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The Also-Rans: Failures on the Messianic Road to Power in Persia

The transformation of the Safavid Order of Ardabil from a contemplative order of peaceful Sufi mystics into a radical millenarian movement that would forge a new Persian Empire was one of the most transformative events of medieval Middle Eastern history. The rise of this humble Sufi order into a major empire that would convert Iran to Twelver Shi'ism, forever altering the course of history in the region. But it need not have been the Safavids who reshaped destiny in this way; before the rise of Junayd Safavi in 1447 and his successors throughout the remainder of the century, other extremist movements, tinged with the same, seemingly Shi'ite loyalties and messianic pretensions that characterized the Safavids, had made their own bids for power in Persia. For various reasons, these preceding movements failed, and the Safavids succeeded.

What then, were the reasons for the failures of the preceding extremist millenarian movements? What made the Safavids different? And what then, do these movements tell us about the state of the religious and political terrain in Persia during the fourteenth century? The answers to these questions are complicated, but the overall patterns are clear enough. The Safavids, rather than representing a total historical anomaly with their sudden transformation from Sufi order to extremist movement and then to brutal empire, were part of a greater historical trend that well predated them. The Safavids were a product of the political instability of the period, which can be traced back to the collapse of the Mongol Ilkhanate (1335, within a year of Safi ad-Din's death) and in the fifteenth century the collapse of the Timurids and their empire, particularly from 1447 (year of the death of Timur's successor Shahrukh, and also of Junayd Safavi's assumption of leadership in Ardabil) onward. This same instability produced the forerunners of the Safavid movement, who would rise to power on the basis of the same, millenarian and messianic claims made by the Safavids.

The preceding thirteenth century had seen the immensely bloody rise to power of the Mongols and the establishment of their power throughout much of the Middle East, with only Mamluk Egypt engaging in successful outright military opposition.[1] Three major independent Mongol dynasties had been established within Muslim territories by the late thirteenth century, with the most important to the Middle East being the Il-khans descended from the Mongol Hülegü, who famously sacked Baghdad in 1258.[2] Hülegü's dynasty ruled in most of Persia and throughout the Tigris-Euphrates valley, with their effective vassals including the previous ruling power in the area, the Seljuq Turks.

The Mongols of the Il-Khanate, always quick to adapt to the culture and religions of conquered peoples, had by and large embraced a non-sectarian version of Islam by the turn of the fourteenth

century, albeit with a fair amount of syncretization from their previous shamanistic and Buddhist beliefs.[3] In accordance with their own folk religious traditions, as opposed to more hierarchical religious orthodoxies, the Mongols showed favoritism towards the mysticism of popular Sufi shaykhs, who commanded much more in terms of a devout personal following than the orthodox Sunni or Shi'i religious scholars of the '*ulama*.[4] These shaykhs, such as Safi ad-Din of Ardabil, generally adhered to a form of "high" Sufism, a form that eschewed any outright heterodoxy (such as Shi'i beliefs), was favored by some "mainstream" Sufi orders, and that was accepted by rulers and scholars alike, no doubt in part because it was non-threatening.[5]

A brief word on the state of Shi'ism under the Mongol Il-Khanate should be said as well. The Mongol Il-Khans took a somewhat apolitical view of most religious controversies; while they were certainly interested in the religious disputes and debates of their day, they largely concerned themselves with keeping the peace rather than taking sides or professing any formal religious allegiance to Sunnism or Shi'ism. While it would be a stretch to say that the Mongols pursued a policy of religious tolerance in a modern sense, they were largely even-handed regarding religious disputes. This is not to say that Mongol rulers would not demonstrate favoritism towards whatever particular flavor of religion was favored at the time, via royal patronage.[6]

For a number of reasons, the Il-Khans were specifically often favorable towards Twelver Shi'ism, a pattern the early Il-Khans established when they entrusted the conduct of most important religious affairs, including endowments *(waqfs)* to Nasir ad-Din Tusi, a philosopher and religious figure whose own views decidedly favored Twelver Shi'ism.[7] By contrast, the Sevener Shi'ites (Isma'ilis) were specifically targeted by Il-Khanate founder Hülegü and his successors because of their status as a military and political power in their own right dating back to the tenth century.[8] The Mongols proved to be reasonably effective in suppressing the Seveners, though the Isma'ilis would still have a role to play in the religious history of Iran and the story of the Safavid transformation.

