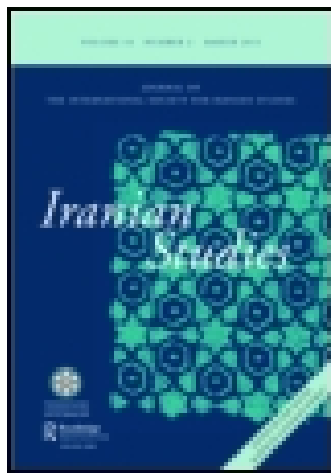


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Maryam Moazzen

Rituals of Commemoration, Rituals of Self-Invention: Safavid Religious Colleges and the Collective Memory of the Shi'a

Shi'ism, perhaps more than any other current of Islam, places emphasis on numerous forms of commemorative culture. Throughout the history of Shi'ism, commemorative rituals have provided a comprehensive framework for interpreting a wide array of historical encounters between the Shi'a and the dominant Sunni culture, thereby allowing Shi'ism to construct itself as a community of learning and remembering. This self-construction required both a high degree of institutionalization as well as specialists to preserve the religious identity of the Shi'a and to transmit religious knowledge to the next generation. Madrasas (Islamic institutions of higher learning) as well as the shrines of the Shi'i Imams and their progeny served as the best institutions to achieve these goals. This paper argues that Safavid madrasas were not only centers for disseminating religious knowledge and preserving Shi'a intellectual heritage. They also rearticulated and contemporized the community's past through the active memorializing of pivotal events in the religious calendar of the Shi'a. More specifically, the paper delineates the nature and scope of religious rituals and rites carried out in the Madrasa-ye Sultāni and a number of other madrasa-mosque complexes of Safavid Isfahan in order to explore the process by which the Shi'i past was contextualized or contemporized as salient to suit the needs of Safavid power and society.

Keywords: Shi'i Commemorative Rituals; Safavid Madrasas; Shi'i Identity; Safavid Ruling Elites; Safavid 'Ulama; Shi'i Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy

In Shi'ism, commemorative rituals have been the sine qua non for religious and cultural identity as well as political success. This is why monuments to the Shi'i Imams and their progeny abound wherever the Shi'a are; and history and its mythic aftermath are ubiquitous and integral aspects of Shi'i societies. To ensure that the Shi'i past does not die over time, history was transmuted into tradition and commemorative rituals. These cultural memories came to be the foundation upon which the Shi'i community established its unity and specificity. Over the centuries, key figures of Shi'i history such as the first and the third Imams (i.e. 'Alī and Husayn, as well as other Imams)

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evolved from human beings of flesh and blood into sacred and infallible persons. These deified figures have been used to personify such concepts as heroic martyrdom and revolutionary ideals; their enemies are portrayed as evil, cowardly, and repressive.

Substantial research has been published on Shi'i commemorative rituals, most of it by historians of cultural anthropology and sociologists who are mainly interested in *ta'ziyeh* (the rituals commemorating the tragic death of Husayn and his family in Karbala on 10 Muharram 61/10 October 680).¹ While some scholars compare the rituals commemorating the death of Husayn and his family with the Christian practice of Passion plays, others examine the socio-political and religious dimensions of commemorative rituals in Shi'ism. For instance, Jean Calmard argues that commemorative rituals have been the most important means of bolstering the legitimacy of states.² Mahmoud Ayoub argues that the recollection of tragic events in the history of Shi'ism has been a source of salvation for those who participated in the rituals.³ On the other hand, Kamran S. Aghaie asserts that commemorative rites are the means of expressing social and political ideals in Iranian society, and also the means of showing direct opposition to the state, a notion that is discussed by Hamid Dabashi as well.⁴

Although these arguments point to both psychological/religious and political meaning in the rituals, I am interested in how commemorating constitutive events in the history of Shi'ism is also an important means of storing and transmitting religious knowledge and culture. Through commemoration, members of the community become either participants or spectators and witnesses. Thus, they play a role in the act of transmission. Theorizing these practices as the transmission of embodied cultural memories offers a new means of critical thinking with regard to the madrasa institution.

As mentioned earlier, the Shi'i community developed a complex interplay of memories that were constitutive of its very existence.⁵ Commemorative rituals, which at the core have been a hermeneutical activity, provided a comprehensive framework for constructing historical encounters between the Shi'a and the dominant Sunni culture, thus allowing Shi'ism to establish itself as a community of learning and remembering. Generally, historical religious memories survive through an array of mnemonic sites and practices. The primary vehicles of collective memory for the Shi'a have been commemorative rites and the shrines of their Imams. Rituals and festivals, particularly if they are performed and celebrated in spaces such as mosque-madrasa complexes and shrines that are considered very sacred to the Shi'a, are the best tools to ensure cultural continuity and the unity of a community.⁶ Emile Durkheim argued that an individual remembers his role as a member of a larger group when he or she attends religious festivities and rituals.⁷ These ritual experiences also help people mediate between events of the past and the present, and to negotiate meanings for the future.⁸ Historical sources report that, from the beginning of their rule, Safavid rulers were actively involved in either construction or restoration of madrasas, mosques, and shrines—the public institutions that represent a shared past. For example, in addition to renovating several *imāmzādehs* and constructing the Madrasa-ye Sultānī, Shah Sultan

Husayn paid special attention to the shrines of the Imams located in the *'Atabāt* (the holy cities in Iraq). In a deed of endowment issued in 1711, he prescribed the following:

The trustee should arrange for twelve thousand Tabrīzī *dīnārs* to be sent to each of the holy shrines in Najaf and Karbala to purchase incense for the shrines of 'Alī and Husayn—if the extra funds were to exceed the incense cost, the trustee was instructed to inquire if any of these shrines were in need of repair, either in their roof or in their land (i.e., the whole building); he was also contracted to donate chests, carpets, bookshelves, Qur'an's covers, lamps, and candle holders to these shrines. The extra funds were to be spent on repairs first, but if the holy shrines needed no repair, or if it was not possible [to repair them], the surplus funds were to be submitted to a group of pilgrims who wanted to return home after visiting the holy shrines but who could not make it due to debt. With that fund, their debts were to be paid off and their journeys and return expenses were also to be funded. If there were few such stranded pilgrims and if there were funds remaining, the sum of fifty thousand Tabrīzī *dīnārs* was to be submitted to each person to cover the expenses of his trip to the holy shrines in Iraq.⁹

Founders of Safavid madrasas usually assigned a sizeable amount of revenue from their endowments to commemorating constitutive events in Shi'i history and celebrating holy dates in the Islamic calendar.¹⁰ Indeed, annual festivals of collective remembering were considered as important as transmitting religious knowledge.

