endeavour with the Ottoman fleet to an end, Süleyman was not surprised. Although he might have been personally angered, he maintained the alliance because he saw it served both countries interests and joint operation would continue soon enough.⁴⁵ For the Persians, particularly Shah 'Abbās, such actions were considered to be a betrayal, because they were less familiar with the personalities of European rulers.

This comparison of the French-Ottoman alliance emphasises the reasons for the failure of an Austrian-Persian alliance. For each of the suggested reasons for this failure given above, those same issues are seen to be curtailed in the French-Ottoman case. This observation indicates that our reasons for the Austrian-Persian failure are indeed correct. The French-Ottoman alliance was not perfect; their relationship also had tensions and mistrust, and the participants sometimes found their counterparts hard to understand. But their relationship developed under much more favourable circumstances than the Austrians and Persians.

In one other aspect the French-Ottoman alliance and the Austrian-Persian relationship were similar. Both started from the issue of military cooperation but expanded into other issues as the military urgency receded. The Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis in 1559 halted direct conflict between France and the Spanish Habsburgs, and therefore reduced the value of the French-Ottoman military alliance. Their relationship was further strained by the Ottoman siege of Malta, where the defending Knights of St. John were led by a French grand master. However, the alliance

43 J. C. Hurewitz, "Ottoman Diplomacy and the European State System", pp. 145-147; Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy", pp. 457-458. Austrian diplomats were often arrested or expelled before the Ottomans went to war in Hungary.

44 Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel*, pp. 49-56.

45 Isom-Verhaaren, *Allies With The Infidel*, pp. 139-140.

continued because of the economic importance of their trade. After the alliance was founded in 1536, French ships were allowed to sail into Constantinople's harbours. The proceeds to the French port of Marseilles dramatically increased as a result of this trade. In 1569, despite the troubles with military issues, the French negotiated a new trade agreement which gave them even more exclusive rights. Merchants of other nations had to pay to sail under the French flag, the only European vessels allowed to enter Turkish ports. The Turkish trade income was vital to French survival during its turbulent period in the late sixteenth century, but also brought great profits to the Turks.⁴⁶ The broadening of the relationship from military to other interests mirrors that of the Austrian-Persian relationship shown in previous chapters, and points to a characteristic pattern in international relations.

46 Jensen, "The Ottoman Turks in Sixteenth Century French Diplomacy", pp. 458-465. Treaty of Cateau-Cambrésis covered in Charrière, *Négociations Levant*, Vol. 2, pp. 578-590.

Chapter Six

Implications for Historiography

At first glance, the story of the Austrian-Persian relationship seems to lack interest, an alliance that did not happen. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, even the attempts at an alliance resulted in cultural exchanges and increased contacts which could adapt to new challenges, and thus is of importance to study. Another reason to study such unexamined areas of history is the effects these subjects have on the field of historiography. Looking into such areas can illuminate aspects which have gone unnoticed in previous studies. Here we show how the Persian diplomatic effort reveals a strong Austrian interest in the East, something often overlooked in much historiography. Revelations of the Austrian's knowledge of eastern cultures impacts on that famous work of cultural commentary upon Middle Eastern studies: Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Said largely ignored Austrian and German studies of the east, as well as those conducted in the early-modern era. But perhaps he should have examined them, for they reveal a different pattern than that he described. Both of these issues could be the subjects for lengthy studies of their own. Here, I provide a brief introduction based on this study of Austrian and Safavid contacts.

Re-orienting Austrian History

Austrian historiography has typically concentrated more on Austria's relations with western Europe. Habsburg Austria was a great power in European politics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and these events attract much of the attention from historians. The Turkish wars are, of course, acknowledged in any Austrian history, but in some they are treated more as an occasional distraction from European affairs. For example, even Bérenger, who is relatively even-handed, concentrates his commentary on relations with the Ottoman Empire in two chapters devoted to the

topic, and is not mentioned in other places.¹ Very few look further afield than the Ottoman Empire in Austria's eastern diplomacy; relations with Persia and other Asian nations are rarely examined. In contrast, the Habsburg monarchy paid significant attention to eastern affairs. This is essential to recognise for a complete picture of their reign. While the quantity of diplomatic actions with the East was not as large as those with Europe, it still represents a substantial amount of activity. Records in the Vienna Staatsarchiv show the many countries with which Austria corresponded.²

The development of the Great Power system in European international politics during the eighteenth century focused the attention of Austria - and historians - on Austria's role in Europe. Austria participated in the many wars and shifting alliances between the major European countries, drawing the Habsburgs' attention away from eastern affairs. Historians since that time have noticed the Austrian focus on western Europe and have followed that gaze by writing primarily about Austria's relations with the west. The eighteenth century and later perspective is often projected backwards in time. However, it was eastward expansion, pushing back the Ottomans and control over Hungary and south-east Europe, that made Austria a Great Power in the eighteenth century. Austria was able to compete with richer states such as France and Great Britain through the resources and manpower brought from Hungary and the Balkan territories. Interestingly, while Austria's participation in the European Great Power system distracts some historians from noticing Austria's substantial eastern activities, scholars writing specifically on Austria's place in that system have well recognised the importance of Austria's eastern frontier.³