While Twelver Shi'ism did relatively well under the Mongols, it did not become an official religious doctrine, and fell out of favor with the last Il-Khan Abu Sa'id (reigned 1316-1335), who preferred to stick with the orthodox Sunni synthesis.[9] Twelver Shi'ism to an extent flourished under the Il-Khans, but ultimately did not succeed in gaining much in the way of political power under the Mongols; the same even-handedness that allowed Shi'ites to move in the open without fear also prevented them from gaining much in the way of real influence even with Shi'i-aligned Mongol Il-Khans.

To an extent then, the collapse of the Il-Khanate in 1335 was a good thing from a Shi'ite perspective, at least in retrospect. The Shi'ite '*ulama* had failed for centuries by that point to convince any central government to adopt Shi'ism, but with the death of Abu Sa'id, the entire question of central government in Iran, Azerbaijan, and the Tigris valley became somewhat academic. The collapse of the Il-Khanate resulted in a power vacuum that would not truly be filled until Timur's conquests five decades later. The power vacuum however, should not be characterized as unambiguously negative; Mongol rule, though it had made Persia powerful, had

been highly burdensome on the population.[10] For Shi'ites, the Mongol collapse would even prove beneficial in some respects.

The fall of the Il-Khanate saw the rise of several localized dynasties, as well as unsuccessful attempts by Mongol successors (most notably Togha Temur) to recreate the Il-Khanate. There were three basic categories of groups that contended for power in Iran in the post-Il-Khanate period. The first were the Mongol princes descended from or who claimed descent from Chingiz Khan, the second were local princes and rulers who either represented tribal confederations or the descendants of senior generals and governors who had served the Il-Khans, and the last group were religious movements (frequently beginning as or in Sufi orders) founded around millenarian Shi'ite extremism.[11] A brief overview of the political situation in Persia between the fall of the Il-Khanate and the conquests of Timur is necessary to understand the trend towards the third type of Mongol successors.

In Iraq and western Persia, beginning in 1340, the dominant power for a time were the Jalayirids, a dynasty descended from one of the Il-Khanate founder Hülegü's key generals, known as "Great Hasan."[12] The dynasty's founder, Hasan-i Buzurg, had been one of the top lieutenants for the last Il-Khan, so his rise to power was a logical consequence of the dynasty's disintegration. Their chief rivals through the 1340s were the Chobanids of Azerbaijan, descendants of a prominent Mongol family, who eventually faded from the scene when they were destroyed by the Golden Horde (Mongol successors in Russia) in 1357.

The strongest rivals to the Jalayirids were the Muzaffarids, originally an Arab family who had become the local rulers of the city of Yazd in central Persia under the Il-Khans.[13] After the collapse of the Il-Khanate, the Muzaffarids extended their power over much of central Persia, Persian Iraq, and into Azerbaijan. The Muzaffarids and the Jalayirids maintained a rough balance of power until Timur's conquests disrupted both powers; the Muzaffarid princes were completely exterminated by Timur, and the Jalayirids, though not destroyed, were weakened to the point that they became vulnerable to other powers. Other important post-Ilkhanate powers in Persia included the Kartids, a Tajik dynasty in Khurasan, and their immediate rivals the Sarbadars of Sabzavar, as well as Togha Temur (r. 1337-1353), a pretender to the Il-Khanate throne based in eastern Iran with the support of the local princes there.[14] Togha Temur was killed by the Sarbadars, and the Sarbadars and the Kartids, like the other groups mentioned here, would be consumed by the Timurid conquests.

The Sarbadars were the earliest Shi'ite beneficiaries of the Il-Khanate's collapse, a rebel group (the original cause of their uprising was taxes on the lesser nobility imposed by the Mongol Togha Temur, an Ilkhanate claimant) in western Khorasan who effectively established their own state when they seized the city of Sabzavar in 1337.[15] The capture of the city of Sabzavar was an important turning point; while the origins of the rising as a tax revolt were commonplace enough, capturing Sabzavar brought the rebels into close contact with the large amount of Shi'ites in the city and region, who had been stirred into fervent Twelver Shi'ism by the preaching of a Sufi mystic from Mazandaran named Shaykh Khalifa, and later his disciple Hasan Juri. Juri would become co-leader of the Sarbadar state in 1340, along with a man named

Mas'ud, who by this time had negotiated a truce with Togha Temur.[16] Juri's faction of dervishes and their descendants conceived of the Sarbadar state as essentially a Shi'ite theocracy (opposed by the moderate followers of Mas'ud) and the two factions would swap power back and forth throughout the remaining lifespan of the Sarbadar state.

