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The Rise of the Safavids According to their Old Veterans: Amini Haravi's *Futuh-at-e Shahi*

This article studies an early Safavid chronicle, Futuh-at-e Shahi by Amini Haravi. In 1521, the founder of the Safavid state, Shah Isma'il, provided Haravi with a number of veterans from the early days of the Safavid uprising as informants. Their narrative presents an alternative view on the early career of the shah that differs from the dominant version current in modern scholarship. From the perspective of the Futuh-at, the rise of the Safavids did not occur as a wild apocalyptic explosion, but was a carefully planned and cautious campaign run by experienced commanders who kept a tight rein on the teenage Shah Isma'il.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the rise of the Safavid dynasty has been seen as a wild and apocalyptic uprising led by a charismatic teenage Shah Isma'il, followed by his fanatically devoted Turcoma.¹ This view has been derived mainly from a set of early sources. The first to be published in 1873 was a collection of travel accounts by fifteenth and sixteenth century Italians who described the incredible charisma of Shah Isma'il as well his cruelty towards his enemies.² Twenty-six years later, Sir Dennison Ross published a dissertation he had completed under Theodor Nöldeke in the then German University of Strasburg, in the form of a partial edition and translation of an anonymous chronicle, vividly detailed and full of fantastic apocalyptic episodes.³ Next came a partial edition and translation of a poetic anthology written by Isma'il himself, again expressing what the editor, Vladimir Minorsky, believed to be a heterodox and apocalyptic doctrine, accompanied by some very violent imagery.⁴ Finally, Minorsky published in 1957 an abridged translation of a late fifteenth century Persian chronicle in which the heterodoxy and fanaticism of Safavid followers were confirmed by one of their opponents—Fazl Allah Khunji Isfahani.⁵

These four texts continue to exert a strong influence on our image of the early Safavid uprising. So, for instance, Erika Glassen drew on some of the scenes from Ross/anonymous (later published in Pakistan as *Janhangusha-e Khaqan*) in order to study the role of Shah Isma'il as a Mahdi (apocalyptic figure in Islam) for the Anatolian Turcomen.⁶ John Woods used the narrative of Italian travelers in order to

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describe how Isma‘il slaughtered thousands belonging to the Aqqyunlu family (including his own mother) after the conquest of Tabriz.⁷ Roger Savory used excerpts from all four texts for his study of the revolutionary and “totalitarian” tendencies of the early Safavids.⁸ Kathryn Babayan referred to some of Isma‘il’s poetry for the reconstruction of his religious and cultural message (combining fringe sectarian Islamic and Turco-Persian motifs).⁹ Colin Mitchell too has drawn on secondary sources that use the texts mentioned above (as well as other Safavid chronicles) to, once again, detect a pattern of apocalyptic thought that, he argues, bled into the diplomatic correspondence of the shah.¹⁰

However, the overreliance of modern scholarship on these documents has created a skewed view of the early years of Shah Isma‘il. All the texts listed above are problematic in one way or another. First off, A.H. Morton showed some years ago that the Ross/anonymous is actually a late seventeenth century composition and cannot be accepted as the contemporary source that it purports to be.¹¹ Second, the Italian travelers all relied on hearsay for much of what they had to write about the early Safavids. The particular description of Isma‘il’s massacres in Tabriz come from Ottoman polemics such as those by the jurist Kemalshazade, who provided the Ottoman state with the legal justification for attacking the Safavids.¹² This is not the kind of material that one can simply accept at face value. Fazl Allah’s Khunji’s history is similar in as much as the author was fiercely anti-Safavid and thus his pronouncements on the early history of the Sufi order for Ardabil must be used with greatest caution. Finally, Shah Isma‘il poems are obviously the open expression of the thirteen-year-old shah’s political agenda. We do not know for whose consumption exactly the poems were produced. Nor have we any way to gauge how the poems were received by their intended audience. In short we are in dire need of alternative contemporary perspectives on the early history of Shah Isma‘il between his departure from Gilan in 1499 and his conquest of Tabriz in 1501.

We are indeed fortunate to possess a contemporary source that provides a detailed and different account of the rise of Isma‘il. The text in question is *Futuhāt-e Shāhi*, a chronicle by Amini Haravi. The author was born in 1477/78 into a notable family in the city of Herat. He was employed in the position of *sadr* (chief religious officer) during the reign of the Timurid ruler Husayn Bayqara. When the Uzbeks captured the city, however, Amini fell from grace and spent some time in isolation. But then the city fell again in 1510, this time to Shah Isma‘il, and Amini enjoyed a return to grace and influence. In 1521 the shah personally commissioned Amini to compose a history of the events of his reign.¹³

There was however an important aspect to this composition that set it apart from other similar histories. In order to provide Amini with information about the beginnings of his career, the shah introduced our author to a number of old veterans who had survived from the time of his father Shaykh Haydar. These are identified by Amini as “Husayn Beg Lala, Farrukh Agha, and others who were present in those battles.”¹⁴ In short, we have a composite text at hand. Particularly, the events of the early years of Shah Isma‘il (prior to the conquest of Tabriz in 1501) are narrated exclusively from the point of view of these old veterans. Their perspective is especially

interesting. In their eyes, the rise of the Safavid state was not a wild and uncontrollable explosion of apocalyptic energies (as modern scholarship contends) but a carefully planned and cautious campaign run by wise old commanders who kept a tight rein on the teenage shah.

Whatever the charismatic appeal of Haydar or Isma'il might have been for some of their soldiers, they seem to have counted for very little among the senior commanders who were guiding their young leader through his political career. It is certainly worth noting, for example, how the stories about Isma'il's predecessors Junayd (his grandfather), Haydar (his father), and Ali (his brother) in the *Futuhat* provide little information about the accomplishments of these men but dwell considerably on their setbacks and defeats. In other words, we can see how the veterans, who were informing our author about these events, had remembered these occurrences as a period of painful learning experiences, the lessons of which they applied to the campaigns of Isma'il, which they micro-managed with utmost care and sobriety. They guided their youthful protégé on a series of campaigns of plunder, which eventually provided the Safavids with enough momentum, money, and recruits to take over the Aqquyunlu capital.

Scholars have for some time been aware of the important role played by the veterans who surrounded the boy Isma'il. Roger Savory for instance argued briefly in 1976 that a core group of seven men (whom he anachronistically dubbed the "politburo") were chiefly responsible for the success of the movement as they protected the young shah while in exile, maintained a "high state of readiness" of "the Safavid revolutionary organization," and planned "the final stages of the revolution."¹⁵ What is significant about the *Futuhat* is that it provides us with the perspective of these very men on the events in which they played such a crucial part. It modifies some of Savory's points and challenges others (I review these in the conclusion). The goal of the present study is not to use a positivist methodology in order to reconstruct accurately what exactly happened between Lahijan and Tabriz between 1499 and 1501. Rather it is to show the point of view of the seven veterans who ran the operations. This is indeed the earliest recorded narrative of this period.