Ferdinand I, who began the Austrian branch of the Habsburgs, felt that his

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- 1 Jean Bérenger, *A History of the Habsburg Empire: 1273-1700*, translated C.A. Simpson, (London, 1994), orig. pub. 1990. See Chap. 15, "The Struggle against the Ottoman Empire", pp. 185-195, and Chap. 24, "The Re-birth of the Turkish Peril and the Siege of Vienna", pp. 318-337.
 - 2 *Quellen zur Geschichte Afrikas, Asiens, und Ozeaniens im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv bis 1918*, ed. Leopold Auer, (Munich, 1986).
 - 3 On the Great Power system see: Derek McKay and H. M. Scott, *The Rise of the Great Powers, 1648-1815*, (Harlow, 1983), esp. pp. 67-76; H. M. Scott, *Birth of the Great Power System, 1740-1815*, (Harlow, 2006), esp. pp. 20-24, 117-142; On Austria's eastward expansion see: Michael Hochedlinger, *Austria's Wars of Emergence*, (Harlow, 2003), esp. pp. 48-77, 153-167, 349-359.

family's destiny was in the east, creating an empire stretching the length of the Danube. He tried, with little success, to convince his brother Charles V of this outlook.⁴ Yet parts of his vision remained alive within the Austrian branch of the family. Maximilian II and Rudolf II both devoted considerable energy to eastern affairs, through pursuing diplomacy as well as strengthening border defences. They each fought wars against the Ottomans and they dreamed of expanding their influence eastward through victory, although at best they achieved stalemate. In the seventeenth century, Ferdinand II and III were faced with the Thirty Years War and so were forced to concentrate their attention on Europe. However, Transylvania and the Balkans were an important secondary theatre of this war, so eastern affairs were never forgotten. They also found time to correspond with eastern rulers, such as the Safavid Shahs, as described in Chapter Four. When Leopold diverted his attention to Europe and rivalry with France, allowing the eastern borders to languish, the Ottomans took advantage and besieged Vienna. After the siege was broken, the Habsburg monarchy again focused on their eastern border, expanding their lands at the expense of the Ottomans and pursuing the dream of a Danubian empire their founder envisioned. The Habsburgs were reminded time after time that they ignored eastern affairs at their peril.

Recognition of this fact led them to create things like the Imperial Library's Oriental Collection and the Oriental Academy for Eastern Languages. Improved knowledge of eastern cultures was important to the survival and enrichment of the dynasty. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the Imperial Librarian Sebastian Tenggagel had a great interest in Middle Eastern books, and he built up the Imperial collection of important oriental texts. In the 1660s, men associated with the Habsburg court published on Middle Eastern languages: Franz Meninski set up a press in Vienna to publish his Arabic-Turkish-Persian dictionary and helped produce a catalogue of the Imperial Library's oriental manuscripts, while Giovanni Podestà compiled several books on the languages of the Ottoman Empire. That Meninski was also a member of the War Council shows how closely intertwined knowledge of eastern cultures was

4 Paula Sutter Fitchner, *Ferdinand I of Austria*, New York, 1982, p. 81.

with strategic concerns.⁵

The threat of the Ottoman Empire and the lure of expansion into the Balkans were the impetus for the Habsburgs' eastern policies, although their policies reached beyond those immediate neighbours. Understanding the allies and enemies of the Ottomans was a matter of strategic importance. With the Danube as their primary transport link, developing trade opportunities along the river and beyond promised sources for economic growth. The monarchy's sense of religious devotion urged them to study cultures of the Biblical lands. Interest stretched as far as China, where central-Europeans joined the Jesuit activity in the Chinese court, such as the Austrians Bernhard Diestel and Johan Grueber who journeyed to the Chinese capital by way of Persia. Some Habsburg subjects translated western theological works into Chinese, while others wrote works on Chinese philosophy, flora and art which were dedicated to Emperor Leopold.⁶ These motivations drew Habsburg attention further than just the immediate threat and on to all of Asia, including Persia.

Austria's relationship with Safavid Persia reveals that the Habsburg court had a more subtle understanding of eastern and Islamic culture than is often credited. Their understanding may indeed be more nuanced than they themselves were aware. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the Habsburgs sponsored extensive anti-Turkish propaganda to encourage the population to fight the Ottoman invasions and to tolerate the sacrifices asked by the regime. Paula Sutter Fitchner examines Habsburg rhetoric in her book *Terror and Toleration*.⁷ In this book, she shows how numerous levels of representation of the Turkish threat - literary, artistic, sermons, educated and popular culture- all reinforced the message: the Turks and their religion of Islam were evil and must be resisted. While the accounts of Turkish war atrocities -

5 R.J.W. Evans, *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy: 1550-1700*, (Oxford, 1979), p. 428; Tremblay, X. and Rastegar, N., "Austria ii. Iranian Studies in", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, Online edition, (2005, 2011).

6 On China: Evans, *Habsburg Monarchy*, pp. 430-432.

7 Paula Sutter Fitchner, *Terror and Toleration: The Habsburg Empire confronts Islam, 1526-1850*, London 2008, Chap. 1, "An Enemy Real and Imagined", pp. 21-71. The rest of the book explores changes to rhetoric in later years to come to an accommodation with their former enemy.

such as massacres and slavery - may have been sensationalised, they were at least reporting on actual events attributed to the Ottoman army. However, many works attacked the Islamic religion as the basis for the difference between their civilizations. Islam was decried as an "evil" religion, and the Koran as a manual of "Black Magic". The terms 'Turk' and 'Muslim' were often used interchangeably, and both synonymous with 'Evil'. With this mass of propaganda casting all Muslims as wicked, unreconcilable enemies, it at first appears unlikely that Austrian society sought an informed, discerning view of Middle Eastern cultures. On the contrary, Habsburg actions reveal an understanding and attention to the distinctions in the eastern world that belies their rhetoric.

