Stanisław Adam Jaśkowski & Anna Jolly

Letters in Silk Pouches

Diplomatic Correspondence from the Safavid Court in the Swedish National Archives

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Abstract

In the 17th century, the Swedish crown sent three embassies to the Safavid court in Isfahan to negotiate a trade agreement for the export of Iranian raw silk to Stockholm. The diplomat Ludvig Fabritius led the Swedish delegations on their journeys and extended sojourns at the Persian court. After each embassy, a letter from the Shah of Persia to the King of Sweden was brought back to Stockholm. These documents are today kept in the Swedish National Archives. Their composition and content reflect the formalised writing style of the Safavid chancellery. For transport the royal letters were folded and slipped into precious textile pouches which have also been preserved. The fabrics from which the pouches were made count among the most luxurious silk textiles produced in Safavid Iran. This monograph offers a detailed study of these Persian letters and silk pouches in their historical context and presents them as tangible evidence of two highly developed arts practised at the Iranian court, both conveying the splendour of their sovereign: the art of writing and the art of silk weaving.

Keywords

17th century, diplomatic history, Engelbert Kaempfer, Iran, Iranian, Ludvig Fabritius, Persian documents, Persian textiles, Safavid, silk, the Swedish National Archives

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PREFACE

This monograph is the result of a fruitful collaboration between two scholars with very different backgrounds: a textile historian and museum curator from Switzerland and a specialist in Persian palaeography from a university in Poland. We would probably never have met, had the subject of this study not called for an interdisciplinary approach. It began with a visit by Anna Jolly to the Swedish National Archives to study the Persian letter pouches under their care, with the aim of identifying Safavid silk weavings from documented historical contexts that would help to date similar fabrics in museum collections. As the original letters which had been transported in the pouches had also survived, it seemed promising to include any information to be gained from these in the case study, especially as the letters had not yet been published in full translation. The search for a suitable co-author among those scholars whose publications touched on related themes led to our first contact, which soon developed into a lively exchange of our respective observations and insights. Driven by a keen interest in Safavid diplomatic history, documents and artefacts and a genuine intellectual curiosity, we both benefited greatly from our joint project. In the end, it proved to be a most enriching learning experience, opening our eyes to each other's disciplines and thereby broadening our professional horizons.

At the same time our research and this publication would not have been possible without the help and support of many colleagues and friends. The Swedish National Archives kindly permitted us to study the original letter pouches and documents in their reading room and generously provided us with new photographs taken by Emre Olgun. We are particularly grateful to archivist Jan Mispelaere for supporting our research and for locating early inventories of the Swedish Royal Archives and other relevant sources.

Margareta Nockert from the beginning took an interest in our project and accompanied it with her advice. Ann Grönhammar generously shared

her knowledge about Ludvig Fabritius and even the location of his burial place with us. Regula Schorta kindly provided advice in the interpretation of the visual evidence of the weaving structure of the pouches and the correct notation of their technical analyses.

András Barati kindly helped interpret some palaeographic nuances and offered his informed commentary on the subject. Mirosław Michalak carefully read the almost finished manuscript and drew our attention to some details. Stephan Popp, Daniel Sheffield and a number of other colleagues also kindly looked at some of the discussed documents and made valid suggestions for improving the manuscript. Hubert Wąjs of the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, AGAD) facilitated access to high-quality photographs in their collection.

The Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien or Royal Swedish Academy of Letters, History and Antiquities seemed the most appropriate institution to which to offer our manuscript, since the material it discusses originates from the Swedish Royal Archive and because the silk pouches had first been published in a previous publication of the Academy. We are most grateful to the Board of the Kungl. Vitterhetsakademien for agreeing to publish our study in their Handlingar series and would like to extend our special thanks to Jenni Hjohlman and Ulrika Gustafsson for guiding us through the publication process. We also wish to thank Linda Huldén as well as Laura Machat-From for editing the text and Lars Paulsrud for designing the book.

Finally, we would like to thank our families and friends for their continued support.

Stanisław Adam Jaśkowski and Anna Jolly, January 2026

Note on the transliteration and date conversion

Persian and Arabic words and phrases appearing throughout the text have been transliterated according to the IJMES transliteration schemes. Some liberties had to be taken. Words well assimilated into the English language were written in their common English spelling, unless they constitute a part of a longer phrase of a proper name (e.g., Isfahan or shah, but *Iṣfahānī* or *shāh* when appearing as part of a phrase). To make it easier to identify the publications cited, full transliteration of personal names and titles of the books was used (except for those well established in English, such as the Qur'an).

In the case of Persian-language publications, even if the name of the author and the title have been transliterated into the Latin alphabet, priority was given to the Persian spelling. If such an author also has an English publication in the bibliography, their name appears in two versions—in the form used in the English publication and as a transliteration from Persian in case of the Persian publication.

Manuscripts, documents and publications which bear a date of publication in the non-Gregorian calendar are cited with the year used in the publication itself as the main date, accompanied by the Gregorian date in parenthesis.

In the transcription of the documents modern Persian spelling was used to make them more accessible to the general Persian-reading audience. In the English translations, the original separation of the text into lines was not followed, as it would make the English text hard to understand.

When discussing the rhetorical devices used in the documents, it was sometimes necessary to specify which exact parts of the text rhyme, or derive from the same root, etc. In such cases, the relevant parts of the quotation are shown here in bold characters, so that the reader can identify them more easily.

The following symbols were used in the edition:

<> – indicates that the text in between was written in gold ink.

// – indicates that the endnote which follows describes the entire section between the slashes.

1. TEXTILE GIFTS AND DOCUMENTS IN SAFAVID DIPLOMACY

The exchange of material objects played a central role in diplomatic encounters in the early modern world. Objects served as agents in ritualised cross-cultural communication and have therefore been studied more closely in what in recent scholarship has evolved into a "new diplomatic history".[1] Material mediators in intercultural encounters were above all precious gifts that were presented by an embassy upon their arrival at a foreign court or objects gifted to an ambassador and his closer delegates towards the end of their sojourn at a foreign court. The exchange of gifts was an essential part of carefully orchestrated ceremonies in the reception of embassies from distant lands and was charged with symbolic meaning.[2] Fortunately, numerous gifts that were received by European sovereigns or their diplomatic representatives from the Safavid court during the early modern period have survived in European and Russian museum collections to the present day.[3] They offer tangible evidence of otherwise largely ephemeral historic encounters. Luxurious silk fabrics, including velvets and flatweaves, as well as the rich robes of honour which were made of such fabrics, were among the most precious gifts which the Safavid court had to offer.

In addition to gift-giving, diplomatic exchange between foreign courts also involved the transfer of written documents, which conveyed messages between distant sovereigns who could not meet in person and therefore corresponded through their personal ambassadors. During a period when several European countries sought to establish political allegiances and trade agreements with Iran, European rulers regularly sent their envoys to the Iranian capital Isfahan with letters addressed to the Safavid shah. Beyond the interest provided by the content and highly stylised language of early modern diplomatic writing, the physical and formal qualities of the letters themselves offer first-hand evidence of the art of Safavid courtly correspondence. Written sources reveal that their size and layout, including the placement of the seal stamp on the back of

the letters as well as the composition of the text, were carefully designed by the chancellery of the Safavid court in accordance with long-standing traditions, but adapted to fit the requirements of their day and age.

Furthermore, the textile pouches in which these letters were transported by ambassadors on long and often precarious journeys across vast territories are worthy of their own empirical study. Royal Safavid letters were generally sent to European sovereigns in exquisite silk pouches, which were made-to-measure for the document they enclosed. This practice continued throughout the entire 17th century, as evidenced by the pouches discussed in the present study as well as earlier and later examples preserved in other archives and museum collections.[4] Meanwhile, the use of silk pouches for royal correspondence in early modern and 19th-century diplomacy was certainly not confined to Iran but was also practised in the Mughal and Ottoman Empires as well as the Crimean Khanate and Afghanistan.[5] Diplomatic silk pouches offer a wealth of information about the material and artistic qualities of Safavid textiles. Their fabrics can be compared to those of the most luxurious gifts and robes of honour which were presented to European rulers and ambassadors. Indeed, patterned silk textiles are among the most valuable works of applied art produced in Iran during the early modern period. From the time of Shah ʿAbbās I, the royal textile store provided a reservoir of material that was carefully selected according to the intended recipient to be made into gifts and letter pouches in the court tailors' workshop.

This monograph presents a detailed study of a small group of Safavid documents and textile envelopes that were received by the Swedish crown from the Safavid court in Isfahan in the later 17th century and have been preserved in the Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet).[6] These precious objects include two of the finest surviving Safavid silk pouches, which originally enclosed letters sent by Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI. A letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn addressed to King Charles XII, that was inventoried together with a seemingly Ottoman pouch, as well as a petition by the Swedish ambassador Ludvig Fabritius in Persian language, preserved together with another letter and a golden-coloured pouch of Indian origin, are also discussed.

The Persian documents and letter pouches that are held by the Swedish National Archives were first published in two separate monographs during the 1940s. The Swedish textile historian Agnes Geijer (1898–1989) and the Swedish historian of Middle Eastern art Carl Johan Lamm (1901–1981)

published the letter pouches in a chapter on 'Persische Briefbeutel' in their 1944 monograph entitled *Orientalische Briefumschläge in schwedischem Besitz*.[7] Their study was printed in Stockholm, as volume 58:1 in the series of monographs known as the Kungl. Vitterhets Historie och Antikvitets Akademiens Handlingar. Shortly afterwards Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen (1866–1953), a Swedish philologist and professor of semitic languages at Uppsala University, catalogued the related documents in a short section dedicated to 'Persica' in his publication *Türkische, Tatarische und Persische Urkunden im Schwedischen Reichsarchiv*, printed in Uppsala in 1945.[8] Both of these monographs were published in German, at a time when it was common for scholars of art history and philology in Sweden and elsewhere to master this language. This is unfortunately no longer the case. Furthermore, both these academic disciplines have evolved significantly since the first half of the 20th century and can today draw on many more resources and comparative material than were known in the 1940s. Finally, our knowledge about the history of Swedish diplomatic contacts with Iran during the 17th century has been enriched by numerous sources which have been published in recent decades. Since Geijer and Lamm first published the letter pouches, later scholars have occasionally included and illustrated them in discussions of Swedish embassies to Iran or silk textiles in Safavid diplomacy.[9] The related documents, on the other hand, have seemingly not been discussed in any detail in the literature on Safavid diplomacy and correspondence since they were catalogued by Zetterstéen in the mid-1940s. It therefore seemed appropriate to restudy, and in more depth than before, the group of Safavid documents and silk pouches preserved in the Swedish National Archives.

The nature of this material, including both complex textiles and written documents from the Safavid court, calls for an interdisciplinary approach to the subject. As the following chapters attempt to show, the documents conveyed their messages by a variety of means, while the silk letter pouches as well as the gifts brought by the envoys were also part of these messages. We hope that by combining findings from history and its ancillary sciences, philology or literary research as well as the history of textile arts and material analyses, this monograph may contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of diplomatic correspondence at the Safavid court.

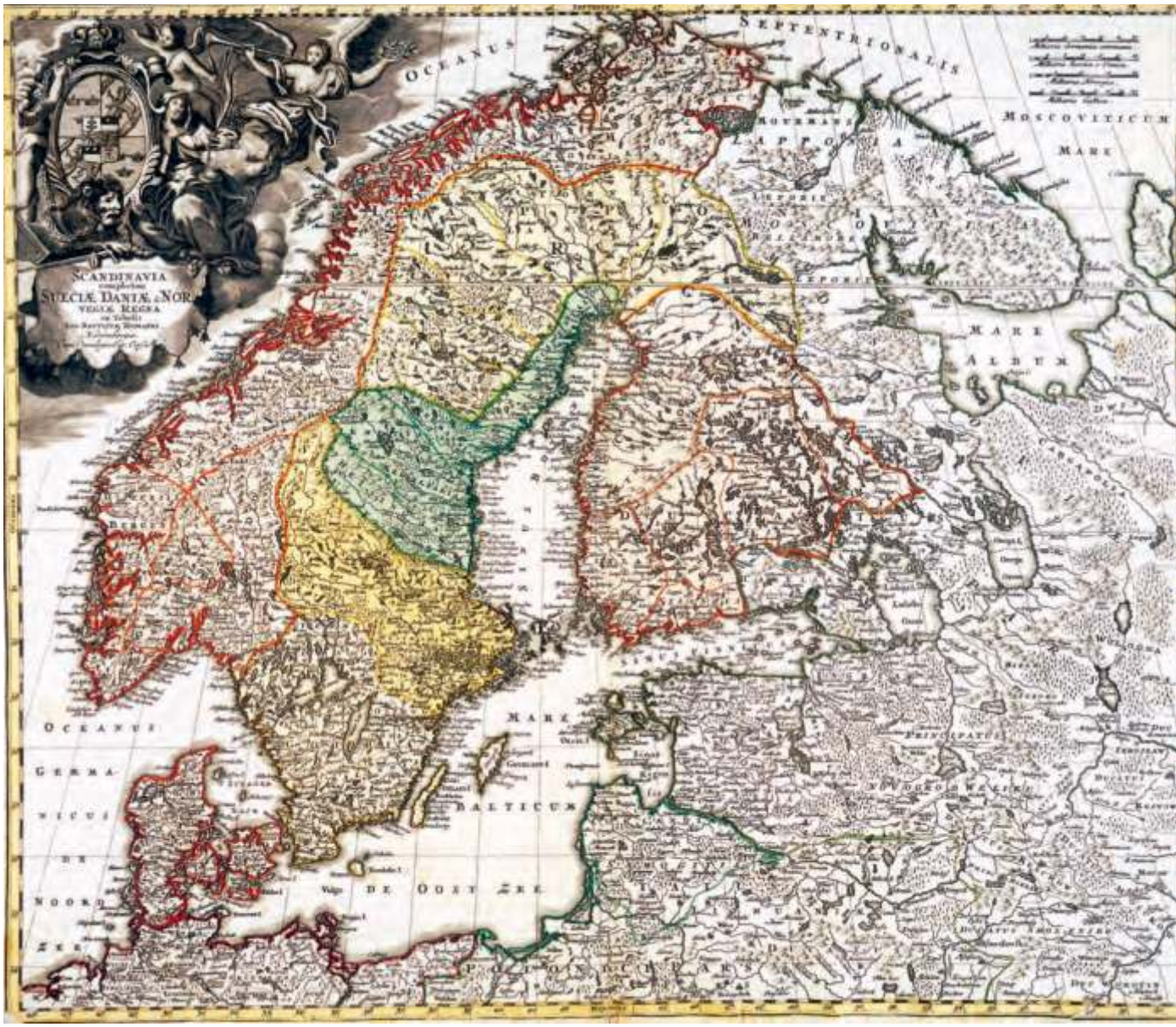


Fig. 1. Map of Scandinavia, Johann Baptist Homann, Nuremberg, 1702–1715, engraving, 47 × 55 cm. Bern, University Library, MUE Ryh 5501: 31.

2. SWEDISH EMBASSIES TO IRAN DURING THE 17TH CENTURY

In the second half of the 17th century, Sweden became the most powerful state in Northern Europe. It first rose to a great power under the reign of King Gustav II Adolf (r. 1611–1632). Through victories during the Thirty Years' War and other military conflicts with its neighbouring countries, such as the Second Northern War and the Scanian War, subsequent Swedish monarchs extended their territorial control over large parts of the Baltic region (fig. 1). By the end of the century, the Swedish Empire encompassed large areas of land surrounding the Baltic Sea, including today's Finland, Estonia, Livonia as well as Ingria and Karelia, both today situated in northwestern Russia. King Charles XI (r. 1660–1697) (fig. 2) consolidated this vast territory and established an absolute monarchy under his personal rule. Only the Great Northern War (1700–1721) during the reign of his son and successor King Charles XII (r. 1697–1718) put an end to Sweden's expansion and finally led to the loss of its territories in the east, leaving the Russian Empire as the new dominant power in the Baltic region.

Despite being generally poor in primary commodities, Iran was one of several important suppliers of raw silk for the Ottoman and European silk industries during the 16th and 17th centuries.[1] Three main trade routes served to transport bales of raw silk to the west during this period: the shortest passage was the Levant route, which went across the Ottoman Empire and through the Mediterranean Sea to the ports in Western Europe. However, since the 16th century Safavid Iran and the Ottoman Empire had been engaged in intermittent warfare over control of the territories between their mutual border in present-day Iraq. Trade along this route was therefore risky and hampered by numerous custom controls. European trading companies such as the Dutch Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) and the British East India Company therefore shipped raw silk along a southern sea route from the port of Bandar Abbas, through the Persian Gulf and around the Cape of Good Hope to

Fig. 2. Portrait of King Charles XI of Sweden (r. 1660–1697), attributed to David Klöcker Ehrenstrahl, 1685, oil on canvas, 106 × 62 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 1245.

Fig. 3. Shah Sulaymān I, India (Deccan or Golconda), c. 1680, opaque watercolour and gold on paper. Washington, D.C., National Museum of Asian Art, Smithsonian Institution, LTS 1995.2.182 (detail).

Northern Europe. A third, northern route passed from Iran through the Caspian Sea and then along the Volga through Russian territory and across the White Sea via Arkhangelsk to Holland and England. During the 17th century several Northern European rulers sought to persuade Iranian shahs to privilege the northern route for the export of raw silk, offering their allegiance against the Ottoman Empire in exchange for exclusive trade agreements.[2] Shah ʿAbbās I (r. 1587–1629) had already considered redirecting the Persian trade via the northern route, to avoid the Ottoman Empire in the early 17th century. Letters sent by Shah ʿAbbās I to the Pope, the King of Poland, the Grand Duke of Muscovy as well as the Khan of Astrakhan in 1610 explicitly mention that he wanted the "Frankish" (i.e., European) merchants to go through Muscovy, so that "their [i.e., the goods'] profit does not go to the Turks".[3] However, Safavid rulers did not commit themselves to any agreement with a single European nation or trading company; and after the Treaty of Zuhāb (Qaṣr-i Shīrīn) in 1639, which brought an end to the long Ottoman–Safavid war, the court of Isfahan seems to have lost interest in forging allegiances with European powers.[4]

By the later 17th century, the northern route was largely controlled by the Russian tsar. In an endeavour to divert this route of Iranian raw silk exports so that it would pass through its own naval territories, the Swedish crown undertook great efforts to persuade Shah Sulaymān I (r. 1666–1694) (fig. 3) and his Armenian merchants to pass through the port of Narva, then the easternmost port on Swedish territory (now in Estonia) (see fig. 1), from there on to Stockholm and further to Holland and England.[5] King Charles XI sent two embassies to Isfahan during the 1680s to negotiate this prospective "derivation" route of Iranian export trade towards the Baltic Sea.[6] The ambassador whom he chose to lead the Swedish delegation was Ludvig Fabritius (1648–1729) (fig. 4).[7] Fabritius seems to have been the perfect man

Fig. 4. Portrait of Ludvig Fabritius, Martin Mijtens the Elder, undated, oil on canvas, 85 × 69 cm. Stockholm, Nationalmuseum, NMGrh 153.

for this task. Born in Brazil to Dutch parents, he had spent several years in the service of the Russian army and in 1677 had attained the rank of a lieutenant colonel. In Moscow, he had met Grigoris Lusikjan, merchant and vice-director of the Armenian trade company, situated in Isfahan's suburb of New Julfa, which since 1618 held the monopoly over the export of raw silk from Iran via the land routes.[8] During a visit to Isfahan in 1676, Fabritius had already helped to negotiate a Russian transit trade agreement with the Armenian merchants. Shortly after having left the Russian military, Fabritius entered the service of the Swedish crown. His experience as a diplomat, his contacts to the Armenian merchant community in Isfahan and his competence in both the Russian and Persian languages promoted Fabritius' appointment to lead the Swedish embassy to Iran. His mission was to convince the shah and the Armenian merchants to abandon the established northern trade route via Arkhangelsk in favour of an alternative northern route via the port of Narva. In return, the Swedish crown offered to waive taxes on imports into Sweden and promised to provide the Armenians with seaworthy ships in Narva for the passage across the Baltic Sea.

2.1 The first Swedish embassy to Isfahan, 1679–1682

In June 1679, a delegation of 20 men headed by Ludvig Fabritius left Stockholm and travelled via Moscow to Iran (fig. 5), where they arrived in 1680. This first Swedish embassy to Iran did not yield any immediate results, although the Armenian merchants had shown strong interest in the proposed alternative trade route, so much so that some of them accompanied the Swedish delegation on their return journey as far as Moscow. There they were, however, discouraged to continue their journey by unfavourable rumours about Sweden.[9]

Upon his departure from the Persian court, Ludvig Fabritius received a formal letter from Shah Sulaymān I addressed to King Charles XI (see chapter 3.1), which was enclosed in a sealed pouch made of a precious silk fabric (see chapter 4.1). The letter was handed over to the Swedish king when Fabritius returned to Stockholm in early December 1682.[10] Its contents conveyed the respect of Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI and thanked him for his initiative to establish trade relations between their respective countries by sending his envoy Ludvig Fabritius to Isfahan.

Fig. 5. Map of the Persian Empire, Johann Baptist Homann, Nuremberg, after 1716, engraving, 47 × 56 cm. Bern, University Library, SOB RoEu ka 7:9.

Fig. 6. View of Isfahan, engraving by F.W. Brandshagen, reproduced from Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum*, Lemgo 1712. Zurich, ETH-Bibliothek, Alte und Seltene Drucke, Rar 669.

It did not, however, reflect any commitment to a future trade agreement.

As this first contact with the Persian court had not yielded any clear support for the Swedish project of diverting the northern trade route through Swedish territory, Ludvig Fabritius after his return to Sweden presented a memorandum to King Charles XI, in which he explained the reasons for the lack of success of his first voyage to Isfahan and offered to undertake a second voyage, which should prove more fruitful than the first. Fabritius stressed that their mission would benefit if he were elevated to the rank of an official *envoyé*, if he delivered an official letter of credence from the Swedish king upon his arrival at the Persian court and if his delegation could present several precious gifts to the shah and his courtiers. A commission approved all these requests and hastened to dispatch the second embassy to implement the trade political plans of their king.[11]

2.2 The second Swedish embassy to Isfahan, 1683–1687

In spring 1683, Ludvig Fabritius departed on his second embassy to Russia and Iran, this time accompanied by a larger delegation of 33 men.[12] The German physician and naturalist Engelbert Kaempfer (1651–1716) from Lemgo in Westphalia acted as a secretary on this embassy. His travelogue, which was published in Latin under the title *Amoenitatum Exoticarum* in 1712, provides a detailed account of their journey and time spent at the Persian court.[13] Details regarding the diplomatic negotiations during their stay in Isfahan were furthermore recorded by Ludvig Fabritius in a handwritten report, which is preserved in the University Library of Uppsala.[14] The delegation left Stockholm on 20 March 1683 and travelled across Finland, because the Baltic Sea was still partly frozen, via Nyenskans (now St Petersburg) and Narva to Moscow (see map in fig. 1), where they stayed

for several months in negotiations with Russian officials and Armenian merchants. The journey continued by ship up the rivers Moskva, Oka and Volga to Astrakhan, where the delegation hired a ship to cross the Caspian Sea. However, they were shipwrecked halfway across the sea and only made it as far as Nisābād near Derbent, from where they followed caravan routes overland to Isfahan (fig. 6). They finally arrived in the Safavid capital on 29 March 1684, almost exactly one year after their departure from Stockholm. The route which the second Swedish delegation took was recorded by Engelbert Kaempfer in a detailed diary that is preserved in the British Library in London.[15]

The Swedish delegates had to wait for a few months until they were admitted to their first official audience with the shah. Audiences at the Safavid court generally took the form of large assemblies of grandees and officials, which were also described in Persian as paradise-like assemblies (*Majlis-i Bihisht-Āʾīn* or *Maḥfil-i Bihisht-Āʾīn*).[16] The first audience of an embassy was always a symbolic highlight in a sequence of formal receptions following their arrival at a foreign court. It usually involved the ceremonious presentation of the letter of credence by the ambassador to the sovereign.[17] Several foreign embassies who were residing at the Safavid court at the time were invited to this festive occasion, which took place in the royal Saʿādatābād gardens situated on the southern bank of the river Zāyandarūd on 30 July 1684.[18] The venue for the reception was the Hall of Audience, a huge wooden pavilion with a painted ceiling held by 22 high columns (fig. 7). Its floor was divided into three levels, covered with red textiles; the highest level was reserved for the seat of the shah and his entourage, the second level accommodated his counsellors and governors, while foreign delegates and other guests assembled on the lowest level.

In his role as official secretary of the Swedish delegation Engelbert Kaempfer headed the train of Swedish delegates on horseback, carrying the letter of credence from King Charles XI in his hand, raised to the level of his forehead: "[...] tum Secretarius Legationis equo vectus, manu, fronte tenus elevata, Literas gestans sui Principis, panno obvolutas aureo."[19] According to Kaempfer's report the royal Swedish letter was thus wrapped in a golden fabric. The rather theatrical manner of carrying the credential letter in his raised hand is also documented for the audience in 1639 of an Iranian delegation residing at the court of Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp in Schleswig.[20] Behind Kaempfer rode the

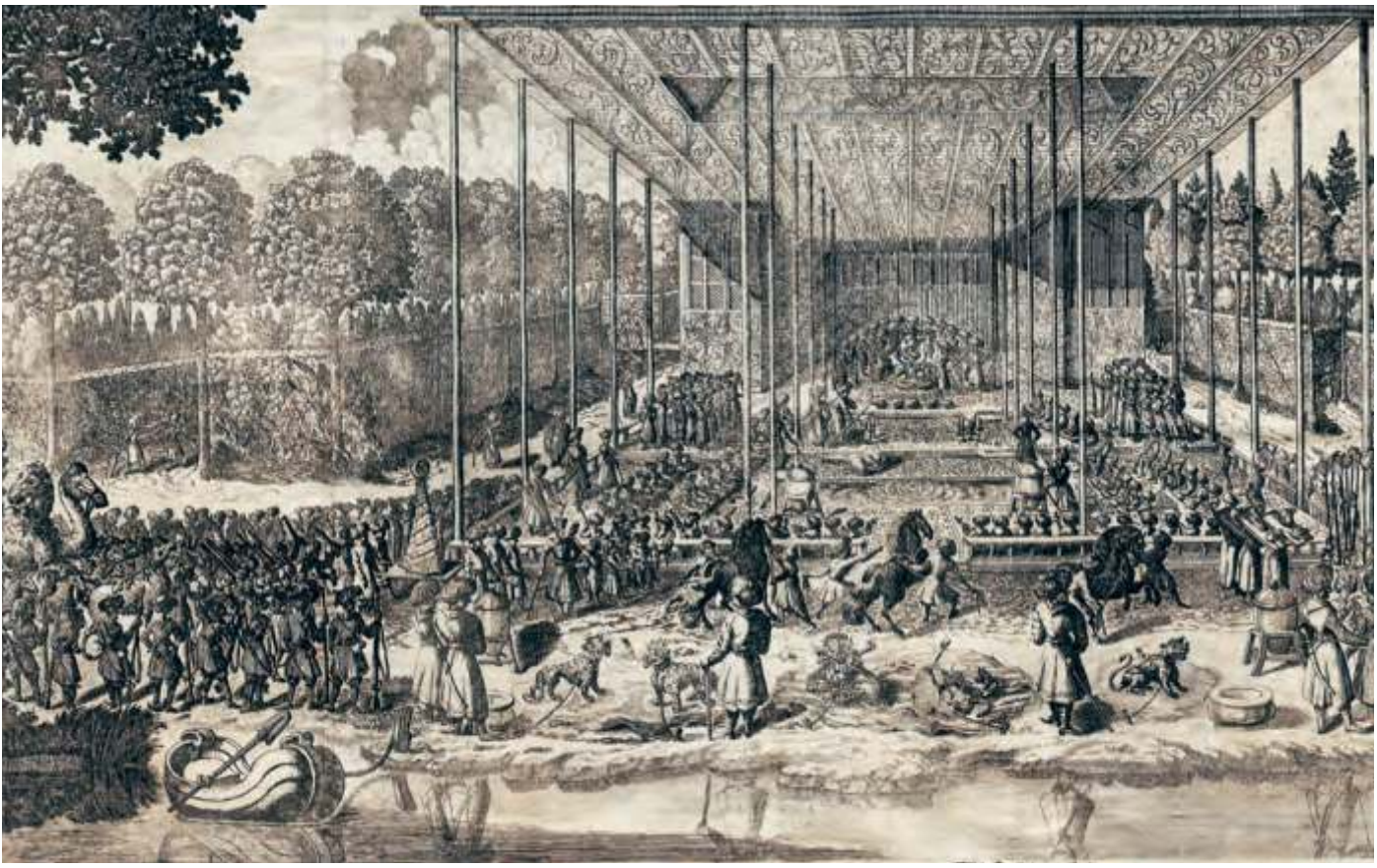


Fig. 7. Hall of Audience in the Saʿādatābād gardens, engraving by F.W. Brandshagen, reproduced from Engelbert Kaempfer, *Amoenitatum Exoticarum*, Lemgo 1712. Zurich, ETH-Bibliothek, Alte und Seltene Drucke, Rar 669.

official ambassador Ludvig Fabritius, accompanied by six pages, and followed by several Swedish noblemen and further members of the delegation.[21] At the entrance to the audience hall Kaempfer handed the letter of credence to Fabritius who, after his salutation, presented it to Shah Sulaymān I. Touching the letter with two fingers the shah handed it over to his grand vizier.[22] In his travelogue Kaempfer summarised the contents of the Swedish letter. It confirmed the mutual friendship between King Charles XI and Shah Sulaymān I, conveyed the king's friendly intentions to establish direct trade relations between Sweden and Iran and offered his allegiance against the Ottomans.[23] Following the formal reception of all foreign delegates their gifts were carried into the audience hall, while the shah watched the procession from a long distance. The Swedish delegation had brought a large standing clock from Nuremberg in the shape

of a pyramid that had to be carried by six men, as well as nine guns of Italian manufacture, each carried by a single man.[24]

After this festive audience, Fabritius repeatedly asked for permission to present the purpose of his sovereign's letter and his plans for a mutual trade agreement to the shah's council in person. On 20 September 1684, he was finally asked to submit his requests in writing. His secretary Kaempfer then quickly compiled a document in Latin with a detailed account of the Swedish trade proposals.[25] This document was translated into Persian by Father Raphaël du Mans (1613–1696), a highly educated Capuchin priest, who had acted as principal interpreter at the Safavid court since 1650 and translated all correspondence that was received from European rulers.[26] Du Mans became a friend to Kaempfer during the lengthy stay of the Swedish delegation in Isfahan. In the autumn the Swedish delegates were finally invited to confer directly with the grand vizier Shaykh ʿAlī Khān Zangana, who according to Rudi Matthee was "one of the most remarkable administrators of Safavid times", as well as the Armenian merchants to promote their trade proposal.[27] Before his departure Fabritius had obtained permission from the Swedish crown to offer to provide the Armenian merchants with ships in Narva to transport their goods across the Baltic Sea and to guarantee them tax exemption in all Swedish ports for the first two years and low taxation for the following years of the anticipated trade agreement.[28] This led to a breakthrough in the negotiations. The Swedish delegation under Fabritius finally managed to convince the Armenians to travel via Narva across the Baltic Sea on future voyages, thereby exporting their bales of raw silk to Northern Europe through Swedish territory.

Following this achievement, the Swedish delegates were to remain in Isfahan for longer than they had intended. Foreign embassies were not free to leave the Safavid court when they chose to do so. Instead, they had to wait until the shah formally granted them leave; in the words of Shah Sulaymān I, as recorded by Fabritius in his handwritten travel account: "[…] your coming here depended on your king, my good friend, but your leaving depends on me […]".[29] The formal ending of an envoy's presence at a foreign court was usually staged in a last audience, during which he would be handed a letter addressed to his sovereign in response to the letter of credence which the shah had received from the envoy upon his arrival. Fabritius recorded in his personal report that he had submitted around ten "memoranda" to the shah, requesting to receive an official

reply to his sovereign's letter and asking to be released from the Safavid court so that he could return home and report the results of his mission to the Swedish king: "[...] and so I have been entertained by the king eleven times in three years and during this time I have handed over ten petitions but have received no reply [...]".[30]

Curiously, one of Fabritius' numerous "memoranda" or petitions in Persian language was brought back to Sweden and is today preserved in the Swedish National Archives (see chapter 3.6).[31] Perhaps this is the note that Fabritius, according to his own report, had given to the envoy Carsten Klingenstierna to ask on his behalf for how much longer he would be detained: "[...] the time was getting so long that I sent a memorial to Mr Klingstierna [*sic*] asking if I should remain under arrest for much longer. [...]".[32] It is unlikely that a petition of a foreign envoy would not have been received by the shah. Indeed, the grand vizier assured Klingenstierna that he had delivered all of Fabritius' memoranda to Shah Sulaymān I but had not been able to discuss the matter with him personally because the shah had been indisposed. According to Fabritius, Sulaymān I was very fond of wine and sometimes spent five to six weeks in his harem, reappearing only occasionally to see to the most urgent state affairs.[33] Since Fabritius had asked for an audience with the shah and an official answer to his request, it is possible that the petition was bundled together with the shah's letter. A royal letter would thus be sent to Charles XI, while the petition might have been accompanied by a separate document issued in response to it. Although official answers to petitions were often directly written onto the same piece of paper, sometimes they were written on a separate piece of paper.[34] Since the official answer to this petition would be a royal letter to a sovereign rather than a decree, it is almost certain that the reply to the petition would have been issued as a separate document to show respect to the addressee. Another possibility is that the petition was returned directly to Fabritius or to his delegate Klingenstierna.

In spite of his repeated requests Fabritius had to wait until spring 1686 to be given leave.[35] During his last audience, which took place on the day of the Iranian New Year (*Nowruz*) on 21 March 1686, Shah Sulaymān I assured Fabritius that he considered himself a good friend of the Swedish king, and that he only kept those ambassadors at his court for a long time whom he liked.[36] Fabritius recorded in his travel account: "Then he waved to the grand vizier, who came forward and took the letter of credence that lay on a cushion in front of the king, kissed it and gave it to

me, saying: Travel with God, the merchants will come to you, so you will be in each other's company [...]."[37] After the successful accomplishment of their trade mission, the Swedish embassy finally embarked on their return journey to Sweden together with a group of Armenian merchants and a first contingent of Iranian raw silk. They arrived in Stockholm in July 1687.[38] The letter from Shah Sulaymān I was delivered by Fabritius to King Charles XI in the same year.[39] As is the case with the earlier letter of 1682, it has survived with its original pouch (see chapter 4.1) in the National Archives of Sweden. The larger part of Shah Sulaymān's second letter to Charles XI contains formal phrases praising the rank and power of the Swedish sovereign and hailing his friendly intentions (see chapter 3.1). The text continues by stating that Sulaymān I had received the envoy Ludvig Fabritius and had ordered his grand vizier to provide an answer to the request of the Swedish delegation and that Fabritius would orally transmit the shah's answer to the Swedish king.

Engelbert Kaempfer did not return to Stockholm with the Swedish delegation after the closure of their negotiations but decided to travel on to Southeast Asia to continue his studies of foreign countries. Being also a medical doctor, he entered the service of the Dutch VOC and travelled southwards to Bandar Abbas, the largest port of the Persian Empire. There he remained from 1685 until 1688 waiting for a ship to take him to his next destination. From 1689 to 1690 he stayed at the VOC headquarters in Batavia (modern-day Jakarta) and thereafter sailed on to Japan where he worked as a surgeon at the VOC factory on the island of Kyūshū for two years. Kaempfer returned to Europe in 1693 and enrolled in the University of Leiden where he graduated as a Doctor of Medicine in 1694.[40] After the completion of his degree he returned home to northern Germany, settled in Lemgo, practised as a surgeon, and published his *Amoenitatum Exoticarum* in 1712. Kaempfer was undisputably one of the most remarkable European polymaths and travellers of the 17th century.

While the new trade route for Iranian raw silk was being negotiated in Isfahan, the Swedish government undertook great efforts to promote the development of local silk manufactories, as part of their mercantilist policy. Their long-term goal was to substitute the import of expensive silk fabrics from other European countries by supporting their home manufactories and thus reach an active trade balance.[41] To this end, the Swedish crown conceded the Armenian merchants far-reaching allowances and privileges, such as the waiving of import tax on raw silk and a reduction of

export tax on goods leaving Sweden. These exceptional allowances were confirmed in a trade agreement which King Charles XI signed during the visit of the Armenian merchants to Stockholm in September 1687.[42] The Swedish crown even went so far as to subsidise the acquisition of raw silk from the Armenian merchants when no local merchant was prepared to take on the commercial risk of not being able to sell it to the developing Swedish silk industry. In the end, it turned out that Swedish silk weavers were technically not sufficiently well equipped for the weaving of such fine silk as the Armenian merchants had brought from Iran. The protectionist politics of the Swedish government thus stood in conflict with the technological shortcomings of their own manufactories.[43] Nevertheless, transit trade with bales of raw silk from Iran to Europe via the port of Narva rose steadily during the last two decades of the 17th century.