It would be worthwhile to highlight the importance of this analysis through a contrast with perhaps the best modern political study of the Safavid uprising. In his 1986 "L'avènement des Safavides reconsidéré" Jean Aubin only devoted nine pages (out of 130) to this period. He only used Amini's account twice and instead drew on numerous other Safavid chronicles of the sixteenth century as well as the usual poetic anthology mentioned above.¹⁶ The biggest problem with this approach is that, first, Aubin ignored the fact that many of his sources had retold this phase from Amini's account. The later chronicles, however, made small but significant changes to their original source in order to make a particular authorial intervention (necessitated by each author's political contexts and exigencies). A source-critical positivist methodology should have forced Aubin to rely primarily (if not exclusively) on Amini as the earliest account narrated by eye-witnesses and participants, and then to supplement this by material from later sources that could arguably be dated earlier and be considered authentic. Aubin's use of the chronicle material seems completely arbitrary however. The second issue is Aubin's use of the poetry of Shah Isma'il.¹⁷ These

poems are undated. We know they come from an early period, but there is no reason at all to believe, for instance, that they were composed *prior* to Isma‘il’s departure from Gilan. His problematic handling of the sources unsurprisingly leads Aubin to confirm the received wisdom in many ways—that the early Safavid movement was always already apocalyptic, charismatic, and violently ecstatic. There is no sense of historical development in such an account, nor is there a critical skepticism toward material that is openly propagandistic or polemical.

As we shall see below, the *Futubat* offers an antidote to this conceptualization. First of all, Amini (and his informants) are very open about the lack of agency of the young shah. Later chroniclers (who used his text as a source) had a difficult time with this aspect of the narrative and tried their best to reduce the role played by the Haydari veterans in order to make Isma‘il the chief agent. (I have placed all the major differences between Amini and the later sources in the notes.)¹⁸ Second, Amini actually helps historicize the development of the apocalyptic nature of the movement. By strictly following Amini’s chronology, I have hypothesized an actual “moment” when the poems of Isma‘il may have been composed, as there exists a convergence between the themes in Isma‘il’s anthology and those in the *Futubat* at a particular juncture in the narrative. Thirdly, Amini helps us distinguish within the Safavid camp between those for whom the apocalyptic message was intended, and those (primarily the veterans) who appear less zealous in their supposed adulation. Fourth, Amini’s account, while not ignoring the religious factors, gives a great deal of attention to more mundane matters that helped Isma‘il’s success—namely financial ones. It is evident that rapid distribution of plunder was the engine that drove the Safavid “revolution” in its early phase. Of course, like all other sources, the *Futubat* has problems of its own. For example, the narrative downplays the violence committed by Isma‘il and his army during their victories over their enemies.¹⁹ Nevertheless, by following Amini closely and by adhering to his chronological periodization, we will derive a very different perspective of the early years of Shah Isma‘il. This alternative perspective should force us to revisit the first few years of the sixteenth century and abandon (in favor of a more nuanced picture) some of the sensational clichés that have dominated the field for over a hundred years now.

How does the uprising of Shah Isma‘il begin in the *Futubat*? We are told that, before 1499, having spent some years in exile in the Caspian region in order to survive the hunting down and killing of his family members by the Aqqyunlu,²⁰ Isma‘il finally decides to leave Gilan in order to seek “the instruments of kingship” (*asbāb-e padishāhī*). But before making his exit, the young shaykh first consults his close advisors: “He shared this plan, which had been placed in his flawless nature by the occult, with some of the dedicated raiders/holy warriors [*ghaziyan-e jānsipār*].”²¹ In other words, Isma‘il’s inspired decision would not have amounted to much had it not won the approval of the more experienced members of the group. He tells them that he wishes to visit the grave of Shaykh Zahid, the spiritual mentor and father-in-law of Shaykh Safi the founder of the Safavid order, to ask for assistance from the holy man’s spirit, and then go to Ardabil and visit the shrines and graves of Isma‘il’s ancestors.²² There is nothing here of the apocalypse,

but much emphasis is placed on political intent and the lineage that justifies it. The experienced advisors, or the *ghazis*, as Amini consistently calls them, are apparently not impressed and send someone to ask the opinion of their host Mirza Ali, ruler of Lahijan. Mirza Ali replies to his young guest that the situation in Ardabil is not safe at that moment and that Isma'il should wait a little bit longer before setting out on the start of his political career. Isma'il actually listens and desists from his plan, or, as Amini puts it, "he took out the foot of departure from the stirrup of haste."²³ The young Safavid leader, it seems, acted very much like a boy of his age, ambitious but cautious, compliant, and a bit unsure of himself.

Having waited for a little while, Isma'il renews his intent to go. This time, he bypasses the opinion of his host and guards and resorts to astrology instead, obviously expecting more support from the stars.²⁴ Amini is uncomfortable about reporting on this practice and he tries to justify it by stating that Isma'il used the astrolabe even though "it was obvious to the world-conquering nature of His Majesty that the true cause and the absolute agent is none other than God."²⁵ Naturally no such thought had occurred to the young shaykh, who clearly did not yet think of himself as in communion with a divine will, or at least did not distinguish between it and the stars.

Rather, the timing was most appropriate politically. We know from Yahya Qazvini's *Lubb al-Tavarikh* that only the year before, the Aqqyunlu kingdom had fragmented in the hands of three rival princes, one of whom had managed to kill Ayba Sultan, the formidable general-kingmaker who had earlier defeated the Safavids led by Isma'il's older brother Ali.²⁶ Moreover, the victorious prince Muhammadi Mirza was soon forced to cut short his brief stay at the old capital of Tabriz and head south in order to deal with his cousin Murad who had been proclaimed king by Ayba Sultan's brothers in Fars. The two fought near the city of Isfahan and Muhammadi Mirza was killed.²⁷ In short there was a political vacuum in Azerbaijan, and the young Isma'il had decided to take advantage of it to return home.