The Sarbadars were a key predecessor to the Safavids as the earliest example of a post-Mongol group which claimed political legitimacy based upon Shi'i religious-millenarian ideals, and not a connection to a particular Mongol ruler.[17] The precedent of Shi'ite-Sufi militancy seen with the Sarbadars certainly foreshadowed the later Safavid transformation, and like the Safavids, they practiced a millenarian, somewhat heterodox version of Shi'ism that predicted the return of the Mahdi, also referred to as the Hidden Imam, a prophesied savior in Islam who would appear before the endtimes.[18] Also similarly to the Safavids, they arose from a popular *ghulat* movement, and (again, much as the Safavids would) their leaders would later seek to impose a more orthodox Twelver Shi'ism on their subjects, though the Sarbadars never received the opportunity to put their plans to that end into effect.[19] Unlike the Safavids however, none of the Sarbadars ever attributed Mahdism to a specific person, and like the Safavids, after obtaining power, they began to move towards establishing an orthodox Twelver Shi'i hierarchy, though they never completed this process prior to being absorbed into Timur's empire in 1381.[20] Religiously, the Sarbadars, while they represented a far less potent strain of militant Shi'ite millenarianism than the Safavids under Junayd, the Safavids followed a very similar trajectory to the Sarbadars in their rise to power; they were a radical, heterodox *ghulat* Shi'ite-Sufi movement that attached itself to the governing power of a state, tried to make it a theocracy, and ended up in effect usurping it. The broad strokes differences between the two movements were more in degree (The Sarbadars were notably less radical and had a far less powerful state to work with) than in basic form.

As a final note on the Sarbadars, it is worth noting they also left one other indirect legacy to the Safavids. Some followers of Hasan Juri's party in Sabazvar, led by a man named 'Izz al-Din, fled to Mazandaran in 1381 following the near-collapse of the Sarbadar state and founded a very similar state in Amul that lasted until 1392 when it was destroyed by Timur.[21] The real importance of this particular small theocratic state was that it provided aid to dervishes in the province of Gilan along the Caspian Sea in seizing control and founding a local Shi'ite dynasty (of the Zaidi, or Fiver, variety of Shi'ism) that would control Gilan for another two centuries, including a period as vassals of the Safavids.[22] The Safavids would later find refuge here after their defeat by the Aqquyunlu in 1494.

Another key difference between the Safavids and the Sarbadars was in the make-up of their following. Hasan Juri's faction of radical Shi'ite followers had been based around the city of Sabazvar, and while they were certainly radical, it was the result of dedicated efforts by dervishes like Juri, and even so, the Sabazvars had a competing non-radical faction and were never as extreme or anywhere near as messianic in their beliefs as the Safavids or Musha'sha. The urban and sedentary following of the Sarbadars would not be the basis for a successful Islamic revolution.

Most of the followers of the fifteenth-century Safavid movement, the culmination of the power of messianic religious extremism in Persia, were nomadic Turkmen tribal groups, descended from the Oghuz Turks who (in the form of the Seljuqs, one Oghuz grouping) began to arrive in Persia in the tenth century.[23] Many of their descendants, Turkmen tribesmen who also made up the contemporary Qaraqoyunlu and Aqquyunlu confederations, would become the fanatical following of the Safavids in the fifteenth century, that were referred to as the Qizilbash.

Who then, were the ancestors of the Qizilbash and what did they believe? The Oghuz Turks, before they wandered into the orbit of the Islamic world, originally held some shamanistic beliefs, and had also been exposed to forms of Christianity, Buddhism. Judaism, and Manichaeanism. Their conversion to Islam was not a very intellectual conversion, in the sense that they for the most part had little interest in the doctrinal disputes between Shi'ites or Sunnis, and instead adopted from Islam what fit into their own ethnic traditions.[24] This nomadic type of folk Islam manifested itself frequently amongst the Oghuz Turks and the Seljuqs in particular as reverence for mystical Sufi dervishes and *babas*.[25] It is worth recalling here that the nomadic Mongols, moving into Persia and Anatolia three centuries later and coming from a similar background of shamanistic traditions with a scattering of Buddhist and Christian influences, would display the same reverence for Sufi shaykhs and would tend to favor Sufi orders over the religious doctrine and debates of the *ulama*, as discussed earlier. The Oghuz Turks, particularly the early Seljuqs, displayed the same preference for the type of popular, folk Islam that the Mongols would later share.