2.3 The third Swedish embassy to Isfahan, 1697–1700

From about 1695 onwards rival groups of Armenian merchants investigated alternative trade routes for the export of raw silk to northern countries. Armenian emissaries to the Baltic region studied the possibilities of travelling via Poland and the Duchy of Kurland to the Baltic Sea. The Russian tsar supported the small Duchy of Kurland with the aim of weakening his mighty opponent in Sweden.[44] This development threatened to undermine Swedish control over the northern trade route and prompted King Charles XI to send his envoy Ludvig Fabritius once again to Isfahan. His mission this time was to consolidate the established trade agreement with Iran and to ensure that the shah and his Armenian merchant community were still committed to the Swedish "derivation" route via Narva.[45] In a memorandum submitted to the Swedish crown on 30 March 1695 Fabritius had suggested to intensify trade relations with the Safavid state. In addition to Armenian merchants travelling to Sweden, he envisaged that Swedish merchants should send raw material, such as copper, as well as textiles to Iran.[46] His initiative was approved by the Swedish economic commission who added that Swedish merchants should receive the same custom concessions as had been granted to the Armenian merchants in Sweden. With this agenda Fabritius was dispatched on his third embassy to the Safavid court in spring 1697. Shortly before the delegation embarked on their journey, King Charles XI died and Fabritius

Fig. 8. Portrait of King Charles XII of Sweden (r. 1697–1718), John Smith after David von Krafft, 1702, engraving, 35 × 25 cm. London, National Portrait Gallery, NPG D11541.

Fig. 9. Portrait of Sulṭān Ḥusayn, engraving reproduced from Cornelis de Bruyn, *Reizen over Moscovie, door Persie en Indie*, Amsterdam 1714. The New York Public Library, Rare Book Division.

was told to announce the ascent of King Charles XII (r. 1697–1718) (fig. 8) to the Swedish throne to the new ruler of Iran, Sulṭān Ḥusayn (r. 1694–1722) (fig. 9). Fabritius arrived in Isfahan in November 1698 and spent six months at the Safavid court in negotiations with the shah and his grand vizier, before returning to Stockholm in May 1700.

As Engelbert Kaempfer did not accompany Fabritius on his third journey to Isfahan and as the ambassador did not regularly send written reports back to the Swedish commission, the main source of information about this last journey to Iran is Fabritius' personal report.[47] It seems that Sulṭān Ḥusayn did not offer any additional support to the Swedish envoy but reverted to declarations of friendship between the two sovereigns without committing himself to any further agreement.[48] Sulṭān Ḥusayn generally did not engage much in foreign politics, although he did maintain diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire and Mughal India.[49] The later years of his reign were marked by tribal uprisings of

neighbouring regions, particularly by the Afghans in the east, who finally forced the shah to surrender in 1722 and thereby brought an end to the rule of the grand Safavid dynasty in Iran. Later Safavid shahs never rose above the level of figureheads or puppets at the hands of warlords who scrambled for power in 18th-century Iran.

Before returning to Sweden, Fabritius received the obligatory official credential letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn addressed to King Charles XII of Sweden. This letter is also preserved in the Swedish National Archives (see chapter 3.2).[50] It does not contain much more information than the shah's condolences upon the death of King Charles XI and his congratulations to Charles XII upon the latter's ascent to the throne. Further details were to be conveyed orally by an Iranian envoy named Sārū Khān Bayg Yūzbāshī, whom the shah chose to send on an official return embassy to Sweden. Sārū Khān was to accompany Fabritius on his way back to Stockholm, and is even mentioned in the letter addressed to King Charles XII. To Fabritius' dismay, the envoy required several more weeks to prepare for his journey, while Fabritius had been ready to depart. He organised seven beautiful horses and other precious things, which were intended as gifts for the Swedish king and therefore travelled with the delegation. However, when they arrived in Russia, hostilities against Sweden had increased. The Persian envoy was arrested and robbed of everything that he was carrying on the grounds that these gifts were intended for an enemy of the Russians. Sārū Khān was detained in Russia for two years, after which he returned to Iran.[51] He thus never made it to Sweden. Fabritius himself was in danger of being captured but was tipped off by an acquaintance and managed to make his way to Stockholm. He submitted the letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn to King Charles XII in June 1700.[52] Shortly after Fabritius' return to Sweden the outbreak of the Great Northern War (1700–1721) finally put an end to trade via the northern land route and to Swedish diplomatic contacts with Iran.

3. THE DOCUMENTS

Sources

The following discussion of Safavid documents preserved in the Swedish National Archives is based on several Persian sources, contemporary with the Safavid period or written shortly after the fall of the dynasty. The chronicles written for the monarchs, which constitute most of the narrative sources of the period, are relatively well known and require little introduction.[1] This is not the case with the other Persian sources used, which, although discussed extensively, still require some explanation. These include three surviving Persian sources describing the organisation of the Safavid state, written after its fall: Mīrzā Rafīʿā's *Dastūr al-Mulūk*,[2] Mīrzā Samīʿā's *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk*[3] and the so-called *Alqāb va Mavājib-i ʿAṣr-i Salāṭīn-i Ṣafavī* by Mīrzā Naqī Naṣīrī.[4] In modern scholarship these sources are called government or state manuals or similar terms. Further sources consulted include the *munsha'āt* literature, which could roughly be classified as teaching material for secretaries and bureaucrats.[5] These were written in a variety of ways and include collections of letters and documents as well as works more akin to proper textbooks. In the Safavid period an example of the former is the *Munsha'āt* by Vahīd-i Qazvīnī, of which numerous manuscripts and later lithographic editions exist, while an outstanding example of the latter group is the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, written by Muḥammad Riżā Naṣīrī and Abū al-Qāsim Naṣīrī.[6] The term *munsha'āt* denotes works on *inshā'* or the secretarial skills. This type of source is essential for the study of documents, their language and, in the case of the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, the administrative procedure, the use of seals, etc.

Another source consulted, which may also be regarded as a kind of *munsha'āt*, is the so-called *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* ("a Safavid *bayāż*", i.e., a book with a binding along the shorter edge).[7] It appears to have been compiled by several secretaries over a large part the Safavid period and differs from most other *munsha'āt*, including those in the style of textbooks, in that it

does not appear to have been intended to train its reader how to become a skilled secretary. Unlike other *munsha'āt*, the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* was not a collection of copied documents selected for their literary value, nor did it attempt to establish any general rules or principles. Instead, it provided information on specific documents, especially letters sent to foreign rulers. In some cases, its authors meticulously described (albeit using contemporary jargon) the paper of a letter, its decoration, folding, covers, seals, the clothes worn by the envoy carrying it and the pouch into which a document would be put.

The study of surviving original documents, both published and unpublished, provides valuable insights into administrative procedures and the production and issuance of documents. Given the subject matter of the present study, most of the documents consulted date from the later part of the Safavid reign.

Further information about the workings of the Safavid administration can be gleaned from the travelogues of Europeans who visited Iran during the 17th century, notably the *Voyages de Monsieur le chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l'Orient*, published in 1711 by the Huguenot jeweller Jean Chardin (1643–1713), who had travelled through Iran in the 1660s and 1670s and even worked for some time at the Safavid court.[8]

Document types

From the point of view of diplomatic studies, the Safavid documents discussed here can be divided into two main categories. The two documents from the court of Shah Sulaymān I (Z 214 and Z 217) and the document from the court of Sulṭān Ḥusayn (Z 218) are royal "letters" (Pers. *nāma*, *maktūb*). The term "letter" was generally reserved for documents exchanged between equals, which in case of royal correspondence meant independent rulers. The two letters of Shah Sulaymān I (Z 214 and Z 217) share several characteristics and will therefore be discussed together in chapter 3.1. This is followed by a discussion of the letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn (Z 218) in chapter 3.2.

Conversely, a letter to a person of higher rank would, regardless of its contents, be written as a "petition" (*ʿarża-dāsht*).[9] The document submitted by Ludvig Fabritius to the shah (Z 215) is therefore a "petition"; in this case the term also fits its contents. Since it belongs to a different genre of document it will be discussed separately in chapter 3.6. When addressing someone of lesser standing, the document would be called an "order", a

"decree" or an "edict" (*ḥukm*, *farmān,* etc.). Even foreign governing bodies or dignitaries were addressed in the latter form.[10]

The fifth document (Z 216), which has been preserved together with the petition of Ludvig Fabritius, is more difficult to classify, as discussed in chapter 3.7. While it appears to be a letter addressed to a person of equal standing to the sender, it bears no seal impression.

The structure of historical Persian documents

Before discussing the Safavid documents, a brief overview of the structure of historical Persian documents in general and royal letters in particular is required, as it seems important to understand certain basic principles when approaching the documents. The different components of a Safavid document are illustrated in an example of the letters discussed here (fig. 10). Further details and relevant literature will be provided when discussing the actual examples.

A Persian document generally begins with an invocation to God (in Western terminology called *invocatio*; *taḥmīdīya* in Persian). Below it, towards the right-hand margin, there is usually a short line of text containing the name and some of the titles of the addressee. This so-called *elevatio* (*mumtāz-nivīsi* or *tajāvuz-i ism* in Persian) was in fact to be read later in the text, generally towards the end of the protocol (although there is one exception from this rule among the documents discussed here). The visually third, but in meaning second part of the document was its protocol, which in the case of Safavid royal correspondence generally contained the address of the letter (*inscriptio*). In Persian epistolography the address or *inscriptio* consisted of three parts, although not all of them had to be incorporated: the address to the addressee (*khiṭāb*), their titles (*alqāb*) and the prayers or blessings for them (*duʿā*); in Safavid royal correspondence the final element was generally absent from the protocol. We can also find the *salutatio*, by which the sender expressed his friendship and greeted the addressee. After that follows the transition to the actual topic of the letter (*rukn-i ḥāl*). This transitional element, sometimes called *makhlaṣ*, was often in the form of a *promulgatio* or the expression of the sender's will. This leads on to the *narratio*, i.e., the narrative relating the circumstances leading to the issuing of the document. A letter ended with an *eschatocol* or ending protocol. Just as the opening protocol could contain a prayer or blessing (*duʿā*), so could the *eschatocol*; it seems that in the Safavid period the latter was generally the case. The date (*tārīkh*) when the

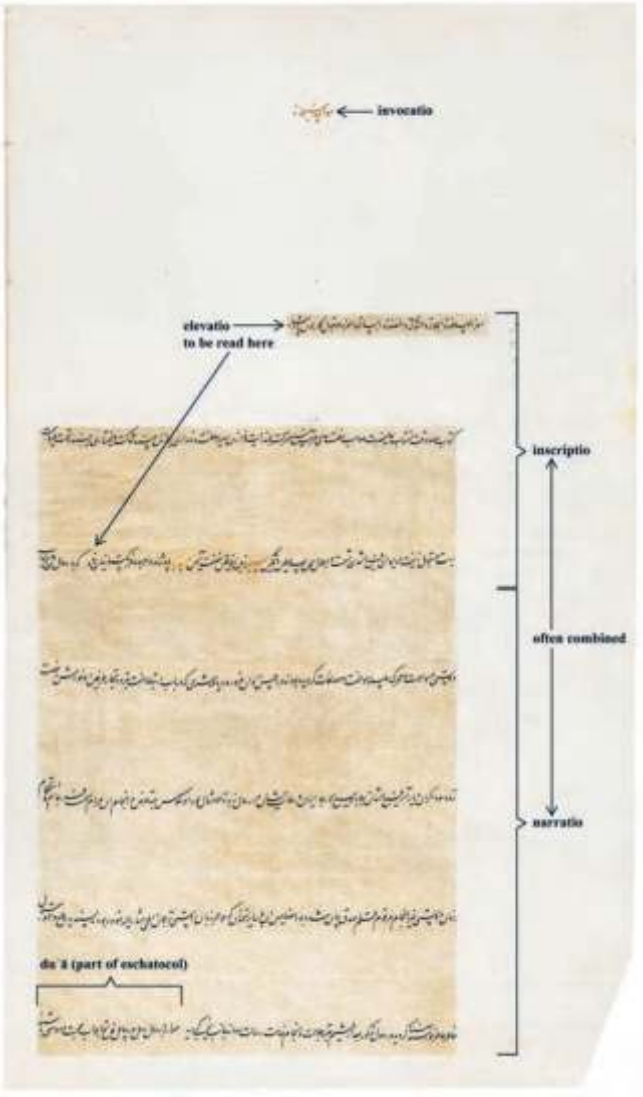


Fig. 10. Letter from Shah Sulaymān I of c. 1682, 98 × 57 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 214, recto with captions specifying the structure of the document.

letter was issued could also be inserted into the *eschatocol*. Considered as part of the opening protocol, the *arenga* or short ideological or religious reasons for issuing the letter or document could be incorporated into the *narratio* of the document. However, this element is not stated explicitly in most of the documents discussed here, apart from Z 216, the origin of which is yet uncertain.[11]

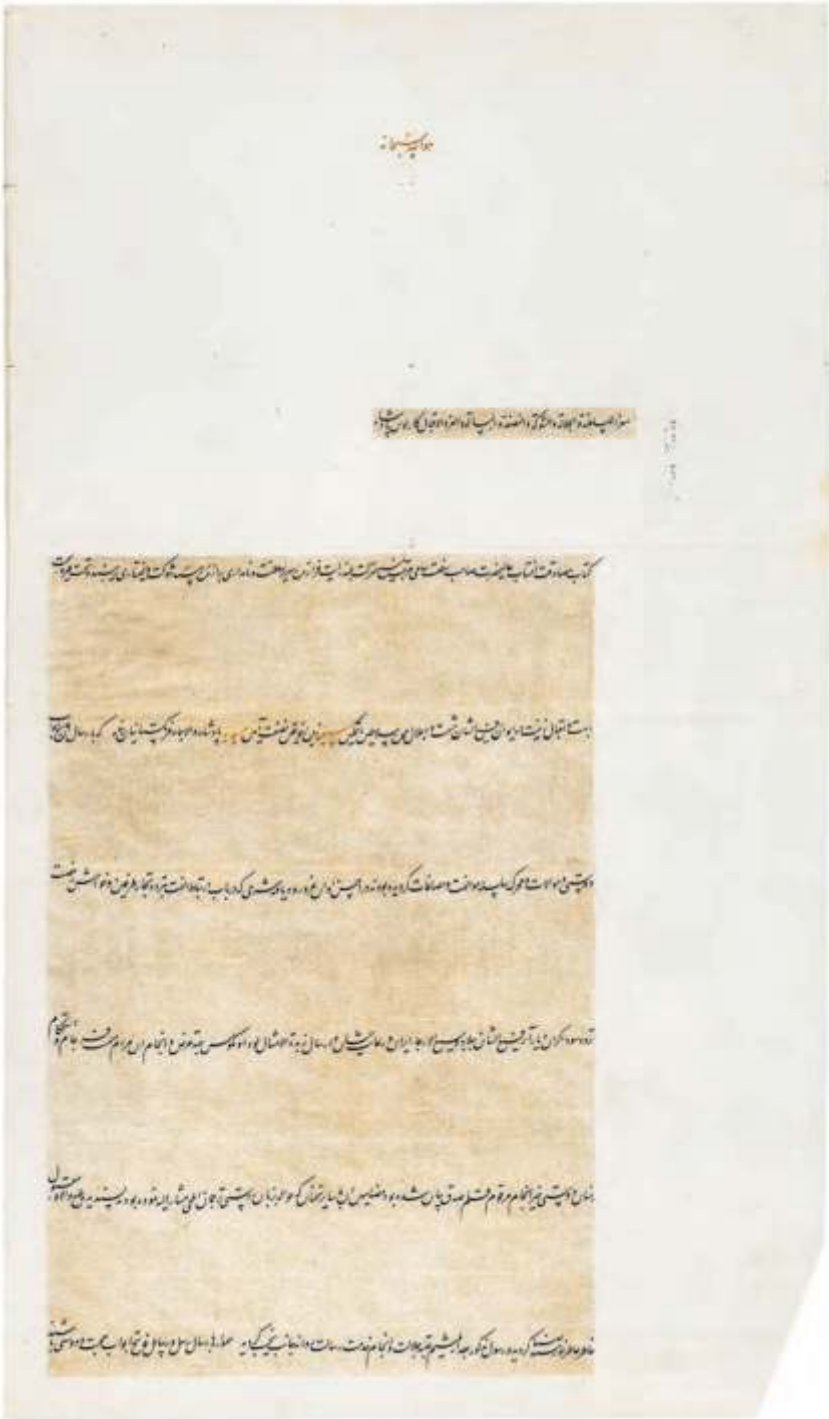


Fig. 11a–b. Letter from Shah Sulaymān I of c. 1682, 98 × 57 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 214, recto and verso.

3.1 Two royal letters from Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI

Document Z 214[12] (fig. 11a–c)

The document is undated, but its historical context suggests it dates from c. 1682. The size of the document is 98 × 57 cm; its lower right-hand corner is cut off (fig. 11a). A seal stamp is placed on the reverse, in the lower right of the document (fig. 11b); the seal imprint itself is transcribed and translated in chapter 3.4. The invocation (fig. 11c), situated at the top of the document's obverse, and single phrases within the text were written in gold ink, the rest of the document in black ink. The field behind the text was sprinkled with gold. The document is written in an elegant and clear *nastaʿlīq* script. A brief part of the text was written above and to the right-hand side of the main body of the text.

Summary of the contents: A royal letter from Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI, underlining friendly relations and promising trade cooperation, also mentioning that the details of the agreement had been entrusted to the Swedish envoy Ludovicus (Ludvig Fabritius).

Fig. 11c. Detail of the invocation to God, written in gold ink.

PERSIAN TEXT:

<هو الله سبحانه>

[1] کتابت مصادقت انتساب عالی‌حضرت صاحب رفعت سامی مرتبت منیع منزلت بلند رایت فرازندۀ سریر سلطنت و نامداری برازندۀ مسند شوکت و بختیاری زیبندۀ تخت فیروزبخت
[2] ابهت و اقبال زینت‌ده ایوان رفیع الشان حشمت و اجلال عمدۀ سلاطین با تمکین <مسیحیه> زبدۀ خواقین نصفت آیین <عیسویه> پادشاه والاجاه فرنگستانیان پناه /معزا للسلطنة و الجلالة و الشوکة و النصفة و البسالة و العز و الاقبال کارلوس پادشاه/[13] که بارسال /آن فاتح/[14] ابواب
[3] دوستی و موالات و محرک سلسله موالفت و مصافات گردیده بودند در احسن اوان عز ورود یافته شرحی که در باب ارتباط الفت به تردد تجار طرفین و خواهش رخصت
[4] تردد سوداگران دیار آن رفیع الشان به بلاد وسیع الارجاء ایران و رعایت ایشان و ارسال زبدة الامثال /لوداویکوس/[15] جهة عرض و انجام آن مرام میمنت فرجام و استحکام
[5] بنیان دوستی خیرانجام مرقوم قلم صدق بیان شده بود مضامین آن با سایر سخنان که حواله زبان راستی ترجمان ایلچی مشارالیه نموده بودند پسندیده طبع والا و مقبول
[6] خاطر عاطر خورشید ضیا گردید و رسول مذکور بعد از تلثیم عتبۀ جلالت و انجام خدمت رسالت روانه جانب نجیب گردید همواره به ارسال رسل و رسایل فاتح ابواب محبت و دوستی باشند

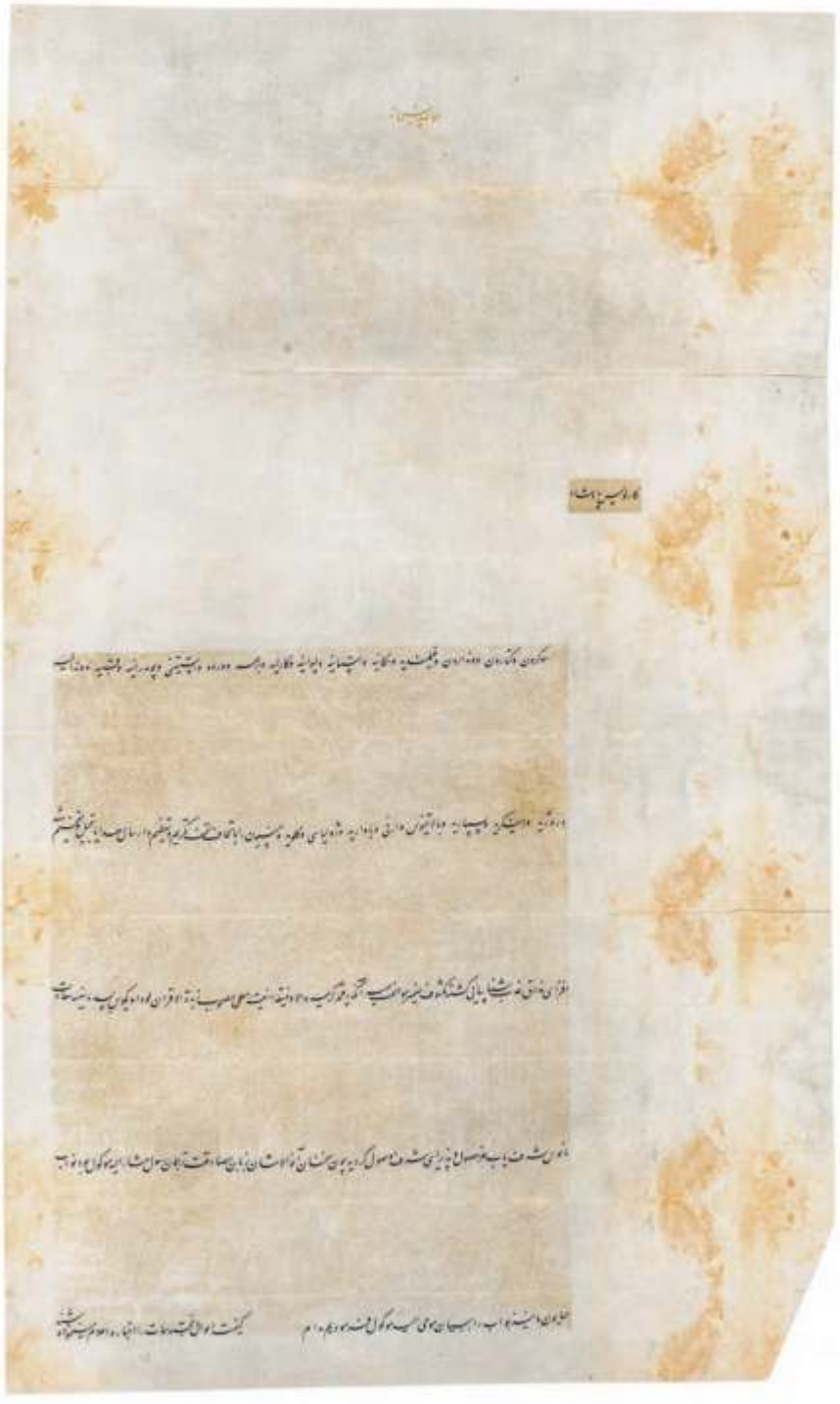
ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

<He, the God, may He be glorified!>

The friendly letter of His sublime presence, the exalted, of high rank, of lofty position, whose banners fly high, he who raises the throne of sultanate and glory, worthy of the seat of greatness and fortune,[16] the ornament of the throne of victorious fate of greatness and auspiciousness, the adornment of the highly positioned palace of magnificence and grandeur, the champion of the mighty <Christian> sultans, the cream of the righteous *Khaqans* <of Christendom>, the *Pādishāh* of high glory, the refuge of the people of the land of the Franks,[17] /he who bestows greatness upon the sultanate, and magnificence, and greatness, and righteousness, and valour, and grandness, and auspiciousness [of] *Kārulūs* [Carolus, i.e., Charles XI] the *Pādishāh/*,[18] who by sending [that letter] had opened the gates of friendship and amity, and set into movement the chain of concord and affinity, had the privilege of arriving in the most auspicious times.

The account that had been written in it by the truth-expressing pen regarding the establishment of friendship by the movement of the merchants, and [regarding the] the supplication for the consent of the movement of traders of the lands of the One of the lofty rank[19] to the boundless domains of Iran, and for supporting them, as well as the dispatchment of the Cream of [His] Peers, *Lūdāvīkūs* [Ludovicus, i.e., Ludvig Fabritius], to present and finalise this objective which bodes a fortunate ending and to strengthen the foundations of well-ending friendship, the contents of which [i.e., this letter] along other words that [they, i.e., the King of Sweden] had entrusted to the truth-telling tongue of the above-mentioned envoy[20] appealed to the High Nature [of the shah] and agreed with the fragrant thoughts of the sun's ray[-like royal perception]. And the above-mentioned envoy, after kissing the threshold of grandeur [i.e., after being granted audience] and completing the service as an envoy, was sent towards the noble One [i.e., the King of Sweden].[21] May he [Charles XI] always be the one to open the gates of kindness and friendship by sending envoys and letters!

Fig. 12a–b. Letter from Shah Sulaymān I of c. 1686, 96.5 × 58 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 217, recto and verso.



Document Z 217[22] (fig. 12a–b)

The document is undated, but its historical context suggests it dates from c. 1686. The size of the document is 96.5 × 58 cm; its lower right-hand corner is cut off (fig. 12a). A seal stamp is placed on the reverse, in the lower right of the document (fig. 12b). The seal imprint is identical to the one on Z 214, transcribed and translated in chapter 3.4. The invocation, situated at the top of the document's obverse, was written in gold ink, the rest of the document in black ink. The field beneath the text was sprinkled with gold. The document is written in an elegant and clear *nasta'līq* script. A brief part of the text was written above and to the right side of the main body of the text.

Summary of the contents: A royal letter from Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI, underlining friendly relations and mentioning that the shah's answer had been entrusted to the Swedish envoy Ludovicus (Ludvig Fabritius) for oral transmission.

PERSIAN TEXT:

<هو الله سبحانه>

[1] /کارلوس پادشاه/[23] سوگرون و گتارون و وندلرون و فیملندیه و سکانیه و استانیه و لیوانیه و کارلیه و برهمه و ورده و استتینی و پومه‌رانیه و قسبیه و وندالیه

[2] و روژیه و اینگریه و پسماریه (!) و بالاتینوس و ارنی و باواریه و ژولیاسی و کلویه و منسیون را به اتحاف تحف تکریم و تعظیم و ارسال هداياء تبجیل و تفخیم شهد

[3] افزای مذاق عذب شناسایی گشته مکشوف ضمیر موالفت سمیر آنکه رقیمهٔ کریمه والا و نمیقهٔ انیقهٔ معلی مصحوب زبدة الاقران لوداویکوس به سدهٔ سنیهٔ سعادت

[4] مانوس شرف‌یاب عز حصول و پذیرای شرف وصول گردید چون سخنان آن والاشان به زبان مصادقت ترجمان رسول مشارالیه موکول بود نواب

[5] همایون ما نیز جواب را به بیان مومی الیه موکول فرمودیم مدام کیفیت احوال خجسته سمات را اخبار و اعلام می‌نموده باشند

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

<He, the God, may He be glorified!>

Having, by granting the rare gift of reverence and admiration and sending the gifts of recognition and esteem, increased the [taste of] honey on the sweet palate of *Kārulūs* [Carolus, i.e., Charles XI] the *Pādishāh*[24] of the Swedes, and Goths, and Vandals and Finland, and Scania, and Estonia, and Livonia, and Karelia, and Bremen and Verden and Stettin and Pomerania and Cassubia and Vandalia, and Rügen, and Ingria, and Wismar, and Palatinate, and Rhine (?), and Bavaria, and Jülich, and Cleves, and Bergen (Montium),[25] [let] it be known to the heart that tells the tales of friendship that the revered letter of the great One and the congenial writing of the sublime One, [sent] with the cream of [his] peers, *Lūdāvīkūs* [Ludovicus, i.e., Ludvig Fabritius], received the honour of being received and the distinction of being admitted to the auspicious threshold. Since the words of this high rank [the king] were entrusted to the truth-speaking tongue of the above-mentioned envoy, our august majesty has also entrusted the reply to the eloquence of the above-named [envoy]. May they always give news and announcement of the blessed ways and conditions.[26]

Material aspects

The size (*andāza*)[27] of the two letters is almost identical: Z 214 (fig. 11a–c) measures 98 × 57 cm, and Z 217 (fig. 12a–b) measures 96.5 × 58 cm. In the units used during the Safavid period, this would translate into five *shabr* minus one or two *aṣbaʿ-i munżam* in length and three *shabr* minus two *aṣbaʿ-i munżam* in width.[28] This makes them slightly larger than earlier letters sent to Polish kings by earlier Safavid shahs as well as two letters sent to Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp by Shah Ṣafī I in 1637 and a letter sent to the King of Denmark by Shah Sulaymān I in 1689, which arrived at the Danish court in 1691.[29] On the other hand, their size is almost identical to that of a letter sent by Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the Polish king with which, as explained below, they also share other features, despite having been written in different languages—the letter to Poland was written in a Turkic language, while Z 214 and Z 217 were both written in Persian.[30] Similarly, earlier specimens of letters sent to Russia tend to be smaller, while those from the end of the 17th century and from the 18th century are of similar size as Z 214 and Z 217.[31] By rule, the greater the importance of both the sender and the addressee, the larger the letter would be. However, comparing letters' sizes from the period of various rulers may be misleading, as the diplomatic practices of the Safavids were constantly developing (albeit within a set of general principles). Furthermore, judging from the *Bayāżī Safavī* it seems that diplomatic practices were sometimes changed to better accommodate the taste and practices of the addressee.[32]

The surface of the paper of both royal letters has been sized and burnished, giving them a slightly glossy appearance. This process was customary in Iranian paper making:[33] it strengthened the paper and made it impervious to ink. The sheet of paper of letter Z 217 is comparatively thin and hence less well preserved than that of letter Z 214. It is burnished like the earlier letter but shows several water stains and is strongly creased.

*Sprinkled gold (*zarafshān, afshān*)*

The second aspect, which is immediately evident, is the decoration of the documents. The field of the obverse that contains any text (apart from the invocation to God) was sprinkled with gold in a technique known as *zarafshān* (i.e., "gold-sprinkled", often shortened to *afshān*, i.e., "sprinkled"). This technique is known to have been used on documents and manuscripts.[34] According to a modern study, it involved pouring gold

(dust) carefully through a vessel with many small holes.[35] It was generally done before the text was written, as seen on the two documents in Stockholm, otherwise the text would have been partially obscured by the golden spots. This practice, apart from its obvious aesthetic appeal, may recall a longstanding tradition of sprinkling letters and other documents with dust. It has its roots in the prophetic tradition of Muḥammad, who suggested that putting earth dust on a letter would result in one's needs, requests and petitions being answered.[36] This belief and the practice of sprinkling dust on letters is recorded in secretarial manuals from at least the 12th century onwards, for instance, in Mayhānī's *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*, in the 14th century in Nakhjavānī's *Dastūr al-Kātib fī Ta'yīn al-Marātib* and throughout the early modern period as in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, a manual from Sulaymān's period.[37] According to Mayhānī and Nakhjavānī, the former of whom does not cite the above-mentioned prophetic tradition (*hadith*) but mentions the existence of a tradition on the subject, this was simply supposed to bring good luck.

It is tempting to link the above-mentioned practice with that of throwing a letter on the ground instead of handing it to the messenger. Described both in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* and by Chardin,[38] it is also well attested by much earlier sources, such as the above-mentioned *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*.[39] Chardin cites no reason for it, but simply states that he has been told this is something one should do. In the *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*, on the other hand, the practice is said to bring good fortune. The key source linking these two practices is the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, as it states that one should throw the letter in such a way that it gets covered with earth dust.[40]

Hence, the sprinkling of gold on those fields of a letter that contain the text may be interpreted as both a decorative element and a traditional feature, rooted in religious practice and supposed to bring good fortune and success to the cause of the letter. It could also be seen as showing greater respect to the receiving party, as the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* prescribes sprinkling dust on the letters addressed to people of lofty rank and standing, whenever they are asked for something, or when asking God for something.[41] It may be worth noting that Sulṭān Ḥusayn's letters to King Augustus II of Poland and to King Charles XII of Sweden, both similar in size to the letters of Sulaymān I to King Charles XI, were sprinkled with gold in very much the same way.[42] The rectangular field that was sprinkled with gold to accommodate the main body of text measures about 57 × 38.7 cm in letter Z 214 and about 48 × 36 cm in letter Z 217.

*Breaking the ill omen of the rectangle (*nuḥūsat-i tarbīʿ*)*

Another non-textual feature of all Persian documents discussed here is that the lower right-hand corner of each was cut off, making them no longer rectangular (see figs 11a, 12a). This practice is sometimes mistakenly identified as having begun with the Safavid documents, while in fact this and similar features are also found on Iranian documents dating from a few centuries before the Safavids' rise to power. The common interpretation of this practice is based on the writings of Jean Chardin, who stated that it reflects the imperfection of any human creation and is thus a sign of humility and disregard to mundane matters.[43] Removing a corner from a document is, however, also mentioned in several earlier, pre-Safavid sources, with different explanations given for it. For example, the manual *Dastūr-i Dabīrī* states that when writing a letter one should remove one of the corners, so that the document is no longer square or rectangular (*murabbaʿ*) because *tarbīʿ* (see below) brings bad luck.[44] It is also mentioned, albeit only briefly, in *Dastūr al-Kātib*, which states that one should cut a segment from the right corner to break the shape of the square or rectangle (*murabbaʿ*) without giving any reason for this practice.[45]

Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī, who studied the development of this practice, basing his study on both surviving documents and secretarial manuals, concluded that the key to understanding the emergence of this practice lies in the term *tarbīʿ* used in *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*, which means square or rectangle, but also signifies a position between two celestial bodies when they are divided by a quarter of the skies.[46] He points out that this astronomical (or rather astrological) position was generally considered to be inauspicious. Indeed, there existed several practices designed to free a person from the impact of *tarbīʿ*, some of which involved the use of rectangular talismans. The astrological *tarbīʿ* was very much related to the shape described by the same name. Therefore, the original idea behind cutting off the corner of a letter may have been to avoid bringing ill luck by creating *tarbīʿ*, in this case not in the sky, but on a piece of paper. Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī furthermore points out that in some regions of Iran similar practices were still followed until recent times. Nevertheless, he does not deny that throughout the ages the meaning of this practice may have evolved, hence Chardin's interpretation was not necessarily incorrect.[47]

In the documents at hand, the corners of the pieces of paper have been cut off, which seems to be the most common method of cancelling its rectangular shape. Another way of achieving the same effect that was popu-

lar towards the later part of the Safavid period was to leave the physical corners of the paper intact and to draw a frame (*jadval*, i.e., table) around the text in the shape of a rectangle with a cut corner. Both these methods could either be used on their own or in combination. Sometimes there would also be a separate border enclosing the *jadval* on three sides (*kamand*); an indentation could also be done in *kamand* instead of *jadval*, or in both. In other instances, the indentation of the paper was done in a very subtle way, by cutting the entire right-hand edge of the document in such a way that the cut became broader towards the lower edge.[48]

In summary, an indentation in the lower right of the sheet of paper, as seen in the documents at hand, is a standard feature of Safavid documents but was not exclusive to them. It was originally done to protect against ill luck,[49] and seemingly by the time of Chardin found another meaning, that of showing one's humility before God. In the case of royal correspondence, it seems likely that both meanings existed side by side in the Safavid period and communicated important messages to the addressee: wishing good luck for both parties or conveying the sender's humility and piety, or both.

The use of coloured ink in the text

The Safavid chancellery used several coloured inks in the text of documents they produced.[50] Two widely used inks in Safavid documents were red (cinnabar, *shangarf* or *shanjarf*)[51] and gold (*zar*, *ṭalā*). The former was mostly used in some of the *ṭughrā*s or opening formulas of royal orders (*farmān*, pl. *farāmīn*) and to highlight important words in the text, for example, references to the monarch.[52] As this colour of ink has not been used on the royal letters preserved in the Swedish National Archives, it will not be discussed further here.

In contrast, gold ink has been used in the two royal letters discussed here. One of the uses of gold—sprinkling it on the page—has been discussed above. Apart from that, gold ink was used for the invocation (*huwa ʿl-lāhu subḥānahu*, "He, the God, may He be glorified") in both letters (fig. 11c), and in letter Z 214 it was also used to write the words referring to God's prophet *ʿĪsā* (Jesus): *masīḥīya* and *ʿīsavīya* (both meaning "Christian"). Clearly, this was done to make these words stand out from the rest of the text. Furthermore, the use of gold is a sign of respect and thus a non-verbal means to convey one's humility and piety.

Layout of the text

Another means of achieving the same goals—showing one's humility and piety—lies in the layout of the text on the paper. This is the case in all documents discussed here, but it was achieved by slightly different means, depending on the relative rank of the sender and the addressee. Both royal letters discussed here are characterised by a large portion at the top of the letter being left blank (except for the invocation and *elevatio*, see below); in letter Z 214 (fig. 11a) it takes up about a third of the page (38 cm), and in Z 217 (fig. 12a) almost half of the page (44.8 cm); in contrast, the bottom margin only measures about 3.0 cm in Z 214 and 3.7 cm in Z 217. This is a common feature of Safavid documents. At the very top of the page the invocation was written in gold ink; in Z 214 it is located 8.8 cm from the top of the page, and in Z 217 this distance is 6.7 cm. Below, about two-thirds of the way towards the main body of the text, stands a single short line of text, containing parts of the name and/or titles of the addressee. In Z 214 it is located 17 cm below the invocation and 8 cm above the main body of the text; in Z 217 these distances are 24.1 cm and 9 cm respectively. In letter Z 214 it contains a section of the titles that begins with *muʿizzan* and is in a way a transition between the titles (*alqāb* or *ʿanāvīn*, i.e., *inscriptio* according to Western terminology) and the actual name of the addressee. In letter Z 217 it is simply the name *Kārulūs Pādishāh* (King Charles). The position of this portion of the text varies slightly in both letters. In Z 214 it begins 3 cm from the main body of the text, on the right-hand margin, and has a length of 18.1 cm, reaching almost to the middle of the actual text of the letter. In Z 217 it fits entirely on the margin, beginning 5.1 cm to the right of the main body of the text and ending at the beginning of the lines of text below.