Contextualizing Cultural Memory of the Shi'a

During Safavid rule, an era of intense religious consciousness, both political elites and religious authorities made use of a variety of material means as well as all available rhetorical tools to enhance and to frame the cultural and religious identity of Safavid society. In addition to building new mosque-madrasas, renovating the shrines of the Imams and their progeny, and lavishly patronizing the commemorative rituals, the Safavid shahs also encouraged and sponsored visits to the shrines of the Imams (*ziyārat*). The Safavid scholars put great emphasis on the salvational value of commemorative rituals and *ziyārat*.¹¹ Shrines and *imāmzādehs* came to function as spiritual and communal focal points.¹² From the outset, visitation to the shrines of the Imams was a major feature of Shi'ism and carried the utmost importance in Shi'i Islam: by visiting the Imams' shrines one acknowledges their authority as the rightful leaders of the Muslim community. Commemorative rites and *ziyārat* tradition with their broad social reach and their immediate impact on the audience were particularly effective in persuading the Safavid subjects to convert to Shi'ism. Additionally, commemorative rituals were salient to the process of expanding the authority and legitimacy of the Safavid shahs and the Shi'i 'ulama.

Safavid Madrasas and Commemorating the Cultural Memory of the Shi‘a

Similar to the shrines of the Imams and their progeny, madrasa-mosque complexes also structurally and systematically reinforced and contextualized Shi‘i collective memory. These institutions served simultaneously as focal points for dialogue between plebeians and the academic, religious, and political classes as well as focal points for a complex dialogue between past and present. According to Safavid deeds of endowment, the founders of the madrasa-mosque complexes normally sponsored pedagogical activities in addition to covering the cost of a wide range of elaborate rituals, and religious observations. The deaths of the Imams and particularly the Husayn family massacre at Karbala, which had gained the status of an archetypal atrocity from the early history of Shi‘ism, became testaments to the sufferings of the Shi‘a and examples of their victimization.¹³ Husayn’s martyrdom in particular led to commemorative activities crucial for subsequent Shi‘i identity formation. Because of its archetypal significance within the collective memory, commemoration of Husayn’s martyrdom had an enormous potential to shape Shi‘i perceptions. Therefore, like many other Safavid founders of pious endowments, Shah Sultan Husayn (d. 1722), the founder of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī (the current Imam Ja‘far Sādiq Seminary), paid almost equal attention to commemorating significant events in the history of Shi‘ism and to the transmission of religious knowledge.

Although all but one of the original deeds of endowment of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī are lost, several copies of the madrasa’s *waqf-nāmehs* provide a wealth of information about the way this major religious and cultural institution was managed and about how its resources were put to use.¹⁴ ‘Abd al-Husayn Sipintā published Madrasa-ye Sultānī’s deeds of endowment based on copies of the originals.¹⁵ The current research is based on copies of the *waqf-nāmehs*, kept in the *Idāra-ye awqāf-e Isfahan*, and Sipintā’s edition. In one of the deeds of the endowment of Madrasa-ye Sultānī (issued on 2 July 1711), Shah Sultan Husayn stipulates that the sum of 351 *tumans* and 8,100 Tabrizī *dīnārs* should be spent on mourning rituals and rites, including the ritual recitation of the sufferings and martyrdoms of the Imams, particularly those of ‘Alī and Husayn in the Madrasa-ye Sultānī.¹⁶ In the deed we read:

On the 21st of Ramadan, the sum of one *tuman* and four thousand *dīnārs* must be spent on reciting the tragedy of the martyrdom of ‘Alī, and on the passion play requirements and tools, and also on providing *halīm*, *halwā*, and bread that must be distributed among the needy Shi‘as on the evening of that day.¹⁷

During the first ten days of Muharram every year in the aforementioned madrasa (i.e., the madrasa-ye Sultānī), passion plays and commemorative ceremonies for Imam Husayn and his family must be conducted. The sum of thirty *tumans* must be spent on *ta‘ziyeh* expenses, including the fee for the reciter of the sufferings of Imam Husayn and his family in Karbala, the fees of a preacher (*minbarī*), and a person who curses the first three caliphs (*tabarrā‘ī*), as well as the cost of candles, lamps, meals, and paraphernalia for the aforementioned *ta‘ziyas* according to the situation and requirements.

On the evening of the day of 'Āshūrā, the sum of 101 riyals must be spent on providing *halīm*, *halwā*, and bread that should be distributed among needy students and people.¹⁸

...

On the 20th of Safar, the day of *arba'in* (forty days after Husayn's martyrdom), the sum of three *tumans* must be spent on bread, *halwā*, and *halīm* that must be given to the people residing at the madrasa and needy people whether men or women.¹⁹

In another *waqf-nāmeḥ* of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī, issued on the 28th of Ramadan in 1711 (9 November 1711), Shah Sultan Husayn stipulates that the revenues from an orchard known as Bāgh-i Burj and some other parcel of lands must be given to a pious Twelver Shi'i chosen by the teacher of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī. This pious recipient should recite the Qur'an daily and the rest of the funds should be used to cover the cost of ceremonies performed during the first ten days of the month of Muharram. He stipulated that the Muharram processions must involve emotional recitations and that passion plays should be as realistic as possible so as to make people remember and recollect the sufferings of Husayn and his family, culminating with the tenth day of the month of Muharram ('Āshūrā) when Husayn was slain.²⁰ In the deed we read:

From the same revenues [i.e. revenues from the Burj orchard] should be paid the fees of the *rowzeh-khvān* [person who recites the suffering of the Imams], *pā-minbarī* (*rowzeh-khvān*'s assistant), the *marthiyeh-khvān* (elegist), the *tabarrā'ī* [person who curses the enemies of the Imams], the cost of feeding the servants providing these services, and the cost of light and other necessities pertinent to this commemoration. [The people directing this service] must do their best to make the event attractive and provide whatever is needed to make participants in this rite cry and weep more. They must also do whatever they can to make the rite look more heart-rending. They should hold this service at the Masjid-e Jadīd-e 'Abbāsī and if that is not possible, it should be held wherever people are more interested in assembling to commemorate the beginning of the month of Muharram.²¹

In light of the information provided by the *waqf-nāmas* of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī with regard to commemorative rituals carried out in the Madrasa-ye Sultani, a summary of which is given in Table 1, it can be inferred that Shah Sultan Husayn, like other Safavid ruling elites, was well aware of the fact that a Shi'i vision for identity could be fortified by means of commemorative rituals, eulogistic recitations (*manāqib/rowzeh-khvānī*) in honor of the Imams of the Shi'a, and visiting their shrines. Indeed, Shi'a have come to know, understand, and make sense of their socio-cultural and religio-political world through the *manāqib/rowzeh-khvānī* tradition, as well as yearly commemorative rituals. These age-old traditions have created universes of meanings for the Shi'a and historically positioned them. Safavid political and religious elites made use of this available universe of meanings to constitute collective loyalties, to legitimize their rule, and if necessary to mobilize and inspire recent converts to fight, kill, and die for their religious beliefs.²² Additionally, by reconnecting a nondescript present with an illustrious past—namely the

Table 1. Commemorative Rituals Carried Out in the Madrasa-ye Sultānī

Commemorative Rituals	Costs
Commemorative ceremonies and passion plays during the first ten days of Muharram	30 <i>tumans</i>
Feeding people on the evening of the day of ‘Āshūrā	101 riyals
Feeding students and the public on the day of <i>arbaʿīn</i>	3 <i>tumans</i>
Reciting the tragedy of the martyrdom of ‘Alī and Passion play and its paraphernalia	1 <i>tuman</i> and 4,000 <i>dīnārs</i>
Celebrating the birthday of Muhammad	14 <i>tumans</i>
Celebrating the birthday of ‘Alī	14 <i>tumans</i>
Celebrating the ‘Īd-e Ghadīr	14 <i>tumans</i>
Celebrating the ‘Īd al-Adhā	301 riyals
Passion play and other rituals on the abovementioned days	341 riyals

bravery, sacrifices and sufferings of the beloved hero of the Shi‘a, Husayn, and his brave followers—*rowzeh-khvāns* and *manāqib-khvāns*—established unity and continuity along two lines: diachronically, the present was put in linear continuity with an honored past from which it proceeded, while synchronically, the Shi‘a were united under one banner—the holy flag of the innocent, brave and righteous Imam Husayn.