The educated and courtly community understood some of the complexity of Middle Eastern and Islamic societies. For one thing, they were aware of the Sunni-Shi'a division. Although they may not have understood all the theological differences between the two, they were certainly cognizant of the effect on political conflict. Abraham Ortelius, in his 1570 world atlas *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, described the Sunni-Shi'a division as a source of conflict between the Ottomans and Safavids. This work was widely reprinted and translated into many languages, so the information expressed within it can be considered readily available to any educated person.⁸ Certainly, conflict due to sectarian division within a religion was something to which Reformation-era Europe was well attuned.

The court commissioned studies of the Ottoman-Safavid conflict in order to better understand the strategic situation and pursue an alliance. Broadsheets illustrated battles between the Ottoman and Safavid armies, so even at the popular level there was awareness of the conflict. One example from 1535 was printed in Venice but in the German language for distribution in Austrian lands, and while the illustration may bear little resemblance to the actual soldiers the very fact of its

⁸ Cyrus Alai, *General Maps of Persia, 1477-1922*, (Leiden, 2005), pp. 64-69, text on Persia, plate 39a, p. 66.

publication is worth note.⁹ The Habsburg court conducted diplomacy with other central Asian nations, such as the Uzbegs and the Tartars, and while these dealings were not as extensive as those with the Safavids, they show a recognition of the complicated alliances in the region.¹⁰ Knowledge of the region was limited, as the sources available at the time were few in number. But the decision-making classes made an effort to understand eastern civilizations as far as their sources would allow them, to learn more about the region, and to integrate this information into their strategic planning.

One area in which the Habsburg court's distinction of Persians from other Middle Eastern cultures can be seen is artwork. Art from the Habsburg court reveals different attitudes towards different nationalities. The portraits of the Persian ambassadors in Prague, discussed in Chapter Three, are very different from those of Turks from the same time. Leaving aside manifestly propagandistic pieces which show Ottoman armies committing atrocities and depicted as wild beasts or devils, portraits of individuals in the same style as those of the Persians, a style which purportedly produced accurate representations, still reveal differences. A Turkish general was depicted in dark shadows with shifty eyes and an untrustworthy expression. The Persian ambassadors are portrayed as exotic but interesting men, the kind with whom deals can be made. No better example exists that whatever the rhetoric may have declared about all of Islam being evil, distinctions were made in practice between different nationalities.

Part of the Habsburg interest in Persia and a source of their distinction from other Middle Eastern cultures stemmed from mythological roots. Austrian intellectuals imagined Persia as the land described in Herodotus and the Bible, the home of Cyrus and Zoroastrian Magi. This romanticised vision appealed to the court, which was steeped in educated magic.¹¹ Olearius wrote poetically about his

⁹ Thomas Winkelbauer, *Ständefreiheit un Fürstenmacht*, (Vienna 2003), p. 348.

¹⁰ *Quellen im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv*. ed. Auer.

disappointment when the reality did not meet the classical image:¹²

How we always seek the ancient splendours
Which are subject to the ravages of time.
I sought to find Persia in Persia,
And, because of this, have come to curse my journey a hundred-fold.

But despite his disappointment, Olearius threw himself into documenting the existing reality. Memories of Timur, or at least the romanticised European image of Tamburlaine, also heightened Austrian interest in Persia. The Safavids themselves helped encourage this connection as their own political propaganda worked to heighten their Timurid connections.¹³ Austrian views of Persia may have been formed and distinguished based on a mythologised image; however, their interest led them, like Olearius, to discover and engage the real civilization of their time.

A Commentary on Said

Edward Said's 1978 book *Orientalism* was very influential upon Middle Eastern studies and writings about east-west relations.¹⁴ Therefore, it is appropriate to address how Said's work intersects with the findings in this thesis. Said makes sweeping claims about how westerners stereotype their view of eastern society, claims which do not match with what has been observed in this thesis about Habsburg views. We have the chance to critique Said's theory and expand upon his work; however, his ideas can still help point up important issues.

11 R.J.W. Evans, *Rudolf II and his world*, (Oxford, 1973, 1997), *passim*; and *The Making of the Habsburg Monarchy: 1550-1700*, (Oxford, 1979), Chapter 10, "The Compromise with Educated Magic", pp. 346-380.

12 Adam Olearius, translated in Gerhard H. Weiss, *In Search of Silk: Adam Olerius' Mission to Russia and Persia*, Minneapolis 1983, pp. 27-28.

"Was suchen wir doch viel die alten Herrlichkeiten
Die unterworfen sind den fresshaften Zeiten.
Ich habe Persien in Persien gesucht
Und durch das meinen Weg wohl hundertmal verflucht."

13 Sholeh A. Quinn, *Historical Writing During the Reign of Shah 'Abbas: Ideology, Imitation and Legitimacy in Safavid Chronicles*, (Salt Lake City, 2000), esp. pp. 86-91.

14 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (Harmondsworth, 1985), orig. pub. 1978.

Said contends that 'Orientalism', which originally designated a field of scholarship about eastern cultures, became a system of discourse shaping western views and attitudes about an inscrutable 'Oriental' culture. "Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between 'the Orient' and (most of the time) 'the Occident'."¹⁵ Eastern-Oriental culture was defined as the antithesis of Western-Occidental-European culture, each having distinct, innate characteristics. The East was perceived to be the opposite of the West. If the West was to be regarded as rational, strong, and creative, the Orient must be irrational, weak, and tradition-bound. This image of the East was then employed in supporting Europe's imperialist actions, bringing enlightenment to the backwards people of the Orient. Scholars believed they could study 'the oriental mentality', and ascertain qualities of character common to members of eastern cultures. In Said's interpretation, Europe's preconceived archetype links all eastern societies as similar to one another.