These parts were not necessarily meant to be read at the beginning of the letter, right after the invocation, as may be suggested by their position on the letter when looking from top to bottom. Instead, they were to be inserted into the text of the letter, in a specially prepared larger spacing. In letter Z 214 the chosen place appears between the words in line 2. In letter Z 217 the blank space has been placed right at the beginning of the first line of the main body of text (see below). The practice of writing the name of the addressee as well as other important names and words (such as those of God) above their actual position in the text or on the margin (*mumtāz-nivīsī*, i.e., "honorific elevation", *tajāvuz-i ism*, "name's exceeding" or *elevatio*) has a long tradition in Iranian and Persianate diplomacy, be-

ginning after the Mongol conquest of Persia.[53] Under the Safavids, the position of the name of the addressee in a letter depended on his and the sender's relative rank: the more important the addressee in relation to the sender, the further up and to the right their name should be written. If they were of equal importance, the name of the addressee—if it was to be read in the opening section (*fātiḥa*) of the letter—should be written where the actual letter begins, at a distance equal to that between the first lines of the text.[54] This is the case in the documents at hand, as they were exchanged between two monarchs. It also partially explains the large space left between the invocation and the rest of the document—the physical distance between the words reflects the distance of rank and power between God and all mundane and temporal powers and issues.

Another clearly visible feature of the documents under discussion is their wide margin on the right-hand side. In Z 214 it ranges from 16.2 cm at the beginning of the main body of the text to 15.9 cm right above the indentation on the right-hand margin, and on Z 217 it is always 18.4 cm. By contrast, the left-hand margin only measures 2.9 cm in Z 214 and 3.5 cm in Z 217. This is a common feature of Persian documents, especially royal ones. It may also have been a way of both showing and demanding respect. Together with the large blank space at the top, it made the entire document appear bigger, and as a rule of thumb the higher the rank of both the sender and the addressee, the bigger the document should be. Furthermore, a larger margin would have allowed for a greater nuance in the *mumtāz-nivīsī*. Another possible reason for the large margin is that in many types of documents the margin was in fact of some use. In certain longer petitions to the monarchs[55]—and sometimes in shorter petitions as well[56]—the margin was used to write replies or royal orders relating to the text of the petition. In royal orders or edicts, it might contain either later orders or additional clarifications of the main text.[57] It was also sometimes used for writing parts of the main body of the document or a separate "chapter" of it, especially in documents between high-ranking officials and the elites of the society, in petitions and orders, albeit mostly non-Safavid ones.[58]

A further interesting aspect of the layout of the letters is the large spacing between the lines of the text. In Z 214 there are 9 cm between the first and second line of the text, 7.5 cm between the last two lines, and 8 cm between the rest of the lines. In Z 217 there are 8.6 cm between the first and the second line, 9.3 cm between the second and the third, 9.3 cm

between the third and the fourth, and 9.6 cm between the fourth and the fifth line. The sources do not mention any rules relating to this. It might therefore have been largely motivated by the necessity to fill more than half of the page with text, since its size did not depend on the amount of text that was to be written on it, but on the etiquette and protocol related to the ranks of the sender and addressee. Still, in the royal letters at hand, the distance between the lines of text is almost the same, which accounts for the smaller blank space at the beginning of letter Z 214, as its main text consists of six lines (plus one with the king's name and a further one for the invocation), in contrast to letter Z 217 with its five lines (plus name and invocation). It may be worth noting that in both documents the *elevatio* is placed above the main body of the text at a distance equal to that between the lines of the main body.

The placement of the seal imprint

The place where the shah's seal appears on the back of the document is another important aspect of the general layout of the document. In general, royal letters sent to foreign powers had their seal stamped on the reverse of the document.[59] Letters sent to addressees who were not royalty bore the seal imprint in the upper part of the document's obverse. However, as mentioned above, they should not be considered letters, but royal orders (*farmān*, pl. *farāmīn*).

In the royal letters at hand the seal has been stamped on the reverse (*ẓimn*, *ẓahr*) of the document. The exact placement of a seal was considered highly important, and sometimes even chosen by the shah himself.[60] In general, its placement on the reverse indicated that the addressee's importance was equal to or greater than that of the sender. According to the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, the higher the rank of the addressee in relation to the sender, the higher and further to the right the seal should be placed on the back of the document; if the addressee was much more important than the sender, the seal should be imprinted only partially, though no reasons are given for these practices.[61] They are, however, corroborated by Chardin, who noted that the seal, acting as a signature, was stamped on the reverse of a letter, at the bottom in a corner. He also commented on the practice of not printing the whole seal, which according to him was meant to show that the sender did not perceive himself worthy of appearing before the addressee.[62] This proposition may have been slightly exaggerated and is not really apparent in the case

of the letters at hand. Nonetheless, the slightly imperfect seal imprints on them may be less pronounced examples of this practice. Most importantly, Chardin's account of the practice suggests that some of the visual aspects of a letter were intended to create the feeling of respectful distance between the sender and the addressee, a distance proportional to the difference of their respective ranks. This is further supported by the language used in the documents, which reflects a difference in status using phrases referring to actual physical distance; out of politeness, this distance—favouring the addressee—was observed even in correspondence with one's equals.[63]

Following this logic, the positioning of the sender's seal on the back of the document avoided problems arising from the rules that determined the layout of the text. By removing the issue of placing the sender's seal either above or below the addressee's name in the document, it prevented committing a *faux pas*. The inclusion of religious phrases and the names of God and the Prophet's family on Safavid seals would have required to position the seal above the addressee's name, and thereby placing the sender's name above that of the addressee.[64]

On both letters Z 214 and Z 217 the seal was stamped in the same position. It appears on the reverse of the document. In Z 214 it is placed 13 cm above the lower edge of the page and 9.8 cm inwards from the right-hand edge of the page (fig. 11b), measured up to the margins of the seal. In Z 217 the placement is 13.8 cm from the lower edge and 10.5 cm from the right-hand edge of the page (fig. 12b). The seal is turned upside down in both cases. This appears to be one of the ways in which Safavid shahs showed their respect towards European sovereigns, who by diplomatic standards were considered of equal standing; the placement of the seal on the reverse is almost a mirror image of the placement of the *elevatio* on the obverse. In comparison, on letters sent to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth the seal generally appears in the lower half of the document's reverse, and is usually (but not always) rotated by 90 or even 180 degrees; in case of the former the seal's dome (when present) tends to face towards the right-hand margin.[65] In most of them, including those where the seal was rotated upside down, the position of the seal is identical to that of the letters from Fabritius' missions.[66] Conversely, the letters from the Safavid vizier to high ranking officials of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth also bear the seal stamp on the back, albeit in the lower right-hand corner, turned at a 135 degree angle.[67] According to the *Bayāżī Safavī* this appears

to have been a rather common practice in the correspondence between high-ranking officials or officials and foreign princes (at least those with no real power).[68] In future, a comparison of the placement of seal imprints on the letters to various rulers (as well as the exact position of the *elevatio*) may shed light on the ceremonial position of these rulers according to Safavid protocol.

The style of the letters: Structure and rhetorical figures

Following the terminology used for the study of Western historical documents can be controversial when discussing Persian archival material, since the latter did not necessarily follow the same forms as those originating in Christian countries. However, the rather strict rules of Ottoman documents are not found in Persian official writings either. On the other hand, Iranian sources and studies use terminology that is mostly lifted from the study of Arabic and Persian poetry, and thus may be confusing to the modern reader.[69] Both of these flawed approaches, however, are not only provisionally useful when describing a document; they also offer an important insight: a Persian document of the period was as much a literary genre as a piece of official writing. This means that most of the rules were more akin to guidelines, and a skilled secretary could largely follow his taste and experience, as long as he got the intended message across. Indeed, the collections of letters that served as the learning material for scribes and secretaries were often composed not of "typical" documents, but of documents that had been written by authors who were famous for their literary prowess.

This literary character, however, did not mean that the field of *inshāʾ* (the art of epistolography) was completely "free for all".[70] On the contrary, like many realms of classical literature, it was seemingly unrestricted, albeit within the rather strict confines of a chosen literary genre.[71] This also meant that *inshāʾ* was a rather conservative genre.[72] Nonetheless, as shown below, although the two letters sent by Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI of Sweden were written on almost the same subject and addressed to the same person, and thus share a number of similarities, they are quite different in form.

Their similarities are most obvious in some of the rhetorical figures used.[73] In both documents we find a prominent use of *sajʿ*, i.e., rhymed prose, which often also shares a metrum or rhythm,[74] as, for example, in the following words and phrases from letter Z 214; note that in some cases

rhyming words which share a metrum also divide the text into parallel parts, which is known as *tarṣīʿ*:[75]

> *zībanda-yi takht-i fīrūzbakht-i ubuhh**at** va iqb**āl** – zīnatdih-i*[76] *ayvān-i rafīʿ al-shān (shaʾn)-i hishm**at** va ijl**āl*** ("the ornament of the throne of victorious fate of greatness and auspiciousness, the adornment of the highly positioned palace of magnificence and grandeur")

> *ʿum**da-yi** salāṭ**īn-i** bā tamk**īn-i** masīḥ**īya** – zub**da-yi** khavāq**īn-i** nisfat-ā**ʾīn-i** ʿīsav**īya*** ("the champion of the mighty Christian sultans, the cream of the righteous Khaqans of Christendom")

> *Anj**ām-i ān** mar**ām-i** maymanat-farj**ām** va istiḥk**ām-i** bunīyān-i dūstī-yi-khayr-anj**ām*** ("finalise this objective which bodes a fortunate ending and to strengthen the foundations of well-ending friendship")

We find a similar use of *sajʿ* in Z 217:

> *Bi-ittiḥ**āf-i** tuḥḥ**af** takr**īm** va taʿẓ**īm** va irsāl-i hadāyāʾ-i tabjīl va tafkh**īm*** ("by granting the rare gift of reverence and admiration and sending the gifts of recognition and esteem"); in this example we also find *ishtiqāq*, i.e., the use of words coming from a single root or at least apparently sharing a root: *ittiḥāf-i tuḥḥaf*.[77]

> *Sharaf-yāb-i ʿizz-i ḥuṣ**ūl** va pażīrā-yi sharaf-i vuṣ**ūl*** ("received the honour of being received and the distinction of being admitted")

> *Sukhan**ān-i** ānvālāsh**ān** bi-zab**ān-i** muṣādiqat tarjum**ān-i*** ("the truth-speaking tongue")

Apart from the easily spotted *sajʿ*, the two documents also share some other features. One of these is *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*, which means using words and expressions of similar meaning, such as "wine" and "a chalice", often relevant to the subject or the addressee of the document.[78] An example in Z 214 is the reference to both throne and palace, found in the first example of *sajʿ* cited above, fitting the subject of royal correspondence. In Z 217, this is found in the phrase *shahd-afzā-yi maẕāq-i ʿaẕb-shināsāʾī … gashta* ("having […] increased the [taste of] honey on the sweet palate […]"), where we find reference to sweetness, palate and honey, all of which are related and hint at the friendly relations between the monarchs. In addition, both letters are characterised by an extensive use of synonyms, characteristic of *inshāʾ*, for example, *ʿumda-yi salāṭīn-i bā tamkīn-i masīḥīya*

zubda-yi khavāqīn-i niṣfat-āʾīn-i ʿīsavīya ("the champion of the mighty Christian sultans, the cream of the righteous Khaqans of Christendom") in Z 214 or *raqīma-yi karīma-yi vālā va namīqa-yi anīqa-yi muʿallā* ("revered letter of the great one and the congenial writing of the sublime one") in Z 217.[79]

Apart from these rhetorical devices, both letters share the general structure of the text.[80] As is typical of Safavid letters, both documents begin with an invocation. This is followed by an *inscriptio*, which itself may consist of several parts (*khiṭāb*, i.e., a "call" or address to the addressee, *alqāb*, i.e., his titles and *duʿā*, i.e., the standard blessing or a prayer formula). As this is the part where the letters differ most strikingly from one another, it will be discussed separately. The sender's name and titles (the *intitulatio* in Western terminology) were omitted from the letter as a sign of courtesy, especially as he could still be identified by his seal stamp on the back of the letter.[81]

This is followed by what is known as *narratio*, which discusses the circumstances surrounding the issuing of the letter and is interwoven with the *sharḥ-i ishtīyāq* or *salutatio,* i.e., the reference to mutual friendship and good relations.[82] In the case of letter Z 214, this part combines both the *inscriptio* and the *narratio*, since it alludes to the letter (mentioned before the *inscriptio*) that had been sent by King Charles XI of Sweden, who had thereby "opened the gates of friendship and amity, and set in motion the chain of concord and affinity" (*fātiḥ-i abvāb-i dūstī va muvālāt va muḥarrik-i silsila-yi muʾālifat va muṣāfāt gardīda būdand*). In letter Z 217 this element of the document is more evident, appearing immediately after the *inscriptio* and written in such a way that its removal from the document would not impact the sense of the entire document. It states that *bi-ittiḥāf-i tuḥḥaf takrīm va taʿẓīm va irsāl-i hadāyāʾ-i tabjīl va tafkhīm shahd-afzā-yi maẕāq-i ʿaẕb-shināsāʾī gardīda* ("granting the rare gift of reverence and admiration and sending the gifts of recognition and esteem had increased the [taste of] honey on the sweet palate").[83] Letter Z 214 lacks the *promulgatio*, which usually introduces the sender's expression of his will.[84] As it links the protocol to the main contents of the letter, it could also be called a *makhlaṣ*.[85] It is easily detected in letter Z 217, where it takes the form of the phrase *makshūf-i żamīr-i muʾālifat-samīr ānki* [...] ("[let] it be known to the heart which tells the stories of friendship that [...]"). Again, letter Z 214 appears to be more skilfully written, with different parts of the document forming a coherent composition rather than a collection of constitutive elements of a document.

This is followed by the *narratio* proper and the main body of the letter. As mentioned above, in letter Z 214 the protocol is linked to the main body of the document, but it is still clear where the *narratio* proper begins. In the more disjointed letter Z 217 this part appears after the *promulgatio*. In both documents this section mentions the exchange of diplomats and that the main part of the message will be delivered orally by the envoy.[86]

Neither letter contains a date; the *eschatocol* is almost entirely omitted in both. At the end of letter Z 214 there is a blessing or a prayer (*duʿā*), in which Shah Sulaymān I expresses his wish for a livelier relationship with Charles XI: *hamvāra bi-irsāl-i rusul va rasā'il fātiḥ-i abvāb-i muḥabbat va dūstī bāshand* ("may he [Charles XI] always be the one to open the gates of kindness and friendship by sending envoys and letters"). It has been graphically removed from the rest of the document, presumably to fill the space in the last line of the text. The end of letter Z 217, also removed from the rest of the document, expresses a similar wish: *mudām kayfīyat-i aḥvāl-i khujasta simāt rā ikhbār va ʿilām mīnamūda bāshand* ("may they [i.e., the Swedish king] always give news and announcement of the blessed ways and conditions"). In this case, however, the larger space appears after the first word of the wish. It is important to note that such a space could be inserted not only between the words of the *duʿā*, but even between the letters of a single word.[87]

The protocols

As mentioned above, the part by which the two letters differ mostly is their protocol, especially the *inscriptio*. Letter Z 214 could be considered rather conservative in this respect. While the *inscriptio* is incorporated into the general text of the document by using the phrase *kitābat-i muṣādiqat-intisāb-i* … ("the friendly letter of"), this style is not unknown from the Safavid chancellery.[88] It fits into the model explained by Mitchell, with the first part being what he calls "epitomaic titles", praising the qualities of the addressee. What seems to be missing, however, are comparisons to heroes of Iranian legends, as well as references to being crowned with the sun and having an army as numerous as the stars, that are ubiquitous in correspondence with Christian sovereigns.[89]

This is followed by phrases referring to the addressee as the one who raises (*farāzanda* and *barāzanda*) a throne, a palace or some other notion related to kingship,[90] or who adorns it: *farāzanda-yi sarīr-i salṭanat va nāmdārī barāzanda-yi masnad-i shawkat va bakhtīyārī zībanda-yi takht-i*

fīrūzbakht-i ubuhhat va iqbāl zīnatdih-i ayvān-i rafīʿ al-shān-i ḥishmat va ijlāl ("[He] who raises the throne of sultanate and glory, worthy of the seat of greatness and fortune, the ornament of the throne of victorious fate of greatness and auspiciousness, the adornment of the highly positioned palace of magnificence and grandeur").

Then follows what Mitchell calls the "superlative" part of the titles, which consists of Arabic constructions, albeit "superlative" ones. This is not limited to the use of comparative or superlative adjectives, but also includes nouns that play a similar role, e.g., *ʿumda* ("pillar", "champion" or "leader").[91] In the present document, however, these constructions, while using exclusively Arabic loanwords, are grammatically in Persian language: *ʿumda-yi salāṭīn-i bā tamkīn-i masīḥīya zubda-yi khavāqīn-i niṣfat-āʾīn-i ʿīsavīya* ("the champion of the mighty Christian sultans, the cream of the righteous Khāqāns of Christendom"). Seemingly in contrast to Mitchell's model, there follow other titles that seem more appropriate to the epitomaic part: *padishah-i vālājāh-i farangistānīyān-panāh* ("the *Pādishāh* of high glory, the refuge of the people of the land of the Franks [i.e., Europeans]"). However, this is not entirely out of place in the "superlative" part, as it does not make the addressee stand out because of his objective rank, position or qualities, but because of his standing among his peers—in this case the Franks (i.e., Christians) and their rulers—which seems to be a characteristic of superlative titles. This is followed by the exclusively Arabic section of the *inscriptio*—although it appears graphically above, as an *elevatio*—composed of a noun in the adjective, followed by a list of positive qualities, generally referring to the epitome of the *inscriptio*.[92] Contrary to Mitchell's model, it is introduced with the noun *muʿizzan* ("he who bestows greatness"), not *niẓāman* ("order"), which is supposedly more ubiquitous in correspondence with Christian powers.[93]

Overall, the *inscriptio* of letter Z 214, which here includes the *elevatio*, conforms to the general form of Safavid imperial correspondence. However, the titles used are not entirely identical to any of the "model titles" proposed in the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī* in the section containing the list of single titles.[94] This indicates that this list was more of a suggestion than a prescription. The epitomaic part, as mentioned above, makes no references to Iranian legendary history, which was often alluded to in the letters. It focuses mainly on the high rank of the recipient and refers to the general attributes of Perso-Islamic kingship, without explicitly naming them; a theme that continues in the later parts of the *inscriptio* and in

the *elevatio*, albeit with ample references to the addressee's Christianity and "Frankishness". The *inscriptio* and *elevatio* are not followed by any kind of standard prayer or blessing that sometimes appears in the missives, especially those sent to Muslim rulers.[95] In the context of rhetorical devices the entire *inscriptio*, together with the *elevatio*, could be seen as *tansīq al-ṣifāt* ("arranging attributes"), i.e., the listing of qualities one after the other, which, as noted in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, was the way titles were written at the time.[96]

The *inscriptio* of document Z 217 is completely different from the earlier one. Instead of being composed in the traditional style, with epitomaic and superlative parts, it is simply an enumeration of lands of which the addressee is the monarch. An enumeration of someone's possessions was not entirely unknown among Persian secretaries, as evidenced by the occasional references in the sources to such a rhetorical figure, called *sīyāqat al-ʿadād* ("enumeration"), although they do not mention this specific style of protocol.[97] This way of presenting the titles, however, was far less popular than the "conservative" style, and seems to have been a late Safavid development. Most other known documents with this or a similar style of *inscriptio* are slightly later, dating from the reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn;[98] the only other letter of this kind from Sulaymān's reign would be the one sent to the King of Denmark in 1689, thus three years later.[99] This would mean that the present document may be one of the earliest examples of this style of *inscriptio*. Apparently, this was done under Western influence. After all, the Safavid state received many letters from Christian powers, and thus the secretaries had ample opportunity to familiarise themselves with the European style of correspondence, in which titles included references to the lands under a sovereign's rule. Moreover, as mentioned above, Safavid secretaries sometimes adapted the style of their documents to the practices of the addressee, albeit within limits. However, we do not yet have enough information to reliably trace the origin of this new style of *inscriptio*.

As a sidenote, despite using the names of foreign lands, the secretaries evidently managed to use at least elements of *sajʿ* in the *inscriptio*. This was made possible by the use of the plural suffix (in this case *-ūn*, taken from Arabic) when naming the peoples over whom Charles XI ruled, i.e., *Svigirūn va Gutārūn va Vandalrūn* ("Swedes and Goths and Vandals"), and also because most of the lands' names ended with *-īya*.

At the end of the *inscriptio* there is no Arabic phrase that would have

been placed in the *elevatio*, as was the case in letter Z 214. The *elevatio*—to be read at the beginning of the *inscriptio* before the titles—simply identifies the addressee as *Kārulūs Pādishāh*.

While the reading of the *elevatio* at the beginning of a document is highly unusual, it is clearly indicated by a blank space at the beginning of the first line of the main body of the text. The reason for such an unorthodox structure is because the word *pādishāh* is linked to the rest of the *inscriptio*, making the whole part to be read as: *Kārulūs Pādishāh-i Svigirūn va Gutārūn va Vandalrūn* [...] ("Charles, the King of Swedes and Goths and Vandals [...]"). In other later Safavid letters utilising "Western" protocol, the term "king" or the like usually appears in the main body of text, and hence the name of the ruler, placed in the *elevatio*, is read more traditionally at the end of the *inscriptio*.[100] It seems that the placement of the word *pādishāh* in the *elevatio* at the beginning of the text in letter Z 217 was done for aesthetic reasons. In other "Western" protocols it contained two names of the addressee, or a name and a number; this is not the case in document Z 217. Still, the use of only one word in the *elevatio* would make it very short and possibly stand out from the rest of the letters, especially those using a more traditional *inscriptio*. Hence, the protocol was slightly restructured to accommodate the change in the *elevatio*; in future correspondence the *elevatio* would return to be read in its usual place, as will be discussed later.

The *inscriptio* is followed by the postposition *rā*, which in this case indicates the addressee. This postposition could be considered to serve the role of the *khiṭāb* ("call" or "address"), as it also marks the Swedish king as the object of what is mentioned after it: "granting the rare gift of reverence and admiration and sending the gifts of recognition and esteem had increased the [taste of] honey on [his] sweet palate." It also signifies that he is the one whose heart is referred to as "the heart that tells the tales of friendship" that should be informed of the contents of the letter.

In summary, the two royal documents discussed above largely follow the standard structure of Safavid royal correspondence, as analysed by Mitchell. Both also use the same types of rhetorical figures, although—as is typical of letters sent to European rulers—they are less ornamental than those sent to Muslim rulers, which were often adorned with poetry.[101]

At the same time, the two letters have very different protocols. Letter Z 214 is quite conservative in this respect, while Z 217 departs from the standard Safavid model and appears to follow the European style by

listing the lands ruled by the addressee. This new form of protocol in correspondence with European sovereigns seems to have become more popular under Sulṭān Ḥusayn. In letter Z 217 the attempt at the new protocol also led to a rare reading of *elevatio* at the beginning of the letter. Curiously, both letters contain virtually no *eschatocol*.

Fig. 13a–b. Letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn of c. 1699, 96 × 48 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 218, recto and verso.

3.2 A royal letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn to King Charles XII

Document Z 218[102] (fig. 13a–b)

The document is undated, but its historical context suggests it dates from c. 1699. The size of the document is 96 × 48 cm; its lower right-hand corner is cut off (fig. 13a). The seal stamp is placed on the reverse, in the lower right of the document (fig. 13b); the seal imprint itself is transcribed and translated in chapter 3.4. The invocation, situated at the top of the document's obverse, and a single word in the last line of text were written in gold ink, the rest of the document in black ink. The field beneath the text was sprinkled with gold. The document is written in an elegant and clear *nastaʿlīq* script. A brief part of the text was written above and to the side of the main body of the text. A Swedish translation of the letter was written on the right-hand margin.

Summary of the contents: Sulṭān Ḥusayn thanks Charles XII of Sweden for the congratulations on his coronation, sent via Ludovicus (Ludvig Fabritius) and returns the favour, wishing for the continuation of friendly relations. Details will be delivered orally by the envoy.

PERSIAN TEXT:

<هو الله سبحانه>

[1] فوایح گلشن همیشه بهار وداد و روایح حدیقهٔ خلد آثار اتحاد از تنسم نسیم کتاب رأفت انتساب پادشاه والاجاه سوگرون و گتارون و

[2] وندلرون و فیملندیه و سکانیه و استانیه و لیوانیه و کارلیه و برهمه و ورده و استتینی و پومه‌رانیه و قسبیه و وندالیه

[3] و روژیه و اینگریه و یسماریه (؟) و بالاتینوس و ارنی و باواریه و ژولیاسی و کلویه و منسیون /کارلوس پادشاه/[103] مجلس انس را معطر و

[4] محفل قدس را معنبر ساخته از گزارش آیین محبت بیشمار و اقتفاء اطوار والد نامدار که بدرود جهان ناپایدار نموده و ارسال رسول دوستی

[5] تقریر لوداویکوس جهة تهنیت تزیین سریر عرش نظیر جهان‌بانی به فر وجود مسعود خاقانی اساس رفیع قصر منیع عطوفت تشیید و پایه

[6] پابرجای بنای متین مودت تأکید پذیرفت و جهة ادای مراسم پرسش و تعزیت والد دوستی‌گزین و ایفا به لوازم مبارک‌باد و تهنیت

[7] اتکاءِ آن رفیع منزلت بر متکای سلطنت سلاطین پیشین رفعت و معالی پناه ساروخان بیگ یوزباشی با نامه موالفت تبیین مشعر بر جواب

[8] سخنانی که چون لآلی رنگین در دُرج رقیمهٔ موانست شمیمه آن گزیدهٔ دودهٔ عز و تمکین اندراج یافته بود به موجب فرمان قدر مقام روانهٔ

[9] محضر الفت و التیام گردیده تکرار آن را در این نمیقه لازم ندید پیوسته جویای وسایل والای ولا می‌بوده باشند[104]

[10][105] ایام سلطنت و اقبال بر وفق رضای <ایزد متعال> بماناد

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

<He, the God, may He be glorified!>

The scents of the flower garden of the eternal spring of friendship and the aromas of the heavenly garden of unity, with the breath of the breeze of the letter (*kitāb*, also book) of kindness of the *Pādishāh* of high glory of Swedes, and Goths, and Vandals, and Finland, and Scania, and Estonia, and Livonia, and Karelia, and Bremen, and Verden, and Stettin, and Pomerania, and Cassubia, and Vandalia, and Rügen, and Ingria, and Wismar, and Palatinate, and Rhine, and Bavaria, and Jülich, and Cleves, and Bergen[106] */Kārulūs* [Carolus, i.e., Charles XII] the *Pādishāh/*[107] perfumed the amiable congregation and filled the pure assembly with the fragrance of amber.

The high foundations of the lofty palace of increasing friendship and the lasting base of the firm foundation of ever-increasing affection were raised by the report of [his] customary, immeasurable kindness and by [his] following the ways of [his] famous father who had bidden farewell to the impermanent world. And [Charles XII also increased the friendship] by sending the envoy who speaks of friendship, Lūdāvīkūs [i.e., Ludvig Fabritius], to congratulate the adornment of the supreme celestial throne of world rulership with the radiance of [our king's] auspicious royal existence.

And to observe the rites of consolation and mourning for [his] friendship-choosing father [i.e., Charles XI], and to deliver the necessary blessings and felicitations [on the occasion of] this high-ranking king's taking place on the pillow [of the throne] of sultanate of the past sultans, by the order (*farmān*) [as powerful] as destiny the refuge of highness and grandeur, Sārū Khān Bayg Yūzbāshī,[108] set out to the court of friendship and concord (i.e., the court of Sweden) with a letter of friendship containing the answer to the words that had been placed like colourful pearls in the jewellery box of the letter (*raqīma*) [that had been sent by] this chosen one of the dynasty of greatness and steadfastness [i.e., Charles XII].

[Our king] did not see it necessary to repeat them in this letter (*namīqa*). May they always search for the means of [improving] high friendship! May the days of sultanate and auspiciousness last as <the Almighty God> approves.

The letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn to King Charles XII of Sweden (fig. 13a–b), while being visually very similar to Z 214 and Z 217, nonetheless differs greatly from them, especially in the style of the text itself. There is hardly any need to discuss its material characteristics, because these largely correspond to the other royal letters, especially to Z 217, except for a few details. The length is almost the same: 96 cm, which is only slightly less than the 98 cm of Z 214 and the 96.5 cm of Z 217. The most noticeable difference is that its width is less impressive than that of the earlier letters: 48 cm compared to 57–58 cm of Z 214 and Z 217. The width of Z 218 can also be specified in contemporary Persian units, for example, two *shabr* and four *aṣbaʿ-i munżam* (one span and four closed fingers). As a result, the gold-sprinkled field for the main body of text is also slightly smaller, measuring 46.9 × 29.8 cm. Another easily spotted difference is that the invocation is written far lower than in the earlier letters: 14.5 cm from the top of the page and 29.5 cm from the main body of the text.

Equally visible is the larger number of lines of text, the main body of which now consists of ten lines, although lines 9 and 10 are not fully written: line 9 ends with a rather large (4.9 cm) blank space, and line 10 begins with the blank space of almost three quarters of the line (19.9 cm). The spacing between the lines of the text is consistent, ranging from 2.5 to 3.4 cm, depending on the exact place of measurement within the line. A less obvious feature is the greater use of coloured ink for the text, with gold ink used not only for the invocation, but also for the term *Īzad-i mutaʿāl* ("the sublime God") in the last verse. On the reverse of the letter (fig. 13b), there is another visible difference: while the placement of the seal stamp is almost identical to that on Z 214 and Z 217 (15.7 cm from the lower edge and 9.8 cm from the right-hand edge of the page), the seal used is clearly a different one; it is described in chapter 3.4. A less visible material aspect of the letter is the blank space left for the *elevatio*, which here appears towards the end of the third line of the main body of the text. Also, the letter features a Swedish translation on the margin, which was clearly added later.

As mentioned above, it is in the text itself that the main differences between Z 218 and the other two letters can be found. While it shares the overall style of the two earlier letters, especially Z 217, following a "Western" protocol, there are some subtle and less subtle differences to Z 217.

In terms of the rhetorical figures used, Z 218 is the most ornamental of all three royal letters sent to Stockholm. Z 214 and Z 217 proceed

directly to the *inscriptio* after the invocation. In Z 218, however, we see an attempt to write a proper, ornamental introduction: *maṭlaʿ*. The use of a particularly ornamental and beautiful opening would be called *ḥusn-i maṭlaʿ* ("felicitous opening"); sometimes the term *tashbīb* is used for this part of a letter.[109] Although under the Safavids the openings of documents were generally simple compared to those of some other historical periods—which even led Qā'im-Maqāmī to the erroneous conclusion that the literary ornamentation of this part of the documents had been completely abandoned—we can still see some glimpses of it.[110] It is well integrated into the structure of the document, since it contains the narrative of the receipt of a letter from the King of Sweden, and thus the protocol is here incorporated into the *narratio*—even more so than in Z 214. Since it is the actual address to the recipient of the letter, it also serves as a *khiṭāb*. The ornamental opening begins with the words:

> *Favāyiḥ-i gulshan-i hamīsha bahār-i vidād va ravāyih-i ḥadīqa-yi khuld-āsār-i ittiḥād az tanassum-i nasīm-i kitāb-i raʾfat intisāb-i pādishāh-i vālājāh-i …* ("The scents of the flower garden of the eternal spring of friendship and the aromas of the heavenly garden of unity, with the breath of the breeze of the letter of kindness of the Pādishāh of high glory …")

This is followed by a list of the peoples and lands under the sovereignty of Charles XII, in the manner of Z 217, with his name being read from the *elevatio*; but then the ornamental prose from the beginning of the letter continues:

> *majlis-i uns rā muʿaṭṭar va maḥfal-i quds rā muʿanbar sākhta* ("perfumed the amiable congregation and filled the pure assembly with the fragrance of amber")

This whole section of the text is in fact one long sentence which further ties the entire section together. The opening evokes the image of a garden in eternal spring, as found in classical poetry, which often begins with a description of spring, youth, etc. This section can also be interpreted as a very short *bahārīya* (a literary text describing the spring), like those that traditionally began the descriptions of each year in classical chronicles.

In the same part of the text there is also an instance of *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*, since all the elements of it are traditionally associated with spring and a spring garden, including pleasant smells and social gatherings (which often took place in gardens in springtime), which are a staple of *bahārīya* poetry.

In the above passage as well as in the rest of the letter, we can also find numerous instances of the use of *sajʿ*, *tarṣīʿ* and *tafannun* or *tikrār* (synonyms, repetitions). *Sajʿ* and *tarṣīʿ* can be found, for example, in phrases such as *muḥabbat-i bishumār … vālid-i nāmdār … jahān-i nāpāydār* "immeasurable kindness … famous father … impermanent world"), and synonyms in expressions such as *pursish va taʿzīyat* ("consolation and mourning"). There are also cases of *ishtiqāq* (derivation), as in ***ittikā**'-i ān rafīʿ manzilat bar **muttakā-yi**…* ("This[111] high-ranking [King] taking [his] seat on the pillow [of the throne] of …"). Since the titles and names of the lands governed are listed here in a similar way to Z 217, *sīyāqat al-ʿadād* (enumeration) was evidently also used in Z 218, as was the possibly unintended *sajʿ* (as in *Svigirūn va Gutārūn*).

The discussion of the stylistic elements of the letter reveals that it is far more ornate and complex than the other two. Again, the main difference lies in the protocol. As described above, it combines both the traditional ornamental opening with a "Western" *inscriptio*. Furthermore, it includes a vestige of more traditional protocols. This is the phrase *pādishāh-i vālājah-i …* ("the *Pādishāh* of high glory of …") at the beginning of the *inscriptio*, which could be considered a relic of the epitomaic part of the protocol.

Unlike Z 217 and more in line with Z 214 and other more traditional letters, the blank space in which the *elevatio* is to be read here stands at the end of the *inscriptio*. This is because the term *pādishāh-i vālājah-i …* ("the *Pādishāh* of the high glory of …") was added before the list of lands and peoples ruled by the addressee. Thus, the name *Kārulūs Pādishāh* could be read at the end of the *inscriptio*. The letter does not contain a clear transition from the opening and protocol to the main body of the text, traditionally called the *makhlaṣ*. However, the final words of the protocol, *majlis-i uns rā muʿaṭṭar va maḥfal-i quds rā muʿanbar sākhta* ("perfumed the amiable congregation and filled the pure assembly with the aroma of amber"), could tentatively be seen to serve this purpose, as they invite the question of how exactly the Swedish king's letter brought such a mood to the Safavid court—a question addressed in the rest of the letter. The absence of an obvious link between the two parts of the letter and a smooth transition between them is—after the ornamental opening and the interwoven character of the protocol—another example of the skill of the secretary who wrote the letter.

The protocol is followed by the typical *salutatio*, here clearly interwoven

with the *narratio*, describing the long friendship between the two rulers and their predecessors, the congratulations on the occasion of the accession of Charles XII to the throne, the condolences on the death of his father and the information on the exchange of envoys, Fabritius on the Swedish side and the Safavid envoy, Sārū Khān, to whom more information had been entrusted. This is followed by a phrase signalling the end of the letter to avoid verbosity and—in this case—repetition: *tikrār-i ān rā dar īn namīqa lāzim nadīd* ("[Our king] did not deem it necessary to repeat them [i.e., the information given in the envoy's letters] in this letter"). The whole letter ends with two blessings or wishes (*duʿā*). The first of these seems to be addressed either to both rulers or possibly to the envoy:[112] *payvasta jūyā-yi vasā'il-i vālā-yi valā mībūda bāshand* ("May they always seek the means of [improving] high friendship"). The second prayer or blessing, which appears in the next line, clearly asks for divine favour for the two rulers, on the condition that God is willing to grant it: *ayām-i salṭanat va iqbāl bar vafq-i riżā-yi īzad-i mutaʿāl bimānād* ("May the days of sultanate and auspiciousness last as the almighty God approves").

The above analysis shows that letter Z 218 is the most ornamental of all three Safavid royal letters preserved in Stockholm. In terms of the materiality of the document, this is reflected in the slightly broader use of gold ink. However, this is slightly offset by the narrower width of the letter compared to Z 214 and Z 217.

The style and structure of the letter is much more developed than in the other two letters. The secretary has skilfully interwoven different parts of the document, so that, without careful analysis, it is not immediately apparent where each section begins. Perhaps most striking, however, is the blending of a "Western" approach to titles with the ornamental opening of the letter. Similarly, the place where the *elevatio* should be read is in a more usual place here than its highly unorthodox position in Z 217. The author also used numerous rhetorical figures, most of which serve to maintain the general theme and atmosphere of the document—after introducing spring, fragrant gardens and courtly conviviality, these are the images that accompany the reader throughout the text.