Historically the ubiquity of ritual representations of such historical memories has also helped the Shi‘i community to demonstrate to its critics and detractors both its loyalty to their beloved Imams as well as its strength and religious cohesion. Yearly Muharram processions of numerous people trailed by spectators must have had a sheer physical strength that was itself a challenge to Sunni attitudes.²³ The commemorative rites thus became opportunities to show that the Shi‘a are no longer the marginalized “heretics” that Sunnis imagined them to be. In addition to the politically assertive and memorializing functions of commemorative rituals, in the course of the rites eulogists showcased the innocence, suffering, bravery, and sacrifices of Husayn and his followers, the brutality and cruelty of their enemies, and the impassivity of Sunnis, who do not condemn the brutal massacre of Muhammad’s beloved grandson. The Shi‘a capacity to ground these heroic deeds in some overarching cosmic order that conferred moral substance and validity was paramount to the foundational function of the constant acts of remembering in creating a full-fledged Shi‘i identity.

The Instructional Values of Commemorative Rituals

During the period of Safavid rule, ritualized activities commemorating the tragic death of the Imams became opportunities not just for narrative recitations of the Imams’ lives and deaths, but also for instructional activities aimed at inculcating and securing commitment to the virtues that the Imams embodied in their lives and deaths. Rituals also boosted the religious sentiments of both students residing at the Madrasa-ye

Sultānī and other madrasas, as well as the wider community. There was, therefore, a synergistic correlation between commemorative and pedagogical activities. A violent death, commemorated as a martyr's death, was instrumental in establishing the virtues the person embodied and what his tragic death exemplified. In other words, commemorative narratives coalescing out of the violent death of the Imams aspired to be far more than mere records of events for posterity. The deaths of 'Alī and Husayn gave rise to commemorative activities focused upon the virtues these Imams embodied in the stories of their lives. It was emphasized that they were killed because of steadfast commitment to a set of emblematic virtues.²⁴ In addition, annual festivals of collective remembering and narratives of the *manāqib khvāns* presented the audience with the ideals of a community as much as the events of individual lives.

The commemorative response to the suffering and death of the Imams also constituted an indictment: those tyrants who spilled the blood of the innocent Imams were guilty. The Shi'a condemned those responsible and disassociated themselves (*barā'a*) from the enemies of the Imams.²⁵ The custom of condemning and cursing the first three caliphs and the enemies of the family of the Prophet—'Alī and Fātima and their children, according to the Shi'a—has a long history.²⁶ Through the act of cursing, the Shi'a showed their commitment to the Prophet's family.²⁷ In his manual on *futuwwa* (chivalry), Vā'iz Kāshifī writes that one of the secrets whispered by the master craftsman into the ear of the adept is a disavowal (*tabarrā'*) of the adversaries of Muhammad's family in affirmation (*tawwallā*) of 'Alī's family and his party.²⁸ Once Shi'ism was declared the official religion by the Safavids, such curses were shouted everywhere from bazaars to madrasas. Muharram was the ideal time for this cursing, when Shi'i eulogists exuberantly praised 'Alī and passionately eulogized the tragedy of Karbala in madrasas and mosques.²⁹ The early Safavid rulers, under the supervision of Shaykh 'Alī Karakī, made cursing an official ritual. Shah Tahmāsb initially used this practice as a mechanism of public conversion to Shi'ism.³⁰ In response to a letter sent by 'Ubaydullāh Uzbek, Shah Tahmāsb wrote a letter to the Ottoman ruler Sulaymān in which he defended the tradition of cursing the three "rightly guided" caliphs (i.e. Abū Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthmān) and counted their wrongdoings. He threatened Sulaymān by warning him that he would ask *Tabarrā'iyān* and Qalandarān to curse him together with the Umayyad, Marvanid, and 'Abbāsid rulers and Barmakids in streets, bazaars, mosques, and madrasas. He called the *tabarrā'iyān* "free-rein fighters."³¹ Not every scholar approved of the practice of cursing. For example, in a debate with a Sunni scholar from Aleppo, Husayn 'Abd al-Samad states that: "according to our school of law, it is not compulsory to curse them [i.e. Abū Bakr and 'Umar] and only the fanatical among the laity do so. As for the 'ulama, none mandated the necessity of cursing them, and their books are clear on that."³²

Madrasas and Social Coherence

Celebrating joyous events in the Islamic and Shi'i calendars, Safavid madrasas acted to create social coherence. The birthdates of Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, as well

as other holy dates such as ‘Īd-e Ghadīr, continued to act as occasions for Shi‘i expressions of unity. At every ‘Īd-e Ghadīr, the Shi‘a renewed their commitment to ‘Alī as they witnessed the re-enacted martyrdom of Husayn in every ‘Āshūrā. In one of the deeds of the Madrasa-ye Sultānī, Shah Sultan Husayn stipulated that the sum of forty-six *tumans* should be spent on royal feasts, holy days, and ‘Īds that were to be held in the Madrasa-ye Sultānī. He set down the following conditions:

—On the 17th of Rabī‘ al-Awwal, the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasting and on feeding sayyids, religious scholars, pious people, students of [religious] sciences, the people residing in the madrasa and the like, and the needy and poor people, whether men or women, or sayyids or non-sayyids.³³

...

—On the 13th of Rajab, the birthday of Imam ‘Alī, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasts and feeding [people].

—On ‘Īd-e Ghadīr, the 18th of Dhu al-Hajja, which is the biggest celebration, the sum of fourteen *tumans* must be spent on feasts and feeding people in the madrasa.

—On the day of ‘Īd al-Adhā (The Sacrifice Feast), sixteen healthy, fleshy, and average-priced sheep that possess the conditions for being sacrificed must be bought and brought to the [Madrasa-ye Sultānī].

—During these days the sum of 341 riyals must be spent on the Passion play and other rituals.³⁴

...