Many people have published critiques of Said's book on various grounds. It is beyond the scope of this work, and not germane to the primary topic, to survey all of these critiques. Daniel Martin Varisco wrote a intellectual history of the debate surrounding Said's work with an extensive bibliography, and Robert Irwin covers many of the prominent critiques.¹⁶ Here we examine one small point in particular, that Europe viewed the East as a monolithic cultural entity. Said claims Orientalism examines Orientals as "a Platonic essence". He wrote,

One of the convenient things about orientals for Cromer was that managing them, although circumstances might differ slightly here and there, was almost everywhere nearly the same. This was, of course, because Orientals were almost everywhere nearly the same.¹⁷

The similarity of all eastern people is a corollary to the "we" versus "them" mentality Said perceives. If Europe is politically differentiated from the east, then "the East" must be an ontological unit. Individual foreign people are, "either a figure of fun or an

15 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 2.

16 Daniel Martin Varisco, *Reading Orientalism, Said and the Unsaid*, (Seattle, 2007), pp. xi -xiii, 20
Varsico describes his goals; Robert Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing, The Orientalists and Their Enemies*, (London, 2007), first pub. 2006, pp. 277-309.

17 Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 37-38.

atom in an undifferentiated type called Oriental, African, yellow, brown, or Muslim."¹⁸ Said believed Orientalist scholars extrapolated this perceived uniform, unchanging Oriental culture by transforming small textual details into generalisations about "the oriental mentality". The pronouncements of these scholars were then used by political leaders to enforce control over eastern countries.

The analysis in this thesis of Austria's relations with Safavid Persia shows that this undifferentiated view of the east was not the case in early-modern Austria. As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, the Habsburg government understood there were different nations, cultures and religions in the east, and they held different relations with various countries. The educated literature discussed distinctions between Persian, Ottoman, Tartar and other cultures. Popular-press broadsheets depicted the Persians conflict with the Turks. Even when the wartime rhetoric used language equating Turks and Islam, the actions of the court indicated they still distinguished between cultures. Portraits showed distinctions in attitudes towards the different peoples. Although their knowledge about the east was limited, they were still curious and eager for more information.

While the term 'Turk' was used as a generic term for Muslims, on that alone it should not be concluded the early-modern Austrians had no understanding of the complicated politics of the Middle East. Bernard Lewis claims Europeans used pseudonyms for Muslims to avoid lending legitimacy to their religion, and therefore called the followers of that religion by the name of the most important Muslim state: Saracens and Moors in the middle-ages or 'Turks' in the early-modern period.¹⁹ But this may be reading too much into a common linguistic phenomena of synecdoche (replacement of part-for-whole). In a similar fashion, twentieth century Americans referred to all citizens of the Soviet Union as 'Russians', a linguistic shorthand that most educated speakers understood. Similarly, as Lewis observes, Muslim writers use similar terms about Western European Christians. Persians called all Europeans

¹⁸ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 352.

¹⁹ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, (Oxford, 1993) p. 7.

Farangiyān, from *Farang* meaning 'Europe' and ultimately derived from the 'Franks', but they held separate opinions about the various European nations.²⁰

Publications of the time, outside of wartime propaganda which generally only demonized the Turks, transmitted developing knowledge of the Middle East. Travel literature became very popular in the sixteenth century, inspired by discovery of new lands. To Said, travel literature was part of building a stereotyped discourse about the Orient, reflecting Europe as the centre of civilization in contrast to the strangeness of the periphery. "From travellers' tales, and not only from the great institutions like the various India companies," he wrote, "colonies were created and ethnocentric perspectives secured."²¹ But readers of the time were craving authentic accounts, eschewing medieval fantasies for first-hand realism.²² Europeans at that time were still trying to understand their place in a newly-expanded world, and they thirsted for reliable knowledge to help accomplish that task. Tectander contrasted Persian, with Tartar, Turkish, Armenian and Russian cultures. Olearius, did as well, and he humanised his facts and observations with accounts of the lives of individuals from all stations of life. Another publishing endeavour was the polyglot bibles, one of the first outputs of true Orientalist research. The most ambitious was the Antwerp Polyglot Bible, published in 1569-72 under the patronage of Philip II, the Habsburg King of Spain. It contained parallel Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic and Syriac texts.²³ The existence of these different languages and cultures, and of Christian groups living amongst the Islamic population were well known to people of the sixteenth century.

Study and writing about Persia was done as a way to further cooperation and partnership, not to dominate and control the east, as Said contends was the purpose of Orientalist scholarship. He wrote, "the European representation of the Muslim,

20 Rudi Matthee, "Between Aloofness and Fascination: Safavid Views of the West", *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2, (Spring 1998), p. 231.

21 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 117.

22 Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, "Introduction", in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, eds. Hulme and Youngs, (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 2-4; Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 62-64.

23 Irwin, *For Lust of Knowing*, pp. 73-75.

Ottoman, or Arab," - he leaves out Persian - "was always a way of controlling the redoubtable Orient."²⁴ But the Habsburgs looked to Persia for allies and trading partners, not subjects. The 'relations' by Tectander and Olearius were written after journeys of friendship. Catholic missionaries travelled with the original intent of converting Persia's religion. This seems to confirm Said's assertion, "the Orientalist makes it his work to be always converting the Orient from something into something else."²⁵ But soon after their arrival in Persia they learned that they were unlikely to convert many of the Persian Muslims to Christianity. "Till now there has been small success," wrote the head of the Carmelite mission. "[Persians] will not eat with Christians,... nor do they have any other dealings such as Turks have with Christians."²⁶ Instead, they decided to shift their primary mission from converting Muslims to supporting those Christians already living there. A small amount of experience convinced them they could not control or change the Persians.