It would be wrong to suggest, that these early Turks were essentially proto-Shi'ites in their affiliations, and that by logical extension, you could directly trace the religious fanaticism of the Qizilbash directly back to them.[26] Sufism and Shi'ism did possess compatible elements, a certain interconnectivity in their early history, and had an incredibly significant historical relationship, but by the time of the Seljuq Turks, Shi'ism and Sufism, for the time being, had essentially separated from each other.[27] The formal Islamic allegiance of the Oghuz Turks, inasmuch as they had any, was certainly to Sunnism during the Seljuq Empire's heyday, although the mysticism of Sufi dervishes and shaykhs, building off of earlier Turkish shamanistic traditions, seems to have held the most appeal for them.

Although the radical millenarianism of later extremist movements was not yet present in the time of the Oghuz Turks, some precedents for the world-embracing and messianic tendencies of the later Mahdist movements were present. From a very early point in Turkic history, dating back at least as far as to the Gök-Türk**s** of the sixth century, according to Byzantine sources, the ideal of world domination as the destiny of the Turks was very much a central element in their belief system.[28] The centrality of this belief was repeated in other Turkic empires and kingdoms, such as that of the Uighurs, and the tendency certainly continued with the Oghuz Turks, who essentially adopted an Islamized version of this belief in the destiny of the Turks. The Seljuqs in particular practiced this explicitly; even as they fought as warriors of Islam, political power was increasingly reserved for Turks, for the often specifically articulated idea of world domination by the Turks.[29]

While this Turkish ideal of world domination should not be mistaken for the particular brand of fifteenth-century millenarian Islamic extremism that would drive previously peaceful and mystical Sufis into a bloody quest for worldly power, the Safavid movement and its predecessor, represented an extension of this belief system, one that was particularly attuned and adapted to the religious currents of the fifteenth century in which there was no uncontested central authority in much of the Islamic world, as opposed to the power of the Caliphate and the Seljuq Empire in earlier times. The popular type of Islam embraced by the early Turks does connect, albeit indirectly, to the extremism of the Safavids and their predecessor extremist Islamic movements in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and to demonstrate this connection, a brief definition of the three essential categories of Shi'ism is warranted.[30]

The two primary organized branches of Shi'ism were the Twelver (Imami) and Sevener (Isma'ili) branches, who differed primarily on the essential point of the amount of legitimate Shi'i imams in the succession from Ali, the fourth caliph. The third type, *ghulat* (or *ghuluww)* extremism, is difficult to properly define, since its defining characteristic was heterodoxy.[31] Broadly speaking however, *ghulat* extremism, which saw its heyday in the fifteenth century, was generally practiced by nomadic Turkmen tribesmen and some more extreme Sufi elements, and while not formally Shi'ism as such, inasmuch as any Twelver scholar would have disdained to be associated with the beliefs of nomadic Turkmen, it took ideas from Shi'ism, particularly the reverence for the family of the Prophet Muhammad and Ali. However, the *ghulat* variety of Shi'ism as a general rule had very little in common with Twelver Shi'ism.[32] Notably, in the fifteenth century it was also increasingly associated with radical millenarian Mahdist movements, which were usually characterized by charismatic leaders proclaiming themselves to be the Mahdi and claiming descent from the bloodline of Muhammad.[33]

The key point to take away from the religious history of the Oghuz and Seljuq Turks is that the popular, Sufi-based type of folk Islam practiced by these early Turks was a distant ancestor of the *ghulat* extremism that would later empower other movements, most notably the Safavids via the Qizilbash. These Turkmen tribes, coming from a folk Islam tradition, and thus already possessing a degree of heterodoxy in how they practiced Islam, were receptive to the extremist ideas of *ghulat* Shi'i Islam, and one way in which the increasingly *ghulat*-influenced nature of the Turkmen tribes' beliefs manifested was in their rituals, some of which, particularly the *futuwwa* tradition, were adapted into decidedly Shi'ite-tinged practices.[34]

The fifteenth century showed a distinct growth in the strength of *ghulat*, heterodox Islamic movements, in contrast to the ultimate failure of Twelver Shi'ite scholars to convert any rulers in the fourteenth century, as discussed earlier, or to gain popular support in Persia.[35] Instead, it was the growth of popular radical movements, often with highly heterodox beliefs, that began to see the creation of successful outright Shi'ite movements and ruling dynasties. Part of the reason for this paradigm shift was not just the relative lack of success enjoyed by Twelver or Seveners, but also the collapse of the only remaining major political power in Persia, the Timurid Empire, which lost its grip on western Persia and the remainder of the Middle East following the death of their founder, Timur, in 1306.