3.3 Foreign correspondence at the Safavid court

It is common knowledge that in pre-modern Iran no ministry of foreign affairs existed, as this institution dates back no further than the Qajar period (1796–1925).[113] However, it is equally clear that earlier Iranian dynasties already entertained official contacts with various other states or countries, both friendly and hostile. As early as in the 12th century the Seljuq vizier Niẓām al-Mulk wrote in his Book of Government how one should approach foreign envoys, how one's own envoys should be appointed and how they should act.[114] With regard to gift-giving, he warns that rich gifts and offers of peace could be understood as a stratagem, aimed at convincing the other ruler to lower his guard before an attack is launched.[115] Furthermore, Niẓām al-Mulk argued that the reason for sending an envoy was not the one stated explicitly, either by the legate or in the letter, but rather to obtain information about the king and his state.[116]

A testament to the prevalence of the ideas recorded in Niẓām al-Mulk's book is their virtual repetition in Muḥaqqiq Sabzavārī's *Rawżat al-Anvār-i ʿAbbāsī*, written only a few years before Shah Sulaymān's accession to the throne.[117] Given Sabzavārī's status as one of the chief religious officials in the capital (the imam of the Friday prayer and the *shaykh al-islām*, a senior judge),[118] this means that Niẓām al-Mulk's ideas were at least to some degree shaping political concepts, including foreign policy, in the Safavid period. Sabzavārī furthermore expanded on Niẓām al-Mulk's ideas regarding diplomacy: for example, he suggested that the members of a delegation should write a diary of the mission, and preferably more than one person should keep a diary, so that upon their return these diaries could be collected and compared.[119] He also pointed out that gifts should be selected carefully, as too precious gifts may betray weakness, humility or stupidity, while too meagre ones could suggest a lack of generosity.[120] He also stressed that envoys were usually sent when the relations between two states were friendly (for example, to congratulate a ruler upon his accession to the throne), or when a specific business between their rulers had to be dealt with. While these observations regarding the nature of diplomacy and gift-giving may seem self-evident, his suggestion that the real reasons for sending envoys were not spelt out in the official letters—a point stressed by both Niẓām al-Mulk and Sabzavārī—sheds some light on how this foreign correspondence should be regarded.[121] Shah ʿAbbās and many rulers after him, extending at least into the Qajar period, treated

foreign correspondence more or less like a "prop" brought by the ambassadors, while the actual message would generally be delivered orally, sometimes even in an informal setting.[122] This attitude is reflected in both the form and the contents of royal letters sent abroad. Richly decorated and written in elaborate prose, they contained only the very basic messages, as the main points were to be delivered orally. The letters themselves were primarily designed to exhibit the ruler's power and splendour. This approach had its impact on the way in which foreign correspondence was prepared.

As the rule of the Safavid dynasty spanned over more than two centuries, it comes as no surprise that official procedures changed and developed during that period.[123] Discussing all of them is far beyond the scope of the present monograph. During the period in question, i.e., towards the later part of Safavid rule, there were two main branches of chancellery or maybe even two main chancelleries that were concerned with foreign correspondence. One was formed around the office of the *majlis-nivīs* (i.e., secretary of the royal council, lit. "writer of the assembly"), also called the *vāqiʿa-nivīs* (lit. "writer of occurrences"). His office was created, or rather expanded, under Shah ʿAbbās I to streamline the preparation of documents which, when done the traditional way (see below), was time-consuming and required more staff. The *majlis-nivīs* generally accompanied the shah and, together with his staff, wrote documents called *raqam*[124] with a *ṭughrā*[125] in black ink. He drafted documents either on the explicit oral orders of the shah or based on memoranda of certain other high officials. Most relevant to the discussion at hand is that he was also charged with reading foreign correspondence to the shah and drafting the replies as he heard them uttered by the monarch. He was also the chief secretary for issues concerning the crown (*khāṣṣa*) lands.[126] Furthermore, the *munshaʾāt* of Vahīd Qazvīnī, who later attained the position of vizier, contains examples of foreign correspondence penned at the time he held the office of the *majlis-nivīs*.[127]

The other, older branch concerned with foreign correspondence, among other things, was that surrounding the *munshī al-mamālik* (i.e., chief of royal correspondence, lit. "secretary of the realms"). His office was the more traditional chancellery or *Dār al-Inshāʾ*, drafting ever more elaborate documents, which were often richly decorated (although surviving *raqams* can also be very ornamental).[128] His documents featured *ṭughrās* in coloured ink (generally red or gold; the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* also mentions

lapis lazuli).[129] Moreover, according to the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* he was supposedly always charged with reading the letters from foreign rulers and writing the replies; this overlap of his and the *majlis-nivīs*' responsibilities will be addressed below. He was supposedly also charged with discussing with foreign envoys, and then transmitting their pleas and demands to the vizier and the shah.[130] Most relevant to the present discussion is that the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* describes the procedure of writing the foreign correspondence:

> And the letters which, according to the sublime command, were ordered to be written to any of the kings of the lands, the above-mentioned [*munshī al-mamālik*] drafted them; then, after they had been read before the most sacred [king] and appealed to [his] world-adorning sight, the *nāma-nivīs* (letter-writer) who was one of his [i.e., the *munshī al-mamālik*'s] subordinates would write them with great care and effort in clear, very good *nastaʿlīq* script, without any mention of *shikasta* [script].[131]

> And it was customary for the paper of each letter to be given from the library, and the decorators (*muẕahhibān*) would draw a frame (*jadval*), draw patterns on it, decorate it, and sprinkle gold on [the part of the paper reserved for] the text, according to the rules written in a book kept by the *munshī al-mamālik* and pointed out by him, and then the letter-writer would begin to write the letter. And from the olden days it was the custom that for every important letter that was written and completed the *nāma-nivīs* would be granted a gift as a reward.[132]

The description of letters drafted by the *munshī al-mamālik* and written by the *nāma-nivīs* perfectly fits the letters Z 214, Z 217 and Z 218 discussed above. This suggests that these letters were written in the *Dār al-Inshā'*, according to the procedure described in the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*.

There remains the question of overlapping duties of the *majlis-nivīs* and the *munshī al-mamālik*. The answer may be found in the discrepancies between the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* and two other Safavid government manuals, the *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk* and the *Alqāb va Mavājib-i ʿAṣr-i Salāṭīn-i Ṣafavī*. Apart from what has been stated, the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* presents the *munshī al-mamālik* as an important office, having 28 subordinates (including a single *nāma-nivīs*). The *Alqāb va Mavājib* also portrays the office as a prosperous one, stressing the required qualifications and recording around 30 subordinates, which corresponds to the information recorded in the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*. *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk*, on the other hand, presents this office as having *de jure* 28 subordinates (without mentioning the *nāma-nivīs*), but in fact

having no employees whatsoever.[133] This suggests that with the passage of time the *majlis-nivīs*' department took over more and more duties from the *munshī al-mamālik*, so that by the days of Shāh Sulaymān I foreign observers like Jean Chardin considered the *majlis-nivīs* to be the state's principal secretary.[134] It seems, however, that even in the early days of Sulṭān Ḥusayn's reign the writing of ceremonial foreign correspondence—the above-mentioned "props" designed to reflect the power and splendour of the shah by their beauty and opulence rather than to convey any message—was still managed by the *munshī al-mamālik*. His ceremonial outfit was enriched by an ornament added to his turban under Sulṭān Ḥusayn, suggesting that, while some of his responsibilities had been transferred to the other department, he was still held in high esteem.[135] It is also of note that the decorations and ornaments described in the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* mostly adorned letters—or documents in general—that were written towards the later part of the Safavid period, whereas earlier documents, especially those sent to Europe, were generally less richly decorated.[136]

A further step in the production of a royal letter was to stamp it with a royal seal and then to put it into a pouch. In the Safavid state several high-ranking officials had the task of keeping various royal seals; these officials were generally called *muhrdār* or, less commonly, *amīr-i muhr* and *vazir-i muhr*.[137] However, by the time of Shah Sulaymān I the offices of these *muhrdārs* were more or less devoid of practical importance, as the seals were being kept either by the ruler himself (in the case of the signet-ring seal even before that time) or in the royal harem, while the *muhrdārs* wore seals—probably others than the most important state seals—hanging around their necks as insignia of their rank.[138] Furthermore, the seals used by the *muhrdārs,* according to the government manuals' description, were mostly employed for internal state affairs, to counterseal certain classes of documents, but these descriptions do not shed any light on the procedure by which foreign correspondence was prepared.[139]

Despite these complexities and developments of the Safavid chancellery or chancelleries and judging by the decoration of the documents, the three royal letters preserved in the Swedish National Archives were seemingly all prepared according to the traditional official procedure, i.e., passing through the office of the *munshī al-mamālik*. This extensive procedure may have prolonged the time Fabritius had to wait to obtain the letters. Moreover, in Safavid and more broadly in pre-modern Iranian di-

plomacy a letter from the shah was primarily a symbol of his royal status and of his respect towards the addressee. Its significance was conveyed by its appearance and style of writing rather than by its actual contents.

3.4 Seal imprints on the royal letters: Description, analysis and comparison

The use of seals on Safavid documents is a complex subject, worthy of a separate study.[140] Unfortunately, the original seals of Safavid shahs have not survived to the present day. This is due to the practice of removing the inscription from a seal upon the shah's death. Such a seal was then reused for the new shah, especially since royal seals were generally made of precious stones.[141] What is available for study are seal impressions, either on paper or in wax. Until now scholars have focused mainly on seal imprints on paper. There appear to be three reasons for this. Firstly, the seal imprints at first sight appeared to be an integral part of the documents and were therefore studied together with them. Secondly, they may have been better preserved, while the wax seal could have been broken when the pouch was opened. Thirdly, seal imprints are discussed extensively in the sources, both in European travelogues (especially by Jean Chardin) and in Persian manuals (mainly in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, *Dastūr al-Mulūk* and the *Ṯazkirat al-Mulūk*). On the other hand, the only major Persian source discussing wax seals seems to be the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī*. Yet, while it offers information on the way they were used, it completely omits the description of the seals themselves.

The golden pouch with a flower pattern provides us with a rare example of a seal impression in a piece of sealing-wax (fig. 19), which is attached to the braid that originally served to close the pouch (see chapter 4.1 and fig. 29). Interestingly, it differs from the seal imprint on the reverse of the letter sent by Shah Sulaymān I in that very pouch. It will be discussed separately in chapter 3.5, as it belongs to the document's exterior, visible before the pouch was opened.

The seal imprints on letters Z 214 and Z 217

The seal imprinted on the reverse sides of letters Z 214 (fig. 14) and Z 217 (fig. 15) is round and rather large (6.3 × 4.5 cm),[142] with the blessing or prayer for the Fourteen Infallibles (i.e., Muḥammad, Fāṭima and the twelve Shiʿa

Fig. 14. Seal stamp on the verso of the letter from Shah Sulaymān I of c. 1682. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 214 (detail of fig. 11b).

Fig. 15. Seal stamp on the verso of the letter from Shah Sulaymān I of c. 1686. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 217 (detail of fig. 12b).

Imams) surrounding the central cartouche (figs 14, 15). The prayer or blessing is expressed with the phrase, intended to be read clockwise:

> *Allāhumma ṣalā ʿalā Muḥammad al-Muṣṭafā wa Fāṭima al-Zahrā, wa ʿAlī al-Murtiżā, wa al-Ḥasan wa al-Ḥusayn wa ʿAlī Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn wa Muḥammad al-Bāqir wa Ja'far al-Ṣādiq wa Mūsā al-Kāẓim wa ʿAlī al-Riżā wa Muḥammad al-Taqī wa ʿAlī al-Naqī wa al-Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī wa al-Mahdī al-Hujja Ṣāḥib al-Zamān*
>
> (Oh God, bless the Muḥammad the Chosen One, and Fāṭima the Radiant, and ʿAlī with whom [God] is pleased, and Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, and ʿAlī the Ornament of the Faithful, [Imam ʿAlī Sajjād or Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn], and Muḥammad who tears [the veil of knowledge], and Jaʿfar the Truthful, and the Mūsā the Forbearing, and ʿAlī [with whom God is] pleased, and Muḥammad the Pious, and ʿAlī the Distinguished, and Ḥasan of the military camp, and Mahdī, the Proof [of God], the Lord of the Age)

The central cartouche contains the phrase *Sulaymān banda-yi shāh-i vilāyat*[143] ("Sulaymān, the slave of the king of authority") and the date when the seal was created: 1091 AH (1680–1681). The coin is adorned with a dome-like element, featuring the Basmala *bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* ("in the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful"); its shape is often described as a "hat" (*kulāhak*, *kulah*) or "crown" in modern studies, especially in case of rectangular seals.[144] In other cases the entire seal is called *gulābī-shikl* ("pear-shaped").[145] In the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, however, such seals are called *miḥrābī* ("mihrab-like")[146] as opposed to *mudavvar*

("round") or *murabbaʿ* ("rectangular" or "square") seals, although it remains unclear whether this is a technical term or simply a description using a familiar shape as a point of reference. The use of these terms in the *Bayāżī Safavī* suggests that they were largely official. This shape appears to be standard for the seals of Safavid shahs after ʿAbbās I, as noted in a number of studies on Safavid seals.[147] Further examples of imprints of the same seal as that found on letters Z 214 and Z 217 have also been published.[148]

Fig. 16. Seal stamp on the verso of the letter from Sulṭān Ḥusayn of c. 1699. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 218 (detail of fig. 13b).

The seal imprint on letter Z 218

The seal imprinted on letter Z 218 is a well-known seal of Sulṭān Ḥusayn (fig. 16) that has been published several times.[149] It is also well attested by contemporary sources—in fact it is identical to the seal discussed in the *Bayāżī Safavī* as the seal with the battlements (see below).[150] It appears to be a later, more ornamental version of the *dād va istad* or the great (*buzurg*) seal.

The seal is round with a dome or mihrab. The main part consists of a round central cartouche, surrounded by twelve cartouches with circular protrusions containing the names of the Fourteen Infallibles. However, there are only 22 protrusions sticking out of the main shape of the seal, while the first and the last one are hidden below the seal's dome.

The central cartouche contains the phrase: *Vāriṯ-i mulk-i Sulaymān-i Ǯahān, Sulṭān Ḥusayn* ("The heir of the realm of Sulaymān of the World, Sulṭān Ḥusayn") and the date 1107 AH (1695–1696). This date does not correspond to the year of the ruler's enthronement. Therefore, it must be the

year when the seal was produced. The term *Sulaymān-i Ǯahān* ("Sulaymān of the World") is both a reference to the shah's predecessor on the throne and a pun on the predecessor's name being the same as that of the Qur'anic Sulaymān (King Solomon), suggesting that the previous shah ruled the world like King Solomon. Those spaces of the central cartouche that do not contain any letters are filled with arabesque and floral patterns, in a show of *horror vacui*.

The dome or mihrab of the seal contains the phrase *ḥasbī al-lāh* ("God is sufficient for me"). It is also where the blessing on the margin begins, as it contains the phrase *Allāhumma ṣalā ʿalā al-nabī va al-waṣī*, which is continued clockwise in the marginal cartouches, eventually resulting in the phrase:

> *Allāhumma ṣalā ʿalā al-Nabī wa al-Waṣī wa al-Batūl wa al-Ḥasan wa al-Ḥusayn wa al-Sajjād wa al-Bāqir wa al-Ṣādiq wa al-Kāẓim wa al-Riżā wa al-Ṭaqī wa al-Naqī wa al-Zakī wa al-Mahdī*
>
> (Oh God, bless the Prophet [Muḥammad], and the Inheritor [Imam ʿAlī], and the Pure [Fāṭima] and Ḥasan, and Ḥusayn, and the One who often prostrates [Imam ʿAlī Sajjād or Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn], and the One who tears [the veil of knowledge]; Imam Muḥammad Bāqir], and the Truthful [Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq], and the Forbearing [Imam Mūsā Kāẓim], and the [One with whom God is] Pleased [Imam ʿAlī al-Riżā], and the Pious [Imam Muḥammad al-Ṭaqī], and the Distinguished [Imam ʿAlī al-Naqī], and the Pure [Imam Ḥasan al-ʿAskarī] and al-Mahdī)

While the inscription of this seal differs slightly from that on the seal found on letters Z 214 and Z 217, it is generally the same seal—with the sections dedicated to the shah in the centre, to God on top and to the Fourteen Infallibles on the margin.

Seals used in Safavid foreign correspondence

Comparing the legend of the seals with the description of royal seals found in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, one could argue that the seal on the letters discussed here is a *muhr-i dād va sitad* ("transaction seal"), as it fits its description—both in shape (the seal of Z 214 and Z 217 is oval with a dome, and *muhr-i dād va sitad* is described as "sometimes oval, sometimes *mihrab*-like") and in legend, for it contains the names of the Imams on the margin.[151] The seal of Z 218 differs slightly but is still largely oval with a dome, and it shares many characteristics with Z 214 and Z 217, as

Fig. 17. Imprint of a signet-ring seal of Shah ʿAbbās I on the reverse of his letter to the Polish lords of 1608. Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, AKW, Perskie, no. 3.

Fig. 18. Imprint of a seal of Shah ʿAbbās II as it appears in his correspondence with King Vladislaus IV, Grand Hetman Mikołaj Potocki and Grand Chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński, all of 1647. Warsaw, Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych, AKW, Perskie, nos 1, 8, 9.

shown above. Contrary to what might be expected, the seal stamps on documents sent to the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in the days of ʿAbbās II (the shah preceding Sulaymān I) have identical shapes but include different inscriptions, even considering the different names of the rulers (figs 17, 18). In the seal stamps on these "Polish" documents, the central cartouche is not surrounded by the names of the Infallibles, but by a poem by Sanāʾī:

> *Ǧānib-i har ki bā ʿAlī na-nikūst/ har ki gū bash man nadāram dust*
> *Har ki chūn khāk nīst bar dar-i ū/ gar fitishta ast khāk bar sar-i ū*
>
> (Whoever is not good (i.e., not on good terms) with ʿAlī/ Whomever you say,[152] I do not like/ Whoever is not like dust on his threshold/ He may even be an angel, shame on him [lit. "dust on his head"])

The seal of ʿAbbās II fits the description of a *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāz̲*, especially as it is used not only on a letter to King Vladislaus IV, but also in *farmāns* or edicts addressed to the grand hetman Mikołaj Potocki and the grand chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński, both of which bear the *ṭughrā* (see chapter 3.1, note 71) *farmān-i humāyūn sharaf-i nafāz̲ yāft*, for which the *sharaf-i nafāz̲* seal was used (fig. 18).[153] The reason for this apparent inconsistency is, again, found in the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī*, which states: *muhr-i nāma muhr-i alāḥidda nist va har yakī az muhrhā ki pādishāhān ikhtīyār mīkardand* [...] *mīzadand* ("a seal for letters is not a separate seal, and they imprinted any seal that the kings demanded ...").[154] This confirms that any royal seal could be used on a letter to a foreign ruler.[155]

Indeed, throughout the *Bayāżī Safavī* several terms are used for the seals employed in this kind of context. Most widely used was the *muhr-i mubārak* ("blessed seal"), apparently a stock expression for any of the shah's seals.[156] A few other names can also be found; their analysis may help to evaluate the role of the seals used on the documents in the Swedish archives, especially as the *Bayāżī Safavī* focuses on correspondence with foreign authorities. The seals mentioned there are the following:

1. *Muhr-i mihr-āṣār* ("sun-like seal").[157] A similar term appears in the *Taz̲kirat al-Mulūk* as both *muhr-i mihr-āṣār* and *muhr-i angushtar-i āftāb-aṣar* ("the seal of the sun-like signet ring") in the description of the duties and salary of the inkhorn holder of the sun-like signet ring (*davātdār-i angushtar-i āftāb-aṣar*).[158] This suggests that it was a signet used as a seal. The term *mihr-āṣār* does not appear in the description of this position

in the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*,[159] but the same source makes a few other references to the seal by this name, most importantly pointing out that it was generally used on documents of the *raqam* type, either issued upon the shah's oral orders or following the notes of the grand vizier or other high-ranking officials.[160] Signet-ring seals were worn by the shah either on his finger or on a necklace.[161]

2. *Muhr-i sar-i ruqʿa* ("seal of the beginning of short letters").[162] This is seemingly the main seal to be used on brief letters; possibly a generic term for any seal used in that function.

3. *Muhrī … ki bar hāshīya-yi ān naqsh ast har ki bā ʿAlī na nikūst* ("a seal the margin of which is inscribed: Whoever is not [on] good [terms] with ʿAlī …").[163] This seems to fit the description of the *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāz̲*;[164] possibly the same or similar seal to that found on the documents in the Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych in Poland, mentioned above.[165]

4. *Muhrī … ki bar hāshīya-yi ān davāzdah imām naqsh ast va jihat-i nāmahā*[166] *kanda shuda* ("a seal the margin of which bears [the names of] the Twelve Imams and which has been carved for letters").[167] The mention that this seal had been carved for letters is often omitted in the literature; its shape is occasionally described as *mihrab*-like.[168] This appears to be the same seal as the one used on the letters to the Swedish king, described as *muhr-i buzurg* ("great seal", no. 8 below).

5. *Muhrī miḥrābī [bā] hāshīya-yi asāmī-i mutabbaraka-yi davāzdah imam-i kungara-dār* ("a *mihrab*-like seal with a margin [featuring] the blessed names of the Twelve Imams, with battlements").[169] This seems to be a seal introduced by Sulṭān Ḥusayn, as shown by existing imprints and since it is not yet mentioned in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*. Based on the description it is possible to identify this seal, for instance, on a letter to King Augustus II of Poland. It appears to be a more ornamental version of the *dād va sitad* or *buzurg* seal which under Sulṭān Ḥusayn replaced the type previously used on the letters to the Swedish king; it existed in two versions: with the central cartouche featuring the same inscription as in Z 218, and with the inscription *Ḥusayn banda-yi Shāh-i vilāyat*, as in Sulaymān's seal.[170] As a result, the former, simpler shape was retained for *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāz̲*.[171] This appears to be the seal used on document Z 218.

6. *Muhr-i miḥrābī ki sajʿ-i ān "banda-yi khāṣṣ-i Amīr al-Muʾminīn Sulṭān Ḥusayn" būd* (a *mihrab*-like seal with the inscription "a private/special slave of the prince of the faithful Sulṭān Ḥusayn").[172] No imprint of a seal with this inscription has yet been identified; however, it is similar to a *mihrab*-like seal of Sulṭān Ḥusayn with the inscription *Kamtarīn Kalb-i Amīr al-Muʾminīn Sulṭān Ḥusayn* ("the smallest dog of the prince of the faithful Sulṭān Ḥusayn"). Two such seals are known, one in the shape of a domed rectangle, another in a shape resembling a pear. The former, however, bears the date 1125 AH (1713–1714) and therefore cannot have been the one described in the *Bayāżī Safavī*, while the latter bears the date 1112 AH (1700–1701), making it a possible candidate.[173] This was possibly the *muhr-i sar-i ruqʿa* mentioned above, as the document on which it was stamped is described as a *ruqʿa*. Given that *ruqʿas* were generally simpler and shorter letters, it may well have been a small seal.

7. *Muhr-i Angushtar* ("signet-ring seal").[174] This might correspond to the *muhr-i mihr-āṣār* (under all its names). Furthermore, there is a separate reference to a *muhr-i murabbaʿ-i angushtar* ("square signet-ring seal"),[175] which also appears to be a *muhr-i mihr-āṣār* or similar seal.

8. *Muhr-i buzurg* ("great seal").[176] This is probably another name for the *muhr-i dād va sitad*, as it would be the largest seal. This suggests that it refers to the seal used on the Swedish documents, particularly so since the *Bayāżī Safavī* records its use under Sulaymān I. Furthermore, the term *buzurg* ("great") apparently served to distinguish it from the small *muhr-i kūchak* (no. 9 below).[177]

9. *Muhr-i kūchak* ("small seal"). The term is also used in the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī*, where it clearly refers to the *muhr-i mihr-āṣār* (no. 1 above) as the signet-ring seal.[178] In the *Bayāżī Safavī* it is mentioned in a number of document descriptions as being imprinted either on the *żimn* ("reverse")[179] or inside the letter,[180] which could mean being placed on a separate slip of paper. Sometimes the term simply refers to any small seal, as in the case of letters received by the Safavids from other rulers.[181] It is also once referred to as a *muhr-i kuchak-i murabbaʿ* ("small square seal"),[182] which further points to a seal similar to a *mihr-āṣār*, described in the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī* as the small seal, which supposedly used to be square, but later became *mihrab*-shaped.[183]

The above analysis of the sources suggests that the seal imprinted on letters Z 214 and Z 217 in the Swedish National Archives was the largest and thus probably the most ceremonial seal used by Sulaymān's chancellery, and the seal imprinted on Z 218 was a later development of the same general type of seal. Paired with its placement on the reverse of the documents (see previous chapter), it pointed to the lofty position of the addressee. As mentioned above, there were no specific seals to be used exclusively on royal letters as opposed to orders or other documents. Similarly decorated letters from the period of Sulaymān I (both letters to King Charles XI of Sweden) and the early reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn (for instance, the above-mentioned letter to King Augustus II of Poland and a letter to Pope Innocent XII)[184] were evidently stamped with the most ceremonial seals available. This suggests the existence or at least the attempt of setting a standard for official letters to be sent to Christian rulers; a trend supported by the commentaries in the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī*. If this is true, then the documents in the Swedish National Archives appear to be among the earliest examples of this development.[185]

3.5 A seal imprint in wax

Although very few wax seals from early modern Iran or from Islamic Iran in general have survived, this does not necessarily mean that they were not widely used. The sources from the entire Islamic period sometimes briefly mention their use. An early example can be found in Firdawsī's epic *Shāhnāma*,[186] which records the ancient, legendary and mythical history of Iran, yet naturally reflected practices existing at the time of its composition. Also early works on *inshā'*, such as the *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*, make references to it, suggesting the use of fragrant waxes with pleasing colours for letters.[187] In the Safavid period surviving sources attest that seals were used to close pouches or bags containing important items.[188] The box containing the royal seals itself was supposedly also sealed with the royal signet ring.[189] The use of wax seals on document pouches is not only supported by the—admittedly few—surviving examples, but also well attested in the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* (see also chapter 5).

However, in a hot climate, pieces of wax or resin may perish faster than under more moderate conditions. Furthermore, the use of the name of God and the monarch on the easily perishable and detachable seals

meant that they would have to be disposed in a way which guaranteed that no blasphemy would occur. Such practices existed in the case of paper. Rajabzāda, who pioneered research into the rituals relating to the practice of *inshā'*, points to two practices which may be closely linked to one another. As one could not simply destroy the paper on which the name of God had been written, the works on *inshā'* instead suggested to wash away the sacred words beforehand. Chardin records a second practice: if a piece of paper needed to be destroyed it should first be soaked in water and then rolled into a ball, which would be placed into a hole until it turned to dust.[190] The existence of such practices for a rather sturdy medium like paper suggests that wax seals, which did not have to be archived and due to Iran's climate were not likely to survive anyway, were even more likely to be disposed of in a dignified manner.

Fig. 19. Wax seal attached to the braid of the golden pouch with the flower pattern, 2.5 × 2.5 cm (detail of fig. 29). Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica.

The red wax seal (fig. 19) that is preserved on the braid used to close the golden pouch with the flower pattern in the Swedish National Archives is rather small, measuring 2.5 × 2.5 cm, while the seal imprint on it measures 1.5 × 1.8 cm. The shape of the seal imprint differs from the one on letter Z 217, which the pouch contained: instead of being round with a dome at the top, it is rectangular with a dome. However, its text is similar, albeit a bit shorter. The main part, here in the form of the rectangular section, reads *Sulaymān banda-yi shah-i vilāyat* ("Sulaymān, the slave of the king of authority") as in the central cartouche of the seal imprint on the letter. There is, however, no margin covered with the names of the Infallibles, and the Basmala featured in the dome-like shape is limited to the words *bi'smi-l'lāhi* ("in the name of God"). In general, it seems to fit the description of the shah's signet-ring seal.[191] This is supported by the *Bayāżī Safavī*, which mentions the term *muhr-i raqam* as the name of the seal being used in wax (in a description of a letter of 11 Muḥarram 1099 AH/17 November 1687 to the exiled Mughal prince Akbar, which was supposedly written in the shah's own hand).[192] The mentioned term has to refer to the *muhr-i kūchak*, i.e., the small (signet) seal, as it was generally used on *raqams* written in the presence of the shah,[193] and a letter written in the shah's own hand by definition had to be written in his presence.

The most unexpected element in the text of the seal imprinted in wax, however, is the date it features: 1077 AH (1666–1667). The same seal was stamped on documents as well, but the date it includes seemingly has not attracted scholarly attention so far. The date on the seal corresponds to the year of Sulaymān's first coronation. It could not have been made at

that time, however, as the shah originally acceded to the throne as Ṣafī II, and only after the disappointing early years of his reign was crowned again under the name Sulaymān I in 1078 AH (1668).[194] It seems, therefore, that while the seals imprinted on paper usually bear the date when they were produced, this wax seal bears the date when the shah's reign had begun, regardless of when it was made.

Neither narrative Safavid sources nor the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* discuss the reason for the presence of the date of enthronement on this seal, instead of the date of the seal's creation, as in most other royal seals. However, it seems that it was simply due to the use of the signet-ring seal. According to at least one study, the signet-ring seals of Safavid rulers bore the enthronement date at least since ʿAbbās I.[195] This type of seal was not limited to being imprinted in wax, as there are numerous examples of its imprints on paper documents; one of them is illustrated here (fig. 20).[196] It seems that the signet-ring seal, by virtue of being a royal ring, was the most "personal" of all royal seals, making it more of a personal medium of identification than an official one; according to some studies and sources, it was also the most respected of all royal seals.[197] Hence, the inscribed date of the first ascent to the throne might have been deemed more fitting than inscribing the date of the seal's creation. Also, there was little risk of its falling into the hands of forgers or enemies. Its use on wax to seal a pouch could have stressed not only the official and ministerial character of the letter, but also the "royal" and maybe personal character, serving almost as a "calling card" of the sender.

Fig. 20. Seal stamp on a document of Shah Sulaymān I of 1683, 1.5 × 1.8 cm. London, British Library, Or 4935_11.

Apart from the seal discussed above, the *Bayāżī Safavī* makes reference to another seal used on wax to seal pouches (albeit its use was not limited to that), namely the *muhr-i ashraf* ("the most noble seal").[198] One could be tempted to consider this a generic term for the royal seals, especially as it is not mentioned in the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*.[199] Yet, the *żimn* ("reverse") of a number of late Safavid documents, at least since the reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn, features in the top-right corner the imprint of a small oval seal with the text *muhr-i ashraf* and an annotation *ṯabt-i muhr-i ashraf shud* ("registered with the most noble seal"), in a way mirroring the seal with the inscription *muhr-i humāyūn* ("august seal") and the annotation *ṯabt-i muhr-i humāyūn shud* ("registered with the august seal");[200] the latter, however, seems to be more common. Judging by the placement, it corresponds to the supposed *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāẕ* described by the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* and *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk*.[201] It is also mentioned in the *Munsha'āt-i*

Sulaymānī, where it is called *muhr-i ṣabt-i muhr-i sharaf-i nafāẕ* ("the seal of registering with the *sharaf-i nafāẕ* seal"); its printed edition suggests that it was introduced on the occasion of Sulaymān's second enthronement, had the legend *Innahu min Sulaymān wa innahu bismillāh al-raḥmān al-raḥīm* ("It is from Sulaymān and it is in the name of God, the most gracious, the most merciful") and was occasionally used on letters.[202] This seems to be the editor's mistake, however, as it is clearly the part of the description of another seal featured on the same page of the manuscript.[203] That different seal, of a slightly smaller size than the "big" *sharaf-i nafāẕ* (and thus possibly its variant; 5.2 × 4 cm and 4.2 × 5.4 cm, respectively), is well known in existing scholarship.[204] Given its size, it cannot be named a small seal, which is how the *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāẕ* is identified in both the *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk* and the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*. The information on the correct, smaller seal is limited to its being kept by a *muhrdār* and being used on the reverse of certain types of documents, without mentioning foreign correspondence.[205]

The reason behind this confusion may be that the small seal used on the reverse of the documents was employed by the *muhrdār-i muhr-i sharaf-i nafāẕ*, i.e., the keeper of the *sharaf-i nafāẕ* seal.[206] Although Busse, who published one document with this seal, in the main text of his study states that the annotation written next to the seal uses the term *muhr-i sharaf-i nafāẕ*, his edition of the document presents it as a *muhr-i ashraf*.[207] Thus, it appears that it was a separate type of seal, used at least since the days of Sulaymān I (as Busse's document is dated 1079 AH/1669) on the reverse of various orders, edicts and patents and sometimes also on pouches, as evidenced by the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī*, citing a letter to the Mughal prince Muʿaẓẓam of 11 Jumadā I 1089 AH (21 June 1678). In that case the pouch with this seal was put into another pouch, sealed with a different seal.[208] This suggests the term *muhr-i ashraf* was used here to denote a specific type of seal, unlike in the term *muhr-i mihr-āsār-i ashraf*, where the term *ashraf* is simply used to stress the royal and noble character of the seal being used, which itself is identified by the term *muhr-i mihr-āsār*.[209] It was also sometimes used on the paper covers in which documents were sent, especially when the addressee did not warrant a pouch because of their lower rank,[210] just as *muhr-i mihr āsār* was sometimes used.[211]

Apart from carrying important foreign correspondence, sealed document pouches—according to the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*—were also used for official business inside the royal chancellery (similarly to the red despatch

boxes used in the United Kingdom). For example, after an important *raqam* document with the *ṭughrā* drawn by the *majlis-nivīs* had been written, the inkhorn holder of the sun-like signet ring (*davātdār-i muhr-i angushtar-i āftāb-aṣar*) would put it into a pouch (also called *kīsa*), seal it (it does not mention using wax, but it would be impossible to do without it) and send it to the royal harem for the shah to adorn it with his seal. Then it would be sent back, and the inkhorn holder sent the document to its addressee.[212] Furthermore, Chardin mentions that a letter informing the new monarch (the future Shah Sulaymān I) of his accession to the throne was "[...] in a pouch of cloth of gold, that was closed by a braid of gold and silk, with tassels of the same, tied into a knot; it was sealed with soft wax stamped with the prime minister's seal".[213]

It is worth noting that in some cases the pouches were intentionally left unsealed, so that they could be delivered open. Such was the case of the *ḥukm* issued in Jumada II 1108 AH (December 1696–January 1697) to Khwāja Muḥammad Ḥusayn, the former *kalāntar* ("elder" or "sheriff")[214] of Isfahan's Armenian New Julfa suburb, who had just converted to Islam.[215]

In the field of Safavid studies the subject of seals used on document pouches, as well as wax seals in general, clearly warrants more extensive research. This is especially important given the fragmented record of their use and the fact that relevant artefacts are scattered throughout the world. Possible places to look for answers are the Russian archives and museums, which house not only Safavid documents (that are steadily being published), but also wax seals.[216] Two interesting examples of late Safavid wax seals are preserved in the Kremlin Museums in Moscow. They were used to seal the pouches containing Shah Sulaymān's congratulatory letters on the occasion of the joint rise to power of Tsars Ivan V and Peter I, dated 1692.[217] However, a brief study of these wax seals reveals that their inscriptions do not resemble those of royal Safavid seals, but instead contain one of the common Shiite prayers: *lā ilāha illā Allāh al-ḥalīm al-karīm* ("There is no god but God, the forbearing, the generous").[218] Thus further study is required to determine whether there existed a separate type of seal, or whether a mistake occurred when these objects were catalogued, or whether royal letter pouches could have been sealed by high-ranking officials of the state, using a non-royal seal. As important as this issue may be, it is beyond the scope of the present study.

Fig. 21. Petition submitted by Ludvig Fabritius to Shah Sulaymān I, c. 1684–1686, 26.5 × 18.5 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 215, recto.

3.6 Ludvig Fabritius' petition to Shah Sulaymān I

Document Z 215[219] (fig. 21)
The document is undated, but its historical context suggests it dates from c. 1684–1686. The size of the document is 26.5 × 18.5 cm. It was written in black ink in *nastaʿlīq-i shikasta-āmīz* script, by its nature more hasty and less elegant than the script of the royal letters.

Summary of the contents: Petition (*ʿarża-dāsht*) by Ludvig Fabritius to Shah Sulaymān I to be granted an audience, instead of just stating his business to the *īshīk-āqāsī-bāshī* ("chief macebearer", i.e., the head of the protocol).[220] Fabritius stresses that he is a royal envoy, not just a merchant.

PERSIAN TEXT:

هو

[1] عرضه داشت کمترین /ایلچی پادشاه شیت/[221] به موقف عرض می‌رساند[222] که در حینی که به شرف پابوس ولی‌نعمت عالمیان رسیده بعض مطالبات

[2] داشتم که عرض نمایم نواب اشرف مقرر فرمودند که به خدمت عالی‌جاه ایشیک آقاسی باشی رفته مطالب خود را عرض که

[3] به خدمت قبله عالمیان عرض شود و حال کمترین به جهة بعض مطلب[223] که پادشاه شیت در حین آمدن /به زبانی/[224] سفارش نموده که

[4] در اینجا عرض و به جواب آن سرافراز گردیده خبر ببرد مقرر دارند که آمده مطالب خود را که به جهة همان به ایلچی‌گری

[5] آمده‌ام و تا جواب نشوم بدون جواب نتوانم رفت به تجاری نیامده‌ام نواب عالی (...) متوجه شده نوعی شود که

[6] به جواب مطالبات فایض گردیده خوش‌حال به ولایت خود رفته باعث سرافرازی گردد چون واجب

[7] عرض نمود باقی امره العالی

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

He [the God]

The petition[225] of the least significant[226] envoy of the *Pādishāh* of Sweden[227]/[228] humbly informs[229] that when I gained the honour of kissing the feet of the benefactor of the people of the world [i.e., was granted audience before the shah] I had several requests to present. His most noble highness ordered that having gone before the glorious *Īshīk Āqāsī Bāshī*,[230] I shall present my matters, so that they may be presented before the *Qibla*[231] of the people of the world [i.e., the shah]. Yet [I,] the least significant, [cannot do so] because of some of the requests which the *Pādishāh* of Sweden orally entrusted to me when I was coming, to present them here and, having reached the honour of receiving a response, take the news [back with me]. May they [i.e., the shah] order that I come and present my requests, because I have come as an envoy precisely because of them, and until I receive an answer I cannot go [back] without an answer, I have not come as a merchant, his highness (...)[232] so that it happens in such a fashion that [I, the least significant] become blessed with the answer to my requests and happily return to my own realm, and it becomes a source of honour. Because [the author] presented what was necessary, for the rest, [may] his sublime order [be obeyed].[233]

The petition that was sent by Ludvig Fabritius to Shāh Sulaymān I shares several characteristics with the royal letters discussed above. As to the type of document, the text is an *ʿarża-dāsht* (lit. "presented, [humbly] said"); the term is usually translated as "petition" or "report", with the caveat that it was also a form in which any message to a monarch was to be penned.[234] This broader understanding of the term, supported by a contemporary source, can be likened to the *farmāns* to foreign addressees of lower rank, which in practice could be letters, as discussed above.[235] Just as a king could not write a letter to someone of inferior rank, but had to present it as an order, so a mere subject could not write a letter to a king, but had to formulate it as an *ʿarża-dāsht* or *ʿarīza*. In the case of the present document, however, the text is truly a petition, as the sender Fabritius literally asks the shah to be granted an audience.