This time, the members of the Safavid company agree to leave Lahijan in the early winter and camp outside of town, waiting for the warmer days of spring before they proceed further.²⁸ When the ice thaws, the company decides to prepare for the greater task by first going on a hunting excursion. The purpose of this act was not simply physical exercise but also to make clear to all the attendants what the social structure of the group was to be. According to Amini, during the hunt Isma'il's falcon repeatedly threw down partridges and pheasants from "the height of fortune to the dust of abjection," and "his good loyal dogs who had placed the head of servitude through the collar of submission" dutifully chased after onagers, "while as the eagle of death hunted other beasts like a shadow, [Isma'il's] swift arrow would, like the needle, rob the seeing light from their heads, and his merciless sword which had had enough of abstinence and was eager for bloodshed would make openings in the kingdom of the bodies of tigers and lions into the meadows of death."²⁹ The wording in this passage is most likely Amini's but the symbolic value of the hunt, to which our author's metaphors refer, are not his invention. They evoke a common cultural frame of reference.³⁰ Everyone knew that the hawk stood for royalty, and by bringing down lesser birds,

Isma'il's hunting bird reinforced its owner's desire to bring down his competitors. Just as with his hounds, Isma'il expected submission and loyalty from his soldiers in the prosecution of his battles. His arrowshot foreshadows the common practice of blinding, and therefore disabling, rival claimants to the throne. The slaughter of animals by sword was naturally a reminder of future murders and executions on the path to power. The hunt was thus a symbolic reenactment of what was to come.

After a short while they arrive in Ardabil. The governor Ali Beg Chakarlu, who was connected through marriage to Mirza Muhammad Talish, a follower of Isma'il, treats them well. However, when Isma'il holds council with the elite (*khavāss*) of his group such as Abidin Beg Tuvachi, Husayn Beg Lala, and the Khalifat al-Khulafa they decide that Ardabil is not safe for them and advise immediate departure. They ask Isma'il, "whose heart ... is lit with divine approbation [*ta'īd-e ilāhī*]," to choose their next destination. The young shaykh, however, seems no more certain than his commanders and instead suggests they should raid Georgia on a holy war because, according to the Koran, "For those who do Jihad in our path, We will guide them on their paths."³¹ This very literal interpretation of the Koranic phrase ("if we do jihad, then God will show us where to go next") proves unacceptable to the emirs, who disagree. They fear lest their small army should disperse in case of a defeat. Rather, they propose drawing on Haydar's practice and send letters to the religious devotees of the Safavid order (*arbāb-e irādāt*). Once strengthened by these recruits, then they can head for Georgia.³² Here again, we are quite a way off from a messianic revolution. The old emirs hold back their youthful charge and he dutifully listens to them. Having dispatched envoys all around, Isma'il's army of about 300 men leaves Ardabil and heads north to the Caucasus.³³

Near the region of Qarabagh, Isma'il's army suddenly runs into another roaming band of soldiers. These men are the followers of Sultan Husayn Barani, a Qaraqayunlu adventurer. Sultan Husayn and his unruly soldiers "*lashkar-e fitnah-angīz*" force the Safavids to join them. Isma'il and his followers have no option but to accept.³⁴ As Isma'il approaches the campsite of Sultan Husayn, his recruits also begin to arrive and his numbers swell to about 1,500 men. Even so, when they reach Sultan Husayn's encampment, they decide to pitch their tents some distance away and send Husayn Beg Lala, Abidin Beg, and Khulafa Beg to speak with the Qaraqayunlu leader.³⁵ Catching on to Isma'il's trepidation, Sultan Husayn offers to share the sultanate with Isma'il, while he secretly schemes to capture him. The emirs realize this and plan an escape. That night Isma'il's army flees under cover of darkness, with torches lit at their campsite in order to confuse their adversary.³⁶ Throughout this episode we get the image of a very cautious, even fearful, small band of soldiers on the move. The older veterans practically manage the entire operation, their professed respect for their young leader notwithstanding. They avoid open conflict at all costs and maneuver around danger in a clever game of strategy.

When finally an opportunity is provided for armed conflict, the group continues to act warily. We are told that a certain Qaracha Ilyas along with other Anatolian (Rūmi) supporters arrive at this point and say that on their way to join Isma'il they were plundered in Shuragöl by a minor local notable named Mantash.³⁷ Isma'il and company

journey in that direction and find the fort shut when they reach it. They decide not to lay siege or attack the structure but simply to plunder the area outside of the fort. According to Amini, Isma'il's soldiers were explicitly told only to fight the inhabitants if they come out to give battle first.³⁸ A few people (*ba'zī az ān mardum*) do exit the fort in order to protect their property but Isma'il's soldiers easily kill them. At this point, the old veterans step in once again and recommend a withdrawal before the violence escalates any further: "since the victorious army gained countless booty from their enemy, the great emirs deemed it wiser not to attack the fort and rather headed out for somewhere else."³⁹ The evidence for the prudent nature of Isma'il's early movement is so overwhelming that one might even wonder why they decide to take the offensive against Mantash in the first place. The answer lies in the need to provision and even pay for the new recruits, especially those who had arrived already destitute. In short, the pattern of the endeavor at its beginning is one of physical exercise, movement, caution, plunder, and withdrawal.

Having had enough fighting for the moment, Isma'il's army moves off to find warmer pastures. An order is issued to the men to begin gathering up the instruments of war.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, the news of Isma'il's uprising and his recent success spreads and more and more people pour in.⁴¹ These are specifically described as old loyal devotees who were now prepared to join the ghazis, no doubt because they had gained some confidence in Isma'il's viability as a leader. The group now behaves as a fully mobile camp, though it should not be mistaken for a transhumant pastoralist "tribe."⁴² There is no claim to kinship among these "ghazis", and they do not engage in herding animals. In fact, they are specifically contrasted with nomadic people. According to Amini, at one point some of the senior commanders advise a retreat out of a certain area because "the fields and plains here have become full of Turcomen."⁴³

Now, numerical viability was not enough to create a sense of group cohesion, and the veterans proposed a symbolic act that would solidify the crowd into a single unit with its own unique identity. Isma'il is told that a ferocious bear lives in a nearby mountain, and no traveler dares to cross that country. Some then suggest they should kill the animal so that "just like with killing rebels, they might attain the ranks of ghaza and jihad, and thus gain advancement and elevation."⁴⁴ Isma'il immediately orders a hunting excursion and personally rides on to meet the beast. When the bear comes out of its cave Isma'il shoots it twice and mortally wounds it. The prey, badly hurt by the arrowshot, drags its bloody hulk back into the cave and is followed inside by a timid soldier who is ordered by Isma'il to finish him off. The soldier soon returns, announcing that the bear had already died from Isma'il's arrow. Everyone shouts out in praise and Isma'il is now styled a "ghazi king" (*shāh-e ghāzī*).⁴⁵

The new ghazi army led by a ghazi king then sets out to Erzincan to spend the cold months of winter. It is here that Isma'il is first compared to the Mahdi (apocalyptic figure in Islam) by Amini. "Like the Mahdi he will correct the ways of the community," he writes.⁴⁶ Also when council is held in Erzincan and the commanders cannot agree on the next course of action, Isma'il declares that since their future is obviously not discernible by rational deliberation he will withdraw for the night to

be guided by the spirit of immaculate imams (early leaders of Shiite Muslims). The emirs go out and spread the word in the camp. No one manages to sleep all night. When finally day breaks, Isma‘il re-emerges, and gives audience to his emirs. The young king appears as one “who in his brightness was like a second morning sun, and they prostrated themselves before him.”⁴⁷ The young ghazi king, who is now touched by divine light, announces that the immaculate imams have assured him that the best course of action is to attack Shirvan in the Caucasus. This is of course where Isma‘il’s father had met his end, and the young man was obviously bent on revenge. Nor do the old veteran emirs oppose their master. The famous *divan* (poetic anthology) of Shah Isma‘il, addressed by a ghazi king to other ghazis, demanding obedience, war, and prostration, claiming divine inspiration, evoking the fourteen immaculate imams and the prophet Muhammad’s family, and promising ruthless revenge on Haydar’s murderers,⁴⁸ must be dated to this period.