The Sarbadars were somewhat ahead of their time; almost a century after the creation of the Sarbadar state, in 1425 a young Sufi named Muhammad Nurbakhsh, associated with the Kubravi order of western and central Asia, proclaimed himself to be the Mahdi, with the support or at least acquiescence of the order's leadership.[36] The rebellion was put down by the Timurid leader Shahrukh, but Nurbakhsh, viewed as a pawn rather than an instigator, survived to inherit the leadership of a split Kubravi order.

These radical Nurbakhshi, like Junayd Safavi's following post-1447, emerged from a previously peaceable Sufi order, and the split was the result of the radical, Nurbakhsh in this case, assuming leadership of the order.[37] The central controversy around Muhammad Nurbakhsh was his claim to be a *sayyid* (descendant of the Prophet) and the Mahdi; later Nurbakhshi accounts of the Kubravi schism would attempt to claim that Nurbakhsh's status as the Mahdi was not self-proclaimed or even originally his idea, but in fact he was recognized and proclaimed by the previous head of the order, Khoja Ishaq.[38] This is a misleading claim, as Nurbakhsh's pretensions, whatever initial encouragement they may have received, were most definitely his own. Regardless, the result effectively split the Kubravi order, with some of the Kubravi refusing to follow Nurbakhsh after the death of Khoja Ishaq.

With the more orthodox followers gone, the Nurbakhshi embraced radical Shi'ism. Unlike the Sarbadars, the Safavids, or the later Musha'sha movement however, Nurbakhsh largely focused on the spiritual guidance of his followers and abstained from any outright violence or attempts to gain political power, despite his messianic claims and the occasional clash with the Timurid leader Shahrukh.[39] While lacking the aggressive millenarianism of their contemporary Mahdist movements, the Nurbakhshi do serve to demonstrate the fervent *ghulat*-based Mahdist tendencies of their times, which were shared and taken further by the Safavids and the Musha'sha, representing another development on the road to the seizure of worldly power by formerly peaceful Sufis. The Nurbakhshi also parallel the Musha'sha and the Safavids in that even after the death of their messiah, the order only grew stronger.[40]

The Musha'sha movement in Khuzistan, bordering the Arab world, bears an even more significant resemblance to the Safavids, not surprisingly, as the followers of Musha'sha (a title meaning “radiant,” his name was Muhammad ibn Fallah) gained power in the late 1430s and the early 1440s, immediately preceding the start of the Safavids' own journey to power.[41] Ibn Fallah declared himself the Mahdi, and a descendant of the Seventh Imam, and after attracting many followers from Arab tribes in southern Iraq, his movement seized the city of Hoveizeh in Khuzistan in 1441.[42] While Ibn Fallah himself would die in 1461, his successors would continue to rule as the independent governors of Khuzistan. The Musha'sha dynasty would control the region until 1508, when they were defeated by none other than the Safavids.

The Musha'sha shared a number of noteworthy features with the Safavids; their origins were more loosely Sufi than the Safavids, but the claim to *sayyid* (descent from the family of the Prophet) status, the claim to be the Mahdi, the tribal nature of their following, and most importantly, the religious heterodoxy of their followers, all of this paralleled the Safavid experience. Also similarly to the Safavids, they were a quite definitively heterodox group,

outside of the normal Twelver-Sevener Shi'i paradigm, and the violent end of the Musha'sha movement was because of their status as Shi'i rivals to the Safavids in Persia.

The Twelver Shi'ite scholar Ibn Fahd, the mentor of Ibn Fallah before he took the title of Musha'sha, outright condemned the movement, despite his own indirect role in starting it.[43] Like the earlier Sarbadars and the later (Junayd and his successors) Safavids, the Musha'sha were an inherently heterodox movement that succeeded in gaining power in large part due to a political power vacuum, where there was no strong central government with the inclination or the ability to suppress them. The key (perhaps only) difference between the Safavids and the Musha'sha was that the later were never able to lead their movement from where it started to the centers of power in the Islamic world.

