
3 The Nature of Safavid Diplomacy

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3.1 The *Ad Hoc* Nature of Safavid Diplomacy

The presence of resident embassies in Italian states responded to a pressing need for accurate, up-to-date information about the actions and intentions of neighbours. Unlike the major European powers, neither the Ottoman (Yurdusev 2004, 15) nor the Safavid empires maintained permanent embassies abroad, including Venice. M. Talbot argues that “the Ottoman concept of diplomacy did not strictly conform to any idealised homogeneous ‘Islamic’ or ‘European’ diplomacy, but operated on pragmatic terms” (Talbot 2017, 52-3). This practice of the Safavid court was observed by Pietro della Valle: “He [Shah] does not maintain his ordinary ambassador at any court, but sends extraordinary envoys when he needs to have talks with any of the rulers”.¹

¹ Della Valle 1628, 31: “In niuna Corte tiene Ambasciatorè ordinario; ma, solo ne manda degli straordinari, quando con alcun Principe gli occorre haver qualche negotio”.

As for Venice, she was officially represented by the bailo in Istanbul but lacked a resident ambassador at the Safavid capital.

Traditional scholarship interpreted Muslim rulers' unwillingness to establish permanent embassies in Europe as an expression of "Muslim isolationism" (Krstic 2015, 685). However, according to M. Pedani's count, around 110 Ottoman missions were received in Venice between 1500 and 1656 (Pedani 1994, 198-202). In a period from 1598 to 1622, Shah Abbās I sent at least seven embassies only to Venice.

In the case of the Ottomans, some historians believe that this was partly due to the Ottoman worldview, which put Istanbul at the center of the world, with the sultan as king of kings in the highest position in the hierarchy of the world's rulers (McCluskey 2016, 338). Bulent Arı characterises this practice as a synthesis of "abstract Islamic principles with Ottoman *Realpolitik*" (Arı 2004, 37). He adds that the economic and commercial structure of the Ottoman Empire did not necessitate the establishment of residential diplomatic missions at the major capitals of Europe (Arı 2004, 48). M. Talbot states that the Ottomans did not adopt the model of permanent resident ambassadors until the very end of the eighteenth century simply because they did not see a need (Talbot 2017, 52).

A very minor exception to this rule was the appointment by Shah Abbās I of the Venetian consul in Aleppo, Giovanni Francesco Sagredo, first as "Persian consul" in the Syrian city (1608) and then (after his return to Venice) as "general procurator" for the entire territory of the Republic (1611). Rota states that "it is not clear what this appointment meant in terms of actual duties for Sagredo, unless it was just an honorific title bestowed on him as a reward for his friendship towards Persia: most probably, he was supposed to help Persian traders operating *in loco*" (Rota 2009b, 234).

The Safavids' refusal to establish permanent embassies abroad should not be interpreted as

reflecting a lack of concern about European affairs. Several European envoys and travellers have attested to the eagerness of various Shahs to learn about the state of affairs in Europe. Membré's *Relazione* could serve as the best example:

In company with the above-named Sultans, he (Shah Tahmāsp I) began by asking me to be so good as to tell him the result of the league (Holy League) which the Most Illustrious Signory had formed, and of its strength, and of all things that were happening in the lands of the Franks, because he was eager to hear of them. (Membré 1993, 27)

Furthermore, Shah Tahmāsp's letter to the Venetian Doge shows that the shah was aware of the recent political developments in Europe concerning the Ottomans.

Shah Abbās's insatiable appetite for accounts of the politics of other states is evident from his conversations with Pietro Della Valle. Shah Abbās questioned Della Valle on diverse issues ranging from politics (the structure of the Papal States), religion (differences between the Christian denominations), the personality of an individual ambassador (García de Silva y Figueroa), to geography (city of Rome) (Della Valle 1843, 1: 652-3, 656, 658). Safavid officials, from the shah down to provincial governors, routinely questioned visiting Europeans about political and military developments in the West (Matthee 1998, 236). In 1621, Shah Abbās, in an audience given to the Carmelite priest Vincenzo di S. Francesco, asked him about the war between the Ottoman and Poland and religious differences between the Catholics and Englishmen.² According to Alessandri, when Safavid prince Heydar Mirza inquired about affairs in Europe, he "wondered if the league (Holy League) had ended and which rulers were more powerful at sea" (Berchet 1965, 33). On his way to the Safavid capital of Qazvin, Alessandri sojourned in Tabriz for several days in order to gain information about the Safavid "way of negotiation" so as not to go "completely inexperienced" to Shah Tahmāsp's court (Berchet 1965, 31).

R. Matthee notes that "as the Safavids were above all interested in European states inasmuch as these offered the prospect of a joint diplomatic and military alliance against the Ottomans, their interest in things European centered on weaponry and military expertise and, in general, the art of war" (Matthee 1998, 235). Safavid shahs promoted their wishes for constant diplomatic relations and more frequent communication as their letters often contained statements such as "we have always kept the doors open for negotiations, ambassadors, and merchants" (Berchet 1865, 196, 210, 214, 254).

In 1608, Carmelite friar Paul Simon presented a "nota verbale" to Shah Abbās I, on behalf of Pope Paul V (r. 1605-1621). One of the points of the note dealt with the proposal to establish mutual resident embassies:

The Pope proposes to accredit to Your royal person a distinguished personage as his ambassador and asks that Your Majesty would send to his court a representative of permanent character, to reside in Rome, as it is to be desired that the communication of se-

² ASV, Fondo Confalonieri 65, ff. 10r-12r.

crets and plans between Your Majesty and the Pope should be more frequent and frank. These ambassadors should reside for several years at both courts, and receive letters from their own sovereigns, and in this way deal with current affairs. Thereafter it would be no longer necessary to dispatch fresh ambassadors every few months, which experience has shown to be useless, both on account of the many difficulties of the journey and from the long delay in receiving the replies, as, finally, also because of other events which sometimes befall. (Chick 1939, 127-8)

3.2 Hospitality in Safavid Diplomatic Practice

Economics of diplomacy, among other items, also covers lodging and upkeep for foreign visitors. In Venice,³ the expence of receiving embassies was funded by public money while in the Safavid Empire it was met by the Shah's treasury. First-hand accounts of a number of embassies, as well as local sources, suggest that the Safavids placed great emphasis on hospitality when receiving foreign envoys. From the time the foreign embassy reached the Safavid lands until its departure, all of its expenses and provisions were covered by the Safavid authorities.

