ARTICLE

Ottoman Policies Regarding Shah Ismāʿīl II as Seen through Ottoman Documents

Nozhat Ahmadi[1] and Mohammad Amin Keikha Shahinpour[2]

University of Isfahan, Isfahan, Iran
Corresponding author: Nozhat Ahmadi; Email: n.ahmadi@ltr.ui.ac.ir

Abstract

Relations between Iran and the Ottoman Empire during the Safavid era were never free of tension, even when there was peace between the two states. In peacetime, both powers secretly and closely monitored the other's movements, either in anticipation of or in preparation for attacks. Due to the destruction of Safavid archives, there is little documentary information in Iranian archives about Iranian-Ottoman relations in the period, forcing us to rely mainly on chronicles and travelogues. However, the Ottoman Mühimme Defterleri (Registers of Important Affairs), which contain a copy of all royal decrees and orders, are a very valuable source for the study of these tense and unstable relations from the Ottoman perspective. According to these registers, upon the coming to power of Shah Ismāʿīl II, the Ottoman government publicly upheld and respected the terms of the Amasya Peace Treaty, while secretly looking for a pretext to resume war against Iran. The question is, however, why the Ottomans did not attack Iran immediately after Ismāʿīl II's accession to the throne. Was it due, as some sources claim, to the bravery Shah Ismāʿīl had previously shown in action against the Ottomans? By examining and analyzing the Mühimme Registers of this period, the authors of the present paper demonstrate that the Ottomans had plans to invade Iran and occupy parts of its territory at the beginning of Ismāʿīl II's accession, but their military campaign was thwarted by the lack of opportunities during the short period of the Safavid king's rule.

Keywords: the Safavids; the Ottomans; Shah Ismāʿīl II; Sultan Morād III; Iran-Ottoman relations; Mühimme Defterleri

Introduction

Safavid-Ottoman relations during the early modern era were tense and complicated. Having conquered both Muslim and Christian territories, the Ottomans did not tolerate a powerful rival at their borders, especially when the new state sought to spread the beliefs of a particular branch of Islam that clashed with the Sunnism espoused by the Ottoman ruling class, and which had many adherents in Ottoman territories. Shortly after the establishment of Safavid rule, many such adherents left Ottoman-held Anatolia for Iran, leading to an Ottoman ban on immigration and movement across borders.[3] The ban was only lifted for Safavid devotees who wished to make a pilgrimage to Shaykh Safi al-Din's mausoleum in Ardabil. This came about through an exchange of diplomatic correspondence and Shah

---

[3] Sümer, *Safevi Devleti'nin Kuruluşu ve Gelişmesinde Anadolu Türklerinin Rolü (Şah İsmail ile Halifeleri ve Anadolu Türkleri)* (Ankara: Güven Matbası, 1976), 17–19, 25.