—The sum of approximately eleven riyals must be spent on purchasing torches for the *ihyā’* nights, feasts, and other times that a torch is needed and on the brazier in winter time [to warm up] the teaching hall, when the professor is teaching.³⁵

Like all other patrons of religious institutions, Shah Sultan Husayn paid special attention to the month-long holy period of Ramadan. The well-orchestrated complex of Ramadan festivities, as reflected in Table 2, was an articulation that affected groups of disparate interests. The festivities were aesthetic as well as socio-political. They also reinforced religious legitimacy. During the Ramadan festivities, people came together to celebrate the holiest month in the Islamic calendar and the shah’s charitable and pious character. Moreover, Ramadan festivities helped to build a sense of community and gave cultural and social meaning to the lives of individuals. Every evening during Ramadan was a celebration. The evening meal for breaking the fast (*iftār*) was a time of animated activity; people gathered in the Madrasa-ye Sultānī not only to eat and drink but also to receive financial aid. Shah Sultan Husayn stipulated that:

The sum of two hundred ninety-six riyals and one tenth of a riyal was to be spent on providing meals every night of the month of Ramadan for forty-one poor and needy

Table 2. Religious Observances during the Month of Ramadan

Religious Observances during the Month of Ramadan	Costs
Feeding 41 poor and needy fasting people during Ramadan	293 riyals and one tenth of a riyal (on each night)
Giving money to 41 people every night during Ramadan	100 <i>dinārs</i>
Giving money to needy people other than those who break their fast in the madrasa during the <i>Ihyā'</i> nights	100 <i>dinārs</i>
Giving the <i>zakat-i fitr</i> of 41 people who break their fast at the madrasa during the last night of Ramadan	100 <i>dinārs</i>
Cost of purchasing Kāshī dishes and large wooden trays used during Ramadan	5 riyals
Purchasing torches for the <i>Ihyā'</i> nights, feasts, and so forth	11 riyals
Giving money to needy fasting people during Ramadan	200 <i>dinārs</i>

fasting Twelver Shi'a from students, and others whether sayyid or not, women or men, married women or widows.³⁶

It is significant that the shah's words afford special attention to the madrasa meal served to people breaking their fast. He must have been well aware that by feeding people, he was also "feeding his own power" in addition to boosting his pious image.³⁷ He orders that:

The meal must consist of bread, cheese, sweet paste (*halwā*), dates, and sherbet. Breads must be round and small and dates must be black or similar to the dates produced in Medina. Dates must be seeded and stuffed with almonds and the like. In preparing *halwā*, fine oil and flour and sugar must be used to sweeten it and honey and syrup of grapes must not be used [to sweeten it], and if they want to make *halwā* from starch, they must add saffron. Sherbet must be made with sugar, willow-water, and sweet basil seeds and in seasons when good ice is around, it must be added to sherbet. The nights of the 19th, 20th, and 21st of Ramadan are the time of mourning [the martyrdom of 'Alī] so they should exclude *halwā*, sherbet, and dates [from the menu] and instead of those [sweet foods] they must make meals that are not sweet. The cost of these substitute foods must be approximately one hundred *dinārs*."³⁸ ... Also the *mutawallī* must give the sum of twelve Tabrīzī *tumans* to one of the religious scholars so that he

will distribute that money in the month of Ramadan among the needy fasting Shi'as. Each should receive two hundred *dīnārs* with which to break his fast.³⁹

In addition to his instructions for celebrating holy occasions and feeding the needy in the month of Ramadan, Shah Sultan Husayn also specified the fees for fourteen Qur'an reciters in the Madrasa-ye Sultānī's endowment deed (issued on 15 of Rajab in 1711 (29 August 2011)).⁴⁰

Reconfiguring the Cultural Memory of the Shi'a

Usually political changes reshape cultural memories and fashion them in the image of different narratives that better suit particular interests. Indeed, the content and forms of Shi'i commemorative rites and traditions changed in some measure after the Safavids assumed power. This mutation was not random or arbitrary: it paralleled, reflected, and played a role in the reworking of identity that transformed a community characterized by multiple loyalties, of which an incipient religious identity was only one of these identities. It became a community that imagined itself as a unified organism with a common past. While Safavid rulers and 'ulama encouraged commemoration of the events deemed essential to boosting Safavid religious sentiments and supplementing the old memories, they vehemently suppressed the rituals they regarded as heterodox.⁴¹ In fact, in the process of creating a new religious identity, Safavid educational and religious institutions reinforced historical religious memories by selecting those that served their purpose, by creating new memories, or by fusing them; in fact, certain memories were frequently excluded.⁴² Such motivated choices in remembered events are evident in the works of Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī (d. 1698), the *shaykh al-Islam* of Isfahan, particularly in his Persian-language books. In his *'Ayn al-hayāt*, Majlisī quotes numerous sayings of the Prophet and Imams in which they urge their followers to avoid listening to baseless tales and Zoroastrian myths. He maintains that stories of the *Shāh-nāme* by Ferdowsī and the tale of Hamzeh are all merely baseless tales and encourages some 'ulama to even renounce reading and listening to those stories. He quotes a prophetic tradition reported by Muhammad Taqī, the ninth Imam, in which the Prophet said: "Remembering 'Alī is worship and one of the signs of a hypocrite is that he does not like to take part in the assemblies in which he [i.e. 'Alī] is remembered. He'd rather listen to baseless tales and Zoroastrian myths instead of listening to 'Alī's virtues." Prophet Muhammad urges people to remember 'Alī in their assemblies and says that "remembering him is like remembering me and remembering me is like remembering God. Thus whoever avoids assemblies in which 'Alī is remembered and listens to baseless stories is one who does not believe in the Hereafter." In his *Haqq al-yaqīn*, Majlisī also emphasizes that listening to myths such as the story of Hamzeh and stories about the Miracles of Sufi *shaykhs* is forbidden.⁴³

As Kathryn Babayan and other Safavid scholars have shown, Safavid rulers, especially from the time of Shah 'Abbās I, began subduing the *ghulat* (extremists—

e.g. Qizilbāsh and Nuḡṭaviyehs) whose ideas, ideals, and memories of the past challenged mainstream beliefs.⁴⁴ Babayan states that the Safavids betrayed their revolutionary ideals to reinvent normative Islam once they attained temporal power. For example, she argues that, during the Safavid revolutionary phase, the *Abū Muslim-nāmehs* that were products of the culture of Anatolia, Syria, and Iran placed themselves within the drama surrounding the story of the 'Alid victims of Umayyad and 'Abbāsīd oppression. Later on, however, under the influence of religious scholars, they banned the tradition of *Abū Muslim-nāmeḥ* recitation.⁴⁵ Abū Tāhir al-Tartūsī has chronicled Muslim's life in his religio-epic text, *Abū Muslim-nāmeḥ*, which is one of the most celebrated of *Abū Muslim-nāmehs*. This historical religio-epic, a composite of history and legend, is at once meta-historical and meta-dramatic in the dual vision that it presents to the audience. In consummate epic style, al-Tartūsī presents the fallen Abū Muslim and his followers as heroes elevated to the loftiest heights of glory, worthy of comparison with the legendary figures of Shi'a history as well as ancient Iranian history. He describes him as the prime avenger of Imam Husayn's blood, who even killed the son of the accursed Husayn's murderer. According to al-Tartūsī, Abū Muslim left for Iraq by the order of 'Alī, which he had received in a dream—a dream seen by two of his other followers.⁴⁶ When he was killed, there were conflicting reactions among his followers. Some denied that it was Abū Muslim who had been killed by al-Mansūr, the Abbasid caliph.⁴⁷ Others accepted his death and soon began the tradition of gathering at his grave on the anniversary of his murder. Shah Ismā'il and Shah Tahmāsb reportedly destroyed his tomb to prevent people from visiting it. Historians Mas'ūdī and Kaydarī have reports that "a group of ignorant people in the suburb of Nishapur has repaired a tomb and named it the Tomb of Abū Muslim and some ignorant people visit that site."⁴⁸