On his departure from the Safavid court in April of 1700, the nephew of Pope Innocent XII wrote:

The liberality of the king and magnificence of this Court is perhaps singular, because they do the same to every ambassador, even to everyone bringing letters from European princes to the king, making no distinction between mere bearers of letters or couriers and an ambassador, except in the manner in which they are treated: and they take the measure of the allowance to be assigned from the person concerned himself. (Chick 1939, 490)

According to Joseph Tournefort:

Persia is the only country I know of, where Ambassadors are maintained at the Prince's charge. As soon as an Ambassador or simple Envoy, has shown the Governors of the Provinces, that he is charged with letters for the King of Persia, they immediately give him the [...] allowance for his daily subsistences. (Tournefort 1741, 3: 181)

³ For reception and treatment of the Safavid envoys in Venice, see Guliyev 2020.

Adam Olearius, the secretary of the 1637 Holstein embassy, wrote: “During our aboad in Ispahan, we were supplied with all things upon the King’s account” (Olearius 1669, 200). Furthermore, Shah Safi I gave the Holstein mission 200 *tūmāns* (\approx 3370 *piastres* or 1000 French *pistols*) as a contribution towards the expenses of their return journey (Olearius 1669, 214).

The Venetian Domenico de Santis was granted travel allowances from the Safavid court paid in three installments: 30 *tūmāns*⁴ disbursed after his arrival at the court;⁵ 50 *tūmāns* before his audience with the Shah,⁶ and 50 *tūmāns* for his return travel expenses after he got permission to leave the court.⁷ According to the Safavid custom, money could also be given instead of a food allowance upon the wishes of a foreign envoy. This is evident from Jean Tavernier’s description of a public dinner given in honour of the visiting envoys at the Safavid court in 1647:

The Master of the Ceremonies came to the Ambassador and told him that if he did not like the cookery of the Persians, he had order from the Atemadoulet [Etimād-ad dawla], who is as the Grand Vizier in Turkic, to offer him Money instead of Diet, to the end he might dress his own Meat as he pleas’d himself. (Tavernier 1678, 76-7)

In 1539, following his first audience with Shah Tahmāsp, Michele Membré was given eighty ducats and a horse in addition to clothes (Membré 1969, 25). The degree of Safavid hospitality was subject to change and varied in accordance with the importance of the incoming mission and the overall nature of its relations with a sending state. In 1721, Ottoman envoy Ahmet Dürri Efendi was given 500 *tūmāns* for the legation’s daily expenses by the marshal of the Royal Court on behalf of the Shah along with a retinue of thirty sol-

⁴ In 1608, 1 *tūmān* equaled to 15 *scudi* (crowns) (ASV, Fondo Borghese II, 20, f. 136r; Chick 1939, 126). It appears from the European sources that the *tūmān* gradually lost its value against the Venetian ducat over the course of the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. While in the 1530s, one *tūmān* equaled to 40 ducats (Membré 1969, 40), its value was 20 ducats in 1571. (ASVe, Collegio, Relazioni, b. 25, *Relazione (originale) di Vincenzo Alessandri, ritornato di Persia, 1572-24 Settembre*, unpaginated). The *tūmān* dropped further in value equalling to 10 ducats in the first quarter of the seventeenth century (Della Valle 1843, 1: 621, 794).

⁵ ASVe, Collegio, Relazione, b. 25, *Relatione del viaggio fatto da Domenico di Santi in Persia*, f. 5v.

⁶ ASVe, Collegio, Relazione, b. 25, *Relatione del viaggio fatto da Domenico di Santi in Persia*, f. 6v.

⁷ ASVe, Collegio, Relazione, b. 25, *Relatione del viaggio fatto da Domenico di Santi in Persia*, f. 7r.

diers (Dourri-Effendi 1810, 15). In 1618, the Russian embassy, which numbered 116 persons, received 90 *tūmāns* for their food allowance for the duration of two months (Veselovskiy 1890-98, 3: 437; Bush-ev 1976, 2: 207).

Granting a *Khilat* or robe of honour was an integral element of Safavid diplomatic practice. The *Khilat* was one of the insignia of royalty and usually regarded as a token of honour. *Khilats* were usually given to ministers, provincial governors, and others, especially on their appointment to office and on the accession of the shah (Lambton 1991, 526). Visiting royalty, ambassadors, and other dignitaries, including Europeans, also received robes of honour (Floor 2013). It was the custom in the Safavid court for foreign envoys to wear *khilat* during their farewell audience with the Shah. The Holstein embassy secretary Adam Olearius writes:

The Mahemandar [Mehmandar] told them [ambassadors], it was the custom, that they should have, upon their own clothes, the best of those Garments [khilat], which the King had sent them. The Ambassadors, at first, made some difficulty to have that compliance but when they were told it was a custom observed by all Ambassadors. (Olearius 1669, 214)

Pietro Bedik adds that “The King [Shah] wants to see them in the last audience dressed in these robes granted by the Royal Munificence” (Filamondo 1695, 335). According to Chardin:

No Ambassador nor Envoy receives his audience of leave, but clothed with this habit; and when it is sent to him, it is a certain mark that he is going to be dismissed. (Chardin 1927, 112)

The quantity and quality of the robes were used to gauge favour and honour. Regarding this, Chardin writes:

These Calates are of different sorts: Some of them are worth a thousand tomans, which are fifteen thousand Crowns; those are enriched with pearls and precious stones. In a word, the Calates have no set price, and they are given more or less rich, according to the quality of the persons. (Chardin 1927, 112)

As attested by Michele Membré, the shah would also distribute *khilat* from his own wardrobe (Membré 1969, 25). In March 1675, Pietro Bedik, who was in the retinue of the Dominican Father Francesco Piscopo, an envoy of Clement X to the Safavid court, wrote:

one day the Mehmandar-Basci came to him with a special order to present him with the usual gift, that is, one of those precious garments, which was given only once by the King, to honour royals and ambassadors. (Filamondo 1695, 334)

It is evident from the contemporary sources that in many cases these robes of honour were given together with money gifts or allowances to enable foreign envoys to cover their return travel expenses. For example, Domenico de Santis, a joint envoy of the Pope, the emperor, the king of Poland, the Grand Duke of Tuscany and the Serenissima to Shah Abbās II, was granted a *khilat* in addition to a gift of money.⁸

Ottoman and Safavid sources of that period mention dozens of instances of *khilat*-giving. Ottoman sultans frequently gave Safavid envoys a robe of honour (*hil'at-ı fâhire*) together with an allowance (*harçlık*) (Selânikî 1989, 2: 253, 675, 818). This practice was also in use at other Muslim courts. For example, according to Marin Sanudo, in 1512, at the farewell audience with the Mamluk sultan Qansuh al-Ghuri, Venetian ambassador Domenico Trevisan, the consuls Tommaso Contarini and recently pardoned Pietro Zen were dressed in robes given to them by the sultan. As similarly to the Safavid court, it was also customary at the Mamluk court to expect an ambassador to wear this robe at his last public audience with the sultan (Sanudo 1879-1903, 15: col. 206-7).