The Ottomans were a source of fear; they presented a existential threat to the Austrian Habsburg line, just as they had extinguished the prior Hungarian dynasty. While Said recognizes the encounter with Islam as "a lasting trauma" for Europe, he trivializes it. His description of the Turks being depicted in London stage shows being used in a way to diminish the threat by symbolically capturing it, does not work for Austria where the threat was real and deadly.²⁷ The representations of Turks in Habsburg proaganda was grotesque and terrifying, better to stiffen the resolve of the population for resistance. Symbolic representation was not what was most needed by the dynasty; hard facts were. Thus, the letters of Busbecq, Ferdinand I's representative to the Ottoman court, were a treasury of information about life and customs of the enemy. His viewpoint was no more detached than any other - he was a representative of his country and defended their interests; but he also openly admired many aspect of Turkish life, particularly their meritocracy.²⁸ The language institutes in Vienna and the oriental texts acquired for the Imperial Library were supported by the Habsburgs

24 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 60.

25 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 67.

26 *Chronicle of the Carmelites in Persia and the Papal Mission of the XVIIth and XVIIIth centuries*, (London, 1939), pp. 164-166.

27 Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

in order to train representatives to Constantinople, but the linguists and librarians were acting out of love for the subject. The two interests intersected, not in the service of colonial control, but survival. While Said identifies this merging of academic and political interests, he misunderstands the motivation and seriousness of their endeavour. And, in the different motives towards study of the Ottomans and Persians, he misses one more sign that the Habsburgs realized the diversity of cultures in the Middle East.

Said is clear that his writing is primarily about nineteenth century Britain and France, not sixteenth and seventeenth century Austria. However, he draws examples from all of history - from classical Greece to modern headlines - when they suit his argument. "This Orientalism can accommodate Aeschylus, say, and Victor Hugo, Dante and Karl Marx."²⁹ Since he pulls examples so widely, he must be held accountable for periods that don't fit his theory. The situation in early modern Europe was more complex than an East vs. West clash of civilizations, as the participants were well aware. France was a constant ally to the Ottomans and used them as a counter-weight to Habsburg power in Europe. Venice alternated between trading-partner and enemy of the Turks, rarely willing to commit to decisive action in fears of damaging their lucrative commercial connections. Austria, under frequent threat from the Turks, sought allies among other nations of the east. Early-modern Europe was not in a position of power strong enough to think of controlling the Middle East; a century of Ottoman expansion had taught them the exact opposite, that Europe may become colonised by an Islamic power. This point has been observed by others before. Bernard Lewis, writing about the development of Orientalism out of Renaissance humanism, notes that French and English scholars were studying Islam in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, before those countries' Imperialist projects were started.³⁰ Paula Sutter Fitchner makes a similar argument in the introduction to her book on Austria's relations with the Ottomans. She writes, "As the Ottomans reeled

28 Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, *The Turkish Letters of Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, Imperial Ambassador at Constantinople, 1554-1562*, trans. Edward Seymour Forster, first pub. Oxford, 1927, (Baton Rouge, 2005).

29 Said, *Orientalism*, pp. 59-63.

30 Lewis, *Islam and the West*, p.126.

off one victory after another, Europeans had no reason to believe that they would end up on top in the scenarios of domination and subordination that colonial relations suggested to later Frenchmen and Britons."³¹ This mismatch between Said's theory and the realities of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries actually serves to highlight the extraordinary changes that took place in world power in the eighteenth century. While the differences over the centuries do not alone invalidate Said's work, they do indicate that his theory is not as universal as he sometimes pretends.

The early-modern scholars arguably had a better balanced image of eastern cultures than many people hold today. Modern political writers like Huntington describe an inevitable 'Clash of Civilizations' between 'Western' and 'Islamic' cultures.³² They may use the Habsburg wartime rhetoric as evidence, but from their post-imperialist perspective they miss the early-modern cultural outlook which understood that rhetoric as such. They ignore the many attempts at cross-cultural cooperation. Early-modern Central Europeans were aware of the Sunni-Shi'ite divide, an issue some modern media and political figures seem not to understand. Their intellectual atmosphere reveled in understanding the diverse and exotic, as reflected in cabinets of curiosities, which reached their zenith in Rudolf II's *Kunstkammer*. This attitude was attuned to the diverse cultures across Asia, finding a myriad of curiosities in the many different cultures. Today we have vastly more information about the world. But we have passed through the era of colonial imperialism, when Europe's power outpaced other countries and colonialism's corrupting influence has narrowed our vision. It is this divide which Said wrote about, and whatever the flaws in his presentation, the impact of colonialism on our representations is important to call to mind.

31 Fitchner, *Terror and Toleration*, p. 17.

32 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, (New York, 1996), pp. 48-54; Said was highly critical of Huntington in the article "The Clash of Ignorance", *The Nation*, (October 21, 2001); as was Amartya Sen, "Democracy as a Universal Value", *J. of Democracy*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (July, 1999), pp. 3-17, where he argues that "diversity is a feature of most cultures in the world".