Visual aspects

The document is much smaller than the royal letters, measuring only about 26.5 cm in length and 18.5 cm in width; this corresponds to the general rule that lower-ranking issuers tended to write smaller letters than monarchs.[236] Unlike the gold-sprinkled royal letters, the *ʿarża-dāsht* has no such ornamentation, and the entire text has been written in black ink (fig. 21). The lower right-hand corner of the document has been cut off, as in the case of the royal letters. Another similarity is the presence of a large margin on the right-hand side and a large blank space between the invocation and the actual text of the document. Again, there is a rather large spacing between the lines of the text (ranging from 1 to 3 cm, depending on the exact place of measurement), although here it is much smaller (in relation to the text) than in the royal letters. Furthermore, the spacing between the first two lines and between the last two lines of the main body of text appears to be larger than between the rest of the lines. Also, the space from the top of the page to the main body of the text is rather large, measuring from 7.5 to 5 cm; the invocation stands about 0.5 cm from the top of the page.

Although there is no *mumtāz-nivīsī* or *elevatio* in the present document, there is one instance where the linear nature of the text is broken; this occurs between the first and second lines of the main body of text: the name (or, in this case, the position) of the sender is written just below the opening formula containing the phrase *ʿarża-dāsht*, and is to be read as a part of that formula. Such a reading is supported by the *Munshaʾāt-i*

Sulaymānī which describes this practice as being "commonly used" (*mutaʿārif*).[237]

In addition to this opening and visibly separated invocation, there is another section of the text that is visibly different from the rest and even separated from its main body, unlike the opening formula. These are the final words of the entire document: *ʿarż namūd bāqī ʾamru-hu'l-ʿālī* ("presented [what was necessary]; for the rest, [may] his sublime order [be obeyed]", see below). It is written on the left-hand side of the document, below the final line of the main body of text, beginning 7 cm to the left from the point where the lines of the text generally start, and ending 2.4 cm from the left-hand edge. Moreover, while the entire document is written in the *nastaʿlīq-i shikasta-āmīz* style of calligraphy, the ending (*bāqī ʾamru-hu'l-ʿālī*, i.e., "for the rest, [may] his sublime order [be obeyed]") is clearly closer to the *shikasta* style than to "pure" *nastaʿlīq*. The handwriting is generally skilful and does not stand out when compared to that of other documents from the period of a rank lower than a *farmān*, suggesting that it was not written by Fabritius himself, but by a local scribe. This point will become even clearer when the text of the document is analysed. Curiously, however, the present *arża-dāsht* shows no seal imprint, which may indicate that Fabritius did not have a seal that conformed to Safavid standards.

Style and structure of the text

The style of the text corresponds to its visual form, with almost no rhetorical figures or embellishments. Furthermore, it is written somewhat less clearly than the royal documents, suggesting less literary skill on the part of its author.

The structure of the text is easily recognised.[238] After the invocation, the text begins with an opening formula: *ʿarża-dāsht kamtarīn īlchī-yi pādishāh-i shīt* (or *shayt*) ("The petition of the least important envoy of the *Pādishāh* of Sweden"). This section serves as the *intitulatio* of the sender and in terms of phrases is the only unchangeable part of Safavid and post-Safavid petitions, apart from the name of the petitioner.[239] This is followed by a phrase that suggests the transition to the actual text of the letter: *bi-mawqif-i ʿarż mīrasānad* ("humbly supplicates"). This is a well-known stock phrase, and among those suggested in the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī*; it was a standard element of the introduction to a petition, although it could be phrased in various ways.[240] Then follows the actual content of the letter, which can

be divided into a *narratio* of the events leading to the writing of the *ʿarżadāsht*, namely the need to meet the shah to fulfil the diplomatic mission initiated by the Swedish king. Fabritius then emphasises his desire to meet the ruler. Curiously, the text does not use the phrase *istidʿā' ānki* ("it is asked/begged that ..."), which often appeared in petitions.[241] Finally, the closing formula states that, having communicated the required information, the sender awaits the addressee's command: *chūn vājib ʿarż namūd bāqī 'amru-hu'l-ʿālī* ("Because [the author] presented what was necessary, for the rest [may] his [i.e., the shah's] sublime order [be obeyed]").[242] This clearly marks the end of the text and in fact contains three messages, two explicit and one implicit. The explicit messages are firstly that the necessary information or request has been delivered above (*chūn vājib ʿarż namūd*), and secondly that the sender will respect the shah's command whatever it may be (*bāqī 'amru-hu'l-ʿālī*). Implicit information is contained within the first message, as it suggests that all that was necessary has just been written, so there is no need to continue the letter. Similar phrases signalling the end of a letter to avoid verbosity can be found throughout Safavid documents,[243] as well as in much earlier *inshā'* works,[244] as can the assurances of the obedience to the addressee's commands.[245] They were also a staple of all petitions, although the actual phrasing varied.[246]

In summary, the note that Fabritius submitted to the shah is not only less ornate than the royal letters, but also very schematic and in keeping with Safavid chancellery practices. It contains the phrases and visual organisation of the text, as if taken almost verbatim from the manual of secretarial arts from the time of Shah Sulaymān I. This, combined with the skilful handwriting, suggests that the document was not written by Ludvig Fabritius himself. A European author writing at that time would probably have made many mistakes or diplomatic *faux pas*,[247] while any non-standard use of grammar in the present *ʿarża-dāsht* does not stand out against the background of the Persian official writings of the time. It seems more likely that the petition was prepared in Latin by Engelbert Kaempfer and then translated into Persian by Raphaël du Mans. In this case, the local secretary would only slightly edit the already translated text and write its fair copy. It is unclear, however, whether the services of an employee of the Safavid divan were used, or whether the text was written by a private secretary.

Fig. 22. Shah Sulaymān I and his Courtiers, Ali Quli Jabbadar. Folio 98a from an Album of Painting and Calligraphy, Isfahan, c. 1660s–1670s, opaque watercolour, silver and gold on paper. From the Saint Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

Fig. 23a–b. Letter and accompanying paper sleeve, undated, 41 × 16 cm and 10.5 × 21.9 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 216, recto.

3.7 An undated document

Document Z 216[248] (fig. 23a–b)
The document is undated. Its size is 41 × 16 cm; its lower right corner is cut off (fig. 23a). The paper was decorated with golden squares (rhombus or *nuqṭa*). It is accompanied by an additional piece of paper, decorated with a floral pattern in gold ink, on which the address has been written (fig. 23b). The document itself was written in black ink in *nastaʿlīq shikasta-āmīz* script with possible Indian influences. The first few lines of the text were written with an indentation on both sides. About half of the letter was written horizontally, the rest diagonally (*chalīpā*) on the margin.

Summary of the contents: A letter (from an unstated sender, without any seal) to a Christian king (possible spelling in the translation) mentioning some recent trade negotiations and wishing for the increase of mostly maritime trade between the two states and their prosperity and peace.

PERSIAN TEXT:

ا

[1] قصر[249] دولت و اقبال و وساده[250] مکنت و اجلال به ذات خجسته آیات
[2] آن منیع اثار اعتلا ابهت و شوکت انتما والاقدر
[3] بلند مکان منتخب عیسویان برگزیده مسیحایان آراسته و پیراسته باد
[4] بعد تمهید بی‌کران اشتیاق دریافت مواصلت گرامی‌بخت[251]
[5] که به صد دفتر گنجایش‌پذیر نیست مشهود رای خورشید ضیا می‌دارد که
[6] مفاوضه رافت معاوضه مملو به مراتب حسن محبت
[7] و فرط توجه که شیمه رضیه آن گروه اخلاق پژوه است دایماً پی
[8] افزونی روابط[252] اخلاص و استحکام مبانی اختصاص و تزاید امور
[9] تجارت و حصول انتفاع طرفین در کمترین ازمنه به وصول
[10] معاشرت شمول ابواب[253] انواع فرح و انبساط بر روی دل
[11] شوق منزل گشود از اطلاع محاسن اخلاق و صفات پسندیده
[12] و اراده ازدیاد تجارت بر مواد ابتهاج افزود از انجاح
[13] همگی داعیه مصروف رفاه خلق و افزایش امورات تجارت
[14] که سبب امنیت و آسودگی بنده‌های خدا و انتفاع و ازدیاد
[15] [254] محصولات می‌باشد به عنایت الهی در آنچه سود و بهبود متصور است
[16] از مکمن قوه به منصه ظهور خواهد آمد. عوالی پناه /امیر اروین (؟)/[255]
[17] به دوستدار ملاقات نموده نقوش حسن اخلاص و اتحاد دلنشین
[18] دوستدار نموده خدای عالم الغیب آگاه که از ملاقات
[19] عوالی پناه مذکورآنقدر سرور انبساط افزوده که شمه‌ای از آن
[20] به قلم نمی‌آید ایزد متعال با آن همه [یا: این همه] خوی‌ها و حسن اخلاق
[21] به جمعیت و عافیت دارد به مقتضی اتحاد صمیم در همه حال
[22] اخلاص و یکجهتی ملحوظ داشته همواره به رسل رقاع مودت شمایم
[23] و روانگی جهازات مسرت افزای خاطر اتحاد مظاهر میشده باشند
[24] زیاده بحر اشفاق چه طرازد
[25] مسرت و شادمانی روزافزون باد

ADDRESS:

به ملاحظه اشرف اقدس پادشاه والاجاه سلیمان دستگاه پادشاه (...)[256] بهادر دام اقباله[257] برسانند

ENGLISH TRANSLATION:

[Letter *alif*][258]

May[259] the palace[260] of prosperity[261] and auspiciousness, and the throne[262] of power always be adorned and decorated with the blessed nature of this great one, who possesses the qualities of high rank, greatness and splendour, the great one, the exalted one, the chosen one among Christians, the distinguished one among Christians!

After the boundless preparations, the excitement of meeting the one of great destiny[263]—[an excitement] that cannot be contained in a hundred books—[the author of the letter] reveals to the sunray-like mind [of the addressee] that the kind letter[264] came as from a friend, full of kindness and goodness, and of the extreme attention which is a commendable nature of that group which studies morality and is constantly seeking to increase the relations[265] of pure friendship and to strengthen the foundations of intimacy, and to increase the foundations of trade and to bring profit to both sides. [And by its arrival] in the shortest time [possible] it opened the gates of [all] kinds of happiness and well-being before the hearts that harbour excitement. The news of the moral advantages and good qualities, and of the tendency to increase trade, increased the happiness. The positive response to all the wishes concerning the welfare of the people and the increase of trade, which leads to the security and prosperity of the servants of God, and to the prosperity and increase of the goods produced, in so far as it concerns that which can be imagined as beneficial and as an improvement, will, by God's grace, leave the realm of potentiality and actually occur.

The refuge of greatness */Amīr* Irvine (?)/,[266] having met your friend [i.e., the author], showed your friend the images of friendship, unity, and kindness. God, who knows all that is hidden, is aware that the meeting with this refuge of greatness increased the happiness such that [even] a part of it cannot be put into writing. May the sublime God keep them in good spirits and health with all these [positive] qualities and good character [that they possess]. According to the requirements of friendship and pure unity, they shall observe true friendship and unity in all circumstances, [and] by always sending friendly letters and setting into motion the vessels which increase the happiness of the unity-reflecting mind.[267]

What more shall come from the sea of friendship?

The happiness and joy shall be ever increasing!

ADDRESS:

May they show it to the most noble, Holiest *Pādishāh* of Sulaymān's splendour, *Pādishāh* [...] the valiant (*bahādur*).[268]

Document Z 216 differs markedly from the rest of the Persian documents kept in the Swedish National Archives. These differences suggest that this could be an Indian document—possibly from the Mughal Empire—rather than an Iranian one. While casting some doubt on the document's provenance, the observed differences do not, however, allow for a definitive statement on its origin.

Firstly, the document is much smaller than the royal letters discussed above, measuring only 41 × 16 cm. More strikingly, its paper is decorated in a completely different fashion. Instead of a plain sheet with some gold sprinkled below the text, the entire obverse of the document is decorated with golden squares (fig. 23a). They differ in size and could have been stamped or painted in gold ink or applied as bits of gold leaf. Their shape makes them appear like oversized dots, a dot (*nuqṭa*) being the main shape and in some way a unit of measurement in traditional Persian calligraphy. Although the bottom-right corner was cut, the indentation appears less prominent than in the documents discussed above; the blank space at the top of the document is one of the few similarities between this document and the other Persian documents in the Swedish National Archives.

The layout of the text is also completely different here. Instead of having a large blank or almost blank right-hand margin, in Z 216 a large portion of the text, written upside down and diagonally (*chalīpā*), occupies the margin. This practice was already mentioned in the discussion of the royal letters Z 214 and Z 217 (see chapter 3.1). Furthermore, the first three lines of the text on the left-hand side, containing the blessings and greetings for the addressee, were written in a central position relative to the following main body of text; conversely, the final two lines of the portion of the text written on the right-hand margin were also centralised. The invocation also differs from that in the other documents and is here shown in the form of a single character, *alif,* as a symbol for God or the abridged phrase *Allāhu akbar* ("God is greater"); a style well-known from the Mughal chancellery and the chancelleries of subsequent Indian states.[269]

The calligraphic style used in the document could be characterised as *nastaʿlīq* or *shikasta-nastaʿlīq*. However, it differs from that used in the other documents discussed above, mainly by the larger reliance on the shape of the letter *ha* with a hook below it. While not unique to India and widely used in Iran (mostly at the beginning of the sequences of letters or less so at their end), this style of *ha* was nonetheless more popular in India, and in the case of the forms used in the middle of a sequence of letters

was virtually unknown in Persia. This shape—in the middle form—appears in this letter, suggesting that it was written by a scribe educated in India.

Although the material aspects of Z 216 differ greatly from the rest of the documents in the collection, the rhetorical figures it uses may be compared to those found in the others. We find examples of *sajʿ*, as in *gurūh-i akhlāq-pazhūh* ("that group which studies morality"), although it features less prominently here than in Z 214 or Z 217. There are also clear examples of *murāʿāt al-naẓīr*, especially in the opening, which mentions palace, throne and similar concepts related to monarchy and prosperity. Furthermore, we find allusions to the sacred texts: the phrase in the text stating that the sender's desire would not fit into a hundred books is reminiscent of verse 31:27 of the Qur'an: "And if all the trees on earth were pens, and if the sea and seven more added to it [were ink] the Words of God would not be exhausted."[270] The passage, often modified and translated into Persian, was often used to express that something is too great to be expressed in full. However, while the kind of rhetorical figures that appear in the text are similar to those in the other Persian documents in the Swedish National Archives, the actual phrases that are used are very different here. Furthermore, this document apparently does not use any *tansīq al-ṣifāt*, enumeration or other similar figures in the text, although synonyms are used quite widely.

The general structure of the document shows further differences to the Safavid documents discussed above, the most striking being the lack of an *elevatio*—given that the addressee is a monarch (see below). The letter opens with an address, which simultaneously features a blessing or prayer, and a few brief titles. As mentioned above, this section of the document is visually more prominent by being centralised, with indentations on the left and right. The transition to the next part of the document is shown graphically—by the loss of the indentations—and by using the word *baʿd* ("after") in the phrase "After the boundless preparations …" (*baʿd-i tamhīd-i bīkarān* …), which introduces the actual narrative and the text of the letter. In this case, the term *sharḥ-i ishtīyāq* is most fitting, as the text explicitly mentions *ishtīyāq* or the desire to meet the addressee. This mention is followed by the narrative of the reception of a letter and an envoy, and alludes to a future increase of trade relations resulting from previous negotiations. *Arenga* seems to be incorporated in the narrative, which repeatedly mentions increased trade leading to safety and prosperity of the people, who are called the slaves of God (*bandahā-yi khudā*). In

the middle of the narrative the text ceases being written horizontally and continues diagonally on the right-hand margin. This shift is not related to the contents of the text but occurs in the middle of a sentence. The latter section of the letter ends with a blessing, wishing for the prosperity of all involved and for the continued good relations between the sender and the addressee. The text closes with another blessing, equal to a farewell, written with indentations on both sides, as at the beginning of the letter.

The accompanying paper sleeve features the address (fig. 23b). It clearly served as a cover or envelope in which the folded letter was placed before being put into the pouch. The paper is decorated with a floral pattern in gold ink and features a single sentence, most of which is written in a single line, with only the verb standing in a second line below. It states that the letter should be presented to a king, the name or realm of whom, unfortunately, has been too strongly distorted when it was transcribed into Persian to make it easily identifiable.

A few aspects of the contents of the letter may be pondered upon. Firstly, it features the name of the person whom the sender met. This could be the key to attributing the document to the right place and time. Unfortunately, it has so far not been possible to corroborate its reading as "Irvine". Furthermore, the letter bears no seal stamp, which is uncommon for letters issued by high-ranking officials; yet the letter itself is richly decorated. The lack of a seal imprint on the document itself does not necessarily mean that no seal was used. It is possible that the seal stamp was placed on a separate slip of paper accompanying the document (see chapter 3.4) or that the seal was only printed in a piece of wax and as such attached to the pouch. In general, Persian monarchs or officials would use their seal. Since this document does appear to be a letter between sovereigns, and not a petition, the lack of a seal stamp is even more baffling.

And finally, the document makes references to the sea and ports. Given the principle of *murāʿāt al-naẓīr* (using rhetorical figures and imagery relevant to the subject matter and connected by the meaning, such as grapes, wine and farming), it may therefore have been written with the maritime trade in mind. It also makes references to the *gurūh-i akhlāq-pazhūh* ("that group which studies morality"), which seems to refer to Christians. Based on the possible reading of the name of the agent ("refuge of greatness") mentioned in the text as [Charles] Irvine, the document could have been issued by the Mughal authorities around the time of the affair of Porto Novo. However, presently there is not enough evidence to clarify this.

4. THE SILK POUCHES

Before discussing the Safavid silk pouches that have been preserved in the Swedish National Archives in detail, some general observations on silk weavings are proposed here as an introduction to the subject.[1]

Woven silk fabrics consist of at least one set of warp threads, which is mounted onto the loom before weaving starts, and at least one set of weft threads, inserted by the weaver into the evolving fabric at a 90 degree angle to the warp. In the finished fabric the warp threads lie vertically, and the weft threads lie horizontally. The pattern of the fabric is created during the weaving process by the interlacing of warp and weft threads in a particular sequence, predetermined by the so-called mounting of the loom, i.e., the tying up of the warp threads with the heddles of shafts and/or the pattern harness. The controlled upward and downward movement of a selection of the warp threads opens a shed through which a shuttle with the weft thread is passed. As a result, the warp threads bind the weft threads within the structure of the fabric. The individual weft threads could either be inserted to lie within the complete width of the fabric, i.e., running from the left-hand to the right-hand selvedge, or over a shorter distance forming a specific motif, the latter being called brocading. The silk threads that were used for both warp and weft were previously dyed by specialised silk dyers, using dye-stuffs of either animal or plant sources. Metal threads, which were used mainly as weft threads, were produced in specialised workshops by winding a thin silver or silver gilt lamella around a silk core thread. Alternatively, the metal lamella alone could also be used as a weft thread.

Technically simpler fabrics, such as the lozenge twill of the small golden pouch (see chapter 4.4), could be woven on a shaft loom. This type of loom featured several treadles which the weaver could step on, thereby causing certain shafts, and the warp threads passing through its heddles, to lift and thereby create a shed into which he could insert the weft. More complex patterned fabrics, such as those used to make the pouches en-

closing royal letters (see chapter 4.1), were woven on a so-called drawloom that incorporated several shafts to produce the foundation weave as well as a pattern harness for the simultaneous realisation of a fabric pattern with a continuous pattern repeat.

In an Iranian drawloom, the pattern harness consisted of heddles with leashes tied to a set of cross cords running above the warp (fig. 24). The manipulation of these cross cords raised groups of warp threads to bind the inserted pattern wefts according to the design. While the treadles for the shafts were operated by the weaver sitting in front of the loom, the warp movements required for the pattern were controlled by a helper, the draw boy, who sat above the warp next to the pattern harness or *naqsha*.

The pattern design would have been created by an artist in the form of a scaled-up thread-model, the *naqsha*, which was attached to the cross cords by a set of draw cords before weaving started (fig. 24). Several silk designers or *naqshbands* from Safavid times are known from documents or woven inscriptions in preserved silk weavings.[2]

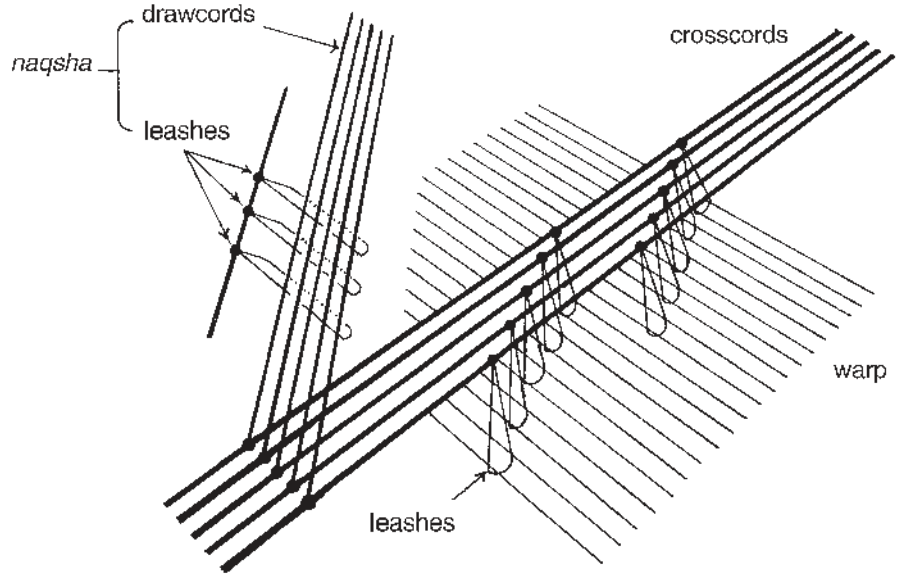


Fig. 24. Schematic representation of the pattern harness on an Indo-Iranian drawloom, reproduced from Jain 1993/1994, p. 54, fig. 3.

So far, no contemporary written or pictorial descriptions of drawlooms used in Safavid Iran to weave patterned silk fabrics have been found. However, traditional looms, which were still in use in Near Eastern countries and India until the second half of the 20th century, have been described and photographed by textile historians and weaving technologists.[3] Luxury silk weavings were produced both by independent workshops working for the free market and organised in guilds as well as by workshops that operated within the palace administration of the royal court and produced luxury textiles exclusively for the royal household.[4]

4.1 Two letter pouches from the court of Shah Sulaymān I

The two royal letters received by King Charles XI from Shah Sulaymān I during the 1680s were recorded by the archivists Sven Leyonmark and Ludvic von Schantz in an inventory of the Swedish Royal Archives, completed in 1702, five years after a fire had destroyed parts of the royal castle. Unfortunately, the pouches in which these letters had arrived in Stockholm were not documented in this early inventory.[5] However, the pouches were recorded together with the letters which they originally contained in an inventory by the archivists R.M. Bowallius and J.A. Posse, completed in 1848 and also preserved in the Swedish National Archives.[6] In this inventory the earlier letter of the Persian shah, which arrived in Stockholm with Ludvig Fabritius in 1682 (Z 214), is described as lying in "a pouch of gold fabric".[7] The second letter of the Persian shah, which arrived at the Swedish court in 1687 (Z 217), is described as lying in "a pouch of floral gold fabric".[8] At the time the inventory was compiled in 1839–1848 the letters were still kept inside their respective pouches and had not been separated from them. When Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen studied the Persian documents and pouches during the 1930s in preparation for his publication on the documents, he recorded in his handwritten notes that the pouch of the letter of 1682 was "of gold brocade with woven-in decoration in various colours" and the pouch that arrived in Stockholm in 1687 was "of gold brocade with woven-in flowers in various colours".[9] It seems therefore that since at least the mid-19th century and up to the 1930s the earlier letter was preserved in the golden pouch showing an ornamental pattern and the slightly later letter was preserved in the golden pouch showing a flower pattern.

However, Agnes Geijer and Carl Johann Lamm in their publication on the pouches of 1944 for some reason linked the earlier letter to the pouch with the flower pattern and the later letter to the pouch with the ornamental pattern.[10] The historical pairing of the two letters with their respective pouches was thus reversed. Zetterstéen in his publication of the documents of 1945 repeated the reversed linking of the two letters and their pouches with reference to Geijer's and Lamm's previous publication.[11] The swapped identity of the pouches was consolidated when narrow textile bands with the catalogue numbers Z 214 and Z 217, following the identification suggested by Geijer and Lamm, were sewn onto the pouches. It seems that the contradiction between the information recorded by the archival inventory of 1848 and the publication by Geijer and Lamm of 1944 had not been noticed before the present study was undertaken. We suggest returning to the historical pairing of the two letters and pouches as documented by the inventory of 1848. Further research into the historical archival inventories held by the Swedish National Archives and the scholarly archives of Agnes Geijer and Carl Johann Lamm may in the future clarify whether the pairing of the two letters from Shah Sulaymān I with their respective pouches, as recorded in the inventory of 1848, is indeed correct, and what led Geijer and Lamm to change it.

A golden letter pouch with an ornamental pattern

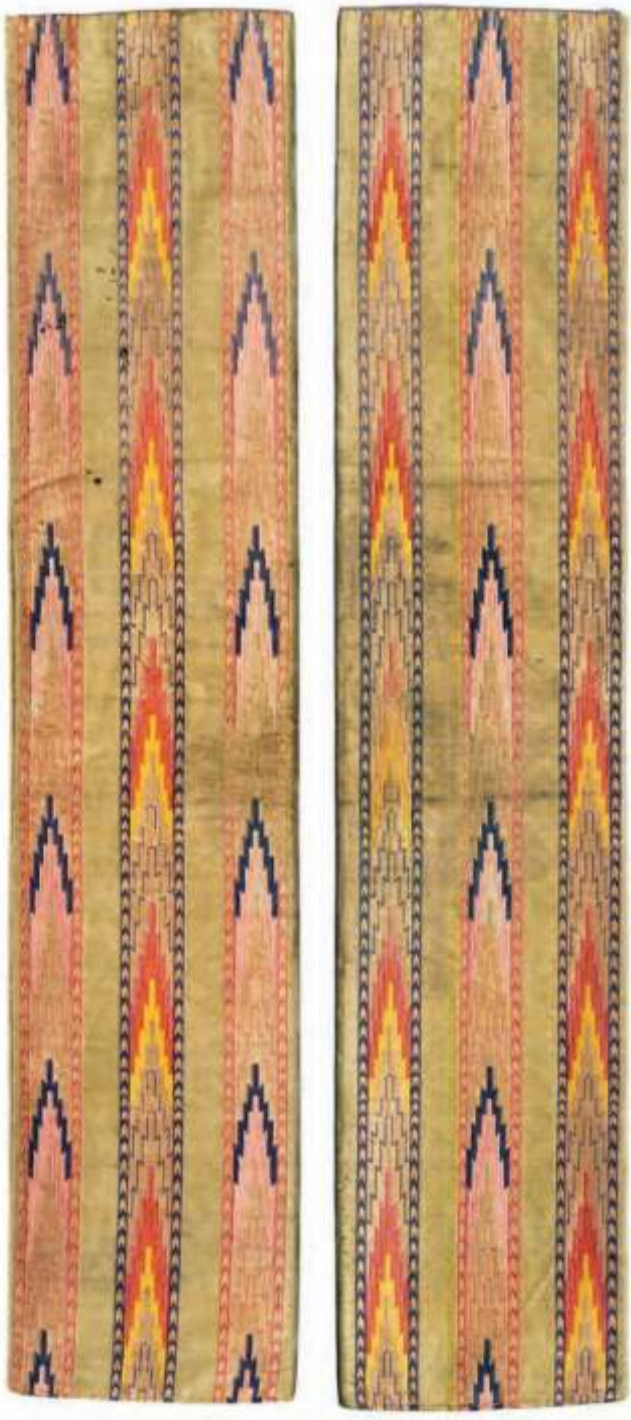
The pouch in which the slightly earlier of the two letters from Shah Sulaymān I was sent to King Charles XI in 1682 (Z 214) measures 73 cm in height and 15 cm in width in its open state (fig. 25a–b). It was custom-made from a single piece of silk fabric measuring c. 31 cm in width[12] that was folded vertically in the middle and then sewn together along the lower edge and one long side with a beige-coloured silk ply thread.[13] The upper edge was left open. The pouch is lined with a light green silk tabby; the lining was fixed to the outer fabric by tiny stitches in silk thread running vertically through the middle on both sides of the pouch. The upper edge is reinforced on the inside by a narrow piece of striped black and white silk tabby cut on the bias (fig. 25c). It may be assumed that the pouch was made in the royal tailors' workshop, using a piece of silk fabric which was provided to them by the royal textile store. Preserved in excellent condition, the pouch only shows a few tiny ink stains on its surface.

Fig. 25a–b. Letter pouch made of a silk fabric with an ornamental pattern, Iran (Isfahan), c. 1682, 73 × 15 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, recto and verso.

To fit the royal letter, measuring 98 × 57 cm, into the narrow pouch, the document was folded in a specific way. A series of horizontal convex

and concave folding lines, which are still preserved in the letter paper (see fig. 11a–b), allows us to reconstruct the original folding method that was used here: starting at the lower border, the piece of paper was first folded several times upwards, thereby producing a series of concave folds. Then the letter was turned on its back and folded again three times, thereby producing three convex folds in the upper part.[14] The latter completely enveloped the letter and thereby protected the script on the obverse and the seal stamp on the back inside the final parcel, while leaving the golden invocation to God visible on the outer shell. The spaces between the folds were steadily increased during the folding process. The final parcel of the folded letter measured c. 13 cm in width and 57 cm in height, which would have fitted perfectly into the space of c. 14 × 62 cm inside the pouch. The folding of letters in the court chancellery is also described in contemporary sources.[15] Before the letter was slipped into the pouch it was wrapped into a simple paper envelope, which has also been preserved. This was labelled at the court in Stockholm with the following words: "Konungens i Persien bref ankommit med Ludov. Fabricius d 7 Decembris A° 1682" ("Letter of the King of Persia arrived with Ludov. Fabricius on 7 December 1682").

The pouch was apparently closed by folding the fabric into a deep pleat at the top and sewing the layers together. Two horizontal rows of stitching holes are discernible in the upper part of the letter pouch, running 6 cm and 11.5 cm below the top



edge (fig. 25d). The holes are spaced approximately 1.2–1.5 cm apart. The braid with which the seam was sewn has unfortunately not survived in this case, but the second pouch provides further evidence about the original sealing method (see below).

The outer silk fabric of this pouch is a highly luxurious silk weaving woven with colourful silk threads as well as metal threads. Agnes Geijer noted the unusual pattern of the fabric (fig. 25d).[16] It features alternating vertical stripes, one of them monochrome golden and the other two patterned in two different colour combinations; the golden stripes measure 2.0 cm in width and the patterned stripes measure 3.2 cm in width. The patterned stripes show geometric shapes forming ascending arrows in two colour variations: yellow, pink and orange in one stripe and light pink, darker pink and dark blue in the other stripe. The motifs of the ascending arrows are framed by narrow dark blue respectively dark pink borders with voided arrow motifs. With a height of 10.7 cm and a width of 13.8–14.7 cm the technical pattern repeat unit is relatively small.

Fig. 25c. Detail of the letter pouch in fig. 25a–b, showing the opening at the top with its light green silk tabby lining and striped fabric along the edge.

Fig. 25d. Detail of the upper part of the letter pouch in fig. 25a–b, showing the fabric pattern and two horizontal rows of stitching holes.

Ikat fabrics may have inspired the designer of this pattern to translate their visual effect into a woven pattern.[17] Ikat is a technique by which a pattern is resist-dyed on the warp or weft threads or both, before weaving the fabric.[18] This technique was widely practised in Western, Central and Southeast Asia during the 17th and later centuries, although the technique originated much earlier. An example of a 17th-century Iranian warp ikat (in this case with added brocaded flower motifs), probably dating from the second half of the century, is held by the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C. (fig. 26).[19] Silk weavings with woven patterns imitating the effect of warp ikat are only known from very few extant examples. A fragment of a Safavid weft-faced compound weave (in this case a weft-faced compound tabby) with a similar pattern—albeit in weft direction—is, for instance, preserved on the lower part of a former piece of clothing dating from c. 1660–1670 in the collection of the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, Switzerland (fig. 27).[20]

Since the pouch is lined and therefore the reverse of the outer fabric is inaccessible for closer analysis, the description of its weave structure that is proposed here remains partly hypothetical (see the technical weave

Fig. 26. Warp ikat with brocaded flower motifs, Iran, probably second half of the 17th century, 45.5 × 29.5 cm, detail. Washington, D.C., The Textile Museum Collection, 3.103A. Acquired by George Hewitt Meyers in 1931.

Fig. 27. Fragment of a silk weaving (9.5 × 9 cm), detail of a garment, Iran, c. 1660–1670 (warp shown horizontally). Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, 5520.

analysis in chapter 7). According to modern textile terminology as defined by the Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens (CIETA), the structure of this fabric may be defined as a weft-faced compound weave.[21] The fabric was apparently woven with two sets of warp threads (a main warp and a binding warp), three continuous *lancé* wefts, as well as discontinuous brocading wefts in three colours.[22] It therefore belongs to the same technical genre as the fabric with the flower pattern of the second pouch discussed below. In the present fabric, however, the two warps are employed in alternating functions, acting either as the main or as the binding warp in different parts of the same fabric. This is very unusual.[23] Furthermore, the two warps differ in colour, one of them being salmon-pink and the other light green, and in the way they bind the wefts. In the golden stripes, the light green warp binds the golden *lancé* wefts in tabby on the front, while the salmon-pink warp binds the dark blue and dark pink weft in 3/1 Z twill below the surface. This technique creates two layers of fabric within the golden stripes. In the colourful stripes the salmon-pink warp binds the pattern weft in 1/3 Z twill on the front, while the light green warp remains invisible from the front. The differently coloured binding points on the surface of the fabric lend the golden stripes a cooler and the colourful stripes a warmer glow. This is another subtle but highly refined detail of this pattern design. The golden *lancé* wefts are composed of an orange-coloured silk core thread covered by a gilt metal strip wound in S-direction around it. The metal lamella is gilt on both sides, suggesting that it was made by drawing and then flattening a previously gilt silver wire. The silk pattern wefts have five different colours: dark blue, dark pink, yellow, orange and light pink. The dark blue and dark pink pattern wefts are *lancé*, while the other coloured pattern wefts are probably brocaded.[24]

A golden letter pouch with a flower pattern

The second royal letter from Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI, which arrived in Sweden with Ludvig Fabritius in 1687 (Z 217), was enclosed in a long rectangular pouch (fig. 28a–b), measuring 84.5 cm in height and 14 cm in width, and thus of similar dimensions to the slightly earlier pouch.[25] The pouches were also tailored in the same way. In this case, a pink silk tabby fabric serves as lining material, and the upper edge is again reinforced by a piece of striped black and white silk tabby cut on the bias (fig. 28c). The lining was fixed to the outer fabric with a pink silk

thread in tiny stitches forming a vertical line along the middle on both sides of the pouch. There are two ink stains on the surface and one blossom of the flower next to an ink stain is discoloured. Otherwise, the silk fabric of the pouch is in excellent condition with its golden ground still shining and the colours of the brocading threads preserving a fresh appearance. The finished fabric was evidently calendered, giving it a flat and shiny surface.

To fit the letter into the pouch, the document was folded in the same way as the earlier letter discussed above. An additional paper sleeve, into which the folded letter was wrapped when it arrived in Sweden, is labelled: "Bref aff Konungen i Persien öfwerlefwereradt aff Envoyén och Öfwerstlieutenant Ludwic Fabritius wid des heemkompst d. 1687" ("Letter from the King of Persia delivered by the Envoy and Lieutenant Colonel Ludwic Fabritius on the occasion of his homecoming in 1687").

Stitching holes preserved in the fabric of the letter pouch allow us to reconstruct how it was originally closed and sealed: two horizontal rows of small holes are discernible in the upper quarter of the pouch, running 11 cm and 23 cm below the top edge (fig. 28d). These holes are here spaced approximately 1.5 cm apart. Once the folded letter had been slipped into its textile envelope, the top part of the pouch was evidently folded into a deep pleat and fastened by sewing both layers of fabric together, forming the so-called *sar* or head of the pouch (see chapter 5). By rare coincidence, the braid of metal thread, with which the head of the pouch had originally been sewn, has been preserved, providing us with material evidence about how such letter pouches were originally closed and sealed (fig. 29).