3.3 Europeans' Perceptions of the Diplomatic Gift-Giving Etiquette at the Safavid Court

Diplomatic etiquette required that, before coming to discuss the object of his mission, an envoy must have given his presents. Venetian doctor Niccolò Manucci, who accompanied English envoy Henry Bard to the Safavid court of Shah Abbās II in 1654, noted the following in reference to his audience with the Safavid Grand Vizier:

the chief object of which [conversation] was directed to finding out presents we had brought for the King of Persia; secondly, to know the ambassador's rank so that the proper honours might be paid to his person. (Manucci 1907, 21)

⁸ ASVe, Collegio, Relazione b. 25, Relazione del viaggio fatto da Domenico de Santi in Persia, f. 6v: "Dopo li quindecim giorni lo stesso Rè mi mandò il presente che furono Tomani cinquanta, et Pezze di seta con oro et senza et altre pezze [...] et con questi mi mandò anco la Calata [*khilat*], cioè le vesti d'Honore et mi fù detto che fra pochi giorni sarebbero venuti à levarmi all'audienza [...] del Rè".

It was a general rule, particularly in Turco-Muslim courts, that an envoy without gifts or lacking appropriate gifts had little chance of succeeding in his mission. Foreign representatives were well aware of this practice, which was obvious from the letter sent by the Carmelite bishop Elias to the Cardinals of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide, dated 27 April 1697:

We had no gifts with which to accompany the presentation of it, as is the custom of this country, I deemed it well to await the coming of the ambassador from Portugal, who was on his way with great state and with rich presents. (Chick 1939, 478)

Although the arrival of an embassy without gifts was considered unusual at the Safavid court, they were received with the same honour. This is evident from Carmelite Bishop Francois Picquet's description of his reception by Shah Suleyman on 5 May 1682:

I was received by him with all benignity and respect; and with some preference over all the other ambassadors. It has been no small marvel to them that I, without gifts, have had so outstanding an audience. But they (the Persian officials) are expecting the presents, the delay in the arrival of which gives me very great trouble, causes me very heavy expense and keeps my hands tied without my being able to discuss any business at all, neither with the Shah nor with his officials. (Chick 1939, 432)

Michele Membré did not present any gifts to the Shah in 1539 while Vincenzo Alessandri brought only meager gifts in 1571, blaming this on the fact that he had travelled through the hostile Ottoman territories.⁹ In 1646, Domenico de Santis made gifts to the Shah Abbās II only on his own behalf "in order to follow the ordinary custom", as he had not been dispatched with presents apart from letters.¹⁰

⁹ ASVe, Collegio, Relazioni, b. 25, *Relatione di Vincenzo Alessandri*, 24 settembre 1572, f. 8r: "mi domandò se v'era altro al presente, li risposi che con gran fatica mi avevo potuto solo presentare a Sua Altezza rispetto l'esser venuto per mezzo il paese de nemici, ma che con occasione la Serenità Vostra non avria mancato di onorare la maestà del re e sua signoria con quei degni presenti che se le conveniva". Cf. Berchet 1865, 32.

¹⁰ ASVe, Collegio, Relazione b. 25, *Relatione del viaggio fatto da Domenico de Santis in Persia*, f. 5v: "Capo de Memandari [...] chiedendomi s'era vero, ch'io havessi lettere diritte alla Reggia Maestà, et se portavo il solito presente, à quello risposi, che ben si havevo le lettere, ma non già presente mandato da Prencipi ma che nondimeno havend'io di proprio diverse cose da me comperate, per curiosità ero dispostissimo a sequitar l'ordinario costume".

3.4 Re-Gifting

As an extension of gift-giving behaviour, re-gifting was a common practice among the Early Modern states. What were the motivations for re-gifting behaviour and what items were most frequently re-gifted? As they changed hands, these objects did not always carry their original meanings, and could acquire and initiate new meanings.

Some diplomatic gifts that the Safavid court received from foreign powers – such as jewelled items, precious stones, luxury cloths, and clothes – were recycled as diplomatic gifts for foreign rulers and envoys. Some sources provide evidence related to the circulation of Venetian textiles through Safavid diplomatic gift-giving. For instance, in 1593, the gifts brought by the shah's envoy Haji Khosrov to the Muscovite court included a Venetian silk taffeta fabric sent to the Russian queen by the aunt of Shah Abbās I Zeynab Beyim (Veselovskiy 1890-98, 1: 196-7).

In 1618, Shah Abbās gave the Mughal envoy Khan-e Alam one of the hunting falcons brought by the Muscovite embassy.¹¹ Russian fur coats, *Firangi* (European, probably Venetian) and Chinese satins and velvets were also included in the gift package sent by Shah Abbās to the Mughal Emperor in 1608 (Munshī 1978, 2: 979-80). In H. 1018-19 (1609-11), Shah Abbās sent a perfume pomander of gray ambergris, previously received as gifts from Mogul Emperor Jahangir, together with a reply letter, to Ottoman Murad Pasha.¹² According to the English diplomat Thomas Roe, among the gifts brought to the court of Mughal Emperor Jahangir in 1616 by another Safavid diplomatic mission headed by Muḥammad Riza Bey were two Venetian gold-embroidered velvet hangings and seven looking glasses (Roe 1899, 2: 296-7).

The recycling of gifts was not exclusive to the Safavids and was common in other cultures as well. Safavid luxury objects, especially carpets and textiles, were also re-gifted by Ottomans and Muscovites. For example, in 1719, Ottoman ambassador Ibrahim Pasha presented a Safavid silk carpet woven with gold and silver threads (*lavorato d'oro d'argento, e di seta*) and two pieces of cloth woven with gold flower motifs (*lavorato d'oro, & à fiori*) to Prince Eugene, who was, at that time, the President of the Imperial War Council of the Holy Roman Empire (Rousset 1739, 4: 508). It is possible that the

¹¹ According to Iskandar bey Munshī, this type of hunting falcons “is not found anywhere in the world except in Russia” (Munshī 1978, 2: 1160).