The early-modern Habsburgs and their scholars operated in an environment of myth and ignorance about eastern cultures. Although they were curious and sought to learn more of the cultures, they were not unblemished seekers of objective truth. Throughout the early-modern era, all commentary was influenced by deep religious convictions. At the start of the sixteenth century, the fantasies of John Mandeville and tales of Prester John were as popular as more sober sources. Over time more reliable information was gathered, but the old myths still left their influence. The Safavid Shahs were not literally believed to be connected to the Kingdom of Prester John, but the resonance of the myth encouraged contacts and helped lead churchmen to believe Persia might convert to Christianity. Olearius disputed the stories of strange peoples found in Pliny and repeated by Mandeville - such as men with no heads or with enormous feet - but he pointed out real cultures which he claimed may have given rise to the myths. Olearius left a detailed description of Persia and the other areas he visited, but he made no effort to hide his opinions. He gave stereotypes of the Persian character which were not all flattering; he explained the tenets of Islam, but then called Mohammed a false prophet. But throughout he reported what he saw, or he explained his reasons for trusting those from whom he received additional information. Throughout the preparation of his text he worked closely with his Persian friend who stayed in Germany after the return mission. He did not attempt to be neutral, but he did attempt to be thorough and open about his own perceptions. Tectander, whose book is less detailed and more naive, is perhaps all the more reliable because of it. He always gave his opinions and direct observations, and his reports dealt with more observable behaviours - how people entering a mosque wash their feet - rather than more philosophical discussion of their beliefs. Their texts are decidedly value laden, but not with the values Said attributes to later Oriental scholars. Tectander and Olearius describe the region populated with a multitude of different cultures, which have both noble and repulsive qualities. Habsburg propaganda demonized the Turks, but extolled the Persians. The submerged myth of Prester John encouraged belief that there were other powerful and friendly civilizations in the east. They had a discourse, but it was not Said's discourse.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

In the previous chapters, it has been shown how the Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians maintained a diplomatic relationship throughout the Safavid era, which evolved with the changing circumstances of the countries. In the sixteenth century, the primary issue in their diplomacy was the effort to coordinate military action against their common enemy, the Ottoman Turks. While both sides desired such an alliance, they were unable to arrange such action. At the start of the seventeenth century, the military alliance came as close as it ever would to being realized. For a short time, both sides were at war with the Ottomans simultaneously, and several delegations travelled between the courts in the span of a few years - the most concentrated diplomatic activity between the two. However, circumstances within Austria forced the Emperor Rudolf to end his war - an act Shah 'Abbās saw as a betrayal. Military alliance between the two countries after that was no longer a realistic possibility, yet at the same time, Christian missionary activity, cultural curiosity, and international trade policies were opening new avenues of contact. As the seventeenth century progressed, these issues became the leading diplomatic concerns. Although interchange between Austria and Persia remained small, it set a pattern of contact which would grow in later centuries.

Post-Safavid Contacts

In the years after the Safavid era, contacts between Austria and Persia continued and expanded. Commercial activity, which was limited in Safavid times, grew in later years. In the dangerous environment of nineteenth century European imperialism,

Austria became an important friend to Persia because Austria did not harbour territorial ambitions in the region. To see the outcome of the relationship which started in the Safavid era, we look briefly at events after the dynasty's fall.

In 1722, an Afghan invasion led to the fall of Isfahan and the abdication of Shah Sulṭān Ḥusain. This effectively marked the end of the Safavid period, although for the next fifty years various Safavid princes and pretenders would be used as puppet-rulers by characters intent on gaining power.¹ One of these, Nādir Shāh, was a general who ruled in the name of Sulṭān Ḥusain's son Ṭahmāsp II, and then Ṭahmāsp's infant son, 'Abbās III, before taking the throne for himself. His reign was violent and did not leave a lasting dynasty after his passing.² In general, Persia endured a turbulent time until the rise of the Qajar dynasty in 1785.

Commercial relations expanded upon the beginnings forged by the first Austrian Oriental Trading Company of Vienna, as discussed in Chapter Four, although it took some time before significant volumes of trade were exchanged. The 1718 peace treaty of Passarowitz, between the Habsburgs and Ottomans, finally united Hungary under Habsburg rule. It also established the right for Habsburg subjects to trade freely throughout the Ottoman Empire, on the Mediterranean, the Danube, and the Black Sea. It specifically protected trade to and from Persia, which indicates the degree of interest Austria had in expanding Persian trade. A second Oriental Trading Company of Vienna was formed, but after 25 years of operation, financial difficulties forced it into liquidation.³ In the early nineteenth century, Austrian-Persian trade rapidly expanded. Austrian-flagged ships sailed to the port of Trabzon, either from the Danube or from the Habsburg Adriatic port of Trieste, and then goods were carried overland to Tabriz. Goods sent to Persia included woollen cloth, glassware, ironware, steel goods, matches and wine; goods brought to Austria included carpets, fruit and

1 Roemer, CHI, "The Safavid Period", pp. 324-330.

2 for the history of Nādir Shāh see Michael Axworthy, *The Sword of Persia: Nader Shah, from Tribal Warrior to Conquering Tyrant*, (London, 2009).

3 Helmut Slaby, "Austria", *Encyclopedia Iranica*, Online Edition, (2005, updated 2012).

cotton. The Danube Steamship Service started regular passenger service to Trabzon in 1837, and later added service to the Persian Gulf. By the 1860s, Austria was the fourth largest trading partner with Persia, after Great Britain, Turkey and Russia, all of whom had direct access or substantial colonial interests in the area.⁴ An official trade agreement was delayed for several years by complications of Austria's membership in the German Confederation and Customs Union, but in May 1857 representatives in Paris signed the "Austro-Persian Friendship-, Trade-, and Shipping Treaty". Consulates were established in each country to promote trade. To this day Vienna remains an important market for the distribution of Persian carpets into Europe.