Of course the ghazi venture of Isma‘il and his followers had not turned into a reckless adventure. The attack on Shirvan did make strategic sense as the country had always made an easy target for Safavid raids since the time of Isma‘il’s grandfather Shaykh Junayd.⁴⁹ While help from the Aqquyunlu was the only thing that had saved the Shirvanshah from complete ruin at the hands of the shaykhs of Ardabil, no such help would be forthcoming in the tumultuous years of the early sixteenth century when the princes of the House of Uzun Hasan were embroiled in desperate dynastic wars amongst themselves. Even so, the Shirvan campaign is dragged out and prepared for with a great deal of foresight. Isma‘il first orders the *khalifat al-khulafā* (chief deputy) to take some of the ghazis and raid the Georgian countryside.⁵⁰ They do so and find their first opportunity in a group of Georgian soldiers who have camped out for the night. The Safavid ghazis attack the campsite at night and put the soldiers to flight. The Khalifat al-Khulafa however forbids his men from pursuing the enemy and instead assigns them the important task of plunder. They take money, enslave the families of the enemy, and most importantly get their hands on a cache of weapons. When they return, everything is divided among Isma‘il’s men, who were now “freed from the sorrow and pain of being unarmed.”⁵¹ The new Safavid movement was showing signs of great maturity after years of failure under its former leaders. Isma‘il’s new recruits were now provisioned with money, arms, and women and children. The campaign in Georgia was undertaken by a small detachment, thereby reducing the general risk to the army as a whole. The enthusiasm of the soldiers had been wisely controlled. Finally, unlike his brother Ali, his father Haydar, and his grandfather Junayd, Isma‘il himself did not take to the field here, thus assuring the possibility of recovery in case of defeat.

Do they march to Shirvan after this? No. Isma‘il declares his intention to return to Mantash’s fort and lay siege to it. The senior emirs, who are now dubbed “the pillars of the state” (*arkān-e dawlat*), flatly reject the idea of Isma‘il’s personal engagement and suggest he should commission one of them to lead the assault. Compliant as ever, the young shaykh appoints Ilyas Beg Uyghudoghlu to run the operation. Before Ilyas Beg and his soldiers reach their target, however, Mantash escapes, and so upon their arrival the fort-keeper opens the gates to them without a fight. The Safavids reward this good

behavior with gifts and reappoint the fort-keeper in his post. Soon Mantash himself shows up to camp with appropriate gifts and asks to be forgiven as well. As a result, he too is rewarded and returned to his post. However, the Safavids take Mantash's brother with them as a "surety."⁵² Amini gives no reason for this campaign. His narrative suggests that no money was taken from the fort and no real fighting took place either. Perhaps the whole affair was intended to boost the confidence of the soldiers. Be that as it may, the episode shows again the cautious planning of experienced veterans.

Of course the Safavid movement did have its ups and downs. Amini unequivocally shows that where level-headed caution failed, Isma'il's men were favored by unusual good fortune. We see this during the march toward Shirvan. Amini says that initially a scouting party led by Bayram Beg Qaramanlu along with a number of Takkalu and Zulqadir commanders (all recent Anatolian volunteers) are sent ahead to gauge the level of risk.⁵³ When they reach the borders of Shirvan, the great emirs find a spy who tells them that the ruler Shirvanshah has learned about their arrival and has withdrawn from his capital of Shamakhi to the stronghold of Qabala.⁵⁴ Isma'il decides to march to Shamakhi anyway, but the emirs oppose him as they think it unwise to leave a strong enemy behind their lines. Isma'il however persists in his decision, believing that the fall of Shirvanshah's capital would necessarily lead to the collapse of his state.⁵⁵ The prediction of the emirs comes true however, and shortly after their arrival under the walls of Shamakhi, the emirs present to Isma'il an informant who tells them that Shirvanshah has left his stronghold and is marching to meet them in battle.⁵⁶

When the two armies meet, the Shirvanis use their knowledge of the terrain to gain the higher ground and shower Isma'il's army with arrows.⁵⁷ Encouraged by the signs of defeat in the Safavid army, the Shirvani cavalry, we are told, lunges forward and down the hill to put an end to the ghazi army below. In their haste, however, they trample their own infantry that had formed an impenetrable vanguard and thereby expose their own center to attack. Isma'il's men immediately take advantage of the situation, charge, and put the Shirvani army to flight.⁵⁸ This crucial first win, states Amini, was what kick-started the royal victories, or *Futuhat-e Shahi*—the title of the book. Although in the end the author credits God for the triumph of the Safavid ghazis, as a whole the narrative makes it clear that their maiden voyage on the sea of victories was accomplished thanks to the enemy's error, not the charismatic magic of a supposed Mahdi-king.

Where the charismatic quality of Isma'il's leadership can be plainly observed is in his role as the distributor of wealth. Following the battle, we are told, the young shaykh orders the meadow to be decorated. Then he sits upon a throne and has all booty gathered by the ghazis piled up in heaps. Afterwards, Isma'il looks upon the great pile "disdainfully" and has much treasure distributed to the emirs and the top commanders according to rank as well as merit in battle. What remains is distributed to every lowly soldier and by the end of the feast everyone withdraws for some hours of repose with his share of the incredible wealth.⁵⁹ In short, the great successes of the Safavid movement, in addition to the wisdom of the veterans who planned its

every move, as well as good luck, lay in its economy of quick exchange. Money rapidly circulated in the form of plunder and gifts. Of course it was also necessary to give warning to others, and on the following day towers of skulls are erected with the heads of the Shirvani dead.⁶⁰

Three days later, Isma'il and company set out towards Shamakhi. On the way they hear that the Shirvanshah's son has taken refuge in the island-fortress of Nawshahr. Khulafa Beg is commissioned to take a squadron of experienced warriors there and besiege it. When he arrives at his destination, Khulafa Beg is told by the inhabitants that the prince has already fled and that they are ready to surrender the city. The ghazis spend the time awaiting the arrival of their leader in great comfort and pleasure. When Isma'il arrives, he rewards the locals with garments, a Safavid-style red crown, and saddled horses.⁶¹ Khulafa Beg is left in charge of Nawshahr, and the rest of the army withdraws, at the recommendation of his new subjects, to an area known as Mahmudabad for winter.⁶² The Safavid movement had now been converted into a small territorial state or principality based in the Caucasus and eastern Anatolia.⁶³ This gave them the confidence to strive for a larger prize—the city of Tabriz, capital of the collapsing Aqqyunlu kingdom.