¹² In his letter to Murad Pasha, Shah Abbās wrote: “I am sending you forthwith a weighting one thousand eight hundred *mesqals*, in a filigree bowl cunningly fashioned by Indian goldsmiths from eight *man* of red gold, a gift to me from the Mogul Emperor Salim” (Munshī 1978, 2: 1026-7).

carpets and textile items, which were recycled as a gift for the Habsburgs, had originally come to Istanbul with one of the Safavid embassies during the first decades of the seventeenth century.

A Safavid figural coat also found its way from the Russian Tsar to Queen Christina of Sweden in 1644. Munroe (2017, 89) notes that “this particular gift may also be an important example of re-gifting in diplomatic exchange, as it most likely travelled from the Safavid court to Russia before it reached Sweden”. “Gold-embroidered Qizilbash velvet” (*Kizilbashskiy barkhat*) was included in the list of gifts sent from the Muscovite court to Queen Christina of Sweden with the embassy headed by B. Pushkin in 1649 (Kologrivov 1911, 123).

Shah Abbās I also participated in the circulation of Christian objects. According to Augustinian missionaries, in 1602, Shah Abbās had intended to regift a number of Christian-themed paintings, which he had received from Catholic Archbishop of Goa Aleixo de Meneses, to Alexander II (1574-1605), the ruler of the Georgian kingdom of Kakhetia (Pinto 2018, 162). In March 1625, the shah’s ambassador Rusan Bey brought the Robe of Jesus Christ, which had been taken from Georgia as a war booty, to Moscow as a gift from Shah Abbās to Tsar Mikhail Romanov and Patriarch Filaret (Belokurov 1891, 26-7).

3.5 The Characteristics of the Safavid Embassies to Venice

In contrast to other European rulers in this period, the Safavids relied on temporary embassies dispatched for a particular mission who would return home upon its completion. The Safavid shahs distinguished envoys according to the importance of the mission and the state of relations with the receiving country. Diplomats were selected for their personal suitability and skills. Thus, the socio-occupational background of Safavid envoys varied mainly according to their destination.

This appears particularly true for the reign of Shah Abbās I, who attached considerable importance to trade relations with Venice. The accession of Shah Abbās to the Safavid throne marked the start of a new era of relations with the Serenissima Republic distinguished by the preponderance of trade issues in bilateral relations. As the commercial agenda increasingly characterised Safavid diplomacy towards Venice, diplomacy and commerce became inextricably intertwined. This is evident from the nature of the Safavid missions and the social backgrounds of the envoys dispatched to Venice. Between 1597 and 1629, Shah Abbās dispatched no fewer than seven diplomat-

ic-cum-trade missions there. Venice, by contrast, is known to have not reciprocated with any missions in the same period. The prospect of a military alliance against the Ottomans, which had shaped the agenda of occasional Safavid-Venetian negotiations in the sixteenth century, was now put aside.

Embassies of ambassadorial rank were rare and it appears that only the first three of these missions had ambassadorial rank since their task of promoting the alliance against the Ottomans made it necessary to give these embassies a fully-fledged character. The occupational background of ambassadors was significant for their selection in one other way. In the seventeenth century, the majority of shah's representatives to Venice were merchants with a relatively low status who were not in charge of military negotiations, but carried letters from the Shah and dealt exclusively with commercial matters. According to Niayesh (2016, 208), this category of diplomatic agents can be primarily defined as one of "economic diplomats". Since they frequently travelled to and fro between the Shah's lands and Venice, merchants were ideal candidates for recruitment. Even during times of war, they enjoyed the freedom of movement as the frontiers that were otherwise closed were open to them.

Safavid envoys, combining the roles of royal agent and merchant, were tasked with selling royal silk and with purchasing the things needed for the royal household. In terms of diplomatic practice, they were not envoys (*elçi* ایلچی) but messengers tasked merely with delivering the Shahs' letters. Venetians called them 'latori delle lettere' or 'letter-bearers' (Berchet 1865, 38). These letters, which conveyed the Shah's assurances of friendly relations, were little more than a recommendation for one agent or another and often included a request for the Venetian Doge to facilitate the activities of such merchants-cum-envoys in the lagoon city.

Usually, they had little knowledge either of the political conditions in Venice or of the rules and protocols of Venetian diplomacy. Rota (2009b, 235) argues that Venetian authorities had no illusions about the status of these merchants-envoys, however personally important or close to the Shah any one of them may have been. Their views can probably be exemplified by the words of Giovanni Francesco Sagredo who, in 1609, advised the Senate to receive Khoja Safar favourably, even if he were 'not able' to understand such honours fully and properly.¹³

¹³ ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 18, 2 settembre 1609, unpaginated: "Ho voluto far saper questo, non perchè creda che si convenga a lei far soverchio honore a questo Cogia Seffer, il quale manco è atto a discernere e conoscere certi termini, ma solo perchè se gli mostri molto affettuosa, et amorevole verso i suoi negozi".



Figure 9 A fragment of the gold-embroidered velvet fabric with the figures of Jesus and his mother Mary (136 cm × 136 cm). Venice, Museo di Palazzo Mocenigo. Photo © Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

Figure 10 Safavid cane shield. Venice, Palazzo Ducale. Photo © Fondazione Musei Civici di Venezia

On many occasions, Shah Abbās I appointed two envoys to head the embassy jointly – probably one as a chief envoy with another as his deputy. The missions of Mehmed Emin Bey and Khoja Ilyas (1597), Fathi Bey and Mehmed Emin Bey (1603), Khoja Shahsuvar and Aladdin Mohammad (1613), Khoja Shahsuvar and Haji Eyvaz Tabrizi (1622) could serve as examples. As is evident, chief envoys had mainly ceremonial responsibilities. The deputy or second envoy would take up the duties of the chief envoy in the event of his death or arrest.¹⁴ Fathi Bey's testimony could explain the reason for the assignment of two envoys at the same time. According to him, "in the absence of one of them, the available one had to execute the orders of the Shah".¹⁵

Shah Abbās I used the same strategy, but with a slight difference, in several missions to other European powers. While two-envoy missions were exclusively composed of the shah's subjects, some missions to Europe were entrusted to Europeans in tandem with the Safavid envoys. It suffices to mention the missions of Huseyn Ali Bey and Anthony Sherley (1599-1602), Ali Qulu Bey and Francisco da Costa (1609), Daniz Bey and Antonio de Gouvea (1609-13). This practice was not limited to the embassies to Western Europe, as we can see from the embassies sent to Russia. The missions of Budaq Bey and Hadi (Andi) Bey (1589-90), Hadi Bey and Ali (Azi) Khosrov (1594-96), Qaya Sultan and Polad Bey (1617-18) serve as good examples (Bushev 1976, 1: 121, 209; 2: 154).