The braid is composed of four elements that are Z-plied of two metal threads, each with a yellow

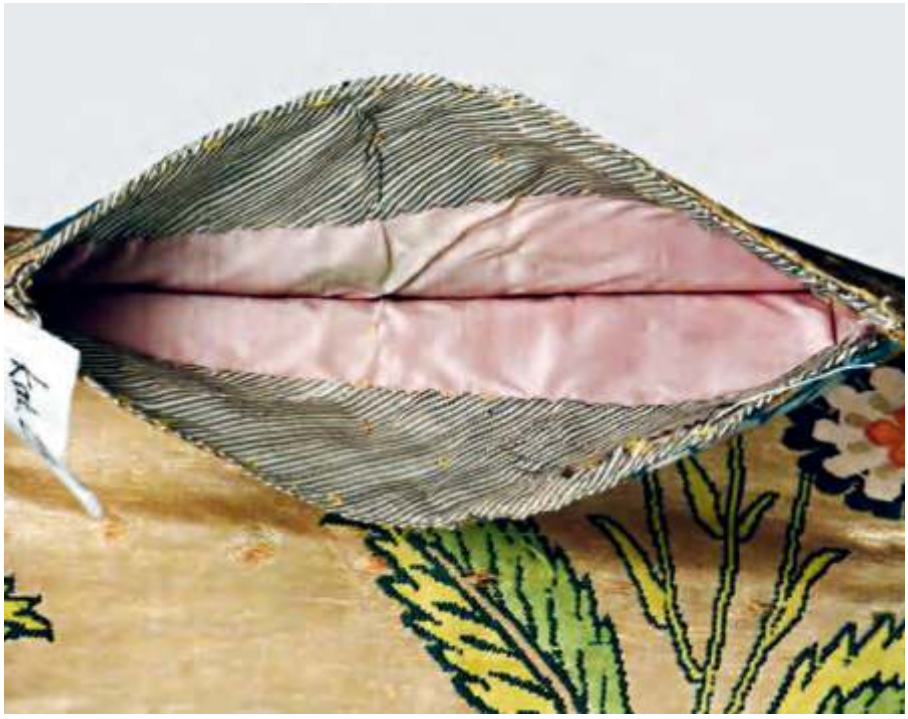


Fig. 28c. Detail of the letter pouch in fig. 28a–b, showing the opening at the top with its pink silk tabby lining and striped tabby fabric along the edge.

silk core and a gilt silver strip wound around it in S-direction.[26] A tassel composed of a small round head (0.6 cm in diameter) and a skirt (3.5 cm in length) is attached to each end of the braid. The head (sometimes also called a "Turk's-head knot") encloses an upper, wooden bead that is covered by groups of four metal threads crossing each other. The skirt of the tassel is made of single Z-plied metal threads with a yellow silk core and a gilt silver strip wound around it in S-direction, which end in a loop. A second, lower bead covered by dark blue silk threads is hidden inside the skirt. The braid runs through both the upper and the lower bead and has been cut below where it exits the lower bead. The original wax seal is still attached to the braid. The square piece of red wax measures 2.5 cm in height and width. On one side the wax surface shows the imprint of a small seal with an inscription (see chapter 3.5).[27]

The tradition of closing and sealing a textile letter pouch at the Safavid court was recorded by the Huguenot jeweller Jean Chardin, who worked for some time at the court of Shah Sulaymān I: "The last aspect that is taken care of with regard to letters is the envelope, the most respectful way is to put the letter into an embroidered [*sic*] pouch, closed by a gold

Fig. 28a–b. Letter pouch made of a golden silk fabric with a flower pattern, Iran (Isfahan), 1686, 84.5 × 14 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, recto and verso.

and silk braid with small tassels of the same material, and to affix the seal stamped on Spanish wax to it."[28]

When the letter pouch arrived at the royal court in Stockholm, it was evidently opened by cutting the braid and pulling it out of the silk fabric, thereby leaving the wax seal intact. The Swedish court kept the closing braid with its wax seal inside the original letter pouch.[29] This is a lucky circumstance, as it seems to be one of the very few Safavid royal wax seals to have survived at all. Two further letter pouches made of simpler brocaded silk fabrics—one of yellow silk tabby, the other of blue silk tabby—dating from the late period in the reign of Shah Sulaymān I have also been preserved together with their original wax seals. However, both these seals are in less good condition than the wax seal in Stockholm. Those pouches originally served to transport two letters dating from 1692 addressed to the young Tsars Ivan V and Peter I, who jointly ruled Russia between 1682 and 1696. They were brought to Moscow by the ambassador Yuzbasha Usein Khan-Bek (Yūzbāshī Ḥusayn Khān Bayg) and are today kept in the Kremlin Museums in Moscow.[30]

Fig. 29. Braid of gilt metal thread with tassels and wax seal formerly closing the golden letter pouch with flower pattern, Iran (Isfahan), 1686, height c. 15 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica.

The outer silk fabric of the pouch discussed here is another precious silk weaving with a complex weave structure and a refined pattern design. It shows horizontal rows of offset flower motifs with green leaves and various colourful blossoms against a golden background (fig. 28a–b, d). From one horizontal row to the next, the floral motifs change direction. This typically Iranian reversal of motifs in alternate rows prevents the design from appearing static.

With a width of c. 28–29 cm the piece of fabric that was used to make the pouch would have been about half as wide as a usual full loom width of silk fabrics produced in Safavid workshops. It was probably cut from a complete length of fabric. The original silk weaving would thus have shown four flower motifs or pattern repeats within each horizontal row. Such a compositional design with horizontal rows of offset motifs, that change direction from one horizontal row to the next, is known from numerous examples in Western museum collections.[31] A similar design is found in the painted depiction of the fabric of a robe of honour worn by

Fig. 28d. Detail of the upper part of the letter pouch in fig. 28a–b, showing the fabric pattern and two horizontal rows of stitching holes.

Fig. 30a. Portrait of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in his silk robe of honour, Nicolas de Largillière, 1679, oil on canvas, 212 × 121 cm. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, GG 520.

the French jeweller Jean-Baptiste Tavernier (1605–1689), who travelled in Iran during the 1660s and even worked at the court of Shah Sulaymān I for several years.[32] After his return to France Tavernier commissioned Nicolas de Largillière to paint a full-length portrait of himself, clothed in the splendid robe of honour that he had received from the shah at his court in Isfahan (fig. 30a).[33] Circumstantial evidence suggests that the portrait painting was completed in 1679.[34] Tavernier was very proud to be honoured with the shah's gift and described his robe of honour in detail in a travelogue which was published shortly after his return to France: "The next day, one of the Nazar's [*nāẓir's*] principal officers brought me the Calaate [*khal'at*] which it pleased the king to honour me with, that is a full Persian-style garment, consisting of a vest and a caftan with a sash and turban."[35] Tavernier communicated his deeply felt gratitude to the shah adding that he was looking forward to showing himself in his robe in France and other European countries. This compliment induced the shah to supplement his gift with the large surcoat with hanging sleeves and a lining of sable fur, which he is seen wearing on top of the other garments in his portrait.[36] When viewed up close the shiny gold fabric of the caftan reveals its pattern of offset flower motifs that change direction from one horizontal row to the next (fig. 30b). The motifs of Tavernier's robe appear to have been slightly smaller than those of the letter pouch discussed here.

Fig. 30b. Detail of the pattern of the silk robe in the portrait of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier, Nicolas de Largillière, 1679. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, GG 520.

From the structural viewpoint the silk weaving of the letter pouch contains two warp systems (a main warp and a binding warp), two continuous *lancé* wefts as well as several discontinuous brocading wefts (for a complete weave analysis see chapter 7). In this case, both warps have the same salmon-pink colour. The background of the pattern design is covered with *lancé* wefts of metal thread, composed of a yellow silk core with a thin metal lamella, gilt on both sides and wound around the silk core in S-direction. These weft threads are bound on the front in 1/3 Z twill by the salmon-pink binding warp. A second *lancé* weft (an orange silk thread) remains invisible on the front face. It is separated from the pattern wefts by the main warp and remains on the reverse of the fabric, where it is bound in 3/1 Z twill by the same salmon-pink binding warp as the *lancé* metal threads. The flowering plants are brocaded in silk threads of ten different colours: light green, green, dark green, pale pink, pink, red, orange, light blue, sky blue and dark blue. These brocading wefts are also bound in 1/3 Z twill by the binding warp on the front, whereas they float on the back in those areas where they are not required on the front.

The silk weaving of this letter pouch can be classified in CIETA terminology as a brocaded weft-faced compound twill.[37] This kind of fabric was produced in many variations in Safavid Iran during the second half of the 17th century.[38] Their patterns usually show rows of floral motifs or a flowering plant with a perching bird, sometimes accompanied by a deer or a butterfly, before a background that is covered by wefts of silver or gilt metal thread. Nancy Reath and Eleanor Sachs first published a discussion of such Safavid weavings with metal background in 1937.[39] More recently, Daniël de Jonghe discussed three different variations of such weft-faced compound weaves that he had identified among Safavid silk fabrics preserved in the collections of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels.[40] Rahul Jain later contributed a technical study of Indo-Iranian metal-ground fabrics, based on several fragments preserved in the collection of the Calico Museum in Ahmedabad (India).[41]

The structure of weft-faced compound weaves is characterised by the presence of two warp systems: a main warp usually separates the wefts according to the pattern, bringing the required weft to the front in a specific area while all other wefts are held at the back; a binding warp binds the *lancé* and/or brocading wefts, either in twill or in tabby.[42] In Safavid weft-faced compound weaves one of the *lancé* wefts is usually a metal thread forming the background to the pattern on the front, while

a second *lancé* weft—generally a silk thread—runs along the back of the fabric without appearing on the front. Further *lancé* wefts of colourful silk threads or additional brocading wefts form the pattern on the front. Most often, all *lancé* wefts are bound in twill by the binding warp on the front and on the back—making them weft-faced on both sides—while the brocading wefts are bound in twill by the binding warp on the front, but float on the back.[43] This structure is called a weft-faced compound twill.[44] In other cases the *lancé* wefts are bound in 1/3 twill on the front and in tabby on the back.[45] In another group of Safavid weft-faced compound weaves, the *lancé* wefts are bound in tabby on the front and the back of the fabric by the binding warp; this structure is called a weft-faced compound tabby or *taqueté* according to CIETA terminology.[46] By virtue of containing two warp systems and at least two differently coloured *lancé* wefts, weft-faced compound weaves are generally robust and flexible fabrics. With only two warps and two or three *lancé* wefts they are also light in weight. They would therefore have been suitable for being made into garments or pouches.

The width of the pattern repeat of the silk fabric with a floral pattern corresponds to the width of one flower motif plus the empty space next to it and thus measures 14.4 cm. The height of the pattern repeat, comprising two flower motifs one above the other, measures 36–37 cm. However, the height of the technical pattern repeat unit, i.e., the minimum repeat unit required to create the complete pattern repeat, seemingly comprised only one flower motif and thus measures 18.5–19.0 cm. Small irregularities in the drawing of the flower blossoms, which appear in mirror image from one horizontal row to the next, suggest that the technical repeat unit was mechanically reversed during the weaving process. Such a regular reversal of the direction of the motifs required a retying of the leashes to the cross cords of the drawloom after each pattern repeat during the weaving process.[47] This is a theoretical possibility which has also been demonstrated to hold true in the case of another 17th-century Safavid weft-faced compound weave, an example of which is preserved in the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels.[48] Daniël de Jonghe's careful study of the pattern of that silk weaving brought to light tiny mistakes, which were repeated in mirror image in the next row of motifs, and therefore must have been made during the set-up of the loom.

The two precious letter pouches, which King Charles XI received from the court of Shah Sulaymān I during the 1680s, symbolised the respect of

the Iranian shah towards the Swedish king. Jean Chardin noted that the quality of the silk fabric for a letter pouch was chosen according to the status of the recipient: "[...] for it is another of the civilities of the East to put letters in rich envelopes or pouches of more or less rich fabrics, according to the status of the persons to whom they are addressed."[49] At the same time, the luxurious fabrics of these pouches demonstrated the excellency of Safavid silk weaving to the Swedish king. The quality of their materials, including the hardly tarnished gilded metal thread and the luminous dyes of their silk pattern wefts, is remarkable, and the techniques employed to weave their designs were highly sophisticated. The refinement of the designs and weaving techniques of their silk fabrics suggests that they had been woven at a court workshop or commissioned by the royal court from a local manufacturer. They might have been woven during the decade preceding the making of the pouches and could have been kept in the courtly textile storage until needed.

The materials, size, shape and sewing technique of the two letter pouches from the court of Shah Sulaymān I preserved in the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm are material evidence of a long-standing tradition of silk letter pouches produced for royal correspondence at the Safavid court. They were tailored in the same manner as a couple of letter pouches that were made in 1637 during the reign of Shah Ṣafī I. The latter are today preserved in Copenhagen but had originally been sent to Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp.[50] These were also made of the most luxurious silk fabrics available at the time: cut voided velvets with patterns—one figurative and the other floral—in velvet pile on a golden ground. As with the pouches in Stockholm, they were lined with a monochrome silk tabby fabric, reinforced at the top edge by a narrow band of black and white striped silk tabby cut on the bias and probably sealed by a thin braid sewn horizontally through the upper part of the finished pouch. The techniques and materials employed for tailoring silk pouches for letters sent to European sovereigns therefore appear to have remained constant in the courtly tailors' workshop throughout the 17th century.

4.2 Two comparable letter pouches from the court of Shah Sulaymān I

Two equally luxurious Safavid silk letter pouches of similar design, material quality and weave structure are preserved in the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe (Germany) (figs 31a–c, 32a–b).[51] Both of these pouches formerly contained a letter addressed to Leopold I, Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (r. 1658–1705). The original letters, which had survived in pieces inside the pouches, were sadly lost in World War II, but their appearance and contents were recorded in the late 19th century.[52] According to an entry in the Register of Oriental manuscripts held in the Court Library of the Grand Duchy of Baden in 1892, the text of the letters featured the usual stylised praise of the recipient and a declaration of friendship. A more specific message of the letter was not identified. The paper of the letters, each measuring c. 100 × 55 cm, had been sprinkled with gold colour and the seal of Shah Sulaymān I was stamped on the reverse side. These material characteristics of the lost letters correspond to those of the two letters sent to the King of Sweden in the 1680s. It remains unclear from their description if both lost letters were addressed to Leopold I. The emperor as the recipient of at least one of them is, however, confirmed by the handwritten inscription "Imperator" on the striped lining fabric

Fig. 31c. Letter pouch, Iran (Isfahan), 1686. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Rastatt 230, detail of the inscription "Imperator" on the lining at the top.

Fig. 31a–b. Letter pouch, Iran (Isfahan), 1686, 82.5 × 15 cm. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Rastatt 230, recto and detail.

attached along the upper inner edge of one of the pouches (fig. 31c). It is interesting that the name of the recipient of the pouch was written in Latin rather than Persian. Perhaps the inscription was added by Raphaël du Mans, the French priest who was principal interpreter of foreign correspondence at the Safavid court. The above-mentioned letter pouches from the Schleswig-Holstein embassy that are preserved in Copenhagen also carry inscriptions on the inside of their linings, naming their intended recipient; however, in those cases, they were written in Persian.[53]

The letter by Shah Sulaymān I to Emperor Leopold I may have been his response to a visit of the German Dominican Sebastian Knab O.P.

Fig. 32a–b. Letter pouch, Iran (Isfahan), 1686, 75.5 × 14.5 cm. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, Cod. Rastatt 231, recto and detail.

(c. 1632–1690) to the Iranian court during this period. Knab had been appointed Archbishop of Nakhjavān in Armenia in 1682 and travelled to Iran in 1683. On his way to Isfahan, he stopped in Vienna, where he met with the emperor to offer his diplomatic services at the Iranian court, when the Holy Roman Empire was drawn into the Great Turkish War (1683–1699). The emperor feared an imminent Ottoman attack on Hungary and Austria and therefore handed Knab a letter addressed to Sulaymān I, hoping to win the shah's alliance against the Ottomans.[54] While staying in Vienna Knab was also entrusted with a letter to the same effect from Pope Innocent XI. Travelling on to Poland, Knab received yet a further

letter from John III Sobieski, King of Poland (r. 1674–1696) with his plea for support against the Ottomans. The archbishop-emissary finally arrived in Isfahan in October 1684 but was only admitted to a royal audience during the Iranian New Year celebrations (*Nawrūz*) on 20 March 1685.[55] His visit thus coincided with the second embassy of the Swedish delegation under Ludvig Fabritius. In his diary, Fabritius mentions that Knab attended the same audience as did Fabritius' party.[56] On this occasion Knab delivered the letters from Emperor Leopold I, Pope Innocent XI and King John III Sobieski to the shah.[57] A year later, the archbishop finally received the long-awaited response letters from the shah. He entrusted them to his fellow-traveller Friar Pius Wilhelm from Vienna who travelled back to Europe to deliver the letters to their respective recipients.[58] The letter addressed to Pope Innocent XI has survived in the Vatican Archive.[59] However, the shah's original letter addressed to Emperor Leopold I for some reason did not remain in Vienna; only an Italian translation of it is preserved at the Austrian House, Court and State Archive in Vienna.[60]

It remains hypothetical whether the two letters that were preserved in Karlsruhe until the mid-20th century were indeed issued in response to the concerted attempt of the Holy Roman emperor, the pope and the Polish king to draw the Iranian shah into their so-called Holy League to prevent further Ottoman expansion into Europe. The letters and their pouches originally came to the Grand Duchy of Baden as part of a large compendium of Oriental manuscripts that had been taken as war booty by Ludwig Wilhelm, Margrave of Baden-Baden during the Great Turkish War.[61] As a general of the imperial army Ludwig Wilhelm, nicknamed "Türkenlouis", played a significant role in the victory over the Ottomans. His son Margrave August Georg (r. 1761–1771) later assembled the famous Ottoman war booty in the so-called "Turkish Chamber" in the castle of Rastatt.[62] The two letter pouches and the letters they originally contained were recorded in the earliest inventory of the "Karlsruher Türkenbeute" in 1772.[63] Their provenance therefore suggests that during the later 17th century they had temporarily fallen into the hands of the Ottomans. While the letters themselves were lost in World War II, the two silk pouches survived the war in a wooden box in the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe, together with numerous Ottoman letter pouches from the former "Turkish booty".[64]

These pouches were tailored in the same way as the previously discussed pouches from the court of Shah Sulaymān I: a piece of patterned

silk fabric was lined with a monochrome silk tabby and a narrow strip of striped silk tabby along the upper edge. It was folded lengthwise in half and then sewn together along the lower and one lateral edge but left open at the top. Two horizontal lines of stitching holes in the upper parts of both pouches testify to their former closure by a seam using a golden braid formerly running through the folded head of the pouch.

The pouch carrying the inscription "Imperator" along the upper edge of its lining (fig. 31c) is made of a silk weaving with a pattern of horizontal rows of offset flower motifs that change direction from one horizontal row to the next (fig. 31a–b). The composition of this fabric, its weave structure and the colours of the floral pattern are highly similar to those of the pouch received by the King of Sweden in 1687. Technically speaking the fabric is also a weft-faced compound twill.[65] However, in this case the ground between the flower motifs is not only covered by *lancé* wefts of gilt metal threads but shows an additional motif of wavy green lines with dark brown contours. In these areas the golden metal threads are coupled with green silk threads that run parallel to the metal thread in the same shed (*trame d'accompagnage*), lending it a green tinge. This feature adds a sophisticated effect to the pattern design.

The silk weaving of the second pouch shows a similar composition with horizontal rows of plant motifs each with three carnation blossoms (fig. 32a–b). Additional single lotus flowers here fill the spaces between the larger motifs, and the ground is covered with silver threads. This fabric also belongs to the group of weft-faced compound twills. Some of the coloured silk pattern wefts are here brocaded rather than continuous (*lancé*). This technique permitted the weaver to change the colours of one of the carnation blossoms from one pattern repeat to the next. They alternate between light and dark blue in one repeat and pink and purple in the next row.

Talented pattern designers, loom engineers and weavers in Safavid Iran were seemingly exploiting all imaginable possibilities for variations that could be achieved in the technique of weft-faced compound weaves.

Fig. 33a–b. Letter pouch, Ottoman Empire (?), c. 1680–1700, 50 × 11.5 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 218, recto and verso (warp shown horizontally).

4.3 A pink letter pouch with a brocaded floral pattern

The letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn addressed to King Charles XII (Z 218) arrived in Stockholm in the year 1700. It was later inventoried together with a pouch made of a silvery pink silk fabric with a simple floral pattern (fig. 33a–b).[66] The pouch is unlined and relatively small, with a length of 50 cm and a width of 11.5 cm. Once folded, the letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn measured 48 × 10.7 cm. It would thus have just fitted into the pouch, without, however, leaving any space for a closing seam in the shape of a deep pleat in the upper section of the pouch. Indeed, the pouch shows no traces of any former horizontal seams in its upper part as have been observed on the letter pouches from the court of Shah Sulaymān I discussed above (see chapter 4.1); it therefore remains unclear how this pouch was originally closed and sealed. It is made of a thin 1/7 twill fabric, which is slightly stiff due to the use of a metal thread as the foundation weft. The silver lamella of the metal thread has been wrapped around the white silk core in Z-direction with relatively large spaces in between (*riant*), leaving much of the silk core visible. A pattern of small flower motifs arranged into horizontal rows has been brocaded into the fabric with rather loose dark pink and green silk threads as well as a metal thread with a yellow silk core and a gilt lamella wound in Z-direction around it (see the technical weave analysis in chapter 7).

The silk weaving of the pouch shows close structural and stylistic similarities to the fabrics of several Ottoman letter pouches from the same period that are also preserved in the Swedish National Archives.[67] Because of the lively contacts between the Swedish court and the Ottoman Empire during the 17th and 18th centuries, numerous documents and pouches that were received from the Ottoman court have survived. Unfortunately, the documents were later separated from the pouches in which they had arrived in Stockholm, and it is therefore no longer possible to link the Ottoman pouches to the individual documents.[68] Nevertheless, most Ottoman silk pouches that are preserved in the archive were woven in 1/7 twill and many of them show simple patterns of brocaded flower motifs on a ground that is covered with silver or gilt metal threads. Several strips of red silk satin that were formerly tied around the top end of the pouches to close them have also survived. The pouch that has been linked to the letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn fits well into this corpus of Ottoman pouches.

Recent studies on the structure of metal threads have shown that

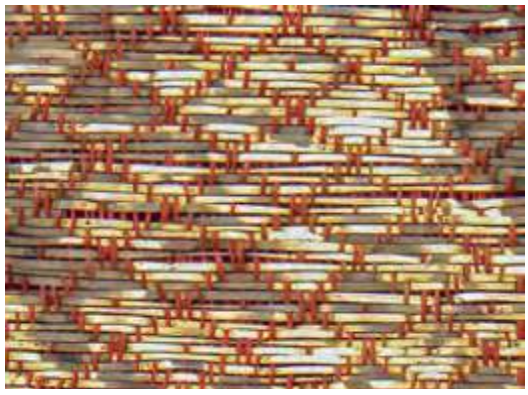
those metal threads that were produced in Iran during this period generally have a metal lamella that is wound in S-direction around the silk core, as seen on the pouches sent by Shah Sulaymān I to King Charles XI discussed above (see chapter 4.1).[69] Furthermore, metal threads were apparently produced and used locally rather than traded abroad.[70] The structural difference to the metal threads in the fabric of the pouch discussed here, with a lamella wound in Z-direction around the silk core, thus provides another indication that the fabric of this pouch was not produced in Iran. Indeed, the metal threads of several other Ottoman letter pouches preserved in Stockholm also show a lamella that is wound in Z-direction around the silk core.[71]

It is therefore most likely that the fabric of the letter pouch or indeed the complete letter pouch which was archived together with the letter sent by Sulṭān Ḥusayn to King Charles XII in c. 1699 in fact originated in the Ottoman Empire. Two possible explanations for this surprising occurrence come to mind: either the chancellery of the late Safavid court reused an Ottoman pouch to send the letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the Swedish court, or the pouch was reused to protect the letter after it had arrived in the royal archive in Stockholm. The first hypothesis could be interpreted as a gesture of "regifting" a textile object, a practice that was not uncommon in the context of diplomatic encounters during the early modern era.[72] On the other hand and in light of what Chardin recorded regarding the hierarchy of letter pouches chosen by the Safavid chancellery according to the status of the addressee (see above chapter 4.1), it is surprising that a comparatively modest Ottoman pouch would have been considered an appropriate envelope for a royal Safavid letter addressed to a European sovereign of equal standing, especially since more exquisite pouches had been used for letters sent to the previous Swedish king. Therefore, it remains a possibility that the letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn and the seemingly Ottoman pouch originally did not belong together. Perhaps the original pouch of the shah's letter was lost during Fabritius' hazardous home journey through Russian territory in the year 1700 (see chapter 2.3). If the letter had arrived in Stockholm without its original pouch, it might have been put into an Ottoman pouch that had previously been received by the Swedish court chancellery. By 1728–1729 the letter was recorded together with a "brocaded pouch" in an inventory of the royal archive.[73]

4.4 A small golden letter pouch

Fig. 34a–b. Letter pouch, Mughal India (?), c. 1680–1685, 33 × 9.5 cm. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 215–216, recto (warp shown horizontally) and detail of the fabric.

The petition or "memorandum" which Ludvig Fabritius had submitted to Shah Sulaymān I while staying at the Safavid court in c. 1684–1686 (Z 215) later also entered the Swedish National Archives, where it was at some stage inventoried together with a relatively small pouch (33 × 9.5 cm) made of a golden-coloured silk fabric (fig. 34a–b).[74] The quality and appearance of this fabric are very different from those of contemporary Safavid letter pouches and suggest instead an Indian origin. The silk weaving of this pouch is relatively simple in structure (see the technical weave analysis in chapter 7). It is a lozenge twill made with only one warp and one weft, which could be woven on a shaft loom. Its visual effect relies mainly on the use of gilt silver strips as weft threads, which are bound in a specific sequence by the dark orange warp threads. The direction of the diagonal lines formed by the binding points is regularly reversed, thereby producing a tiny lozenge pattern with an additional single binding point in the middle of each lozenge.[75] This pattern is sometimes called goose-eye twill. The loosely woven fabric is rather weak and has broken in several places. A red silk tabby was used as lining material for the pouch and its top edge was reinforced by a narrow strip of green silk satin. The size and shape of the pouch differ markedly from the royal Safavid letter pouches discussed above, and the silk and metal fabric from which it was made is also highly unusual. When discussing this pouch, Agnes Geijer commented that its fabric was probably not woven in a manufactory of the Safavid court.[76] Instead it might have originated in Mughal India, where fabrics with shiny golden surfaces were popular.



The small pouch also contained a second letter (Z 216), that by 1848 was archived together with the petition of Fabritius.[77] This letter has been interpreted as being a reply to Fabritius' petition.[78] However, it does not carry any seal stamp on its reverse and therefore does not appear to have been an official decree from the shah. This document and its accompanying paper sleeve also show similarities to Indian traditions in their decoration and style of writing (see chapter 3.7). For the moment it remains a mystery, both where this pouch originally came from and why it was inventoried together with these documents. By their size, both documents would certainly have fitted comfortably into the pouch, but it seems equally clear that the pouch was not made to measure for either of these documents. One possibility is that the pouch was previously received by the Safavid shah with some correspondence from the Mughal court and later reused. Since neither of the two documents it enclosed was an official royal letter and the person who received them was only an envoy and not a sovereign, a modest repurposed pouch might have appeared to be an adequate envelope for them. On the other hand, it is uncertain if the documents that were archived together with this pouch originally came to Sweden at the same time.

5. SAFAVID DOCUMENT POUCHES IN CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN SOURCES

Not many Persian written sources offer information on the textile pouches used for the transport of documents during the reign of the Safavid dynasty. One of the reasons may be the fact that chronicles, so-called government manuals or secretarial textbooks called *munsha'āt* were written by men of letters or officials who were linked to the chancellery.[1] While certainly aware of silk pouches they were far more familiar with what happened to a document before it was enclosed in a pouch, and they informed their readers of what they knew best. Also, they may have considered the material aspects of the letters to be less important.[2]

As a result, possibly the only Persian source from the Safavid era that offers extensive information on textile letter pouches is the manuscript known as the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* (see introduction to chapter 3). When discussing the pouches, its authors use the term *kīsa*, which is a common Persian word meaning a bag or a pouch.[3] What can be inferred from the text is that generally larger documents were put in larger pouches. This also meant that the more important the document (or its recipient), the larger the pouch had to be, as the size of the paper was one means of conveying the importance of the sender and that of the addressee. On the other hand, many documents were issued and sent without a pouch.[4]

According to the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī*, pouches could be made of different materials. In general, they were made of fabrics woven with golden or silver thread. The manuscript uses various terms to describe these fabrics, including *zarbaft* and *ṭalā-dūzī*; often the term *gulābatūn* is also mentioned. The first two terms appear to be synonyms, although the use of both terms to describe individual pouches is slightly puzzling. The descriptions of material properties of the documents in this source are generally very specific and devoid of numerous synonyms that were the staple of the Persian of the period. This would suggest that there was some difference in the meaning of these two terms; possibly *zarbaft* refers to a weaving (as the verb *bāftan* means weaving), whereas *ṭalā-dūzī* might

refer to sewing (as the verb *dūkhtan* generally means sewing or stitching). The word *gulābatūn*, on the other hand, denotes either patterns woven with a golden or silver thread, or a thread used to weave such patterns. Another term used for the pouches, *chakin/chikin*, also means gold-woven or gold-sewn cloth or clothes. Other terms used for these pouches are *dah-yak-dūzī*, which is, again, a technique of weaving or sewing patterns with a golden or silver thread. Other patterns mentioned on the pouches include boteh motifs (*buta-dār*) and arabesques (*islīmī*). Furthermore, some pouches were waxed (*mushamma'*), probably to give them a shiny surface or to protect their contents from the elements, while others were not subject to this treatment.[5]

Many of the pouches described in the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* also feature tassels (*mangūla*) made of gold thread (*gulābatūn*). The top part of the pouch is generally called its head or top (*sar*), and the opening itself a mouth (*dahān*). The pouches could be closed in various ways to keep the contents safe. In case of the grand vizier's letters the top part of the pouch could be twisted or tied with a golden *gulābatūn* braid, possibly sewn, then sealed with sealing-wax and a seal.[6] In general, however, the opening of the pouch would be sewn together, usually using a decorative thread or braid of *gulābtūn*, and then sealed using sealing-wax and the seal.[7] In some cases, a pouch would be put into another pouch, possibly for added security.[8]

From the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* it appears that the pouches of royal Safavid letters sent to Indian rulers (especially the Mughals) were more richly decorated than those sent to European rulers.[9] This distinction applies even more strongly to the documents themselves. For example, a letter sent to the Mughal ruler Farrukhsīyar (r. 1713–1719) is described as having been painted in gold and lapis lazuli with a pattern of boteh and floral motifs, etc., and being put into a similarly exquisite pouch with tassels, floral patterns, golden and silver thread, wire and precious nets.[10] None of the letters or pouches described in the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* which were sent to European rulers or officials reach the same level of rich decoration. The latter were at most decorated with a frame in gold ink surrounding the text or written in different colours of ink, while the pouches are simply described as being made of a fabric of velvet, gold thread or *gulābatūn*, or with tassels—the pouch of a letter sent to the States General of the Netherlands is an example of the latter.[11] The reasons for this different treatment may lie in the greater importance which the Safavids attached to their relations

with immediate neighbours. Furthermore, the Ottomans and Mughals shared some of their secretarial traditions, hence information could be transmitted to them more easily through non-verbal means than when corresponding with culturally more distant countries. However, only few pouches of the ones that are described in the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* were sent to European authorities, and these were generally addressed to persons of lower rank than monarchs. Therefore, it is impossible to make any authoritative statement on them, especially as some pouches sent to Central Asian states were also described as being very precious.[12]

The *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* also provides some information on the making of letter pouches. Some of them are described as having been "made in the [royal] workshop" (*ʿamal-i kārkhāna*).[13] In one case, the golden thread-sewing workshop (*zardūz-khāna*) is reported to have prepared a pouch in the wrong size.[14] Another case clearly refers to the royal tailors' workshop (*qaychāchī-khāna*),[15] which in the context of the sentence is identical to the *kārkhāna*, which is the term used more often. The *Tazkirat al-Mulūk* refers to two tailors' workshops, one royal, the other for the high officials of the state.[16] The *Dastūr al-Mulūk* is slightly less clear on the subject. Sometimes it mentions the royal tailors' workshop, sometimes the other one, and sometimes it seems to suggest that there was only one workshop, simply called *qaychāchī-khāna*.[17] This either suggests that the institution was at times reorganised or that the officials describing it paid little attention to it. Given that one of the pouches is mentioned as having been chosen personally by the shah from the tailors' workshop,[18] the pouches may at least sometimes (if not always) have been made by the royal tailors. As to the *zardūz-khāna*, it is not mentioned as a separate institution by the government manuals. Yet the tailors' workshops were also making special turbans or coronets using golden thread, which means that they were adept at working with this material. Also, according to the *Tazkirat al-Mulūk* robes of honour (*khalʿat*) were made in Isfahan and Kāshān. In Isfahan they were probably made in the royal tailors' workshop, as the one for high officials of the state provided ready-made robes and the above-mentioned turbans or coronets.[19]

It is worth noting that the fabrics which are reported to have been used for making robes of honour were similar to those used for letter pouches. Furthermore, it seems that the makers of golden thread did not belong to the same department as the tailors' workshops, but to the department of the *Muʿayyir al-Mamālik* ("The [Specie] Standard Inspector of the Realms"),

who oversaw the standard of coins and the various workshops of the mint.[20] This is further supported by the *Tazkirat*'s suggestion that the tailors' workshop did not produce their own fabrics, but received them from the royal treasury or bought them in a quite complicated procedure.[21] It appears that the treasury was responsible for providing the most precious fabrics, especially those woven with gold thread, as both chronicles, the *Tazkirat al-Mulūk* and the *Dastūr al-Mulūk*, refer to the treasury as the institution to which the most precious objects, including fabrics, were entrusted; the *Dastūr al-Mulūk* even explicitly mentions cloths woven with gold thread.[22] Thus, it seems that three separate departments and workshops may have been involved in making the pouches.

While it is a well-known phenomenon that later Safavid letters and documents were generally more richly decorated than earlier ones,[23] the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* contains too little information to judge if the same development occurred with regard to the pouches; still, the most vivid and rich descriptions relate to pouches for documents from the early 18th century and thus the twilight of Safavid reign.[24]

6. CONCLUSION

The small group of Persian documents and silk pouches that form the subject of this monograph are the material remains of three Swedish embassies to Iran headed by Ludvig Fabritius on behalf of the Swedish crown in the late 17th century. The aim of these diplomatic contacts was to redirect the northern trade route for the export of raw silk from Isfahan to Europe from the existing route that passed through Russian territory and across the White Sea to an alternative route passing through Swedish territory via the port of Narva and the Baltic Sea.

Two royal letters of Shah Sulaymān I addressed to King Charles XI of Sweden in c. 1682 and c. 1686 and the silk pouches in which they were carried from Isfahan to Stockholm provide tangible evidence of two highly developed arts practised at the Iranian court: the art of writing and the art of silk weaving. These arts were brilliantly mastered by the scribes and silk manufacturers who worked for the royal court. The main purpose of such royal letters and their silk envelopes was to convey the splendour of the Safavid shah (fig. 35) to their distant recipients. By rare historical coincidence these two letters have survived together with the silk pouches in which they were originally dispatched. Even one of the original wax seals on a braid of metal thread, with which the pouches were securely closed, has been preserved.

Their textile pouches were made to measure for these documents from two differently patterned silk fabrics of dyed silk threads as well as gilded metal threads. These fabrics may technically be classified as weft-faced compound weaves, a weaving structure that is known to have been produced in many variations during the later period of the Safavid reign. These silk fabrics were woven as full loom pieces on drawlooms equipped with a pattern harness. They were either woven in a royal workshop or commissioned by the Safavid court from a local manufacturer and kept in the royal treasury until needed by the royal tailors who were responsible for sewing the letter pouches. The pattern designs of these fabrics and

Fig. 35. Portrait of Shah Sulaymān I (r. 1666–1694), Shaykh ʿAbbāsī, c. 1670–1685, detail of an album folio (47.5 × 31.3 cm), colours, ink and gold on paper. Dublin, Chester Beatty, CBL Per 298.7.

their technical structures are highly refined, reflecting the art and expertise of Safavid loom engineers, silk designers and weavers. King Charles XI must have been impressed by their artistic and technical quality, which probably surpassed that of silk fabrics woven in Swedish manufactories at the time. The letter pouches thus also served to demonstrate to foreign sovereigns the kind of luxury textiles that could be woven from Iranian silk, provided the necessary artistic and technical skills were mastered. The closest comparisons to the fabrics preserved in Stockholm are two equally refined silk weavings of a pair of Safavid letter pouches from the same period, preserved in Karlsruhe, which originally contained two letters from Shah Sulaymān I addressed to Leopold I, ruler of the Holy Roman Empire.

The two royal letters of Shah Sulaymān I which the pouches originally contained offer an insight into the Safavid court chancellery and its production of royal documents. Acting primarily as symbols of the splendour and power of the shah, these highly stylised letters may also be considered works of art. Their poetic style of writing, while following a long tradition of the formal requirements in the production of official documents, is characterised by a mastery of subtle metaphors and rhetorical figures. Shah Sulaymān's second letter also seems to reflect the possible influence of Western diplomatic letters on foreign correspondence prepared in the Safavid chancellery, possibly partly due to the employment of Raphaël du Mans as principal interpreter during the second half of the 17th century. Their graphic design, including the use of gold ink, and their textual composition are carefully orchestrated to reflect the respect that was due to both the sender and the recipient of the letter. The imprint of the shah's seal on the back of the large sheet of paper adds a further detail to the complex balancing of signs of deference involved in diplomatic relations.