An audacious plan is hatched. A messenger is sent to Tabriz. The pretext of the mission is to give news of Isma'il's victory in Shirvan to the ruling prince Alvand, to offer condolences for the death of Alvand's brother Muhammadi, and to ask for the hand of the prince's sister's in marriage. In reality, however, the Safavid envoy is instructed to spend his time stockpiling weapons and armor and smuggling them out to Shirvan right from under the Aqqyunlu ruler's nose. The man chosen for this dangerous mission is another veteran from Haydar's time—Emir Musa Khalifa. Very soon large shipments of arms begin to stream into Shirvan from Tabriz, thanks to Musa Khalifa's foresight and cleverness (*tadbir*).⁶⁴

Of course a campaign of such scale requires access to large sums of money. According to Amini and his informants, Isma'il proposes that since the citizens of Baku have not dispatched emissaries to express their obedience, they must be considered a threat. Khulafa Beg and Ilyas Beg Uyghudoghlu are therefore charged with the responsibility of laying siege to and capturing Baku. They cannot bring down the fort however, and so Isma'il himself marches toward the seemingly impregnable fort. There he commands a rampart of stone to be built opposite the walls, and soldiers armed with firearms are dispatched to the top to shoot their weapons into the population behind the walls. The plan works and the townspeople sue for peace.⁶⁵

Characteristically for this early phase, Isma'il "pardons" and rewards them. Unsurprisingly, we find out that Baku is the site of the royal treasury of the Shirvanshahs. The Khalifat al-Khulafa, accompanied by army paymasters, performs an audit and brings out the treasures to Isma'il. According to Amini, even though no one in the Safavid army has ever seen such wealth, the young Isma'il rejects the treasure and has it dispersed to his soldiers. There was such extravagant distribution that barefoot pages in the camp, writes Amini, were wearing jewels as footwear and the gold tucked in the belts of stable-boys reached up to their necks.⁶⁶ The author makes no secret of this: Isma'il was the most generous paymaster for soldiers during a period of political

breakdown and profusion of impoverished, plunder-hungry, vagabond armies. "Having distributed that boundless treasure among the soldiers," writes Amini, "and having set his sun-bright mind totally at ease with regards to that town, [Isma'il] set out to capture the fort of Gulistan."⁶⁷ The numbers of his army, our author tells us, had increased manifold at this point.⁶⁸ The author, however, leaves out a troubling scene of revenge enacted by Isma'il that is reported by other authors. Khvandamir and Hasan Beg Rumlu, for example, state that having captured Baku, Isma'il then orders the graves of those local rulers who had opposed his father earlier be excavated and their bones burned. He also commands their palaces to be razed to the ground.⁶⁹ As we shall see, Amini is consistent in excising such scenes of cruelty that begin to occur more frequently during Safavid victories.

Moving along, while preparing for the siege of Gulistan, news arrives from Musa Khalifa, who had been stockpiling and shipping arms in Tabriz, that the Aqqyunlu ruler has left Tabriz intending to confront Isma'il, planning to collect the scattered army of the Shirvanshah on the way. Isma'il immediately calls council with the most experienced of his men and decides to send Chavush Mirza to a place called Javad, at the confluence of Kur and Aras Rivers. The Mirza's mission is to build a bridge there so that Isma'il's army can cross and face Alvand before he enters Shirvan. Obviously their strategy was to cut off the Aqqyunlu army before they could rendezvous with their potential allies and increase their numbers. Chavush Mirza goes there, and since in his haste he has not bothered bringing iron or halters for the bridge, he resourcefully commands his men to use the numerous bales of silk they had gained through recent plunders to make ropes. The final structure is a bridge made with broken boards and silk ropes, extremely strong.⁷⁰

Here Amini provides information that suggests the Haydari veterans were the ones overseeing this entire campaign. We are told that a messenger arrives at Isma'il's camp, one who is identified as "Muhammad, one of the great deputies [*khulafā*] of Sultan Haydar," and brings news that the Aqqyunlu had in fact preempted Isma'il's plan to build a bridge at Javad and had sent two contingents to prevent the ghazis from accomplishing their task. However, Isma'il's commanders Piri Beg Qajar (perhaps the same man as Haydar's commander Qara Piri Qajar) and Pir Ahmad Beg Qarabaldur had cut off the enemy, beaten them, and sent them back to their lord.⁷¹ Nowhere does Amini suggest Isma'il had any role in or knowledge of this counteroffensive and one gets the impression that the Haydari veterans had got ahead of their young master and dealt with the problem without Isma'il's consent. This is of course perfectly in line with the pattern of the Safavid movement in this period, as seen above.⁷²

At this point, Isma'il, who has conveniently been told in a vision to quit the siege of Gulistan,⁷³ packs up and marches toward Nakhjavan where Alvand had camped. On the way, Piri Beg Qajar rejoins the main army and is sent ahead as vanguard. Soon Piri Beg encounters the Aqqyunlu vanguard led by a certain Osman Beg, beats him, captures him, and plunders his army. Upon their return, Osman Beg is immediately executed on Isma'il's orders.⁷⁴ The stage is now set for the Safavids' most important encounter yet. It will be the first time since his departure from Gilan that the Haydari veterans allow their young master to personally enter the fray.

As Isma'il's army moves quickly toward Nakhjivan, Alvand withdraws slowly back south to the Shurur steppe, where the terrain is more suitable for maneuvering. This however encourages Isma'il's ghazis, who interpret the withdrawal as a sign of fear.⁷⁵ As soon as they see the Aqquyunlu camp, we are told, the ghazis are commanded to dismount and get into formation while more experienced commanders are put in charge of guarding the encampment. The veterans had obviously not forgotten their prudence.⁷⁶ Next Isma'il issues the command for the senior officers to arm themselves in preparation for ghaza and jihad, and the young leader himself dons the Safavid crown.⁷⁷ Then he comes out of his tent, projects light on to the field like the morning sun, and mounts his horse. The light surrounding Isma'il is of course seen as a reflection of God's light.⁷⁸ After riding around and encouraging his troops, a handful of warriors ride ahead to challenge their counterparts to duels. While they succeed in beating their first set of opponents, chasing them all the way back to their lines, Isma'il's ghazis are suddenly forced to retreat with a large number of Aqquyunlu soldiers galloping after them. This unexpected onslaught frightens the Safavid army, which begins to lose heart. This forces Isma'il to personally lead a charge against the Aqquyunlu, his first direct involvement in battle. Obviously the stakes were so high that the old veterans had to risk all to avoid defeat. The risk pays off and Isma'il's soldiers regain their courage and beat their foe, putting the Aqquyunlu prince to flight.⁷⁹