By reciting Abū Muslim-nāmeḥ religio-epic, Safavid storytellers captivated the imagination of the entire social spectrum of Safavid Isfahan, from its bazaars to its coffee houses. By transforming a historical event into oral narratives, storytellers represented Abū Muslim's uprising in mythical and cosmological terms, while in the process they interlaced the indigenous cosmology of Persians with the history of Shi'ism. The popularity of this religio-epic narrative is evidenced by its appropriation into the revolutionary discourse of the early Safavid time. It may be argued that, in the acts of recitations and witnessing, both the storytellers and denizens of Safavid Isfahan vindicated themselves through epic exaltation of the fallen revolutionary heroes who had sacrificed their lives for the cause of the Shi'a Imams.

Perhaps due to the fact that they could not tolerate any narrative rivaling the *rowzeh-khvānī* tradition, a number of Shi'i scholars vehemently condemned *Abū Muslim-nāmeḥ khvānī* and denounced Abū Muslim as one of the enemies of the Imams and the Shi'a. Among the denouncers was a student of Shaykh-i Bahā'i and Mīr Damad named Sayyid Muhammad Sabzawāri Isfahānī, also known as Mīr Luwhī. The object of Mīr Luwhī's scorn as well as that of his supporters was the common practice of using rhetoric by Safavid storytellers to glorify an "infidel" and his deed that, according to them, was nothing more than a pedestrian incident and an act of betrayal towards the Shi'i Imams. They did not wish to set the historical

record straight, but rather to deride the character of Abū Muslim who had been transformed, to their dismay, into a lasting historical and sacred figure. In the end, what mattered to Mīr Luwhī and the cohort of his supporters—whom I will introduce shortly—was not the narrative itself or its veracity, but rather the effect that it produced on the public.

A body of twenty disputation (*rudūd*) treatises, including *Anīs al-mu'minīn* by Muhammad b. Ishāq Hamawī and *Khulāsāt al-fawā'id* by 'Abd al-Mutallib b. Yahyā Tāliqānī, was compiled in support of Mīr Luwhī's denunciation of Abū Muslim during the final decades of the seventeenth century.⁴⁹ The authors of these polemics explicitly criticized storytellers who propagated myths revolving around Abū Muslim. They argued that storytellers purposely distorted public perception and toyed with the illusion of reality through the use of exaggerated narratives. These polemicists were troubled by the pervasive presence of rival narratives that penetrated an extensive range of socio-cultural realms influencing popular tastes. They were also concerned with the "corrupting effects" of listening to the stories recited by the *naqqālān* (storytellers), which presented a danger to the Islamic-Shi'i identity.⁵⁰ In addition, they complained about the distortion and misrepresentation of Shi'i creed as part of an ongoing deviation from "true Shi'ism."⁵¹

Like Mīr Luwhī, they also re-cast Abū Muslim and his followers in a less than favorable light. In his *Izhār al-haqq va mi'yār al-bātil*, Sayyid Ahmad 'Alawī al-'Āmilī argues that Abū Muslim was one of the enemies of the family of the Prophet Muhammad and not a pro-'Alid.⁵² In his *Sabīfat al-rashād*, Muhammad Zamān b. Muhammad Radawī, another Safavid polemicist, quotes the eighth Imam, al-Ridā, who said: "Abū Muslim was one of our enemies, so whoever likes him is indeed our enemy; whoever accepts him, rejects us, and whoever praises him, disapproves of us."⁵³ In his *Anīs al-mu'minīn*, Muhammad b. Ishāq al-Hamawī quotes al-Ja'far al-Sādiq, who was asked if it is permissible to listen to the words of storytellers. He replied: "It is not permissible, and whoever listens to a storyteller, it is as if he has verily worshipped him."⁵⁴ In his *Khulāsāt al-fawā'id*, 'Abd al-Mutallib b. Yahyā Tāliqānī has the harshest words regarding storytellers who, according to him, were fabricating stories about Abū Muslim and Hamzeh and promulgating their tall tales among the people.⁵⁵ Both Hamawī and Tāliqānī paint Abū Muslim as the hero of Zoroastrians, and state that once the news of Abū Muslim's assassination had reached his Zoroastrian devotees, their leader revolted in order to reclaim the blood of Muslim. Hamawī and Tāliqānī also state that a large number of Abū Muslim's followers considered him as God.⁵⁶

The above-mentioned polemics also represent unequivocally the impetus of cultural dynamism in Safavid Isfahan. Safavid Isfahan maximized communal socializing and entertainment; some denizens of Isfahan spent hours listening to the amazing stories narrated by *naqqālān*. For a public accustomed to the earthy language and fantastic aura of storytellers, the transition to the dry narratives of the 'ulama was not easy. Some religious scholars, including Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī, realized the need to broaden their audience to encompass a wider group. They styled their teachings and writings in the vernacular of the common believer, and produced popular religious

manuals in Persian. The narratives given by Safavid scholars did not aim to reveal past events with objective accuracy. They aspired to craft statements about the past that would resonate as “meaningful,” “persuasive,” and “true” in the context of the age in which they were produced. In fact, despite claiming to expunge the so-called heretical ideas and practices from Twelver Shi'i practices, Safavid 'ulama nurtured some of the popular *ghuluww* practices, such as cursing rituals, that were rejected by many leading Shi'i scholars. For their part, the 'ulama also adapted elements of folk religion present among Qizilbāsh and Persian Sufis alike.⁵⁷ They even embellished historical religious memories in their literary sources. This tendency is evident in Muhammad Bāqir Majlisī's *Bihār al-anwār*, and his Persian works including *Jalā' al-'uyūn* and *Haqq al-yaqīn*. He embellished not only the references to Karbala, but also the aforementioned works' numerous hagiographic accounts of 'Alī and Husayn, who is reported to have performed miracles such as curing the sick, helping regrow dismembered limbs, and causing infants to speak.⁵⁸