A third royal letter preserved in the Swedish National Archives was sent by the next shah, Sulṭān Ḥusayn, to King Charles XII in c. 1699 in reply to the third and last Swedish embassy to Isfahan. This letter shows an even more ornamental style of writing and a compositional structure that possibly reflects Western diplomatic influences on the style of foreign correspondence prepared in the Safavid chancellery. The letter of Sulṭān Ḥusayn was delivered to the Swedish court by Ludvig Fabritius after an adventurous return journey through Russian territory at the beginning of the Great Northern War in the year 1700. It was later inventoried together with a silk pouch, which is probably of Ottoman origin and there-

fore may have been reused either by the Safavid court or by the Swedish court after the arrival of the letter in Stockholm.

A fourth letter pouch that is preserved with the Persian documents in the Swedish National Archives is more modest in size and material. It is made of a technically relatively simple twill fabric with gilded wefts that is probably of Indian origin. This pouch contained a petition or "memorandum" from the Swedish ambassador Ludvig Fabritius, translated into Persian at the court chancellery, which he submitted to the shah during his second sojourn in Isfahan requesting an answer to his sovereign's proposals. The same pouch also contained another Persian document, which does not appear to be a royal letter or decree, as it bears no seal impression on its verso. Although its contents are related to the contacts of Sweden with a state using Persian in its official correspondence, the author and date of this last document remain uncertain for the time being. It is nevertheless included in this monograph to encourage future researchers to consider its possible significance in the context of Swedish embassies to Iran and Asia.

The chancellery of the Royal Swedish Court and later the Swedish National Archives have preserved these historical documents and artefacts in almost pristine condition. As part of Sweden's national heritage, they provide first-hand evidence of diplomatic encounters between Sweden and Iran in the late 17th century while revealing the highly developed skills that were cultivated at the Safavid court.

While Safavid documents, which have survived in relatively large numbers in archives around the world, have been studied and published by generations of palaeographers, the silk pouches in which royal letters were sent to foreign rulers have so far received far less attention from scholars of diplomatic history. This is probably partly due to the limited number of extant pouches. However, the silk fabrics from which letter pouches were made count among the most luxurious silk weavings produced in Safavid Iran, comparable to the fabrics of the robes of honour that foreign ambassadors received as personal gifts from the shah upon their departure from his court. We hope that this publication will contribute to a growing awareness of the beauty and importance of Safavid silk letter pouches and lead to the rediscovery of further examples in archives and museum collections.

7. TECHNICAL WEAVE ANALYSES OF THE SILK FABRICS OF THE LETTER POUCHES

A golden letter pouch with an ornamental pattern (fig. 25a–d)[1]

Weft-faced compound weave
Warp

Proportion:	1 end of warp I to 1 end of warp II
Material:	Warp I: silk, no noticeable twist, salmon-pink
	Warp II: silk, no noticeable twist, light green
Pattern step:	4 ends of warp I
Density:	40–42 ends of warp I and 40–42 ends of warp II/cm

Weft

Shuttling order:	I, II, III, IV (brocaded)
Material:	Weft I: gilt metal strip wrapped in S-direction around orange silk core with a slight S-twist, *couvert*
	Weft II: silk, no noticeable twist, dark blue
	Weft III: silk, no noticeable twist, dark pink
	Weft IV: silk, no noticeable twist, yellow, orange, light pink
Pattern step:	2 passes
Density:	40–42 passes/cm

Weave structure[2]
Weft-faced compound weave with two warps, three wefts and additional brocading wefts.[3]

In the golden vertical stripes, warp II binds weft I in tabby on the front, while warp I works in 3/1 S twill over wefts II and III.[4] This is in fact a double-weave and creates long, narrow pockets of two fabric layers.

In the golden areas of the colourful vertical stripes, warp I binds weft I in 1/3 Z twill on the front, while warp II binds wefts II and III in 3/1 S twill. This is also a double-weave and creates little pockets of two fabric layers.

In the dark blue areas of the colourful vertical stripes, warp I binds weft II in 1/3 Z twill on the front and weft III in 3/1 S twill, while warp II separates the wefts; weft I probably floats on the back.

In the pink areas of the colourful vertical stripes, warp I binds weft III in 1/3 Z twill on the front and weft II in 3/1 S twill, while warp II separates the wefts; weft I probably floats on the back.

Brocading effect within the colourful vertical stripes: Warp I binds the brocading weft in 1/3 Z twill on the front and wefts II and III in 3/1 S twill, while warp II separates the wefts; weft I probably floats on the back.

Selvedge: Not preserved
Technical pattern repeat unit: H. 13.8–14.7 cm; W. 10.7 cm

A golden letter pouch with a flower pattern (fig. 28a–d)

Weft-faced compound twill, weft-faced on both sides, brocaded
Warp

Proportion:	1 main warp end[5] to 1 binding warp end
Material:	Main and binding warp: silk, slight Z- and S-twist, salmon-pink
Pattern step:	2–3 main warp ends
Density:	44–46 main and 44–46 binding warp ends/cm

Weft

Shuttling order:	I, II, III (brocaded); all passes with the same weft sequence
Material:	Weft I: silk, no noticeable twist, orange
	Weft II: gilt metal strip wrapped in S-direction around yellow silk core with slight S-twist, *couvert*
	Weft III: silk, no noticeable twist, light green, green, dark green, light blue, sky blue, dark blue, pale pink, pink, orange, red
Pattern step:	2 passes
Density:	44–46 passes/cm

Weave structure
Weft-faced compound twill with two warps, weft-faced on both sides, with three wefts, one of them brocaded.

The main warp separates the wefts according to the pattern design: the required weft is brought to the front in a specific area while all other wefts are held at the back of the fabric. The binding warp works in 1/3 Z twill over weft II and the brocading wefts on the front. It also works in 3/1 Z twill over weft I which always remains at the back of the fabric.[6]

Brocading effect: Weft III is bound by the binding warp in 1/3 Z twill on the front and floats on the back where not required on the front.[7] Weft II also floats on the back in brocaded areas while weft I continues to be bound in 3/1 Z twill by the binding warp.

Selvedge: Not preserved
Technical pattern repeat unit: H. 18.5–19 cm; W. 14.4 cm

A pink letter pouch with a brocaded floral pattern (fig. 33a–b)

Twill, brocaded

Warp:	1 warp only
Material:	Silk, slight S-twist, salmon-pink
Pattern step:	c. 4–7 ends
Density:	80–88 ends/cm

Weft:	1 weft only
Material:	Foundation weft: silver metal strip wrapped in Z-direction around white silk core without any noticeable twist, *riant*
	Brocading weft: silk, no noticeable twist, green, dark pink; gilt metal strip wrapped in Z-direction around yellow silk core without any noticeable twist, *riant*
Pattern step:	1 pick
Density:	15 picks/cm

Weave structure
1/7 S twill of warp and foundation weft, weft-faced on the front by an additional brocading weft.

Brocading effect: The brocading weft floats on the front according to the pattern (*liage par découpure*). The foundation weave twill continues underneath the brocading weft. The brocading weft floats on the reverse of the fabric.

Starting or ending border (partially preserved along the top edge of the fabric inside the pouch): 1/7 S twill of the salmon-pink warp and 2 picks pink silk weft, 2 picks foundation weft, 2 picks green silk weft, 2 picks foundation weft.

Selvedge: Not preserved
Technical pattern repeat unit: H. (not entirely preserved) min. 22.6 cm; W. 8.8 cm

A small golden letter pouch (fig. 34a–b)

Weft-faced lozenge twill

Warp:	1 warp only
Material:	Silk, S-twisted, dark orange
Density:	26–27 ends/cm

Weft:	1 weft only
Material:	Weft: metal strip, gilt on both sides (W. c. 0.3 mm)
Density:	29–32 picks/cm

Weave structure
Weft-faced lozenge twill 2/4 (single point)
7 ends for the straight repeat and 5 ends for the return repeat
6 picks for the straight repeat and 4 picks for the return repeat

Selvedge: Not preserved
Technical pattern repeat unit: H. 1.5 cm; W. 2.0 cm

NOTES

1. TEXTILE GIFTS AND DOCUMENTS IN SAFAVID DIPLOMACY

1. This was previously suggested by Um & Clark 2016, p. 4. For an introduction to the "new diplomatic history" see also Watkins 2008.
2. See Stollberg-Rilinger 2013, pp. 139–140. Recent publications on diplomatic ceremonial in the early modern period also include Kauz et al. 2009; Burschel & Kundrus 2013; Burschel & Vogel 2014.
3. Diplomatic gifts from Islamic countries, including silk textiles, have been discussed and presented in numerous recent publications and exhibitions: Shifman & Walton 2001; Eickel & Lusaka 2009; Komaroff 2012; Gagliardi Mangilli 2013; Casale 2015; Mackie 2015, pp. 370–375; Grönhammar 2016; Farhad 2017; Simpson 2017; Biedermann et al. 2018; Jaśkowski 2022, p. 204; Popp 2019; Casale 2023; Guliyev 2023; Munroe 2023, pp. 181–208.
4. Among the earliest extant examples of Safavid letter pouches is one containing a letter by Shah Safī I addressed to the States General of the Dutch Republic in 1629. This pouch is made of red silk damask with a floral pattern and is preserved in the National Archive in The Hague, inv. no. 12595.8. Among the latest extant examples are the pouches of two letters sent by Sulṭān Ḥosayn to the two young Russian tsars Ivan V and Peter I in 1692. These are preserved in the Kremlin Museums in Moscow; see Zagorodnjaja 2005, p. 90, cat. nos 48–49.
5. Silk letter pouches from the Ottoman Empire, the Crimean Khanate and the Mughal Empire (where they were called *kareeta* or *kharita*) have, for instance, survived in the Badische Landesbibliothek in Karlsruhe and the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm; see Petrasch et al. 1991, pp. 349–355, cat. nos 301–310; Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 19–47. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London also preserves several Indian letter pouches made of painted leather; see Houghteling 2022, p. 81. For a late 19th-century silk letter pouch from Afghanistan see Zeir 2019.
6. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, nos Z 214, Z 215–216, Z 217, Z 218.
7. Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 7–18. Agnes Geijer discussed the Persian letter pouches once again in abridged form in her book on Oriental textiles in Sweden; see Geijer 1951, pp. 43–44, 103–104.
8. Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 123–132. The documents had been sent to Zetterstéen in the 1930s, allowing him to study them in Uppsala; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. iv–v. His handwritten notes about these documents are preserved at the Swedish National Archives in Stockholm: 'Anteckningar rörande återställandet av U U B:s arkivalielån från R A 1933–35 för Prof. K.V. Zetterstéens räkning', dated August 1937. Zetterstéen later summarised his description of the Persian documents in a short Swedish publication on Oriental documents preserved in the Swedish National Archives; see Zetterstéen 1952, p. 218.
9. See, for instance, Mackie 2015, p. 374; Grönhammar 2021, p. 122.

2. SWEDISH EMBASSIES TO IRAN DURING THE 17TH CENTURY

1. Matthee 1999a, pp. 15–32.
2. Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp had already sent a large embassy to Isfahan in 1635 to achieve this goal, but this undertaking was unsuccessful; see Lohmeier 1971, pp. 9–28; Matthee 1999a, pp. 141–142; Jolly & Mühlemann 2023, pp. 54–55.

3. See his correspondence in Sutūda 1383 (2004), pp. 78–81 (letters dated 1610).
4. Matthee 1999a, p. 147. On foreign interest in the Treaty of Zuhāb see Jaśkowski 2022.
5. On Shah Sulaymān I and his politics see Matthee 2012, pp. 55–74; 2015c with further literature.
6. Stefan Troebst published the most detailed historical studies about the embassies sent by the Swedish crown to Iran; see Troebst 1993; 1998.
7. For the life and career of Ludvig Fabritius see Kempe 1762; Matthee 1999a, pp. 197–201; 1999b; Troebst 2012; Grönhammar 2021, pp. 110–131.
8. Troebst 1998, p. 135.
9. Fabritius n.d., fol. 1v; Hoppe 1982, p. 159; Troebst 1998, p. 144.
10. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 214; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 128–129, no. 214. The letter was first recorded in an inventory of the royal archive of 1702; see 'Inventarium, öfver Riksarkivets ur 1697 års Slottsbrand räddade handlingar', Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, D II ba:9, fol. 152r. We are most grateful to Jan Mispelaere at the Swedish National Archives for having drawn our attention to the early inventories of the royal archive.
11. Troebst 1998, pp. 145–146.
12. The number of 33 men is recorded in Boëthius 1953, p. 733.
13. Kaempfer 1712. A complete transcription and German translation of the Latin original is provided online by the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel; see Kaempfer 2010–. For an English translation see Kaempfer 2018. Most relevant in this context is Kaempfer's report on the audience of the Swedish delegation at the court in Isfahan; see Kaempfer 1712, ch. XVI, pp. 216–237. Previously, only extracts of this publication had been published in German translations; see, for instance, Kaempfer 1984.
14. Fabritius n.d. Fabritius' report, handwritten in German, is the most important primary source on Fabritius' three embassies to Isfahan, next to Kaempfer's published travelogue. The text has previously been transcribed and published in abridged editions by various authors; see Konovalov 1955, pp. 95–101; Hoppe 1982, pp. 159–165.
15. Kaempfer n.d.: London, British Library, Sloane MS 2923 (from Stockholm to Astrakhan) and MS 2920 (from Astrakhan to Isfahan); see Meier-Lemgo 1968, p. 3. Kaempfer's diary is very difficult to decipher but has been tentatively transcribed into readable German by Karl Meier-Lemgo; see Meier-Lemgo 1968. Hans Hoppe and Detlev Haberland have summarised the travel route of the Swedish delegation as described by Kaempfer; Hoppe 1982, pp. 157–158; Haberland 2009, p. 332. Kaempfer had originally intended to publish his complete diary in four parts after his return to Europe, but finally only managed to publish the *Amoenitatum Exoticarum* which was initially intended to be a mere taste of what the public could expect; see Meier-Lemgo 1968, pp. 1–3.
16. Mashhadī Rafīʿ & Vusūqī 1398 (2019–2020), pp. 236–241.
17. Vogel 2013, p. 162.
18. Kaempfer 1712, pp. 220–223. For the Saʿādatābād gardens see Golombek 2000, pp. 302–303.
19. Kaempfer 1712, p. 221.
20. Anonymous 1639, p. 3; Jolly 2024, p. 23.
21. Kaempfer 1712, p. 221.
22. Kaempfer 1712, p. 232.
23. Kaempfer 1712, pp. 232–234.
24. Kaempfer 1712, pp. 48, 242.
25. Kaempfer 1712, pp. 231–233.
26. On Father Raphaël du Mans see Richard 1995; 1996.
27. Troebst 1998, pp. 149–151. For Shaykh 'Alī Khān Zangana, grand vizier of Shah Sulaymān I from 1669 to 1689, see Matthee 1994; Matthee 2012, pp. 62–72; Matthee 2015b.
28. Fabritius n.d., fol. 4r; Troebst 1998, pp. 145–146, 151.
29. Fabritius n.d., fol. 7r: "[...] dein herkomen hadt dependiret von deinem Könige meinen gutten Freundt dein wech gehen aber stehet bey mihr [...]"; Hoppe 1982, p. 162.

30. Fabritius n.d., fol. 6r: "[…] undt so bin ich ellf mahlen in drey Jahren von dem Könige bewirtet in diese zeyt habe wol zehn Memorialen übergegeben allein kein Antwort ehrhalten […]"; Hoppe 1982, p. 162. Rudi Matthee has pointed out that it was customary practice at the Safavid court to let foreign emissaries wait for long periods before granting them the shah's answer to their requests and his permission to leave the court; Matthee 1998, p. 160.
31. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 215; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 129–130, no. 215.
32. Fabritius n.d., fol. 6r: "[…] entlig wurde mir die zeit lang so schickte ich den Herrn Klingstierna mitt ein Memorial und begärte zu wissen, ob ich noch lange solte in Arrest verbleiben […]"; Hoppe 1982, p. 162.
33. Fabritius n.d., fol. 6r; Hoppe 1982, p. 162. Regarding Shah Sulaymān's reputed neglect of government affairs see also Kaempfer 1712, pp. 42–54; Matthee 2012, pp. 55–59.
34. Barati 2023, pp. 100–101.
35. Troebst 1998, p. 151.
36. Fabritius n.d., fol. 7r; Hoppe 1982, p. 163.
37. Fabritius n.d., fols 7r–7v: "Hier auf wencket Ehr dem Gros Wesir der trat her vor undt Nam die Kreditif so vor dem Könige auf ein Kyssen lagen küste es und gab es mihr und sagte reise mitt Gott die Kaufleute warden sich bey dihr einfinden so habt ihr gesellschaftt an einander […]"; Hoppe 1982, p. 163.
38. Matthee 1999a, p. 199.
39. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 217; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 130–131, no. 217. The letter was first recorded in an inventory of the royal archive from 1702; see 'Inventarium, öfver Riksarkivets ur 1697 års Slottsbrand räddade handlingar', Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, D II ba:9, fol. 152r.
40. The literature on Engelbert Kaempfer is vast; for a summary see Haberland 2009. Furthermore, several shorter Persian studies on Kaempfer's travelogue and other European travellers to the Safavid state have been published in Iran, e.g., Dānishpazhūh 1385 (2006–2007), pp. 300–301; Yadallāhpūr 1398 (2009); Bahrāmzāda & Dādbakhsh 1398 (2009–2010), p. 16.
41. Troebst 1998, p. 154.
42. Grönhammar 2016, p. 119.
43. Troebst 2017, pp. 28–29.
44. Troebst 1998, pp. 176–192.
45. Troebst 1998, pp. 192–196.
46. Troebst 1998, pp. 192–194.
47. Fabritius n.d., fols 8r–10v; Hoppe 1982, pp. 164–165.
48. Fabritius n.d., fol. 10r; Hoppe 1982, p. 164.
49. On Sulṭān Ḥusayn see Matthee 2015d.
50. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 218; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 131–133, no. 218.
51. Fabritius n.d., fols 10v–11r; Hoppe 1982, p. 164.
52. Troebst 1998, p. 199.

3. THE DOCUMENTS

1. For an overview of them see Quinn & Melville 2012.
2. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018. There also exist earlier editions and translations (into English and Russian). For an overview see Marcinkowski 2005.
3. Minorsky 1943. Minorsky's translation, albeit reflecting the state of research a few decades ago, is still invaluable, partly because it includes a good-quality facsimile of the manuscript. For an overview of this source see Marcinkowski 2008.
4. Raḥīmlū 1372 (1993–1994); Mīrzā Naqī Naṣīrī 2008. Floor's translation, while generally very good, still contains some surprising mistakes and thus should be read together with the Persian edition.

5. For an extensive discussion of pre-Safavid *munsha'āt* see Mitchell 2021.
6. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010); for the authorship of this source see Morton 1970, pp. 352, 357–358; Röhrborn 1977, pp. 322–325; Flūr & Javādī 1390 (2011).
7. It was published as a facsimile in Afshār 1357 (1978–1979). The "technical" information regarding the documents copied in it was also edited and separately published; Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008).
8. Chardin 1711; 1811. On the life and work of Jean Chardin see Emerson 1991.
9. As recorded by a secretarial manual from Shāh Sulaymān's period; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125.
10. Examples of these include ʿAbbās I writing to the Polish lords, ʿAbbas II sending letters to the Chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński and Grand Hetman Mikołaj Potocki; in all three cases the de facto letters were called orders (*farmān*); see Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 136–145, 192–209. This is also evident in the scribe's commentary to the *Bayāżī Ṣafavī* (see chapter 3.4), when a copy of a letter sent to the Dutch States General was considered by him as being of dubious authenticity partially because foreign authorities lower than kings should be addressed through the medium of an order, not that of a letter: Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 327; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 60, document 157/234.
11. More information on the structure of Persian documents, especially letters, can be found below on pp. 50–57. For a discussion of the general structure of Safavid imperial letters see Mitchell 1997, pp. 184–186, 193–205. A detailed description of the general structure of Persian historical documents and their elements (throughout the Islamic period) can be found in Qā'im-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 147–240 (this includes a lengthy discussion of *ṭughrās* and seals). Fragner's analysis of *farmāns* is also of use here; see Fragner 1999. A lengthier discussion of the various parts of a document can be found in Busse 1959, pp. 29–41; the structure of a document (mostly post-Safavid) is also discussed in Barati 2023, pp. 51–73. Mitchell in his description makes a few minor mistakes, for instance, when citing *Dastūr al-Kātib* he confuses praises and greetings of another king's enthronement with general "polite formulas" and wishes of friendship, etc., to be written at the end of a document's protocol; see Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī 1964, pp. 140–148 and Mitchell 1997, pp. 185–186. There are further similar, minor oversights in Mitchell's otherwise inspiring study.
12. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 214; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 128–129.
13. Written as *elevatio* (see below, p. 46–47) above the first line, slightly to the right.
14. The letters *nūn* and *ḥā* are joined into a single shape.
15. The proper name of the envoy.
16. See the titles in 'A letter of Shah ʿAbbas II to King Vladislaus IV' (1647); Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 184, 187.
17. *Farangistānīyān*.
18. Written as *elevatio* above line no. 1, slightly to the right of the main body of the text, so that it begins on the margin; on the details of this practice see Shaykh al-Ḥukamā'ī 1390 (2011). In this case, the titles "lifted" from the text are the Arabic abridgement of the Persian style that appeared in the main body of the text, and also contains the name of the addressee, as in the previously cited document to Vladislaus IV. For the rather detailed list of the types of phrases similar to the one used here see Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 114–115. It is also briefly mentioned in Fragner 1999. In principle, the Arabic style should praise the same qualities as the Persian one; in this case, however, this rule was not strictly followed.
19. I.e., the King of Sweden.
20. On the practice of entrusting large portions of the message orally to the envoys see pp. 26, 29, 53, 66–67, and 143, note 86.
21. This is followed by a short blank space in the document.
22. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 217; see Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 130–131.

23. Written as an *elevatio*, above the first line of the main body of the text, slightly on the right margin.
24. Written as *elevatio*, above the first line of the main body of the text, slightly on the right margin.
25. *Svigirūn va Gutārūn va Vandalrūn va Fīmlandīya va Skānīya va Istānīya va Līvānīya va Kārilīya va Brihma va Virida va Istītnī va Pūma Rānīya va Qasubīya va Vandālīya va Rūzhīya va Īngrīya va Pasmārīya (!) va Bālātīnūs va Arnī va Bāvārīya va Zhūlīyāsī va Kilivīya va Munsīyūn. Minsīyūn* could be Meissen of a corruption of *nimsīyūn*, which could refer to the Germans; the term *Nimsa* would in later periods be sometimes used to refer to Austria (as it still is in the Arabic language) and less often to the German-speaking lands in general.
26. The wishes at the end probably refer to the Swedish king.
27. The term is used throughout the *Bayāżī Safavī*; in case of manuscripts the term *qaṭʿ* (lit. "cut") was used.
28. *Shabr* or *vajab* (cubit) is a unit of length, equal to c. 20 cm (or 15.45 cm in Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1401 [2022]). *Aṣbaʿ*, meaning finger, existed in two versions: with fingers spread out, *aṣbaʿ-i munfaraj*, equal to c. 6–7 cm; and with fingers together, *aṣbaʿ-i munżam*, equal to c. 1.5–2 cm. Probably the best discussion of these measurements can be found in Mashhadī Rafīʿ 2021; Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1401 (2022), p. 24, offers different measurements to the author's other research, but they do not seem correct; especially the sizes of the different *aṣbaʿs* do not seem to follow the actual proportions of the human body. See also Hinz 1955, p. 54. Unfortunately, Hinz discusses only *aṣbaʿ* and does not differentiate between the *aṣbaʿ-i munfaraj* and *aṣbaʿ-i munżam*.
29. The measurements of letters sent from Safavid shahs to Poland are: ʿAbbās I: 81.5 × 29 cm and 85.5 cm × 39 cm, Ṣafī I: 97 × 47.5 cm, ʿAbbās II: 77.5 × 38.5 cm; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 106–107. The measurements of letters sent by Ṣafī I to Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp are: 93.2 × 47.2 cm and 87.5 × 48.8 cm; from Sulaymān I to the King of Denmark: 94.4 × 38.8 cm; Jolly & Mühlemann 2023, pp. 60, 67, with earlier literature.
30. This letter measures 100 × 57 cm; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 107.
31. Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 108–109.
32. E.g., Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 43, document 15/24.
33. Loveday 2001, pp. 42–47.
34. Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1393 (2014). Curiously, the *Bayāżī Safavī* mentions this technique only when discussing one document: a letter to the Mughal prince Shāh ʿĀlam Muʿaẓẓam (1643–1712, r. 1707–1712) from 1685/6; Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 202; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 41, document 9.
35. Māyil Hiravī 1379 (2000–2001), p. 285.
36. Shaykh Ṣadūq 1403/1362 (1983), p. 394; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 126.
37. Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī 1964, pp. 61–62; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 28; Rajabzāda 1375 (1996), pp. 76–77; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 126.
38. Chardin 1811, vol. 2, pp. 294–295; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 127.
39. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 28; Rajabzāda 1375 (1996), p. 77.
40. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 127.
41. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 126–127.
42. Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 239, 389.
43. Chardin 1811, vol. 2, p. 293.
44. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 28.
45. Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī 1964, pp. 84–85.
46. Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī 1386–1387 (2007–2008). A less extensive discussion of the practice can be found in Rajabzāda 1375 (1996), pp. 75–76.
47. Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 90–92.
48. Busse 1959, p. xlv; Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1393 (2014), pp. 117–120. Definitions of both *jadval* and *kamand* are found in Māyil Hiravī 1379 (2000–2001), pp. 282–283; Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 86–88.

49. The protection was seemingly thought to benefit the sender, but when the letter is a friendly one, it may be understood as protecting the endeavour of both parties involved.
50. Māyil Hiravī 1379 (2000–2001), pp. 285–286.
51. Māyil Hiravī 1379 (2000–2001), p. 285. However, contemporary sources simply call it *surkhī*, i.e., red; e.g., Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
52. An example here is ʿAbbās I's *farmān* to the Polish lords; see Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 136–141.
53. For discussion of this tradition see Shaykh al-Ḥukamāʾī 1390 (2011); for the Safavid practice, see Yastrebova 2022, pp. 59–60; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 125–26. .
54. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 126.
55. Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 108–115; while the author cites *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk*, which suggests that the answers were written below the chapters of the petition, the photograph of the actual document shows them having been written below and on the margin.
56. An example, albeit from the time of Karīm Khān Zand (r. 1751–1779), thus much later than the documents at hand, can be found in 'Petition to and farman by Karim Khan Zand' [1770].
57. E.g., Busse 1959, pp. 178–179, tab. xxvi, document 8 (Shah Ṭahmāsb's appointment of reciters of the Qurʾan to the tomb of the shah's sister, 972 AH [1565]). In Fekete 1977, pp. 409–410, document 72, tab. 161, the text on the margin is almost a footnote to the main text.
58. E.g., Fekete 1977, pp. 157–159, 291–295, 353–356, 401–403, 405–407, 445–451, documents 14, 44, 60, 71–72, 78–79, tabs 52, 112, 130–131, 159–160, 181–184.
59. Busse 1959, p. 53; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 110.
60. E.g., Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 57, document 129/201.
61. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 125–126. It is worth noting that the *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* discusses not only royal letters, but letters and similar documents in general, exchanged by various people.
62. Chardin 1811, vol. 2, p. 292: "Le quatrième est à l'apposition du sceau qui tient lieu de signature; le profond respect requiert qu'on appose son sceau au dos de la lettre, en bas à un coin, et de l'imprimer si fort sur le bout, que tout le sceau ne soit pas marqué, mais qu'il en manque une partie; c'est pour dire: Je ne suis pas digne de paraître devant vous; je n'ose par respect me montrer qu'à demi en votre présence."
63. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 125–126.
64. A similar problem is discussed in *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* regarding documents appointing Safavid Sufi caliphs or representatives. There, the document included in its opening section many references to God, the Prophet and Imāms. Thus the seal, which bore religious phrases, but also the shah's name, was placed below that section of the document; see Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 29. Furthermore, in royal orders or edicts the seal appears above the main body of the letter, but below the invocation and the names of God, pious formulas referring to God, i.e., *al-mulk li'Lāh* ("the rule [belongs to] God"), including those that are to be read in the main text of the document, and the names Muḥammad and ʿAlī, which appear in this order; for examples see Busse 1959, pp. 199, 204, tab. XL, document no. 16, tab. XLIII, document no. 17; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 194, 197, 204, 207, 383, 386.
65. See 'A letter of Shah Sultan Husayn to King Augustus II', 1712; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 382, 389.
66. 'A letter of Shah Sultan Husayn to King Augustus II', 1712; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 377, 381–382, 389.
67. Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 385–386.
68. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 43, 55, documents 13/22, 14/23, 117/189, 120/192.
69. The less strict nature of Persian official forms is discussed in Fragner 1999. For an early example of such terminology being used see Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), pp. 20–21. For a detailed analysis of the various parts of documents' text, see especially Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 147–166; Barati 2023, pp. 51–73. For a discussion of the structure of Safavid imperial correspondence see Mitchell 1997. The subject of *inshā'* and rhetoric in Safavid Iran has been discussed in Mitchell 2012. For a general discussion of the forms and terminology used in correspondence see also Mojtabāʾī 1993, Rajabzadeh 1993.

70. *Inshā'* is a broad term, describing mostly the art of epistolography, writing ornamental prose and skills necessary for a secretary (*munshī*); for the most extensive discussion of works on the subject and the evolution of the art, albeit pre-Safavid, see Mitchell 2021.
71. Mitchell 1997, pp. 182–183.
72. Mitchell 1997, pp. 205–209.
73. The present analysis of the rhetoric of the letters follows the relevant chapter of *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, see Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 128–161, as it was written in both geographic and temporal proximity to the documents at hand. It was also prepared with the secretaries in mind, meaning it probably well reflected the boundaries of an average secretary's understanding of these matters. It is necessary to note, however, that the chapter appears to be largely based on Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ's (d. 1182 AH) *Ḥadā'iq al-Siḥr fī Daqā'iq al-Shiʿr* ("The Gardens of Enchantment on the Fine Points of Poetry"). An English summary of the rhetorical figures as described in the latter can be found in Chalisova 2009. These texts have also been used here as additional points of reference, as were some others, such as *Dastūr-i Dabīrī*.
74. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 14–15; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 148.
75. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 3–6; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 139–140. For the prevalence of tarṣīʿ in the earlier Safavid letters, see Mitchell 2009, pp. 41, 43–44, 56, 73–74, 92, 155, 195–196.
76. Also possibly read as *zīnatda-yi*.
77. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 12–14; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 144.
78. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 34–35; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 132.
79. In *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* the use of various words all having the same meaning is called *tafannun* and considered a type of *tikrār* (repetition) and is not presented as an ornament of *inshā'*, but its (rhetorical) figure; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 146. Interestingly, Vaṭvāṭ's *Ḥadā'iq* …, which was seemingly the basis for most of the descriptions of rhetorical figures used in *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī*, does not mention *tafannun*.
80. For the structure of the documents and letters see Busse 1959, pp. 29–41; Qā'im-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 147–240; Mitchell 1997, pp. 184–186, 193–205; Fragner 1999; Barati 2023, pp. 51–73.
81. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 125–126.
82. According to Mitchell, the *salutatio* should precede the narration; Mitchell 1997, p. 185. However, in the present examples both elements are seamlessly merged, as was often the case with other elements of the document, according to Fragner, who discusses *arenga* (ideological or religious reasons for issuing a document) being incorporated into the *narratio*; Fragner 1999. For Qā'im-Maqāmī *sharḥ-i ishtīyāq* is not a separate part of the document but another name for narration or *rukn-i ḥāl*; Qā'im-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), p. 165.
83. In the translation this section had to be moved to the beginning of the document because of the differences between English and Persian grammar.
84. Mitchell considers this part of the imperial correspondence to be a more polite equivalent of a *promulgatio* used in documents addressed to recipients of lower rank than the sender, rather than a *promulgatio* per se; Mitchell 1997, pp. 185–186. However, as they serve the same function in the overall structure of a document, this distinction does not seem necessary.
85. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 20. Again, this term comes from the study of poetry, where it denotes the final verses of the opening part of a *qaṣīda* or the final verses of the *ghazal* genre of poetry, in which the poet's nom de plume, called *takhalluṣ*, appears.
86. On the importance of oral communication in Safavid diplomatic relations see Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 75, 111–112; Jaśkowski & Kołodziejczyk 2019, p. 180.

87. See, for example, the spaces after the word *ayyām* ("days") at the beginning of the *duʿā* and before the letter *dāl* at its end in the vizier Khalīfa Sulṭān's letter to Mikołaj Potocki; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 386.
88. See, for example, Fekete 1977, pp. 529–533, 543–548, documents 96, 99. This is also discussed in Mitchell 1997, p. 197, suggesting that this part was largely omitted in letters to European rulers. This claim, however, seem dubious in the light of the documents published by Fekete, whose work was used extensively by Mitchell.
89. Mitchell 1997, pp. 184–185, 197–198.
90. Mitchell 1997, pp. 198–199.
91. Mitchell 1997, pp. 185, 199.
92. According to the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī*, when this section of titles is introduced, it must refer to the titles previously given, albeit "by approximation" (*bi-qurbī*); Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 114.
93. Mitchell 1997, pp. 184–185, 195, 199. However, the *Munshaʾāt-i Sulaymānī* suggests that four nouns were most universal in this position (as in the case of Muslim addressees, this noun could be chosen in a way that best suited the recipient's name): *kamālan* ("perfection", in accusative), *niẓāman*, *muʿizzan*, *jalālan*.
94. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 111–112.
95. Mitchell believes that this omission occurs in letters sent to Christian sovereigns, though not always; Mitchell 1997, p. 200. It should be added that such a prayer was not considered necessary by contemporaries; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 114. However, the introduction of blessings and prayers, especially in Arabic, was believed to improve the overall style of a text, and could be *ḥashv-i malīḥ* ("elegant interpolation") or *iltifāt* ("turning towards another") when in the letter the author switches from writing in the second person to the third person or vice versa; Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 38, 53–54; Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), pp. 37–38 (instead of *malīḥ* the term *nīk*, i.e., "good" is used); Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 150, 159. Citing sacred texts was sometimes considered a separate rhetorical figure, called *iqtibās*; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 149–150; Muḥammad ʿAlī al-Ṯhānawī 1996, pp. 242–244.
96. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 51–52; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 147.
97. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 50–51; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 147–148.
98. E.g., Fekete 1977, pp. 549–551, document 100 (Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the Venetian Doge, 1701/1702); Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 237–247.
99. Vahman 1998, pp. 182–183, 189; Jolly & Mühlemann 2023, p. 67, n. 57.
100. E.g., Fekete 1977, pp. 549–551, document 100 (Sulṭān Ḥusayn to the Venetian Doge, 1701/1702); Vahman 1998, pp. 182–183, 189; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 237–247. In the letters to Venice and to Denmark the term appears at the beginning of the first line of the main body of the text; in the letter to Poland, it was written at the end of the first line, but this is due to the difference in syntax between Persian and the Turkic language in which the second letter was penned.
101. Mitchell 1997, p. 202.
102. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 218; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 131–132.
103. Written on the right-hand margin above the first line of the proper text.
104. Followed by a blank space stretching to the end of the line.
105. Written on the left-hand side of the page.
106. *Svigirūn va Gutārūn va Vandalrūn va Fīmlandīya va Skānīya va Istānīya va Līvānīya va Kārilīya va Brihma va Virida va Istitīnī va Pūma Rānīya va Qasubīya va Vandālīya va Rūzhīya va Īngrīya va Yasmārīya va Bālātīnūs va Arnī va Bāvārīya va Zhūlīyāsī va Kilivīya va Minsīyūn*.
107. Written as *elevatio*, above the first line of the main body of the text, slightly on the right margin.
108. *Yūzbāshī* – an officer, in general a commander of 100 men.