Following the battle, Isma'il sits in a small structure created for him, and the great emirs begin displaying on camelback the immense treasures they have captured from the Aqquyunlu camp. Once again, we are told, Isma'il did not deign to accept anything for himself and distributed the entire loot among the ghazis. Wasting no time at all, Isma'il departs on the very same day for the Aqquyunlu capital of Tabriz where, according to our author at least, he is welcomed in a great celebration by the townspeople and led to the royal garden of *Hasht Bibisht* (eight paradises).⁸⁰ Predictably Amini says nothing of the violent and forceful imposition of twelver Shiite rituals in the city. Khvandamir and Hasan Beg Rumlu write that Isma'il ordered the twelver formula be used in the calls to prayer in all the mosques and moreover dispatched his ghazis to enforce the recitation on the callers on the pain of death. Such policies led to the exodus of a number of people from the city.⁸¹ Yahya b. 'Abd al-Latif Qazvini does not catalogue the cruelty of the Safavids but does affirm that "after this victory, the horror of the Qizilbash so affected their enemies that they would flee from one country to another at the mere mention of their name."⁸² Anti-Safavid Ottoman historians such as Kemalpashazade, and, probably following the same Ottoman polemic, some Italian travelers suggest that Isma'il undertook a systematic slaughter of the Aqquyunlu family, including his own mother. However, 'Abdi Beg Shirazi claims that the elite of the Aqquyunlu were wiped out during the battle outside of Nakhjivan.⁸³ Khurshah b. Qubad also avers this.⁸⁴

Conclusion

In short, the *Futubat-e Shahi* provides a very different view on the rise of the Safavid state than other contemporary sources that have dominated modern scholarship on

the topic—a fact no doubt related to the original oral sources used by the chronicler Amini Haravi. While some of their opponents or foreign travelers remembered the more extravagant aspects of Isma‘il’s movement, the old veterans who directed the events had a much more sober remembrance of this history. I am not suggesting that this version of early Safavid history should totally replace the other, but, according to Amini, the “messianic” part of the doctrine developed gradually and peaked in certain periods only to subside shortly thereafter. How, then, does the *Futuhāt* contribute to our understanding of why the Safavid movement succeeded under Shah Isma‘il?

Recently Andrew Newman has argued that the Safavids were successful because they used a political discourse that helped unite various elements, but also thanks to the distribution of land, marriage alliances, and political appointments in favor of their supporters.⁸⁵ However, such “pragmatic” policies, as Newman calls them, could only be undertaken *after* the Safavids had conquered the resources and infrastructure of the Aqqyunlu and Timurid states. As such Newman’s only remaining explanation for Isma‘il’s success during the period covered in this article, when there was no land to be given away or profitable marriages and appointments to be doled out, is “discourse”—by which Newman means the content of the shah’s poetry. Amini however provides us with a more sophisticated explanation.

Indeed, Amini helps take us beyond Savory’s arguments as well. As stated above, Savory believed that the inner circle of seven protected the young shah, kept the movement in a state of readiness, and planned the final stages.⁸⁶ The *Futuhāt*, however, written from the perspective of these men, shows that their protection of the shah extended well beyond the start of the uprising. It also shows that there was no pre-existing movement as such, ready to burst into action at the shah’s call. Rather the viability of the new leader had to be established by a series of successful campaigns planned by the veterans. In short, whereas Savory seems to suggest that the Safavid “revolution” burst into action with mere appearance of the shah, the *Futuhāt* shows that this was not so. A great deal had to be accomplished before the crucial moment of the conquest of Tabriz in 1501.

Finally, it should also be noted that the *Futuhāt* challenges and expands our understanding of Safavid historiography. Sholeh Quinn for instance, in her study of later Safavid chronicles, has argued for the existence of a historiographical mode which she dubs “imitative writing.” She identifies a set of models (some of them going back to the Timurid period) that were used and reused by Safavid historians who nevertheless made important changes based on particular exigencies of their time.⁸⁷ Amini’s text was one such model for most subsequent chroniclers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Some of the changes made by these authors are noted in the notes to the present article.) By studying these alterations further and contextualizing them within the immediate setting of each historian, we can apply Quinn’s insights to the sixteenth century chroniclers too. While the later chroniclers agree with Amini on the basic narrative, none of them allow the same extent of influence and agency granted to the veterans that is found in the *Futuhāt*. But Amini’s text has further significance as it evinces a composite authorship, especially in the sections

detailed above. While the author, as well as many other chroniclers, belonged to administrative families of the Aqqyunlu, Timurid, and Safavid states, Amini's oral informants came from a very different background. It would indeed be worthwhile to focus on such strands within other Safavid chronicles for other views on the events with which we think ourselves already sufficiently familiar.

Notes

1. See for instance the early work of Babinger, *Schejch Bedr ed-din*.
2. Grey, *Narrative*.
3. Ross, "The Early Years."
4. In Minorsky, "The Poetry of Shah Isma'il I"; Babinger, *Schejch Bedr ed-din*; Browne, *A Literary History*; and Hinz, *Irans Aufstieg*.
5. Minorsky, *Persia in A.D. 1478-1490*.
6. Glassen, "Schah Ismâ'il."
7. Woods, *The Aqqyunlu*.
8. Savory, "Some Reflections."
9. Babayan, *Mystics*, xv-lvi.
10. Mitchell, *The Practice*, especially pp. 20 to 67. Yet, interestingly, while the examples Mitchell cites brim with religious and sectarian imagery, they do not explicitly provide millennial motifs (the Mahdi, Dajjal, or apocalyptic signs are not mentioned). In short, it seems to me that Mitchell is projecting the received wisdom into his reading of the victory proclamations of 1504 and 1510.
11. Morton, "The Date and Attribution." Morton argues here for the suppression of the support for Ibrahim (Isma'il's brother) from other Safavid sources.
12. Kemalpaşazade, *Tevarih*, folios 15a-15b.
13. Nasiri, "Pishguftar," xv-xviii.
14. *Ibid.*, xxvi.
15. Savory "Some Reflections," 234-5.
16. Aubin, "L'avènement," 4-16, including a two-page map.
17. *Ibid.*, 7.
18. Amini is followed in broad outlines by subsequent chroniclers, and, through them, by modern scholars. See, for instance, Roger Savory's three-page narrative of this period in Savory, *Iran*, 24-6.
19. This is most likely done by the veterans as Amini has no problems elsewhere describing the brutality of Shah Ismail, as in the massacres committed in Tabas and the reign of terror unleashed in Herat. See Amini, *Futubat*, 242-3 and 234-5, 349-50, 359.
20. The fullest coverage is still in Hinz, *Irans Aufstieg*.
21. Amini, *Futubat*, 79; Khvandamir, who had relied primarily on Amini as his main source, in fact emphasizes the importance of this group of advisors by calling them "the elite among the ghazis" or *a'yan-e ghāziyān*, Khvandamir, *Habib IV*, 447. Gunabadi, in his verse *Shah Isma'il Namah*, 184, draws on images of Sufism and calls these men *muhibban-e pakizab dil* "pure-hearted lovers" to whom young Isma'il declaims his aspirations in 130 epic couplets. However, Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 47, who closely follows Amini, calls them "ghazis" but he too removes the latter's resistance to immediate departure.
22. Amini, *Futubat*, 79-80.
23. "*pay-e 'azimat az rikab-e shitab birun farmud*," Amini, *Futubat*, 80-81.
24. Amini, *Futubat*, 82-3. Gunabadi *Shah Isma'il Namah*, 192, states that Isma'il sent a second angry letter demanding leave. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 48, says that Isma'il held off out of politeness, spent some time copying the Quran, and then renewed his intent.
25. "*bar tab'-e jahanngusha-e an hazrat vazih bud kih mu'assir-e haqiqi va fa'il-e mutlaq juz haqq-e subhanibi va ta'ala kasi nist*," Amini, *Futubat*, 82. Khvandamir also downplays it and merely states that Isma'il departed on a "victorious hour," Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 448. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*,