In addition to the storytelling tradition, Sufi practices and philosophical inquiries were criticized by jurists (*fuqahā*), some of whom strongly opposed mysticism and firmly rejected philosophy as heresy (*bid'a*).⁵⁹ As early as Tahmāsb's reign, a number of 'ulama began challenging Sufi beliefs and practices.⁶⁰ For example, Muhaqqiq al-Karakī (d. 1534) wrote a book entitled *al-Matā'in al-mujrimīya fi radd al-sūfiya*.⁶¹ Continuing on this path, his son later penned *Umdat al-maqāl fi kufr ahl al-zilāl*.⁶² Ahmad-e Ardabīlī (d. 1585) denounced some twenty-one Sufi groups for such heretical beliefs as ascribing partnership to God, abandoning prayer, fasting, dancing, singing, listening to poetry and music, and so forth.⁶³ Muhammad Tāhir Qumī, the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Qum (d. 1686), was another scholar who wrote a number of polemics, such as *Hikmat al-'arifīn fi radd shubahat al-mukhalifīn ay al-mutasiffifīn va al-mufalsifīn*,⁶⁴ *Tabāfat al-akhyār*, *Fawā'id al-dīniya fi radd 'alā al-hukamā wa šūfiya*, and *Muhibbān-i Khudā*. In these works he rejected the ideas of Sufis and mystical philosophers, including Shaykh Bahā'ī and Mullā Sadrā, for believing in the unity of existence. He believed their infidelity was greater than the unbelief of the Jews and Christians because they deny the difference between the Creator and the created—he felt that whoever did not denounce them and did not call them unbelievers was himself an infidel lacking religion. Shaykh 'Alī b. Muhammad 'Āmilī (d. 1691) also harshly refuted Sufis in his *Zād al-murshidīn fi radd al-sūfiya*. Muhammad Ḥurr al-'Āmilī (d. 1693), the *Shaykh al-Islam* of Mashhad, cited one thousand traditions as evidence against the Sufis.

The conflict between Sufis and the guardians of Shi'a-influenced Islamic “orthodoxy” during Safavid rule was not an unprecedented occurrence. Indeed, in the course of Islamic history, both conventional Shi'i and Sunni scholars' emphasis on “orthodoxy” has caused an ongoing dialogue and at times conflicts and bloody confrontations with Sufis. Within the history of Sufism, Sufis who fostered forms of knowledge and conduct that were in conflict with mainstream religious beliefs and practices were subject to suspicion and often hostility. The age-old strife between Sufis and conventional religious scholars was rooted not only in the mechanisms of control evident in the counteractions of mainstream religious authority towards

Sufis, but also in social aspects of Sufism that had emerged mainly in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries in the form of Sufi brotherhoods. These new forms of Sufism were publicized in the sense that they were accessible as much in the marketplace as in the *khānqāh* (Sufis' hospice) and expressed for the most part in the vernacular, often by individuals who had not received a solid religious education. Paradoxically, although these new developments in Sufism would seem to counteract the suspicion of esotericism voiced by mainstream religious authorities, they actually provoked fears because they were seen as giving 'dangerous' ideas a broader reach among strata of society that were less subject to close supervision. In other words, as long as Sufism was largely the purview of spiritual elites, it was regarded a relatively safe phenomenon. When it spread out among the masses it automatically became more dangerous to the guardians of "orthodoxy." Yet, when suspicions of mystical heresy once again smoldered in Safavid Persia, many of the nodes of conflict were strikingly familiar. The specific charges brought against Safavid Sufis, such as pantheism and moral corruption, were old.

'Abd al-Husayn Zarrīnkūb argues that the Safavid 'ulama were essentially not opposed to Sufis; nor were central mystical ideas alien to their works and ontology—they were mostly threatened by the radical impact of their socio-economic content on the masses.⁶⁵ Zarrīnkūb states that clerical rejection of popular Sufism was directed against the Sufis who encouraged their followers to challenge the "orthodoxy" upheld by the state and its religious elite. The jurists viewed with great alarm the Sufi concepts of the pole (*qutb*) and the seat of deputyship (*maqām-i wilāyat*) that circulated with the widespread popularity of the works of Ibn 'Arabī.⁶⁶ He argues that jurists, while striving to uproot popular Sufism, had inadvertently claimed a form of spiritual guidance as a pole.⁶⁷

That being said, despite the fact that during the latter half of Safavid rule Sufis were rapidly deprived of opportunities and privileges to which they had grown accustomed, and were only given baser types of employment such as royal guards, sweepers of the palace buildings, gatekeepers, and jailers, they were not persecuted violently.⁶⁸ Even with the animosity expressed by Safavid legal-minded 'ulama towards Sufis and the steady decline of Sufis' power and political status, it seems Safavid ruling elites maintained their ties with the Sufi establishment until the end of their rule.⁶⁹ Shah Sultan Husayn, as soon as he assumed power, sent twelve Tabrīzī *tumans* and twelve big trays of sweets to the *khalīfat al-khulafā* of the Sufis just as his forefathers had, and asked them to pray for the longevity of his kingship.⁷⁰ In a royal decree, he entrusted Sayyid Ibrahim with the following responsibilities of *khalīfat al-khulafā*':

He [*khalīfat al-khulafā* of the Sufis] was ... responsible for directing his followers to the love (*wilāyat*) of the Prophet's family. He should ask them to observe all religious duties, including religious cleansing, paying alms (*zakat*), and fifth (*khums*), fasting, *hajj*, visiting holy shrines of the Imams, and the like. He also should forbid his followers from committing unlawful acts such as denying what was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad, eating a human corpse [and pork], drinking wine, stealing, having homosexual relationships, adultery, and the like.⁷¹

Conclusion

In their attempts to construct a Shi'i "orthodoxy" through the articulation of "true" narrative and public morality, Safavid political elites, along with mainstream religious authorities, were active in appropriating the domain of culture by making effective use of all religious institutions and rhetorical tools available to them. As a result, the madrasa institution acted not only as an agent in the transmission of religious knowledge and the social construction of collective memory, but also played an important role in retrieving and reconstructing the Shi'a's own past, and hence their distinct identity within the flux of Muslim cultural identity. That said, during Safavid rule the cultural memory of the Shi'a was constantly reconstructed in the context of current circumstances and perceptions. Thus, Safavid needs were not suited by simply enacting the retrieval of knowledge stored in the collective archives of Shi'i history; in order to assert its legitimacy, Safavid rule constantly strove to contextualize that knowledge and contemporize the past. Madrasas were also places for transmitting the curriculum and textbooks considered "orthodox" by the elites who sponsored intellectual and cultural activities.⁷²

The rise of the *shari'a*-minded Shi'i scholars in Safavid society was a notable force through the articulation of a set of discourses that challenged the authority of extremist supporters of the Safavids. These discourses simultaneously claimed authority over the interpretation of the realm of meanings associated with notions of identity, as well as the role of past heroes and practices among unconventional socio-religious, spiritual, and intellectual groups. In the ongoing struggle over the power to define and control the assumed right belief, the dominant discourse sought to claim authority by using the categories of religiously permitted cultural practices and those which it was forbidden to refer to. Thus they imposed their religious outlook within the public sphere. The Safavid court's positioning in the cultural battle converged with that of the mainstream while maneuvering to manage the challenge of the extremist Shi'a. The Safavid court's image was increasingly invested in the religio-cultural arena as a strategy for neutralizing the extremists. The Safavid elites pursued this aim on the grounds of morality and religiosity, using religio-cultural productions and institutions—e.g. commemorative rituals and the madrasas—as weapons for discrediting revolutionary Shi'ism and non-conformist schools of thought.