Some Safavid envoys bore the title *khoja* (*khwaja*), which put them on a certain social level in society. In fact, *khoja* was a title of respect used for wealthy merchants among both Muslim and non-Muslim Safavid subjects. Among the envoys, Mohammad Tabrizi bore the title of *haji*, indicating that he had undertaken the pilgrimage to Mecca and that he had sufficient independent economic means to do so.

As far as Venice was concerned, those arriving in the Safavid court bearing the letters of Venetian Doges were not noblemen or even actual diplomats. The highest-ranking Venetian emissary, from the point of view of both his social status and his rank within the Venetian administration, was Degli Alessandri (Rota 2009b, 234). In the seventeenth century, in particular, such letters were given to missionaries, merchants, and also, in certain cases, to travellers. The

¹⁴ For example, Bastam Qulu Bey, Shah Abbās's envoy to Spain in 1603, died on the way to Europe and the leadership of the embassy had to be taken by his secretary (Steensgaard 1974, 238).

¹⁵ ASV, Senato, Deliberazione, Mar, fz. 157, 13 marzo 1603, unpaginated: "Che il sudetto Signore Memet, mio compagno venisse a morte in nave, sapendo che il volere di Sua Maestà era che manchando uno di noi l'altro dovesse eseguir li suoi ordini".

discrepancy between their status and the nature of their missions emerges from the words of French traveller and merchant Jean-Baptist Tavernier in reference to Domenico de Santis:

This Venetian [Domenico de Santis] was a person ill-fitted for the quality of an Ambassador, being a person of no Parts; which made me wonder that such great Princes and so wise a Commonwealth should send such a person upon a Concern of that importance. (Tavernier 1678, 74)

3.5.1 *Gäräkyaraq*

During the reign of Shah Abbās I, envoys to Venice were often chosen from among the officials of the royal household. The administration of the Safavid royal household was managed by a separate department, headed by the *Nazir-i Buyutat*, or superintendent of the royal workshops (*buyutat-i khassa-yi sharifa*) (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* 1943, 48, 49, 118; Savory 1986, 354). *Nazir* had under him thirty-three different buyutats; alongside such purely domestic departments as the King's kitchen, scullery, etc., there were also departments, which represented small factories (tailoring department, weaving mill, jewelry workshop) (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* 1943, 119). *Nazir-i Buyutat* had many subordinate officials who assisted him in the discharge of his multifarious duties, including: agreeing on the price of, and signing contracts for, foodstuffs and other goods supplied to the royal household (Savory 1986, 355). Among these subordinates were *gäräk-yaraq*s, whose duties included purveying the materials required for a Royal Buyutat and sending goods from the provinces (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* 1943, 177-8).

As noted by Minorsky, the term is Turkish: *gäräk*, 'necessary,' *yaraq* in a general sense 'an implement', an object possessing some utility (from *yaramaq*, 'to be useful'). In a special sense *yaraq* means 'arms'. The compound stands, then, for 'purveyor of necessary things, or of arms' (*Tadhkirat al-Mulūk* 1943, 178),¹⁶ 'provider of what is necessary' (Das 1978, 120), the person in charge of supplies, or simply provisions officer. We can assume that merchants were also appointed as purveyors to the Royal Household due to their knowledge and expertise in assessing the quality of goods. The existence of the office of the *Gäräkyaraq*s in other Turco-Mongol powers is confirmed

¹⁶ Among the famous holders of this rank, we can mention Agha Mirak, who was a prominent painter before his appointment as the *gäräk-yaraq* at Shah Tahmāsp's court (*Calligraphers and painters* 1959, 185). See also Doerfer 1967, 593-4.

by the sources.¹⁷ As in the earlier period, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the *gäräkyaraq* supplied the court with its needs from crown lands (*khassa-yi sharifa*) (Floor 2012).

Olearius describes this figure as, “The *Kerek jerak*, or ordinary Steward of his Majesty’s Household” (Olearius 1669, 211). Furthermore, while describing the office of the *Nazir*, he writes: “The *Nasir*, or Controller of the King’s house, whom they also give the quality of *Kerek jerak*, because he executes the function of a Purveyor” (Olearius 1669, 273). Mohammad Rafi Ansari in his *Dastur al-Muluk*, a manual of the Safavid administration, made reference to the *gäräkyaraq*’s duties both in Safavid provinces and foreign states (Ansari 1991, 102). In the shahs’ Persian language letters, this phrase appeared as *garakyarāqān-e khāsse-ye* گرکیراقان خاصه شریفه, while its Turkish equivalent was written as *Khassā-yi shārifāmizin Gäräkyaraqaları* (Shorokhov, Slesarev 2019, 29). Venetian Dragomans interpreted this term as ‘agents of our most revered court’ (*agente della riverita nostra corte*).

The Safavid merchant-envoy class, particularly during the reign of Shah Abbās, appears to have been dominated by *gäräkyaraq*s. This is evident from extant letters where three out of five envoys were described as being *gäräkyaraq*s. With the exception of Khoja Safar and Khoja Kirkuz, other envoys, namely, Asad bay (1600), Fathi Bey (1603), and Khoja Shasivar (1613 and 1622) all belonged to this group. Their expert knowledge of goods and previous long-distance trade experience as merchants made *gäräkyaraq*s particularly well qualified for the post of envoy to Venice.

According to Keyvani (1980, 269), “one instance of Abbās I’s mercantile aspirations was his dispatch of royal agents to Venice, London, and Russia to procure manufactured goods and luxuries for the royal stores – a practice which was continued under his successors”. Safavid missions to Venice were similar in nature to those sent to Russia. Merchants commissioned by the shah also routinely accompanied diplomatic missions to Russia and these missions often had important commercial mandates or were little more than trade missions in disguise. Aside from the status and legitimacy the accompaniment of a diplomatic mission conferred upon merchants, they also benefited from protection and the opportunity of evading customs duties (Matthee 1999, 69).