- II: 934, excludes the detail about astrology altogether but states that Isma'il personally went to Mirza Ali a second time and declared his determination to leave. 'Abdi Beg Shirazi in his *Takmilat al-Akhhbar*, 36, has quite a different story whereby Isma'il had declared unequivocally that he had been chosen to go and spread twelfth Shiism and cleanse the earth from the innovation (of Sunnis). He moreover has the "Sufis of Lahijan" putting pressure on the ruler of Gilan to let Isma'il go. Husayni in his *Tarikh-e Ilchi*, 5, says that a group of "devotees and believers who were not devoid of reason and strategy" initiated the request to leave in the first place. Though Gunabadi *Shah Isma'il Namah*, 192–3, does not say directly that the young shah resorted to astrology for his decision, his vocabulary, from Isma'il's purported letter, is rife with astrological language where Isma'il calls himself a sun and the Gilani king harps on the influence of Isma'il's horoscope (*tāli*).
26. Qazvini, *Lubb al-Tavarikh*, 257.
 27. *Ibid.*, 260.
 28. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 448 does not mention the commanders a second time and thereby foregrounds Isma'il as the main decision maker. Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 934–40, provides a great deal more interesting detail. For instance, he states that on his way to Ardabil Isma'il traveled through at a series of villages and towns such as Tarum, Baranda, and Khalkhal. It is crucial to note that the Safavid family possessed property in these locations from the early fourteenth century, see Gronke, *Derwische*, 330–31. Rumlu also relates an almost touching story in which Isma'il demanded a snow fortress to be built and engaged in war games with his advisors.
 29. Amini, *Futuhat*, 85.
 30. See Allsen, *The Royal Hunt*, for an overview. The passage is also excerpted from Khvandamir, presumably because he would see no need for the young king to try to emphasize his position among his small army.
 31. Amini, *Futuhat*, 86–7. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 448–9, changes the wording slightly to make it seem it was Isma'il himself who deemed it was time to depart. Shirazi, *Takmilat*, 37, gives the credit for the departure to inspiration from the graves of Isma'il's ancestors. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 49, follows Amini in every detail except where the veterans oppose the shah. Instead he has them give their consent and propose the plan to wait for recruits.
 32. Amini, *Futuhat*, 87.
 33. *Ibid.*, 89. Husayni, *Tarikh-e Ilchi*, 6–7, follows Amini in these passages.
 34. Amini, *Futuhat*, 90–91.
 35. *Ibid.*, 92. Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 943, states however that Husayn Beg Lala stayed behind with Isma'il.
 36. Amini, *Futuhat*, 93–5. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 449, changes Sultan Husayn's words from expressing a desire for sharing the throne to a request for joining the ranks of Isma'il's servicemen (*chakir* and *jansipar*). Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 941, follows Khvandamir. Shirazi, *Takmilat*, 37, is very brief and only states that Isma'il deemed it wise to leave as the Sultan Husayn appeared to be harboring some evil. Husayni, *Tarikh-e Ilchi*, does not report this episode. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 51–3, follows Amini but finishes the episode by writing that Sultan Husayn followed Isma'il the next day and caught up with him. However the young shah arrayed his men for battle and frightened him away. Basically every author tries to do something to cover up these uncertain years.
 37. Amini, *Futuhat*, 96–7. Shirazi, *Takmilat*, 37, obviously retrojects issues from the reign of Shah Tahmasp where he refers to this group as the "Rumlu" whom he castigates for not having been "Sufis of pure intent." Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 53, also uses the term Rumlu, again denoting its later application.
 38. Amini, *Futuhat*, 99. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 452, excludes this warning from his account.
 39. Amini, *Futuhat*, 100–101; also excluded by Khvandamir. Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 945, makes Isma'il the sole agent in this account and excludes the emirs. Shirazi, *Takmilat*, 37, is again very brief and merely writes that Isma'il put the inhabitants to the sword and plundered them. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 54, turns the skirmish into an epic battle.