Notes

1. The massacre of Husayn's family became pivotal to Shi'i communal identity and still finds tremendous resonance with Shi'a all over the world. For more information on the battle of Karbala and its importance in shaping the Shi'i communal identity, see Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 25–7, ff.; Nakash, "An Attempt to Trace the Origins of the Rituals of 'Āshūrā." According to Yarshater pre-Islamic Persia provided *ta'ziyeh* rituals with a ready mold, and the *Ayadgar-e Zareran* offers parallels to many aspects of Husayn's memorial ceremonies. See Yarshater "Ta'ziyeh and Pre-Islamic Mourning Rites."
2. Calmard, "Le patronage des Ta'ziyeh"; Calmard, "Les rituels Shiites et le pouvoir"; Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II."

3. For more information on this interpretation of Shi'i commemorative rituals, see Ayoub, *Redemptive Suffering*, 147.
4. Aghaie, *The Martyrs of Karbala*, xii, 12. Dabashi sees *ta'ziyeh* as the performance of social dissent. See his "Ta'ziyeh as Theatre of Protest."
5. In his *al-Naqd*, Qazwini frequently refers to these commemorative rituals. See Qazwini, *al-Naqd*, 41, 43 ff.
6. Almost all Safavid madrasas were centers of religious learning and ritualized activities. For instance, in the *waqf-nāmeḥ* of the Madrasa-masjid-e Shah complex, Shāh 'Abbās I provided for the cost of soup (*halīm*) that was to be distributed among the public on the day of 'Ashūrā. He also made provision for the fee of the Imams' dirge reciter and the cost of other religious observances. See Sipintā, *Tārikhcheb-ye awqāf*, 58, 60, 67, 68.
7. As Emile Durkheim argues, a community is able to maintain its unity and personality through upholding and reaffirming their collective sentiments and ideas at regular intervals. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms*, 427. See also Assmann, *Religion and Cultural Memory*, 7–9.
8. For an elaboration of this approach to memory, see Bal et al., *Acts of Memory*, vii–xvii.
9. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheb-ye awqāf*, 172–4.
10. Typically donors (*wāqifs*) of madrasas in Sunni societies also assigned a part of their endowment revenues to the commemoration of the most important festivals in the Islamic calendar. See, for example, Subtelny, "A Timurid Educational and Charitable Foundation," 47–8. There were of course donors who did not sponsor the commemorative rituals at all. For example, various donors of the 'Alid Shrine provided for the fees of muezzins, Qur'an reciters, and the prayers imam but not for any Islamic festivals. See McChesney, *Waqf in Central Asia*, 133–4.
11. See, for example, Majlisi, *Bihār al-anwār*, 44: 180–82, 184, 198, 270.
12. The act of pilgrimage, in the words of Nakash, "meant a movement from a mundane center to a sacred periphery." Nakash, *The Shi'is of Iraq*, 165.
13. Shi'i *maqātil* literature contains copious information about the historical events which led to the violent death of the Shi'i Imams. They also describe the attitudes of persons, groups or sects that took part in socio-political and religious clashes. For a comprehensive examination of this genre of literature see Gunther, "Maqatil-Literature in Medieval Islam."
14. Nasiri Muqaddam published a *waqf-nāmeḥ* of the madrasa dated 1709. See Nasiri Muqaddam, "Waqf-nāmeḥ," 112–18. The original text of this *waqf-nāmeḥ* is held in the Iran-e Bastan museum. There is a microfilm of this *waqf-nāmeḥ* in the Kitābkhāneh-ye Markazi-e Dānishgāh-e Tehran under number 1735. Muhammad Taqī Dānishpazhūh, who had seen the document, described it as follows: "*Waqf-nāmeḥ* number 8549, held in the Mūzeh-yi Iran Bāstān, was written by the calligrapher Mīrza Ahmad Nayrīzī in 1720 on European paper and its title is written in gold. It is lavishly decorated with brilliant color." Cited in Nasiri Muqaddam, "Waqf-nāmeḥ," 113.
15. See Sipintā, *Tārikhcheb-ye awqāf*, 120–228. See also Dibāji, "Waqf-nāmeḥ-ye Shāh Sultān Husayn," 80–83.
16. In *rowzeh-khvāni* sessions, the ritual recitation of the sufferings of the Imams—a hagiographically embellished version of the historical accounts of Karbala—is normally recited in dramatic and deeply emotional style. Husayn Vā'iz Kāshifī (d. 1504), an elegist himself, recounted the suffering of the Imams, especially events of Husayn's martyrdom in Karbala, in his *rowzat al-shuhadā* (Meadow of Martyrs). This book has become one of the most commonly recited elegies at dirge sessions (*rowzeh-khvāni*), during Muharram processions. For more information on this text see Amanat, "Meadow of Martyrs."
17. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheb-ye awqāf*, 163. Calmard suggests that it was during the reign of Shah 'Abbās I that "the mourning ceremonies dedicated to the Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn had become a big communal feast comprising an increasing number of dramatic elements—often very realistic—in pageants incorporated into processional rituals." Calmard, "Shi'ite Rituals and Power," 154.
18. Serving mourners with food and drink is considered a good deed and a blessed act that is still practiced every year during the 9th and 10th of Muharram and Safar 20.

19. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 165.
20. It seems the main purpose of the rite had been to lift the audience out of their mundane existence and into the spiritual sphere of the stories the preachers (*minbaris*) were narrating by enhancing the drama of the stories, thus the historical veracity of the stories was not a concern as such.
21. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 238–42. European travelers give detailed accounts of these annual commemoration ceremonies, to which Safavid shahs paid particular attention. P. Della Valle reports that during the processions of Muharram, elaborate paraphernalia were used to enhance realistic representation of the tragedy. See Della Valle, *The Pilgrimage*, 143–4. M. Membre also describes the *ta'ziyeh* ceremonies during the reign of Tahmāsb. See Membre, *Mission to the Lord Sophy of Persia*, 52.
22. For example, Shah 'Abbās I asked Muhammad Bāqir Mīr Damad (d. 1631) to confirm whether fighting against the Sunni Ottomans was a religious duty or not. And if a believer (i.e. a Shi'i Safavid soldier) got killed in this battle, would he be considered a martyr? In response to the Shah's *istiftā'*, Mīr Dāmād wrote that "... war against the Ottoman army is in accordance with right religion and it is a necessary and legitimate fight." Cited in Ja'fariyān, *Kāwushbhā-ye tāzeh*, 134–7.
23. Although Twelver Shi'ism had been declared the official religion of the Safavid realm, there were many Persians who had not yet converted to Shi'ism. In addition, Persia's neighboring Sunni states were disturbed by some of the Shi'i rites.
24. See, for example, Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, vols. 44–50, wherein he describes the life of the imams and their virtues. In his *al-Naqd*, Qazwīnī also describes the virtues of 'Alī. See *al-Naqd*, 137–43.
25. For the doctrine of *barā'a*, see Kohlberg, "Bara'a in Shi'ite Doctrine."
26. The doctrine of *barā'a* was well developed in Imami Shi'ism by the late eighth century. See Kohlberg, "Bara'a in Shi'ite Doctrine," 144–7. Qazwīnī refers to the well-established tradition of cursing the first three caliphs in the twelfth century. See his *al-Naqd*, 110–11.
27. Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 33–4.
28. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 223.
29. For the history and culture of *manāqib khvānī*, see Mahjūb, "The Evolution of Popular Eulogy of the Imams." It seems that even in the later period of Safavid rule, the Safavid Shahs and 'ulama needed to resort to popular culture to consolidate Shi'ism. Majlisi dedicated the entirety of the eighth volume of *Bihār al-anwār* to the strife between Sunnism and Shi'ism. This volume also contains detailed prescriptions on cursing the first three caliphs.
30. Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 26–7.
31. See Nava'i, *Shah Tahmāsb Safavi*, 42–4, 214, 217–32. See also Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 26–7; Stanfield-Johnson, "The Tabarra'iyan and the Early Safavids."
32. Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 34.
33. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 164. The Sunnis commemorate the anniversary of the birth of the Prophet on the 12th of the month of Rabi' al-Awwal.
34. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 164. 'Alī's birthday is seen as important as Muhammad's birthday and celebrated in the same way, while 'Īd-e Ghadir is equated with 'Īd al-Adhā, the most important Islamic celebration.
35. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 166.
36. *Ibid.*, 162.
37. The Ottomans also supplied and distributed food to their subjects, thereby constituting a source of legitimacy for themselves. For more information see Singer, *Constructing Ottoman Beneficence*, 131.
38. These rituals are perhaps designed to support memory. Leaving out the sweet meals and desserts from the menu is incorporated as a symbolic aid to memory.
39. Sipintā, *Tārikhcheh-ye awqāf*, 129–30, 199.
40. *Ibid.*, 165–6.
41. Perhaps these stories were rejected because they evoked patterns of behavior and ethics within a Persianate conceptual frame, as argued by Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 165. Calmard, "Popular Literature under the Safavid", 312–21, ff.