Persian independence was threatened in the nineteenth century by the imperialism of Great Britain and Russia. In the face of these moves, Persia sought to strengthen its ties to Austria, a European country which could serve as a counter-balance to the colonizing powers. In an attempt to resist growing British and Russian pressure, in 1850, the Grand Vizier Amir Kabir founded a polytechnic school in Tehran, to introduce modernization with the use of foreign instructors. He sent a representative to Vienna to recruit instructors for the new school. Austria obliged and sent military instructors, although not officially, to avoid the appearance that Austria might have colonial ambitions in the area. Also recruited to the school were Austrian clothmaking and mining specialists.⁵

Persia was invited to present an exhibit at the 1873 World Fair in Vienna. Official permanent diplomatic relations were established at this time. The first Austrian minister to the Persian court invited Shah Nāṣer-al-Din to make an official visit to the fair. The Shah accepted and became the first Shah to visit Europe. He was received by Emperor Franz Joseph and treated with courtesy. On the visit, the Shah requested Austrian help in reorganising his government administration and military. The Austrians promised to help, although they were cautious not to upset Russia over

4 Charles Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran, 1800-1914*, (Chicago, 1971), trade items: pp. 115, 137-140; steamship service: pp. 93, 99-106; trade volume: p. 134.

5 Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran*, pp. 292-297; Slaby, "Austria", *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

military aid.⁶ They started by helping reorganise the Persian Postal Service and the Mint. After five years the Persians renewed their request for military assistance. By this time, Austrian relations with Russia had been damaged by Russia's increased strength after the 1877 Russian-Turkish War, and over Austria's annexations in the Balkans. Austria, no longer concerned with avoiding offense to Russia, was pleased with a chance to weaken Russian influence in the Middle East, and so agreed.⁷

The Shah visited Vienna again in 1878 to sign agreements over military aid. He toured the Arsenal and viewed weapon demonstrations. The Persians purchased a large quantity of Austrian made arms, which increased the already flourishing trade links. Austria also sent a team to Persia to train an "Austrian Corps" for the Persian Army. They trained 7000 soldiers for this corps; however, plotting and intrigue at the Persian court undermined their efforts. The commander-in-chief of the Persian military was a Russian client, and he made the situation difficult for the Austrians.⁸ The official Austrian mission ended after three years, although Austrian officers continued to enter Persian service under private contracts. In the 1880s, when Russia and Britain took large portions of Persia into protectorate status, Shah Nāṣer-al-Din requested intervention from Austria and Germany. Both countries had to decline, stating they were unable to provide assistance because the distance made intervention impossible, although in reality they could not challenge the larger Empires which had entrenched interests in the area.

Even after that refusal, Austria continued trading with Persia and supplying arms to what was left of their military. Nāṣer-al-Din's son visited Vienna several times after he took the throne. The relationship remained cordial. Even in recent times, the Republic of Austria has maintained relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite

6 *A Diary Kept by His Majesty the Shah of Persia, During His Journey to Euorpe*, trans. Albert Houton Schindler and Baron Louis De Norman, (London, 1879), pp. 231-272; Slaby, "Austria", *Encyclopedia Iranica*.

7 Slaby, "Austria", *Encyclopedia Iranica*; On reform of the mint: Issawi, ed., *The Economic History of Iran*, pp. 354-355.

8 Stephanie Cronin, "Building a new army: military reform in Qajar Iran", in *War & Peace in Qajar Persia, Implications Past and Present*, ed. Roxanne Farmanfarmanian, (Abingdon, 2008), pp. 61-63.

efforts of the United States to have Austria join a boycott.

In Summation

In this thesis, I have examined the changing relationship between the Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavid Persians throughout the Safavid period (1500-1722). No one has done a comprehensive study of this relationship before. Some, such as Palombini, have examined part of the time period; others, such as Rota, have looked at the Safavid relations with other countries.⁹ I have examined the arc of the relationship: tracing its development from its beginnings in the search for a military partner in the perilous, early periods of both dynasties; through the intensive diplomatic effort at the time of the Safavid's greatest ruler; to the changes that were induced by the failure of that effort and the changing priorities of each country. I have used original manuscripts from the Austrian archives, which some authors, such as Steensgaard, have not. This primary research I incorporated with those studies of particular elements that have been conducted before, such as Hassinger's study of the Vienna Oriental Trading Company.¹⁰ This approach has revealed a process of change and development. As the relationship between the Safavids and Habsburgs matured, new subjects of negotiation entered into what started as a a mono-focused effort. The relationship itself became more important than a single issue. This pattern has occurred in other international relationships: we saw relations between medieval Europeans and the Ilkhāns, and with Tīmūr, and between the French and the Ottomans in the sixteenth century also started as an attempt at military cooperation, but evolved to focus more on trade and other issues. A study focused on a single issue, such as warfare, trade or religion, or on a short time interval around a critical event would miss this dynamic. By viewing the full timespan of their relationship, we can

9 Barbara von Palombini, *Bündniswerben abendländischer Mächte um Persien 1453- 1600*, (Wiesbaden, 1968); Giorgio Rota. "Diplomatic Relations between Safavid Persia and the Republic of Venice, an Overview", in: *The Turks*. Vol. 2. (Ankara, 2002).

10 Niels Steensgaard, *The Asian Trade Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Chicago, 1974); Herbert Hassinger, "Die erste Wiener orientalische Handelskompagnie 1667--1683". *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschafts- Geschichte*, Vol. 35, (1942). p. 6.

reveal the course of its evolution and see that this fits a wider pattern.

Significance

The significance of the Austrian-Persian relationship lies not in its military outcome, but in its very attempt. If the Habsburgs and the Safavids had formed an alliance to decisively defeat the Ottoman Turks, the event would be in every history textbook. However, while they did not fulfil their stated goal, the fact that they made the attempt and connected on many other issues is still important. The encounter with the foreign culture expanded the cultural knowledge of both sides. Travellers from Europe wrote of their journeys, thereby increasing their countrymen's understanding of the wider world. Artists in both cultures commemorated the encounter and incorporated foreign elements into their styles. The influx of new information added to the shift from an understanding based on legend to one based on direct experience. Cultural knowledge of the other was imperfect on both sides, but they began to recognize the reality of foreign cultures. This shift, from medieval, legendary apprehension to a more modern, experience-based knowledge had a huge impact on intellectual history.