Another feature that the Musha'sha shared with the Sarbadars, the Safavids, and their close contemporaries the Nurbakshi was their millenarian ideology, embracing the concept of an imminent end of time, and the arising of a prophesied leader to signal the beginning of that end of time.[44] The fifteenth century in particular was a hotbed of such millenarian beliefs, in movements such as the Nurbakshi and the Musha'sha, and when that is taken into account, the Safavid transformation that began with Junayd, while still a radical departure from the previous nature of the Safavid order, was clearly quite in keeping with the spirit of the times.[45] The steady rise in powerful, heterodox, extremist movements, from the Sarbadars in the mid-fourteenth century to the Hurufis later in the century, to the Safavids, Musha'sha, and Nurbakhshis in the fifteenth century, was more than mere happenstance. The increase in millenarian ideals and claims of messianic status was a foreshadowing of the nearing (1580) completion of the first millennium of Islamic history since the Prophet Muhammad, and a consequence of messianic pretensions backed by Islamic astrologers.[46] The tensions raised by this millenarian trend in Persia began to surface in various messianic Sufi and extremist movements that are best classified as belonging to the *ghulat* category of Islam rather than Sunnism or any scholarly version of Shi'ism.[47]

The failure of early millenarian extremist movements that were similar to the Safavids to reach the same heights was primarily due to political reasons. The Sarbadars, the least extreme and most sedentary group discussed here, were ahead of their time, appearing as something of an anomaly, and were effectively eliminated by the brief resurgence of a strong governing power in Persia in the form of the Timurids. When the Timurids faded, new groups in the form of the Nurbahkshi and the Musha'sha arose. As with the Sarbadars, they grew out of Sufi sects, but the Nurbahkshi and Musha'sha went further with their religious extremism and were not attached to any more secular polity as the Sarbadars were.

The two later groups were much closer to their contemporaries the Safavids, with the Musha'sha in particular bearing an eerie resemblance, featuring a messianic leader claiming to be the Mahdi with a large tribal following. Unlike the Safavids though, the Musha'sha were on the extreme periphery of Islamic world, with their center of power being the backwater of Khuzistan. The more strategically-located Safavids on the other hand (based originally from Ardabil in northwest Persia before Junayd and his followers were exiled), even as they claimed their

messiah, Junayd as the Mahdi, as a descendant of the Seventh Imam, were able to attach themselves to the Aqquyunlu, one of the major powers of the Middle East, as a key ally during one of the periodic Aqquyunlu civil wars.[48] When another round of Aqquyunlu civil war broke out in the 1490s, the Safavids were positioned to exploit the situation and take power in their own right. Location, timing, and politics explains the success of the Safavids where their predecessors failed. The Safavids were able to combine the radicalism and militancy of the Nurbahkshi and Musha'sha with the political influence and power of the Sarbadars to create their empire. But the road to the Safavid transformation was paved by their less successful predecessors.