42. For an excellent examination of the Safavids' suppression of so-called heterodox sects and ideas, see Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, 121–50, 161 ff.
43. Majlisi, *Ayn al-hayāt*, 547–8. Some Shi'i 'ulama's rejection of ancient Iranian myths was probably due to similarities that exist between certain Shi'i beliefs and Zoroastrian beliefs. The Shi'a were accused of adopting some of the ancient Iranian beliefs. See, for example, Qazwīnī, *al-Naqd*, 444–8, wherein he dismisses these accusations.
44. See, for example, Bashir, *Messianic Hopes and Mystical Visions*, 189–97; Amanat, "The Nuqtawi Movement of Mahmūd Pisikhānī"; Arjomand, "Religious Extremists (*Ghuluww*)."
45. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs, and Messiahs*, xxvii, 101–6, 245–81, and particularly chapter 10: 349–87; Babayan, "The Safavid Synthesis." See also Ishraqi, "Nuqtaviyyeh à l'époque safavids," 341–9; Roemer "The Qizilbash Turcomans."
46. al-Tartūsī, *Abū Muslim-nāmeḥ*, 1: 657–60.
47. According to 'Abd al-Mutallib b. Yahyā Tāliqānī, the Khuramiyeh believed Abu Muslim has not died and will never die. He will return to restore justice on earth. See Shari'at Mūsawī, *Kifāyat al-muhtadī*, 311.
48. *Ibid.*, 311–12.
49. Tehrānī lists seventeen epistles. See *al-Dharī'a*, 4: 151. Shari'at Mūsawī published the four of those epistles that he could find. See Shari'at Mūsawī, *Kifāyat al-muhtadī*, 179–414.
50. Shari'at Mūsawī, *Kifāyat al-muhtadī*, 195–8, 289–90, 330–32.
51. *Ibid.*, 287–90.
52. *Ibid.*, 265–9.
53. *Ibid.*, 279–80.
54. *Ibid.*, 195.
55. According to 'Abd al-Mutallib b. Yahyā Tāliqānī: "Infidels love Abū Muslim, because he claimed divinity, and Sunnis love him because he supported Banī 'Abbās." Shari'at Mūsawī, *Kifāyat al-muhtadī*, 313.
56. In all the above-mentioned polemics, Abū Muslim was declared one of the Kaysāniya; he had a humble origin and was an illegitimate son of a slave. See Shari'at Mūsawī, *Kifāyat al-muhtadī*, 192, 292–4.
57. See Calmard, "Shi'i Rituals and Power II," 166 ff.; Morton, "The Chub-e *tariq*," 242–4.
58. Majlisi, *Bihār al-anwār*, 44: 180–82, 184, 198, 270; Majlisi, *Jalā' al-'uyun*, 659–71; Majlisi, *Haqq al-yaqīn*, 43–8, 129–30, 135.
59. The nature of critiques of jurists will be discussed in chapter 6 of my forthcoming book entitled *Shi'i Higher Learning and the Role of the Madrasa-yi Sultani in Late Safavid Iran*, which will be published by Brill in the near future.
60. In spite of religious scholars' censure of Sufi teachings and rituals, Tahmāsb patronized rather lavish Sufi rituals conducted at the shrine of Shaykh Safi in Ardabīl. For more information on these Sufi rituals and practices, see: Rizvi, *The Safavid Dynastic Shrine*, 41, ff.; Rizvi, "Its Mortar Mixed," 330–32.
61. For more on ostracizing of the Sufis, see Abisaab, *Converting Persia*, 24–6.
62. Ja'fariyān, *Ilal-e bar ofiādan-e safaviyān*, 323–45; see also another of his books, *Safaviyeh dar 'arseh-ye dīn*, 1: 390, 3: 1141–54.
63. For more on him, see Cooper, "Some Observations," 149; Cooper, "The Muqaddas al-Ardabili," 263–6.
64. Ja'fariyān, *Dīn wa siyāsāt*, 241. For more on him see Mudarris Tabrizī, *Rayḥānat al-adab* 4: 487; Kashmīrī, *Nujūm al-samā'*, 46; 'Āmilī, *Amal al-āmil*, 2: 277.
65. Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar tassawwuf*, 259–60. Craftsmen in several guilds also challenged the clerical aristocracy and the state by undermining the *shari'a* and expressing defiance to the *mujthahids*. Zarrīnkūb, "Persian Sufism," 177–8.
66. Zarrīnkūb, *Justijū dar tassawwuf*, 262.
67. *Ibid.*, 262–3.
68. Moreen, "The Status of Religious Minorities," 121–3.

69. The Safavid shah had a deputy among the Sufis, the *khalīfat al-khulafā*, and obedience to him was tantamount to obedience to the shah. For more information on this office, see Savory, "The Office of *khalīfat al-khulafā*," *JAOs* 85 (1965): 497–502.
70. Nasīrī, *Dastūr-e shabriyārān*, 56.
71. Ja'fariyan, *Din wa siyasat dar dowreh-ye safavi*, 115–117.
72. As will be explained in chapter 4 of my forthcoming book, entitled *Shi'i Higher Learning and the Role of the Madrasa-yi Sultani in Late Safavid Iran*, which will be published by Brill in the near future, the curriculum of Safavid madrasas also reflected varying attitudes and ideological postures toward the present, as well as towards other cultures and systems of knowledge.

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