In addition, through the examination of this relationship, we have illuminated the study of history itself. I have shown that Austrian history, as written by western European authors, has too often focused on European politics, and not examined enough the significant eastern aspect of Habsburg policy. I have also shown how the early-modern Austrian relationship with the Middle East diverges from certain interpretations of Europe's image of the east. European orientalism's conceptualization of the east is a topic fraught with controversy, and which has topical significance for current events. Through the study of an actual international relationship, one which was quite different than those of nineteenth century maritime powers, I hope to have added a certain amount of clarity to the vast polemic on the topic. A comprehensive

view of a previously unexamined relationship, such as I have produced in this thesis, reflects on the study of history as a process and allows it to advance.

Further Studies

There are several ways in which the work in this thesis could be expanded. These are large projects in themselves, beyond the scope of this work.

Work on the Austrian-Persian relationship could be integrated into a full international context. I tried to provide some of this context here, although space limitations precludes a full reckoning. The wars of the Ottoman Empire were the motivation for the Austrians and Persians seeking an alliance; however, the French-Habsburg conflicts, the French-Ottoman alliance, and the development of oceanic trade were all essential components of the international dynamics in the sixteenth century. In the seventeenth century the development of international trading companies and the shift in international trade dominance from Spain, Portugal and Italy, northwards to England and the Netherlands has a major impact on world relations. I have mentioned all of the topics using secondary sources by other scholars; however, there are many archives with primary documents which could be integrated into this study. Also, throughout most of this work, I have treated the Ottoman Empire as an unexamined 'Other' - an implacable enemy of both my main subjects. However, the Ottoman Empire was itself a complicated, multi-national empire, with its own internal motivations and arguments. In future study, the Turkish archives could also be included. Here I have concentrated on the two main partners; but they were part of a larger world, one which was becoming more interconnected, and eventually all of these topics mentioned should be combined into a larger tableau.¹¹

11 Bert Fragner provides some thoughts along these lines in his "The Safavid Empire and the Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Political and Strategic Balance of Power within the World System", in *Iran and the World in the Safavid Age*, ed. Willem Floor and Edmund Herzig, (London, 2012), pp. 17-29.

In Chapter Six, I made the case for an eastward-looking Austrian history. Such a project could examine Habsburg relations with the east, both the near neighbours such as the military frontier, south-east Europe and Russia, as well as more distant contacts such as Persia, Tartary and beyond. In addition to the actual events which occurred between the Habsburgs and eastern countries, this study could also explore attitudes towards eastern cultures and their influences upon Austrian society. To carry this project out would require archival research on the diplomatic initiatives with many other eastern countries, documentation of which does exist in the Austrian State Archives.¹² Also of relevance would be the study of intellectual history, and perhaps artistic and commercial history topics. With all of these elements it be a large study, but it would be a valuable contribution to Austrian history. Some of these topics have been investigated separately by scholars already, but they may be combined with primary research still to be conducted to produce a synthesis.

When examining documents in the Austrian State Archives, I found numerous sources related to the economics of diplomacy. These covered such items as salaries of diplomats, lodging and upkeep for foreign visitors, requisition of supplies for travelling missions en-route, and disputes regarding the costs borne by diplomats and the rewards from foreign service they received. I have mentioned some of these topics briefly while recounting the various diplomatic episodes. Since economics was not the primary focus of my thesis, much of this information remained accessory, but the documents exist to examine the funding of diplomatic missions. Funding of the Persian diplomacy would be a first step, but it could be expanded into a more general study of the economics of diplomacy.¹³ This could bring interesting new insights into early-modern diplomacy and government.

12 For a summary of what document exist see *Quellen zur Geschichte Afrikas, Asiens, und Ozeaniens im Österreichischen Staatsarchiv bis 1918*, ed. Leopold Auer, (Munich, 1986).

13 The financing of Habsburg Imperial diplomacy has been examined in Klaus Müller, *Das kaiserliche Gesandtschaftswesen im Jahrhundert nach dem Westfälischen Frieden, 1648-1740*, (Bonn, 1976), Chapter 5, pp. 162-179.

Final Thoughts

In the Safavid era, Persia was strong enough and its government was stable enough to stand as an equal with the countries of Europe. Austria and Persia sought each other out as potential partners against the threat of the expanding Ottoman Empire. Although they had very different cultures, the common enemy gave them a point of similarity upon which to build a relationship. This relationship survived even when the original justification, the anti-Ottoman alliance, was no longer pursued. It survived because the leaders were familiar with one another and made efforts to keep their contacts alive.

At the start of the era, neither side knew much about the other, but they developed knowledge through their interaction. Austrian diplomats returned home to publish books; Persian diplomats observed western customs for the Shah. Knowledge of the other was important for diplomacy, but it also expanded cultural awareness. New artistic styles opened in both countries, and new opportunities for trade were explored. The relationship brought benefits beyond those originally searched for in a military alliance.

The Austrian Habsburgs and the Safavids maintained an attitude of mutual respect even when the relationship faced difficulties. Agreement was not always possible due to other circumstances, but they maintained the relationship despite disagreements. As their relationship expanded from a single issue to multiple avenues, they had a reasons to stay in contact even when there was disagreement on certain things.

In modern times, the relationship between Iran and most Western countries has been strained. Persia endured several centuries of domination and exploitation by European powers. Iran views the West with suspicion learned through hardship, and

western countries view Iran as a threat to their accustomed dominance in the Middle East. But it has not always been this way. In the Safavid era, Persia and European countries attempted to work together. Their efforts at cooperation despite cultural differences shows the modern world it can increase efforts at improving relations.

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