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1 Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam* vol. 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 412.
2 *Ibid*, 410. The term “Il-Khan” was meant to signify the (largely theoretical) allegiance of the western Mongol rulers to the Mongol empire based in China to the east.
3 *Ibid*, 415.
4 David Morgan, *Medieval Persia 1040-1797* (London: Longman, 1988), 73.
5 Colin Turner, *Islam Without Allah*? *The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000), 55.
6 Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 412.
7 Michel Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safawids: Shi'ism, Sufism, and the Gulat (*Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, 1972), 25-26.
8 Bertold Spuler, “The Disintegration of the Caliphate in the East,” in *The Cambridge History of Islam* vol.1, eds. P.M. Holt, Ann K.S. Lambton, and Bernard Lewis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 149-150.
9 Mazzaoui, *The Origins of the Safavids*, 40.
10 Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 82.
11 H.R. Roemer, “The Jalayirids, the Muzaffarids, and Sarbadars,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 6, ed. Peter Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 1. The name “Sarbadar” meant “those with their heads on the scaffolding,” in keeping with their rebellious origins.
12 Ibid, 5.
13 Morgan, *Medieval Persia*, 84.
14 Roemer, *The Cambridge History of Islam*, 16-17
15 H.R. Roemer, “The Jalayirids, Muzaffarids, and Sarbadars,” in *The Cambridge History of Iran* vol. 6, ed. Peter Jackson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 22-23.
16 Ibid., 24.
17 Ibid., 17.
18 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 70.
19 Turner, *Islam without Allah*, 53.
20 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam*, 71. Arjomand, it should be noted, is primarily interested in making the case that the Sarbadars do not theologically represent a clear stepping stone towards the Safavids, saying their Mahdism ultimately led to a greater focus on sacred law, rather than fanatical worship of a particular leader, as with the Safavids.
21 Roemer, “The Jalayirids, Muzaffarids, and Sarbadars,” 35.
22 Ibid.
23 Ilker Evrim Binbas, “Oghuz,” in *Lexikon des Mittelalters and International Encyclopaedia for the Middle Ages*, published online, http://www.library.leiden.edu/catalogues-databases/catalogues-databases-news/lexikon-des-mittelalters-.html
24 Mehmed Fuat Koprulu, *Islam in Anatolia after the Turkish Invasion* trans. Gary Leiser (Salt Lake City: University of Utah press, 1999), 5-6.
25 Ibid., 11. *Baba* is similar to Shaykh.
26 Ibid., 6. This theory was put forward by early twentieth century scholar Franz Babinger, and disputed most notably by Koprulu.
27 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, “Shi'ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History,” *Religious Studies* 6 (1970): 238. The eighth Twelver Imam, 'Ali al Rida, (766-818 CE) is considered the last explicit link between Sufis and Shi'ites by Nasr, who also remarks that by the tenth century, Sufis were shying away from political life while the opposite was true of Shi'ites.
28 Osman Turan, “The Ideal of World Domination among the Medieval Turks,” *Studia Islamica* 4 (1955): 78-79.
29 Ibid., 85.
30 Fiver Shi'ism, mentioned above, is not discussed at length here, but varies from Twelver and Sevener Shi'ism in the same way as they do from each other, in the number of true Imams they recognize descending from the Prophet's line.
31 Mazzaoui, *Origin of the Safavids*, 5.
32 Said Armir Arjomand, “Religious Extremism (Ghuluww), Sufism, and Sunnism in Safavid Iran: 1501-1722,” *Journal of Asian History* 15 (1981): 2.
33 Shahzad Bashir, “The Imam's Return: Messianic Leadership in Late Medieval Shi'ism,” in *The Most Learned of the Shi'a: The Institution of the Marja Taqlid*, ed. Linda Walbridge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 21-22.
34 Riza Yildirim, “Inventing a Sufi Tradition: The use of the Futuwwa Ritual Gathering as a Model for for the Qizilbash Djem,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 133 (2013:) 167-169. The futuwwa was a ritual gathering for tribal initiation, and in this period, began to features praises to the fourth caliph.
35 Colin Turner, *Islam without Allah? The Rise of Religious Externalism in Safavid Iran* (Surrey: Curzon, 2000), 51-52.
36 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 75.
37 Ibid.

38 Devin DeWeese, “The Eclipse of the Kubraviyah in Central Asia,” in *Iranian Studies* 21 (1988): 59-60.
39 Shahzad Bashir, “After the Messiah: The Nurbakhshiyyeh in Timurid and Early Safavid Times,” in *Studies on Iran in the Safavid Period*, ed. Andrew Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 295-296.
40 Ibid., 312.
41 Arjomand, *The Shadow of God*, 76.
42 Mazzaoui, *Origin of the Safavids*, 68-69.
43 Turner, *Islam without Allah*, 52-53.
44 Ahmed Azfar Moin, “Islam and the Millennium: Sacred Kingship and Popular Imagination in Early Modern India and Iran” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2010), 120.
45 Bashir, “The Imam's Return: Messianic Leadership in Late Medieval Shi'ism,” 30.
46 Matthew S. Melvin-Koushki, “The Quest for a Universal Science: The Occult Philosophy of Sa'in al-Din Turka Ishafani (1369-1432) and Intellectual Millenarianism in Early Timurid Iran,” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2012), 12. See also Moin, “Islam and the Millennium,” 38-40. Timur himself was an example of an Islamic leader in this period using astrology to back his messianic aspirations.
47 Ibid., 14.
48 Kazuo Morimoto, “The Earliest 'Alid Genealogy for the Safavids: New Evidence for the Pre-dynastic Claim to *Sayyid* Status,” in *Iranian Studies* 43 (2010): 447.