109. Rashīd al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿUmarī Kātib Balkhī Maʿrūf bi Vaṭvāṭ 1362 (1984), pp. 30–31; Chalisova 2009; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 128–129; for *tashbīb* see Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 20. The term *maṭlaʿ* originally meant the first verses of a poem; *tashbīb* refers to the opening section of a *qaṣīda* genre of poetry which again is a testament to the close links between poetry and epistolography.
110. Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), p. 157. Examples of ornamental openings of letters can be found in Munshaʾāt-i Vaḥīd, e.g., Vaḥīd Qazvīnī 1125 (1713), pp. 1–2.
111. Literally "that".
112. The latter, however, is far less likely, given the use of the plural. As singular forms are used in the present letter for kings, the use of the honorific plural for the shah's envoy seems unlikely.
113. For an overview of the history of Iranian administration of foreign affairs see Floor 1999.
114. Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk 1347 (1968), pp. 125–132. For an English translation see Darke 2002, pp. 94–98.
115. Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk 1347 (1968), p. 132; Darke 2002, p. 98.
116. Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk 1347 (1968), pp. 125–126; Darke 2002, pp. 94–96.
117. Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzavārī 1383 (2004–2005), pp. 815–821.
118. Floor 2000, pp. 484–489.
119. Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzavārī 1383 (2004–2005), p. 817. Possibly one such diary is that of the mission to Siam during the reign of Shah Sulaymān: Muḥammad Rabīʿ b. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm 2536 (1977); for an English translation see Muḥammad Rabīʿ b. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm 1971.
120. Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzavārī 1383 (2004–2005), p. 816.
121. Khwāja Niẓām al-Mulk 1347 (1968), pp. 125–126; Darke 2002, pp. 94–96; Mullā Muḥammad Bāqir Sabzavārī 1383 (2004–2005), pp. 816–817.
122. Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 111–112; Kołodziejczyk 2017, pp. 71–72; Jaśkowski & Kołodziejczyk 2019, pp. 179–180. For an example of such informal discussions, albeit with a person who was not officially an envoy, see Polczynski 2014. For the early Qajar shahs' approach, stressing the importance of form on the one hand and the penchant for informal talks on the other, see Malcolm 1829, pp. 399–402, 407–411.
123. For a discussion of the various periods or stages of the Safavid chancellery see Floor 2001, pp. 60–64.
124. For a description of the type of documents called *raqam* see Barati 2021. For a general overview of various names and types of documents see Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 41–131 (*raqams* are discussed on pp. 74–79).
125. In Safavid documents *ṭughrā* (tughra) is an opening formula mentioning the shah, often written in an ornamental style or in coloured ink. Various classes of documents would have different *ṭughrās*, traced by different officials. The formula itself and its shape clearly evolved throughout the period, as it did before and later. For an overview of Safavid *ṭughrās* see especially Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 178–220; Barati 2024.
126. The office is extensively discussed in Safavid government manuals: Minorsky 1943, pp. 52–54, facsimiles 24–27; Raḥīmlū 1372 (1993–1994), pp. 26–30; translated into English in Mīrzā Naqī Naṣīrī 2008, pp. 41–43; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 43–45. A study of the development of this office and its expansion at the cost of *munshī al-mamālik* can be found in Röhrborn 1977, pp. 314–320. An overview of the office, together with the list of office holders, can be found on pp. 55–58. For the discussion of the development of the office of *majlis-nivīs* and the *raqam* documents, both in the Safavid and post-Safavid period, see Simsār 1346 (1968), pp. 131–145; Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 74–79; Röhrborn 1977, pp. 320–322; Barati 2021. For the difference between the crown (*khāṣṣa*) and state (*mamālik*) lands and their respective administration, as well as the expansion of the former at the expense of the latter see Minorsky 1943, pp. 24–26; Floor 2001, pp. 3, 80–81, 122–123; 2012b; 2022, pp. 78–79, 207–208, 218–221. See also Röhrborn 1966, especially pp. 115–138.
127. For example, Vaḥīd Qazvīnī 1125 (1713), pp. 1–5; the letter discusses the Safavid victories over the Mughals in the war of 1649–1653, and Vaḥīd Qazvīnī was *majlis-nivīs* in 1642–1679; Floor 2001, p. 57.

128. For an example of a highly ornamental *raqam* see Mīr Muḥammad Ṣādiq 1373 (1994–1995).
129. Minorsky 1943, pp. 52–54, facsimiles 24–27; Raḥīmlū 1372 (1993–1994), pp. 26–30; translated into English in Mīrzā Naqī Naṣīrī 2008, pp. 61–63; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 68–72. An overview of the office, together with the list of office holders, can be found in Floor 2001, pp. 50–55.
130. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 69–70.
131. *Shikasta*, lit. "broken", a style of calligraphic handwriting popular especially among bureaucrats, which was a more hasty and less clear *nastaʿlīq*, characterised by many "shortcuts" one could take in writing.
132. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 69–70.
133. Minorsky 1943, pp. 61–62, facsimiles 39–40.
134. Chardin 1811, vol. 9, p. 423.
135. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 71–72. On various types of Safavid turbans and their significance, see Sayyid Bunakdār 1395 (2016).
136. Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1393 (2014); Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 111. For an earlier example of a document with a golden frame see Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 159–167, 380.
137. On these offices see Minorsky 1943, pp. 62–63, facsimiles 40–43; Floor 2001, pp. 68–77; Mīrzā Naqī Naṣīrī 2008, pp. 46–47.
138. Chardin 1811, vol. 5, pp. 452–453; Busse 1959, pp. 54–56; Simsār 1347 (1968), p. 62; Floor 2001, pp. 72–74.
139. Floor 2001, p. 67; see also the discussion of the seals in chapters 3.4 and 3.5.
140. Several such studies exist, but some of them are rather dated and most of them focus on the seals themselves, rather than on their use. Classic positions include Rabino di Borgomale 1971; 1974. See also the appendix to Qāʾim-Maqāmī's influential textbook and study of Iranian diplomatics, an expanded section on coins from an earlier article (Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1348 [1969]): Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), pp. 227–239, 367–412; the Safavids are discussed on pp. 233–235, 358–377. Other studies include Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007); Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006). For a study of Iranian, but also Persianate, seals in general see Jiddī 1387 (2008–2009). The importance of Jiddī's work lies largely in his expertise on the art of producing the seals. Equally relevant to the present study, as discussing the seals of documents sent to Europe, is Jaśkowski 2013. In this chapter observations are limited to matters strictly relevant to the documents at hand, while more general information on Safavid seals is found in the above-mentioned works. Studies which focused more on the use and role of the seals than the objects (or rather their imprints) include Busse 1959, pp. 47–58; Schimkoreit 1982; Floor 2001, pp. 64–68.
141. Chardin 1811, vol. 5, p. 461; Simsār 1347 (1968), pp. 69, 74–75; Floor 2001, pp. 67–68. Several non-royal seals have, however, survived; see Porter 2011, pp. 88–101.
142. Ismāʿīlī gives slightly different measurements: 6.7 × 5 cm; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 157. As the difference is almost exact in case of width and length, it is possible that this was a general problem with her measuring of that seal.
143. *Vilāya* here means the spiritual and material authority of Imam ʿAlī, as the supposedly rightful heir of Muḥammad, inherited by his descendants; Fazlhashemi 2021, pp. 185–186; Sachedina 1988, pp. 34, 92–100, 119–120, 175–177. It is noteworthy that under the Safavids the concept of ʿAlī's *vilāya* was an essential part of the ruling ideology, clearly distinguishing the Shiʿites from Sunnis, and hence largely propagated; Takim 2000, pp. 169–173. For an overview of Safavid claims to power, see Khafipour 2019.
144. Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006), p. 88; Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1393 (2014), pp. 118–119.
145. Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006), pp. 89, 95–96; Jiddī 1387 (2008–2009), pp. 123–124.
146. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 37–38.
147. Rabino di Borgomale 1971, pp. 23, 39–40, 43, pl. 3; 1974, pls 48–50; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), pp. 148–165. For an attempted typology of Safavid seals see Schimkoreit 1982, tab. 2.
148. Rabino di Borgomale 1971, p. 40; 1974, pl. 49, no. 17; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 157; Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006), pp. 95–96.

149. 'A letter of Shah Sultan Husayn to King Augustus II', 1712; Fekete 1977, p. 539, document 98; Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 49, no. 18; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 159; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 389. Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006), p. 121, read it without a date and with minor mistakes.
150. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 39, document 7/16.
151. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37.
152. The word *gū* ("say") used here is sometimes identified as *gaw* ("hero"), leading to a different translation; Kostikyan 2005, p. 243, document 1; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 167, document 4. This would, however, require the use of the form *bāshad* instead of *bāsh*, yet the latter is clearly visible on the seals themselves; see 'A farman of Shah 'Abbas II addressed to Chancellor Jerzy Ossoliński', n.d.; 'A farman of Shah 'Abbas II addressed to Crown Grand Hetman Mikołaj Potocki', n.d.; 'A letter of Shah 'Abbas I to King Sigismund III', 1624?; 'A letter of Shah 'Abbas II to King Vladislaus IV', 1647; 'A letter of Shah Safi I to King Sigismund III', 1629?; Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 49, no. 16. This translation is also supported by Fekete, although his reading was slightly wrong; Fekete 1977, pp. 457, 513, documents 81, 92.
153. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37. This type of seal was also identified in Yastrebova 2022, pp. 57–58.
154. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37.
155. One seal is singled out by the phrase *gāhī bar nāmahā mīzanand* ("sometimes they put it on the letters"); Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38. However, this implies that in some cases other seals were used on letters. The *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* lists a large number of seals, which were, however, mostly used for internal affairs of the state, and hence listing all of them would add little to the discussion; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), pp. 37–38.
156. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37.
157. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 44.
158. Minorsky 1943, p. 63, facsimile 42.
159. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 102–103.
160. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, p. 43.
161. Muḥammad Maʿṣūm b. Khwājagī Iṣfahānī 1368 (1989), p. 34; Muḥammad Yūsuf Vālih Iṣfahānī 1372 (1993–1994), pp. 490–491; Floor 2001, pp. 66, 73–74.
162. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 46.
163. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 54, 56, documents 107/170, 124/196.
164. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37.
165. Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 382–384.
166. It seems that Afshār erroneously read it as *nāmhā*; this would mean that the seal had been carved "for names" which makes little sense.
167. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 307; Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 56, document 125/197.
168. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), pp. 246, 318; Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 50, 59–60, documents 69/100, 151/227, 157/234.
169. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 200; Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 40, document 7/16.
170. 'A letter of Shah Sultan Husayn to King Augustus II', 1712; Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pls 49–50, nos 18, 21; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 161; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, p. 389.
171. Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 50, no. 22; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 161.
172. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 46, document 27/36.
173. Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 49, no. 20; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), pp. 160, 162.
174. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 53, document 99/136.
175. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 250; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 51, document 74/106.
176. E.g., Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 39, 58, documents 5/14, 135/207. Most relevant for the discussion at hand is a reference to its use under Sulaymān I; see also Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 309; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 58, document 136/209.
177. For a discussion, largely speculative, on the large and small seals, based mostly on Chardin, *Taẕkirat al-Mulūk* and surviving documents, see Busse 1959, pp. 50–58.
178. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
179. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 228; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 47, document 41/64.
180. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 236; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 48, documents 48/76, 49/77.

181. E.g., Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 48, document 51/79.
182. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 47, document 46/74.
183. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
184. Fekete 1977, pp. 543–548, document 99, pls 229–230.
185. A letter from the early reign of Sulṭān Ḥusayn addressed to the Doge of Venice, although it is not sprinkled with gold and hence less ornamental, appears to be another example of this trend by a similar use of titles, layout of the text and the imprint of the most ornamental available seal; see Fekete 1977, pp. 549–551, document 100, pls 231–232.
186. As it refers to sealing a box, such a seal could not have been just an imprint on paper, and points to the tradition of sealing containers with important contents; Firdawsī 1384 (2005), p. 98; for an English translation see Warner & Warner 1912, p. 261.
187. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), pp. 27–28.
188. Examples of such practices abound. The items sealed could be musk or amber sent among Shah Ṣafī's gifts to the Ottoman sultan Ibrahim I; Navāʾī 1360 (1981–1982), p. 46. According to Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh, papers, pen and inkwell used—in direct violation of the royal order—by the imprisoned prince Ismāʿīl Mīrzā were sealed in a pouch and sent to the shah; Qāżī Aḥmad b. Sharaf al-Dīn al-Ḥusayn al-Ḥasanī al-Qumī 1383 (2004–2005), p. 544. The same source also mentions a jewellery pouch that had been sealed in two places (although it belonged to the Shirvānshāhs); ibid., p. 62. Also, in Khulāṣat al-Tavārīkh there is a mention of a house being sealed; this obviously necessitated the use of a wax seal or one of a similar material; ibid., p. 455. According to Tārīkh-i ʿĀlam-ārā-yi ʿAbbāsī a sealed bag (also called a *kīsa*) was even used by the Uzbeks to keep Shah Ṭahmāsp's body which they stole from his grave; Iskandar Bayg Turkamān 1382 (2003–2004), p. 527.
189. Chardin 1811, vol. 5, pp. 452–453; Simsār 1347 (1968), p. 69.
190. Chardin 1811, vol. 4, pp. 272–273; Rajabzāda 1375 (1996), p. 77. Rajabzāda does not cite Chardin directly, relying instead on Henri Masse; Masse 1357 (1979), pp. 106–107.
191. Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), p. 368; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 155.
192. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 44.
193. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
194. For the description and analysis of these events see Matthee 2015a.
195. Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), pp. 148, 150, 152, 155, 163. It is noteworthy that these seals often lacked the *mihrab*. I have not been able, however, to verify the reading of some of the dates because of the low quality of the pictures.
196. See, for example, British Library, document Or 4935_11, which features the imprint of the same seal as the one discussed here but stamped on paper; published in Busse 1959, pp. 212–214, pls XLIX–L, document 20. We are most grateful to Ursula Sims-Williams for providing us with a photo of the seal stamp on this document. It is worth pointing out that the use of the black-ink *ṭughrā: ḥukm-i jahān muṭā shud* suggests that this document is a *raqam*, i.e., it was written by the *majlis-nivīs* (see chapters 3.1, 3.4) and the note on its reverse suggests that it was written on the explicit oral order of the shah.
197. Simsār 1347 (1968), p. 69; Floor 2001, pp. 65–67.
198. One should keep in mind that the term *Ashraf*, "the Most Noble" clearly refers to the shah, often called "the most noble one"; hence *muhr-i ashraf* could also be translated as "the seal of the most noble one".
199. This view is supported by Simsār 1347 (1968), p. 74, who argues that neither of the terms used for the seals described a specific seal. However, his view is not substantiated, as shown in this and the previous chapter.
200. *Farmān-i Vāguzārī-i Manṭaqa-yi Mubārak Ābād Ba Mīrzā Muḥammad ʿAlī Ǧābirī* 1129 (1717).
201. Minorsky 1943, pp. 62–63, facsimiles 41–42; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 64–65.
202. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38. The legend of the seal is taken from the Qur'an, 27:30; for an English translation and further information about this verse see Nasr et al. 2015, p. 933. For the seal itself see Qāʾim-Maqāmī 1350 (1971–1972), p. 370; Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 48, no. 12; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 156; Karīmzāda Tabrīzī 1385 (2006), p. 95.

203. The mistake stems from the fact that in the original manuscript the names of all types of seals were written in red ink. The last one, however, was introduced as a corrigendum written on the margin, and probably for that reason was not made distinct by being written in another colour; *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* 1236 (1821), p. 15; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
204. Rabino di Borgomale 1974, pl. 48, no. 12; Ismāʿīlī 1385 (2006–2007), p. 156. Ismāʿīlī slightly misread the legend by adding *banda-yi* ... etc., while it is missing from the actual seal. I relied on the measurements given by Ismāʿīlī.
205. *Munsha'āt-i Sulaymānī* 1236 (1821), p. 15; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 38.
206. Minorsky 1943, pp. 62–63, facsimiles 40–42; Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 37; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 63–65.
207. Busse 1959, pp. 57, 203.
208. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 199; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 39, document 6/15.
209. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 206; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 44, document 21/30; this is a *ruqʿa* to the exiled prince Akbar, 15 Jumadā II 1111 AH (8 December 1699).
210. As in the case of the document dated late Rabīʿ II 1124 AH (May–June 1712) to Maḥmūd Bayg, defeated contender for power in Balkh and Central Asia, who had fled to Qunduz; Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 51, document 80/113.
211. E.g., an order (*ḥukm-i sharaf-i nafāẕ*) to Naẓar Maḥmūd Bayg, the nephew of the Kalmyk ruler Alūka (Ayuka; Rajab 1102 AH/March–April 1691); Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 58, document 137/210.
212. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, p. 102.
213. Chardin 1811, vol. 9, p. 449; "Elle étoit dans une bourse de drap d'or, qu'une tresse tissue d'or et de soie, avec des houpes de même, fermoit de ses *nœud*s; elle étoit chachetée de cire molle du sceau du premier ministre."
214. For a description of this office see Floor 2012a.
215. Afshār 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 62, document 162/241.
216. For a Russian edition of the documents see Andreev et al. 2021.
217. Rossijskiy Gosudarstvenniy Arkhiv Drevnikh Aktov, f. 77 'Snosheniya Rossii s Persiey', op. 2, no. 71. For the pouches in Moscow, Kremlin Museums, see Zagorodnjaja 2005, p. 90, cat. nos 48–49.
218. The final part of the inscription is not entirely clear and could also read: *al-ʿalīm al-karīm* ("the knowledgeable, the generous").
219. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 215; Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 129–130.
220. For the description of this office see Minorsky 1943, pp. 47–48, 118, facsimiles 12–14; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 30–33.
221. Written below the line.
222 See the opening of a letter suggested in Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125.
223. As in the original, it seems *maṭālib* would be more correct.
224. Or: *zabānī*
225. *Arża-dāsht*; a type of document from a person of lower rank to a person of higher rank.
226. *Kamtarīn*, lit. "smallest".
227. *Pādishāh-i Shīt*.
228. Written in two lines, the second half (beginning with *īlchī*, "ambassador") written in the space between the first and the second line of the actual text of the document; Zetterstéen incorrectly thought this part belongs to the end of the line of the proper text of the document. On the practice of beginning letters or rather petitions in the way described here see Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125.
229. *Ba mawqif-i ʿarż mīrasānad*, lit. "presents to the place of standing".
230. Head of protocol; more on this office in Minorsky 1943, pp. 47–48, 118. The title *ʿālī-jāh* ("glorious, of high glory") also described a rank and position in the state and within the court and was a most important honorific title for officials; Floor 2001, p. 24.
231. Direction in which the Muslims pray.

232. Reading uncertain: *dawlatmand ast,* "is prosperous"; probably intended to suggest that the shah has everything and has no use for merchants. Another possible reading is *Faqr-e kamtarīn* (with a singlo stroke missing from the letter *kāf* or *kamtarīn*), "the least significant's poverty", which with the following word would be read as "notices the least significan's poverty, so that ....".
233. A formula ending letters and petitions; it signifies that all that was important has already been said; see Barati 2023, p. 100.
234. Mohiuddin 1971, p. 151; Fekete 1977, p. 42; Mihan 2020, pp. 193–196.
235. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125.
236. For example, the Safavid *farmāns* sent to the Polish chancellor and hetman measured 63 × 27.5 cm and 63 × 29 cm, respectively, while the shah's vizier's letter to the same addressees measured only 45 × 22 cm and 43 × 24.5 cm; Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 193, 203, 213, 223.
237. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125.
238. The structure of Safavid and post-Safavid petitions is discussed in Barati 2023, pp. 98–103.
239. Barati 2023, pp. 99–101.
240. Jaʿfarīyān 1388 (2010), p. 125; Barati 2023, p. 99.
241. Barati 2023, p. 100.
242. While an explicit mention of being obedient to the royal order is missing from the text of the petition, this is the implied meaning of the phrase used. Moreover, the form used in this letter is clearly an abridged and slightly modified version of the most standard ending of petitions; see Barati 2023, p. 100.
243. E.g., *zīyāda cha iṭnāb namāyad* ("Why exceed in verbosity"); Jaśkowski et al. 2017, pp. 127, 131.
244. E.g., Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), pp. 21, 54. This practice may be compared to the writing of "farewell"; it seems to have been quite widespread, as it seeped into poetry: the opening part of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī's *Maṣ navī* ends with the following words: "None that is raw understands the state of the ripe: therefore, my words must be brief. Farewell!"; Nicholson 1926, p. 5.
245. Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Khāliq Mayhānī 1375 (1996–1997), p. 54.
246. Barati 2023, p. 100.
247. This was observed by Manūchihr Sutūda about the documents compiled by Juan Tadeo; Sutūda 1383 (2004), [XIII].
248. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives (Riksarkivet), Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, Z 216; Zetterstéen 1945, p. 130.
249. Read as *qaṣd*, '("intent or goal") by Zetterstéen.
250. Incorrectly read as *risāla* ("treatise") by Zetterstéen.
251. Possible reading: *Garām-bihjat*, ("of dear youthful joy").
252. Possibly also *avārija* ("ledgers").
253. Spelt with a *madda* sign above the word.
254. From here on the text is written diagonally *(chalīpā)* on the right-hand margin.
255. Writing unclear.
256. Reading uncertain.
257. Originally spelt *al-iqbāluhu*, which is a mistake.
258. Symbolising God, in this case replacing the invocation (for example, *Allāhu Akbar*), popular especially in the Mughal Empire.
259. Written in line 3.
260. Zetterstéen read this word (*qaṣr*, "palace") as *qaṣd* ("goal, objective, aim"); Zetterstéen 1945, p. 130. However, this reading makes little sense in the context of the imagery used in this section of the document.
261. Or "state", as the word *dawlat* carries both meanings; it is possible that both were to be understood from the single word used.
262. Incorrectly read as *risāla* ("treatise") by Zetterstéen 1945, p. 130.
263. *Girāmībakht*, reading uncertain, misspelt as *girāmihakht*.
264. *Mufāviża*, also "discussion", "contract".

265. *Ravābiṭ* or possibly *avārija* ("ledgers"). Based on the handwriting both readings are equally probable.
266. Writing unclear. It is nonetheless tempting to read it as Amīr Irvīn, i.e. Irvine, which could mean that the document at hand was issued by the local authorities before the affair of Porto Novo in 1733, when the British and French East India companies attacked the Swedish East India Company's warehouse in Porto Novo (present day Parangipettai in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu); see Gill 1958, pp 50–53; Hodacs 2020, 554–555.
267. I.e., the mind of the king or shah.
268. Name unreadable, seemingly *bbrbktr*, maybe supposed to be read as *pribiriktr*, which could be a corruption of "Frederick". This would mean that it was addressed to Frederick I of Sweden (r. 1720–1751). If so, this could also support the idea that the document could have been issued around the time of the affair of Porto Novo. The address seems to be in a form typical of Indian rather than Iranian chancelleries; see Balfour 1781, pp. 186–191.
269. Mohiuddin 1971, pp. 63, 128.
270. Nasr et al. 2015, pp. 1005–1006; further discussion of the verse can also be found there.

4. THE SILK POUCHES

1. For an introduction to the structures of historical fabrics in English see Emery 1966 (and later editions). An introduction to the textile terms used in this study is found in CIETA 2021. The CIETA (Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens) has established a multilingual glossary of weaving technology and rules for a standardised description of fabrics. The CIETA vocabulary (so far available in twelve languages) is an alphabetically organised glossary of technical terms; for the English edition see CIETA 2021; for an illustrated edition see Burnham 1964. For a general introduction to historical textiles see also Otavský 1987.
2. For instance, the *naqshband* Kwaja Ghiyāth al-Din 'Ali Naqshband-i Yazdi, who operated a silk manufactory in Yazd during the second half of the 16th century; see Skelton 2000; Thompson 2003, p. 312, n. 42.
3. See, for instance, Thompson 2008, pp. 277–289. For a detailed description of the Indian drawloom, which was modelled upon the Iranian drawloom, see Jain 1993/1994.
4. Thompson 2003, p. 280.
5. Vice president Suen Leijonmark [*sic*] and secretary Ludvic van Schantz are mentioned on the last page of an inventory which was drawn up in 1702 after a fire had destroyed parts of the royal castle in 1697. For the relevant entries in the 'Inventarium, öfver Riksarkivets ur 1697 års Slottsbrand räddade handlingar', Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, D II ba:9, see fol. 370r. We are most grateful to Jan Mispelaere at the Swedish National Archives for having drawn our attention to the early inventories of the royal archive.
6. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Riksarkivets ämbetsarkiv (samlingspost) SE/RA/481/01/01, 1848, D II ef:1, fol. 173r.
7. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Riksarkivets ämbetsarkiv (samlingspost) SE/RA/481/01/01, 1848, D II ef:1, fol. 173r: "Inlagdt i en påse af guldtyg".
8. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Riksarkivets ämbetsarkiv (samlingspost) SE/RA/481/01/01, 1848, D II ef:1, fol. 173r: "Inlagdt i en påse af blommigt guldtyg".
9. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives: 'Anteckningar rörande återställandet av U U B: s arkivalielån från R A 1933–35 för Prof. K. V. Zetterstéens räkning', dated August 1937, fol. 318, under Z 214: "Beutel aus Goldbrokat mit eingewebten Verzierungen verschiedener Farben"; fol. 321, under Z 217: "Beutel aus Goldbrokat mit eingewebten Blumen verschiedener Farben".
10. Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 8–9. The same pairing was repeated by Agnes Geijer in her book on Oriental textiles in Sweden; Geijer 1951, pp. 103–104.
11. Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 129, 131.
12. This approximately corresponds to half the complete width of Safavid fabrics from this period.
13. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica. The pouch was first published in Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 8–10, figs 2, 4.

14. Heribert Busse assumed that the letters were rolled up and then flattened; Busse 1959, p. 28. However, the sequence of concave and convex folds that are preserved in the present letters suggests that they were folded rather than rolled. The same folding pattern has been observed on two letters of Shah Ṣafī I sent to Duke Frederick III of Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp in 1637; see Jolly & Mühlemann 2023, pp. 60–63.
15. The *Bayāżī Safavī* contains numerous mentions of folding the documents, although it does not mention any specific technique. Rarely, it also mentions the size to which a letter should be folded, curiously mentioning only the width, not the length (albeit in the letters from foreign rulers); Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 196; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 39, document 4/11. This seems to suggest that while there was a possibility of using various folds for one of the dimensions of a document, the other one had to be somehow more standardised. It also seems to suggest that the order of the folds may have had some importance, as in the case of one letter to ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Khān of Bukhara it is mentioned that the seal should be placed separately (i.e., on a separate piece of paper) "after the fold [containing] all the titles" (*baʿd az lā-yi tamām-i alqāb*); Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 234; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 47, document 46/74.
16. Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 10; Geijer 1951, pp. 43–44.
17. This was also suggested by Agnes Geijer; Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 11.
18. CIETA 2021, p. 36.
19. The Textile Museum Collection, Washington, D.C., 3.103A. Acquired by George Hewitt Myers in 1931; Bier 1987, pp. 160–161, cat. no. 12 (Mary McWilliams); Fellinger 2021, p. 128, fig. 2; Krody 2023, pp. 150–151.
20. Riggisberg, Abegg-Stiftung, inv. no. 5520. A larger piece of the same silk weaving, albeit with faded colours, is held by the Textile Museum in Washington, D.C., inv. no. 3.105; Bier 1987, pp. 162–163, cat. no. 13 (Mary McWilliams).
21. CIETA 2021, p. 84.
22. The weave analyses and technical terms used here follow the notation method and terminology of the Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens (CIETA). Agnes Geijer had published her observations on the weave structure of the silk fabric before the CIETA vocabulary was established.
23. Daniël De Jonghe had first drawn attention to such fabrics, in relation to a Safavid silk weaving from the collection of the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire in Brussels, inv. no. Tx 898; De Jonghe 2003, pp. 177–179, 192–193, figs 4, 5 (I). In that case, both warps bind the pattern wefts in 1/3 twill.
24. According to Agnes Geijer some of these patterns weft float on the reverse, when they do not appear on the front. She also mentioned that none of them is brocaded; see Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 8–9. This seems unlikely, since the fabric feels thicker in the areas of the yellow, orange and light pink pattern wefts.
25. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica; see Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 8, figs 1, 3; Geijer 1951, p. 43.
26. Joy Boutrup kindly helped identify the structure of the braid.
27. On extant seals and seal impressions in the Islamic worlds see Porter 2011; Gallop & Porter 2012.
28. Chardin 1711, vol. 1, p. 178: "La dernière civilité à laquelle on prend garde dans les lettres, est à l'envelope dont la manière la plus respecteuse est de mettre la lettre dans un sac de broderie, lié par un filet d'or et de soye avec de petites houpes de même et d'y apposer le seau sur la cire d'Espagne."
29. Geijer mentioned that it was lying inside the pouch; see Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 8.
30. Moscow, Kremlin Museum; Zagorodnjaja 2005, p. 90, cat. nos 48–49. We are most grateful to Marina Gorkova for providing us with information about these letter pouches and their attached seals.
31. For instance, in two silk weavings in the Cleveland Museum of Art, inv. nos 1924.744.a and 1926.22; see Mackie 2015, pp. 380, 382, figs 9.39, 9.42.
32. On the life of Jean-Baptiste Tavernier see Burger 2017.
33. On the *khilʿat* or *khalʿat* see Floor 2017, with further literature.

34. Braunschweig, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, inv. no. GG 520. For a recent study of this painting see Brancaforte 2022, pp. 614–618.
35. Tavernier 1679, p. 531: "Le jour suivant un des principaux Officiers du Nazar m'apporta la *calaate* dont il plût au Roy de m'honorer, c'est à dire un habit complet à la Persienne, qui consistoit en une veste & une surveste avec une ceinture & une toque."
36. Tavernier 1679, pp. 533–534.
37. CIETA 2021, p. 83.
38. Sonday 1987, pp. 57–58.
39. Reath & Sachs 1937, pp. 26–30.
40. De Jonghe 2003.
41. Jain 2008, pp. 189–239.
42. In contrast to medieval samite weavings, the binding warp here does not bind the pattern wefts *par passée*.
43. A Safavid silk fabric with this weave structure is discussed in De Jonghe 2003, pp. 179–180, 192–193, figs 4, 5 (II).
44. CIETA 2021, p. 83.
45. A Safavid silk fabric with this weave structure is discussed in De Jonghe 2003, pp. 181–182, 192–193, figs 4, 5 (III); 2005.
46. CIETA 2021, pp. 71, 83. Many 17th-century Iranian sashes were woven in this technique.
47. For a hypothetical reconstruction of the Indian drawloom, which was likely modelled upon the Iranian drawloom, see Jain 1993/1994, pp. 53–54.
48. Brussels, Musée Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire, inv. no. Tx 900; see De Jonghe 2003, pp. 181–182, 192–193; 2005.
49. Chardin 1711, vol. 1, p. 237: "[…] car c'est une autre civilité de l'Orient de mettre les lettres dans de riches boëtes, ou dans des sacs don't l'étoffe est plus ou moins riche, selon la qualité des gens à qui elles sont adressées." The same tradition is reported for the Ottoman Empire by Franz Babinger; see Babinger 1931, p. 17, n. 3.
50. Copenhagen, Designmuseum Danmark, inv. nos D 1227 and 1228. For a discussion of these two pouches and their historical context see Jolly & Mühlemann 2023.
51. Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek, inv. nos Cod. Rastatt 230–231; Petrasch et al. 1991, pp. 340, 346–347, cat. nos 297–298.
52. Brambach 1970, p. 53, nos 104–105; Holder 1970, p. 217.
53. Jolly & Mühlemann 2023, pp. 59–60, figs 6–7. They were originally sent to Schleswig in the 1630s, thus before the time of Raphaël du Mans at the Savafid court.
54. Eszer 1973, pp. 266–268; Matthee 1998, p. 157.
55. Eszer 1973, pp. 270–271.
56. Fabritius n.d., fol. 5v; Hoppe 1982, pp. 161–162. This is confirmed by a letter by Raphaël du Mans of 30 June 1685; Richard 1995, vol. 1, pp. 295–297.
57. Eszer 1973, pp. 270–271; Matthee 1998, p. 160.
58. Eszer 1973, pp. 267, 271.
59. Vatican Archive, AA. Arm. I-XVIII, no. 1737; see Chick 2012, pp. 422–423.
60. Vienna, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Haus, Hof- und Staatsarchiv, StAbt. Persien 1; Eszer 1973, p. 275, n. 192.
61. Petrasch 1952, p. 662; Brambach 1970, p. 41; Holder 1970, pp. 183, 217.
62. Petrasch et al. 1991, pp. 21–31.
63. Petrasch 1952, p. 574; Petrasch & Zimmermann 1955, p. 220, cat. nos 519–520.
64. Petrasch 1952, p. 660.
65. Detailed analyses of the weave structures of the outer fabrics of the pouches in Karlsruhe, based on notes by Harold Burnham, are provided in the entries on these pouches in Petrasch et al. 1991, pp. 346–347, cat. nos 297–298.
66. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 218; Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 9, fig. 5.

67. Agnes Geijer had also noted the stylistic and structural similarity of this pouch to Ottoman examples; see Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 19–20.
68. Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 19. The Ottoman documents were published by Zetterstéen 1945, pp. 1–77.
69. Jain 1993/1994, pp. 59–60; Cohen 2015, pp. 24–25; Mackie 2015, p. 426.
70. Jain 1993/1994, p. 60.
71. For instance, two Ottoman letter pouches made of a silk weaving in 1/7 twill with metal threads covering the ground and brocaded flower motifs: Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Turcica, nos 1–2, 4–7.
72. A famous instance of "regifting" a textile object is that of a coat of cut voided velvet, which Queen Christina of Sweden received, possibly upon her accession to the throne in 1644. The garment has hitherto been believed to have been a gift of the Russian tsar; see Cyrus-Zetterström & Ekstrand 2004, pp. 30–31; Mackie 2015, pp. 370–374. Ann Grönhammar recently questioned this assumed provenance and instead put forward the interesting hypothesis that the garment might have been given to the queen by Philipp Crusius, who could have received it from Shah Ṣafī I when he departed from the Safavid court in 1639. Crusius later entered the service of the Swedish crown and might have wanted to show his gratitude to the Swedish queen by gifting the coat to her; see Grönhammar 2016, pp. 121–125.
73. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Riksarkivets ämbetsarkiv (samlingspost) SE/RA/481/01/01, 1728–1729, D II ba:12, 'Persica'.
74. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 215–216. The pouch was first discussed by Agnes Geijer in Geijer & Lamm 1944, pp. 9–10, 12.
75. See CIETA 2021, p. 44.
76. Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 12.
77. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, Orientaliska dokument och brevomslag, Persica, no. Z 216. This document was already kept in the golden pouch together with the petition by Fabritius (Z 215) in the mid-19th century, as recorded in an inventory of the Riksarkivets ämbetsarkiv of 1848; Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, D II ef:1, p. 173.
78. Zetterstéen 1945, p. 130, no. 216.

5. SAFAVID DOCUMENT POUCHES IN CONTEMPORARY IRANIAN SOURCES

1. See the overview of used sources at the beginning of chapter 3.
2. An earlier example of such an attitude can be found in Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī's (fl. 14th century) argument that the better versed a person is in the literary and oratory arts, the better person they are, as it is through the capacity for intelligent speech that humans have been elevated above other animals; Muḥammad b. Hindūshāh Nakhjavānī 1964, pp. 3–6.
3. This term was also cited by Adam Olearius from his experience at the court of Shah Ṣafī I in his travelogue of 1647; see Olearius 1647, p. 539.
4. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), pp. 206, 310; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 45, 57–58, documents 23/32, 133/205, 134/206, 137/210.
5. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 198; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 39, document 5/14.
6. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 205; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 43, document 14/23.
7. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 201; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 40, document 7/16. Sometimes the seal would be the only method of closing the pouch; Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 205; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 43, document 15/24. Unfortunately, most Safavid seals have only survived in the form of their imprints on paper, probably because those which were used to seal the pouches eventually had to be broken.
8. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 199; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 39, document 6/15.
9. Unfortunately, the manuscript does not include enough information about the correspondence with the Ottomans to include them in this discussion.
10. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), pp. 201–203; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 40–41, documents 7/16, 8/17, 9/18.

11. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 327; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 60, document 157/234. These were still extremely precious fabrics, reflecting the importance of the sender, but not as exquisite as the ones sent to the Mughals.
12. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 307; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 56, documents 125/197, 127/199.
13. E.g., Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 307; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 56, documents 125/197, 127/199.
14. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 201; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 40, document 7/16.
15. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 202; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 41, document 9/18.
16. Minorsky 1943, pp. 65–66, facsimiles 47–49.
17. Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, pp. 108–109, 159, 161–162.
18. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), p. 202; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), p. 41, document 9/18.
19. Minorsky 1943, p. 66, facismile 49.
20. Minorsky 1943, p. 58.
21. Minorsky 1943, p. 66, facsimiles 47–48.
22. Minorsky 1943, p. 65; Mīrzā Muḥammad Rafīʿ Anṣārī 2018, p. 55, facsimile 46.
23. Mashhadī Rafīʿ 1393 (2014).
24. Afshār 1357 (1978–1979), pp. 201–204; 1386–1387 (2007–2008), pp. 40–43.

7. TECHNICAL WEAVE ANALYSES OF THE SILK FABRICS OF THE LETTER POUCHES

1. The weave analyses and technical terms used here follow the method and terminology of the Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens (CIETA); for the English version of the CIETA vocabulary see CIETA 2021.
2. The weave structure proposed here is partly hypothetical because the reverse of the fabric was inaccessible. The structure appears to be very similar to the one described by De Jonghe 2003, pp. 177–179, 192–193, figs 4, 5 (I), the main difference being that in his case, both warps bind the pattern wefts in *1/3* twill on the front, whereas in our case warp II binds the pattern wefts in tabby on the front. In the present fabric two single ends of warp I appear (by mistake) on the front within the golden stripes and one single end of warp II appears (by mistake) on the front within the colourful stripes, suggesting that both warps are present over the entire width of the fabric.
3. The fabric is thicker in the areas patterned by yellow, orange or light pink wefts, suggesting that these wefts were brocaded.
4. The work of warp I is visible underneath weft I in a tiny area where the fabric is abraded along the top edge of the pouch.
5. The main warp is visible underneath weft II in those areas where the fabric was slightly distorted by the braid used to stitch the head of the pouch together. Agnes Geijer apparently did not distinguish the binding warp from the main warp; see Geijer & Lamm 1944, p. 8.
6. This is visible as *1/3* S twill from the reverse in a tiny, exposed section of the reverse of the fabric in an area without brocading at a corner on the inner side along the top edge of the pouch.
7. Floating brocading wefts on the back of a brocaded area are visible in a small section where the lining of the pouch is torn on the inner side along the top edge of the pouch.

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Monat Octobris, von Ihrer Fürstl. Gn. dahin abgefertigte an Personen starcke Legation, nach vollendeter weiten Reise anhero, widerumb glücklichen an- und Haußkommen, empfangen worden. [...] [s.l.]

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In the 17th century the Swedish crown sent three embassies to the Safavid court in Isfahan to negotiate a trade agreement for the export of Iranian raw silk to Stockholm. The diplomat Ludvig Fabritius led the Swedish delegations on their journeys and extended sojourns at the Persian court. After each embassy a letter from the Shah of Persia to the King of Sweden was brought back to Stockholm in a precious textile pouch. This monograph offers a detailed study of these Persian letters and silk pouches in their historical context and presents them as tangible evidence of two highly developed arts practised at the Iranian court, both conveying the splendour of their sovereign: the art of writing and the art of silk weaving.

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