40. Amini, *Futubhat*, 103, 105; again excluded by Khvandamir. Shirazi, *Takmilat*, 37, now switches from his censure of the “Rumlu” and praises and describes in detail how the Ustajlu, who dwelled in that region, “took his majesty into their people in the same way that the noble *ansar* [helpers] of Medina took the prophet Muhammad to Medina.” Qazvini, in his equally brief section on this events in the *Javahir al-Akhhbar*, 115, also credits the Ustajlu for tipping the balance of recruitment in favor of Isma‘il by joining him and bringing him tremendous prestige as a result.
41. Amini, *Futubhat*, 103.
42. The notorious concept of “tribe” is ever present in Safavid historiography. It is usually not historicized and scholars often assume that self-contained eternal kinship groups simply joined the Safavids in a sort of confederation. See for instance Sümer, *Safevî Devletinin Kuruluşu*. On the problematic and unusable nature of this concept and its history see Sneath, *The Headless State*, for a summary of recent anthropological critiques.
43. “*chun hamun va dasht az tarakamih pur gasht*,” Amini, *Futubhat*, 108; Khvandamir excludes all this, thus erasing the gradual and uncertain nature of the movement.
44. Amini, *Futubhat*, 104.
45. *Ibid.*, 104–5. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 453, turns this episode into a mere hunt and completely submerges its symbolic meaning. He moreover gives full credit for the killing of the bear to Isma‘il and removes the part about the soldier following the wounded animal into the cave. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 55, does the same. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 945–6, also removes the helping soldier and merely states that “the lion-hearted khaqan, though he was only thirteen years old, set out to kill the beast.” The military/religious significance of this scene coupled with other features of Shah Isma‘il’s career share a number of tantalizing similarities with the *berserker* of early medieval Europe. These men would undergo a ritual initiation into warrior bands by fighting a bear and killing it, thereby appropriating its superhuman powers. They would thereafter enter battle without armor in a violent and trance-like state. Isma‘il’s initiation ritual does involve hunting the bear in order to achieve the status of holy warrior (*ghazi*), and being possessed by divine light. Based on some reports his followers would fight without armor as they believed his new power would extend to them and protect them in battle. See Pastoureaux, *The Bear*.
46. “*chu Mahdi kunad rasm-e millat durust*,” Amini, *Futubhat*, 106.
47. “*kib dar ‘ayn-e rawshanai nurbakhsh-e subh-e sani bud musharraf gashtand, sar bih sajdih nahad [and]*,” Amini, *Futubhat*, 108–9. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 954–5, generally agrees with Amini but with a slightly subdued tone. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 55–6, does the same, taking out for example the prostration of the emirs before a haloed Isma‘il.
48. Minorsky, “Poetry.” For an overview of Isma‘il’s literary influences, as well as his influence on others see Gandjei, “Isma‘il I”; as well as Karamustafa, “ESMĀ‘İL.” Gallagher, in “Shah Isma‘il’s Poetry,” studies later anthologies of the poetry of the Safavid family to argue that the “transcendent” religiosity of the Qizilbash continued at the shrine of Ardabil even as the Safavid court began to distance itself from it.
49. See the new discovery of the grave of Junayd’s son in Aytberov, “The Newly Found Tomb-Stone,” 281–4.
50. On this office see Savory, “The Office.”
51. Amini, *Futubhat*, 110–12. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 454, reduces the emir’s agency by portraying him as merely following an order from Isma‘il. He increases the violence by suggesting there were numerous deaths and takes out the emir preventing the soldiers from pursuing the enemy. In short, Khvandamir transforms this episode from a raid to a combination of slaughter and plunder, therefore downplaying its primary financial aspect. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 56, does the same. He moreover states that Isma‘il merely gifted “the share of the treasury [*divan*].” However Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 955, confirms Amini’s account by stating that the campaign was a raid for plunder.
52. Amini, *Futubhat*, 114–16. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 454, takes out the opposition of the emirs to their king. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 56, does the same. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 955, does the

same as Khvandamir. Husayni, *Tarikh-e Ilchi*, 8–10, explicitly follows Khvandamir but gives a much briefer account, keeping his narrative to the political events (no mention of the hunts) and even excludes the run-in with Sultan Husayn Qaraqyunlu. Interestingly, however, his narrative is very close to Amini in so far as he maintains the uncertain dialogue between Isma'il and his emirs.

53. Amini, *Futuhat*, 117.
54. *Ibid.*, 120.
55. *Ibid.*, 123–5. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 955, says that Qaraman Beg had been unable to cross the Kur [Kura] River. Isma'il joined them and drove his horse into the river and crossed. In the meantime, some folks began to show rebellion and were summarily executed. Rumlu's narrative is not very clear but it is consistent with Amini in glossing over acts of violence. More on this below.
56. Amini, *Futuhat*, 126. None of these equivocations are mentioned by Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 455–6, or by Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 956.
57. Amini, *Futuhat*, 132.
58. *Ibid.*, 134–5. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 458, does not mention the initial defeat. Qazvini, *Tarikh-e Alfi*, VIII: 5479–80, supports Amini's narrative, as does Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 957. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 61, says the Shirvanis did not fly the battlefield until Isma'il personally rode into the fray.
59. Amini, *Futuhat*, 137–8. This scene is slightly altered by Khvandamir wherein it is the emirs who first bring gifts to the king, who in turn rewards those who deserved it with prizes. Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 62, tells a very different story, according to which Isma'il ordered all the plunder to be thrown away because the Shirvanis were Sunnis and their wealth was therefore ritually unclean!
60. Amini, *Futuhat*, 139.
61. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 958, does not mention the gifts but specifies the inhabitants as various Muslim notables.
62. Amini, *Futuhat*, 140–44. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 460, makes it seem that it is Isma'il who personally makes all these decisions.
63. Qazvini, *Lubb*, 272, calls this specifically Isma'il's ascension to the "royal throne of Shirvan" (*takht-e saltanat-e shirvan*).
64. Amini, *Futuhat*, 145–6. This entire episode is excluded by others.
65. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 959–60 has a different account. According to him, the "ghazis" mined the walls and brought down a tower, which the inhabitants rebuilt. Three days later the ghazis charged again, found entry, and killed seventy people before the elite of the city sued for peace.
66. Amini, *Futuhat*, 146–55. This scene of wild distribution is also totally downplayed Khvandamir's narrative, *Habib*, IV: 460.
67. Amini, *Futuhat*, 156.
68. *Ibid.*, 156.
69. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 960, and Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 461–2.
70. Amini, *Futuhat*, 157, excluded by Khvandamir.
71. Amini, *Futuhat*, 158.
72. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 463, however, following his own authorial pattern gives agency to Isma'il for these events, as does Qumi, *Khulasat*, I: 70.
73. Amini, *Futuhat*, 159–61. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 972, simply states that Isma'il quit the siege because he was informed of Alvand's march.
74. Amini, *Futuhat*, 162–3. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 973, says more people were executed.
75. Amini, *Futuhat*, 164.
76. Amini, *Futuhat*, 166. Rumlu, *Absan al-Tavarikh*, II: 974, states that most of the men did not have armors. Qazvini, *Javahir*, 116, says Isma'il had taken the field against the Shirvanis too. This is also reported by Gunabadi, *Shah Isma'il Namah*, 200, where he skips the entire history from Isma'il's arrival in Ardabil to his wars in Shirvan.
77. Amini, *Futuhat*, 166.
78. *Ibid.*, 167.

79. Ibid., 168–72. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 465–6, and Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 974–5, totally deleted the element of chance and the early setback by the Safavids.
80. Amini, *Futubat*, 173.
81. Khvandamir, *Habib*, IV: 467–8, and Rumlu, *Ahsan al-Tavarikh*, II: 977.
82. Qazvini, *Lubb*, 273, and following him Qazvini, *Tarikh-e Alfi*, XIII: 5481.
83. Shirazi *Takmilat*, 39.
84. Husayni, *Tarikh-e Ilchi*, 16.
85. Newman, *Safavid Iran*, 15 and 25.
86. Savory, “Some Reflections.”
87. Quinn, *Persian Historical Writing*, 10–11.

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