¹⁷ In Ilkhanids the term ‘Gäräk-yaraq’ was also used in the sense of taxes collected on behalf of the rulers, princes, and amirs to provide them with arms and supplies (Geydarov 1987, 129; see also Petrushevskiy 1960, 393). In the fourteenth-century Golden Horde, the phrase ‘Gäräk-yaraq’ signified the procurement of everything necessary for the needs of the Court (Tizengauzen 1941, 96). The official who engaged in purchasing goods required by the court was also called ‘Gäräk-yaraq’ in the eighteenth century Uzbek Khanate of Bukhara (Vil’danova 1970, 48).

Conversely, Safavids dispatched eminent dignitaries as envoys to the Ottoman Porte. Della Valle observed that the shah always sent high-ranking courtiers – “his best and worthy subjects” to the Ottomans and Mughals.¹⁸ The Safavids attached particular importance to their relations with the Ottomans, which was reflected in the social status of the envoys sent to Istanbul. Governors, particularly of the border regions, such as *Chukhur-Sa’d* and Azerbaijan were increasingly employed as heads of missions to the Ottoman court. Furthermore, they were usually of noble background and prominent members of Turkic Qizilbash clans. Often, high-ranking court officials were designated by both sides to conduct peace negotiations. One of the so-called peace envoys was Farrukhzad Bey Qajar, who held an important post of Eshikaghasibashi at the court of the Shah Tahmāsp, was in charge of the negotiations leading to the Amasya Peace treaty in 1555. The Ottoman court usually gave special honours to the Safavid envoys, which also can be seen from the Venetian *relazioni* (Pedani Fabris 1996, 635-83, 671).

3.6 The Selection of Diplomatic Envoys

Theoretically, the Safavid shahs, as absolute rulers of their domains, could choose their diplomatic agents personally. Before naming the envoy, the shah probably considered the advice of the members of the *divan* and *amirs*. The viziers or other leading court officials could influence the shah’s choice by presenting one candidate rather than another. For example, in 1599, Shah Abbās’s grand vizier Hatam Bey Ordubadi was against the appointment of Anthony Sherley as an envoy to the European powers in particular and to this venture in general (Sherley 1613, 82). However, it is difficult to determine the extent of the influence that the Safavid court dignitaries had upon the selection process since the sources offer very little information on this procedure.

The personal relationship that potential candidates enjoyed with the Safavid court officials was also of importance in being appointed to embassies. Haji Mohammad was introduced to the court by his trade companion Khoja Habibullah, whose son Mirza Shukrullah held the position of *vizier* at the court. Khoja Safar was probably presented to the Shah by his father Khoja Yadigar, who was a merchant of

¹⁸ Della Valle 1628, 33: “Come fece al mio tempo al Turco più volte, al Moghol, & ad altri tali, hò veduto mandar sempre persone, e di qualità, e di valore, e del migliori soggetti in somma, che havesse nella Corte”.

the royal household (*Sovdakar khāsse-ye sharifa*).¹⁹ One reason why merchants were selected as envoys was the nature of the duties that they were called upon to perform. Obviously, previous trade experience in Venice or geographical knowledge and knowledge of the host country played a role in the appointment of the envoys. For example, according to their own testimonies, Haji Mohammad and Ali Bali had been in Venice before their selection as the Shah's representatives. Envoys also hoped to receive a reward for their services in the form of fiefs, or other forms of remuneration. For example, in 1580, Haji Mohammad was given twenty houses with land in the countryside by the Shah in advance of his mission.²⁰

3.7 Safavid Rituals of Letter Delivery

The importance of royal correspondence for the Safavids is best exemplified with the words of Fathi Bey, Shah Abbās's envoy to the Serenissima: "The great rulers visit each other through the medium of the letters and in this way, they confirm and enhance the friendship and good correspondence that they have together".²¹ A similar phrase was used by Doge Leonardo Loredan in 1504 during the audience given for the Ottoman envoy Yakup Bey: "through the medium of the [sultan's] letter he would see (visit) also [his] land" (Sanudo 1879-1903, 5: col. 991).²²

The letter presentation ritual was an important part of early modern diplomatic practice. In the Safavid tradition, any written communication of the shah was regarded as an object of respect. The Safavid envoys were instructed not to show the contents of the shah's letter to anyone before presenting it personally to the ruler of the host power. As representatives of the shah, envoys were obliged to deliver the letter directly into the hands of the foreign rulers.

As required by Safavid custom, the shah's envoys to the Serenissima usually presented their master's missives in accordance with their own protocol. As a mark of reverence, Safavid envoys kissed the Shah's letter before handing it over to foreign rulers. Fathi Bey's audience with the Venetian Doge in 1603 [fig. 11] gave evidence of this ritual:

¹⁹ According to Berchet (1865, 202), he was a *senser* at the Venetian consulate at Aleppo.

²⁰ ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 3, 1 maggio 1580, c. 322r.

²¹ "I principi grandi visitarsi l'un l'altro col mezzo delle lettere, per confirmar ed accrescer di questa maniera l'amicitia et buona corrispondenza che hanno insieme". ASVe, Annali, fz. 13, marzo 1603, c. 1r.; ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 13, 5 marzo 1603, unpaginated. See also Berchet 1865, 44.

²² "E si vederia la lettera, e in questo mezo el vederia la terra".



Figure 11
Gabriele Caliari
(attributed to, 1568-1630),
*Il doge Marino Grimani
che riceve gli Ambasciatori
persiani (1603)*.
1603-1605. Oil on canvas.
Venice, Palazzo Ducale,
Sala delle Quattro Porte.
Photo © Fondazione
Musei Civici di Venezia

Since he had been ordered to place it [the letter] in the hands of the Doge, he drew it from his chest, where he kept it in a red silk bag embroidered in silver, kissed it, and presented it to the Doge.²³

Oruj Bey Bayat related the episode of presentation of the shah's letter to the Spanish king Philip III as follows:

The ambassador [Hüseyn Ali Bey] had brought the Letter enclosed in a bag of cloth of gold, and he carried this in his turban close upon his head, from whence he had now taken it, and first kissing it, then presented it to the King. (*Don Juan of Persia* 1926, 291)

In another place, from Oruj Bey's description of the audience at the Muscovite court, it appears that the Russian ruler imitated the Safavid practice and received the letter in the same manner:

Then before the presentation, he [Pirgulu Bey] kissed the Letter which he bore, and next put it into the hands of his Highness [Russian Tsar]. On this, the Grand Duke [Tsar] rose from his seat, and receiving the Letter kissed it likewise. (*Don Juan of Persia* 1926, 255)

Iskandar Bey Munshī, while describing the misdoings of the Safavid envoy Daniz Bey noted that he "showed disrespect for the shah's letter" by not delivering it to the Pope of Rome in person:

²³ ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 13, 5 marzo 1603, unpaginated: "Havendogli comandato di presentargliela in propria mano, et così presa la lettera, che haveva in seno, et era posta in una borsa lunga di panno di seta sguardo tessuto d'argento, la basciò, et presentò in mano di Sua Serenità".

This was completely unacceptable behaviour on the part of the ambassador. If there really was some reason why he could not deliver the letter in person, he should have brought the letter back and explained the circumstances to the Shah. (Munshī 1978, 2: 1075)

The same ritual was also observed by the Safavid officials. For example, Robert Stodart, who was in Safavid lands in 1628-29 as a member of Dodmore Cotton's mission, reported that "whenever they receive any letter from their king, they kiss and raise it to their eyes and heads" (Ross 1935, 29). This custom was also observed by the Ottoman envoys visiting the European capitals, including Venice, when consigning the Sultan's letters into the hands of host rulers.²⁴ In Venice, the Ottoman envoy would sometimes bring the imperial missive with him to his audience with the Doge; at times, his servant would precede him with the letter placed on a pillow. However, the envoy usually kissed the letter before handing it over to the ducal counselor who would, as a sign of respect, imitate him in receiving it (Pedani 1994, 75).

According to the French missionary priest, Martin Gaudereau, secretary to the papal legate led by the archbishop of Ancyra, the privilege of handing a letter to the Shah was reserved only for the Ottoman envoys:

Of all the Princes of the world there is only the Great Lord [Ottoman ruler] whose Ambassador has the privilege of giving the Letter immediately in the hand of the King of Persia, and it is said that the Ambassador of Persia has the same privilege in Constantinople. (Gaudereau 1702, 22)

For example, Ottoman envoy Ahmet Dürri Efendi, who was received by Sultan Huseyn in the winter of 1721, began by introducing and conveying the Padishah's greetings then kissed the imperial letter (*nâme-i hümayun*) twice, placed it upon his head, and presented it to the shah (Dürri Efendi 2006, 4b). Unlike the Safavid envoys, it seems that the European ambassadors did not present their rulers' epistles to the shah in person but consigned them into the hands of the grand vizier, as was the Safavid custom. This rule was illustrated by Martin Gaudereau:

²⁴ "[Mustafa çavuş] dalla convinientia delle sue Imperiali lettere, le quali presenti in mano as sua Serenita dentro una borsa di panno d'oro" (ASVe, Senato, Deliberazioni Costantinopoli, fz. 14, 4 march 1618, unpaginated; ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, registro 14, 18 maggio 1600, c. 111r). In 1669, at an audience with the king, Süleyman Ağa, an Ottoman envoy to the French king Louis XIV, reported that "his Master [Sultan Mehmed IV] ordered him to deliver his Letter into the hands of His Majesty" (Dumont 1739, 4: 101).

The custom in Persia is, that an Ambassador having arrived in the presence of the Roy gives the Letter of his Prince to the Echicagassi Bachi [Eshikağasibaşı], who immediately returns it to Etmadolet [Etimād-ad dawla], this Prime Minister presents it to the King. (Gaudereau 1702, 21-2)²⁵

Foreign envoys also received the response letters with equal ceremony. Manucci described the departure of English ambassador with a Shah Abbās II's letter addressed to the exiled King of England (Charles II) in 1655.

The ambassador was on the left side of 'Azamat-ud-daulah.²⁶ The latter put his hand into his pocket and drew forth a bag of gold brocade, inside of which there was a letter. Lifting this bag with both hands, he placed it on his head, making a profound reverence to the king [Shah Abbās II]. Then he handed the said bag to the ambassador, saying that his king sent that letter to the King of England. (Manucci 1907, 34)

His description confirms that European and Muscovite envoys received their response letters not from the Shah but from the hands of the Grand Vizier. In 1699, Russian envoy Vasily Kuchukov refused to follow this customary Safavid procedure and insisted on handing over the Tsar's epistle to Sultan Huseyn rather than to the grand vizier, claiming that he had to present them personally. This incident was described by the Carmelite bishop Elias in his letter dated 12 June 1699:

This resident [envoy], at his first audience now more than a year ago, was unwilling to give his letters [of credence] into the hands of any minister, claiming that the king [Shah] himself ought to take them with his own hands. When the Persians answered to this that it was contrary to their customs, which could not be altered, after some disputing, somewhat noisy and threatening on the part of the resident, he was sent outside rather contemptuously and kept confined to his dwelling by a considerable number of guards. (Chick 1939, 489)

The intention to imitate the Safavids' practice reflects the Tsar's desire to attain a recognised equal standing to the shah.

²⁵ "La coutume en Perse est, qu'un Ambassadeur étant arrivé en presence du Roy donne la Lettre de son Prince à l'Echicagassi Bachi, qui la rend aussitôt à l'Etmadolet, ce premier Ministre la presente au Roy". See also Lockhart 1958, 61-2, Matthee 1998, 234.

²⁶ Should be Etimād-ad dawla.

3.8 The Use of Oral Messages in Diplomacy

It was not uncommon for shah's envoys to be entrusted with oral messages accompanied by written letters. The Safavids relied on the memory of their envoys or messengers to transmit important secret information because letters of this kind had very little chance of getting through the Ottoman territory. Even though they carried a letter, these bearers had to keep a significant part of the message in their minds so as not to risk it falling into the hands of the Ottomans.

In Safavid-Venetian diplomatic correspondence, the use of oral communication combined with written messages is attested by two letters bought by Safavid envoy Haji Mohammad to Venice in 1580. These two letters, one written in Turkish and another in Persian, originals of which have not survived, have a similar content. It is evident from the text of one letter and the testimony of Haji Mohammad in Venice that he was commissioned by two Safavid amirs: Mohammad Khan²⁷ and Amir Khan.²⁸ Both of the letters are brief and apparently, the main message was to be delivered orally by an envoy. The wording of both letters also confirms that the envoy's primary task was to convey an important oral message. One of these missives states (Berchet 1865, 190): "we have sent Haji Mohammad to tell you" (*abbiamo mandato [...] chogia Mehemet per significarvi*); while the other one has a similar phrase: "we entrusted Mohammad with giving you an account of [...]" (*al quale Mehemet abbiamo commesso [...] darvi conto*). The letters, therefore, played a secondary role and amounted to little more than the introduction of the messenger to the Venetian government. Furthermore, during his discourse in Venice, the Safavid envoy also emphasised the importance of oral delivery by mentioning "I have been told by them [Safavid amirs] to say to the lords of Venice" (*mi dissero che dovessi dire alli signori di Venetia*).

It is clear from the missives that Mohammad Khan and Amir Khan dispatched Haji Mohammad to give an account of their military engagement against the Ottomans on their behalf and to learn the Venetians' stance.

²⁷ This was probably Pira Mohammad Khan Ustajlu who was one of the most influential amirs during the reign of the Shah Tahmāsp I, Shah Ismāil II, and Sultan Mohammad Khodabanda. During the first years of the latter's reign, he held the post of the governor of Ardabil province. Moreover, he was the father-in-law of Shah Ismāil II and also had family ties to the above-mentioned Amir Khan, as one of his daughters had married the latter's son.

²⁸ Amir Khan at that time held the post of governor of Tabriz (*Don Juan of Persia* 1926, 175).

Haji Mohammad's reception in Venice was conducted secretly and senators did not give him a written reply "in order not to put him in danger", contenting themselves with giving an oral answer.²⁹ Although Haji Mohammad insisted on a response letter that could also serve a proof of his meetings in Venice,³⁰ the Doge politely turned down his request by reminding him that "the previous Persian King [Shah Tahmāsp I] had also not given a response letter to our Vincenzo Alessandri, but we trusted him and in the same way, your Shah and amirs would also believe in you".³¹ It appears that in 1509, the second Safavid envoy was also dismissed without a response letter, as the Venetian government trusted him to report their decision to Shah Ismāil verbally (Berchet 1865, 26).

In his letter dated 24 July 1621, Khoja Shahsuvar writes, "to confuse your enemies, I wish to say nothing else in writing but only by word of mouth".³² In a letter, dated 10 August 1670, Archbishop of Nakhchivan Matteo Avanisens writes: "He [Safavid Shah Suleyman] gave me no response by word of mouth about the deal of war, telling me that his opinion was contained in his letters".³³ Documents on Safavid-Russian diplomatic relations suggest that in some missions to Muscovite rulers, Safavid envoys were charged with delivering oral messages from the shah in addition to the letters (Veselovskii 1890-98, 2: 20-2, 44, 363, 412-16).

One of the main challenges of studying the history of Safavid-Venetian diplomatic encounters is the absence of Safavid envoy reports. Whereas it was customary for Venetian envoys to write a report (*relazione*) and present it to the Senate upon their return, shah's envoys seem not to have recorded their impressions and observations during their European journeys. Shah's envoys made their reports

29 ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 3, 13 giugno 1580, cc. 312r-312v: "Noi non vi diamo lettere nostre per non mettere in pericolo la vostra persona c[h]e ne è carissima, p[er] la prudentia c[h]e conoscemo essere in voi; ma riferirete a bocca a quei sig[no]ri c[h]e vi hanno mandato".

30 ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 3, 17 giugno, c. 302r: "Che hà ben inteso la risposta, et che riferirà il tuto, ma che haveria desiderato di reportar indriedo qualche segno dal suo esser stato qui".

31 ASVe, Collegio, Esposizioni Principi, fz. 3, 17 giugno, cc. 302v-303r: "Che essendo de mezzo come lui diceva un inimico tanto potente non bisognava mettersi in pericolo con le[tt]er[e] et che considerando il medes[sim]o Il Rè di Persia vecchio quando fù à sua ma[est]a questo nostro Vin[cenz]o di Alessandri se ben li portò nostre let[ter]e, non però li diedi let[ter]e in risposta essendo sicuro, che noi li credessamo, come sua Ma[est]a et quei signori credera anco à lui".

32 ASVe, Savi all'eresia (Santo Ufficio), b. 72, 24 luglio 1621, unpaginated: "a confusione de Vostri nemici che in pena non voglio dire altro ma a boca".

33 Berchet 1865, 233: "Intorno al negozio della guerra non mi ha dato risposta alcuna a bocca, dicendomi che nelle lettere responsive si contenevano li suoi sentimenti".

by word of mouth (delivered orally) meaning that unfortunately we have no written records for Safavid missions to Europe. The shah's envoys were only debriefed verbally after their return from diplomatic missions, which is also evident from Della Valle's description:

He (Shah Abbās) is a very diligent investigator of every particular detail of his country, and of others; a curious observer of the things of foreign rulers. In general, he frequently sends and places his ordinary men in different parts under the pretext of trade [...]; often [sends them] with letters to [foreign] sovereigns, and after their return, he inquires of them very carefully, paying much more attention to their oral reports than to what is written in the letters of the [foreign] rulers, which they brought. (Della Valle 1628, 31)

In his other work, Della Valle mentions that the shah did not open the letters sent by European rulers, and "they remained as sealed as they were", and "according to the custom, he wants his envoys to convey the report by word of mouth" (Della Valle 1843, 1: 828).

This was also true for the Ottomans before the late seventeenth century when the sultans' envoys were debriefed orally after their return and written reports were not customary (Faroqhi 2014, 7). The first *sefâretnâme* was written in 1666 by Kara Mehmed Pasha following his embassy to Vienna (Unat 1968, 47-8). While later Ottoman delegations composed *sefâretnâme*, unfortunately, no such document exists for the Safavid envoys who travelled to European courts.

Besides letters for foreign rulers, the shah or court officials also delivered verbal instructions to Safavid envoys concerning their conduct in foreign domains before their departure and it appears that it was not customary for an envoy's instructions to be written down. Although we do not possess any knowledge of the contents of those instructions, the "affair of Daniz Bey Rumlu", which was described in detail by Iskandar Bey Munshî, suggests that to reduce the possibility of misconduct, the behaviour of these envoys abroad was regulated by numerous restrictions and prohibitions. According to Munshî, the Safavid envoys were instructed not to show the contents of the shah's letter to anyone other than the host ruler and the letters had to be delivered personally to the foreign sovereign (Munshî 1978, 2: 1075). Furthermore, the envoys had to observe the dress code of their country as was attested by their appearances in audiences at the foreign courts and to treat their fellow mission members well (Munshî 1978, 2: 1075-76).

