

Chapter 5, “Ships and Shipping”, and Chapter 6, “Mercantile and Legal Services”, both build upon previous scholarship but with refreshing insight and, at times, revisionist verve. By the latter, I am referring in particular to Margariti’s new take on the long-debated issue of the origins and workings of the *kārim* group (pp. 152–54) in Chapter 5, and, in Chapter 6, her revisionist synthesis of the argument between Goitein and Smith concerning official and non-official positions of merchants’ representative(s), the so-called *wakīl al-tujjār* (pp. 178–88).

Another important methodological question the author raises pertains to the so-called *geniza* phenomenon of the pre-modern Islamic Near East (pp. 198–99) in light of recent discoveries and studies of other Arabic documents outside the Cairo Geniza, such as the Quseir (*al-Quṣayr al-qadīm*) documents from the Red Sea trade routes. Margariti makes it clear that for the present investigation the Cairo Geniza documents are of pivotal importance as primary sources only because of the circumstances and contexts in which they were situated. The Geniza documents most frequently cited herein are the ones from the prominent Jewish merchants operating in Aden, Cairo, and India who were directly involved in the India Ocean trade: the Maḍmūns, the Ben Yijūs, and the al-Lebdis. In this regard, this book is judicious in its assessment and cautious about concluding over-hastily the existence of a widespread, almost universal *geniza* system of documentation before more groundwork in this area has been conducted. As a student of medieval Arabic documents, I cannot agree more. (As a matter of fact, a 2007 University of Chicago Ph.D. dissertation by Katherine Burke argues that, in archaeological terms, the Quseir texts in no way could be categorized as a *geniza*.)

The book is beautifully produced, and includes illustrations and maps. The maps are excellent, but the quality of the illustrations varies, partly due to their small size. This is understandable. The author and the publisher are to be commended for supplying in transliteration profuse quotes from the original Arabic texts, mostly from the Geniza documents. For a work of such scope, some minor slips are perhaps inevitable: there are a few obvious errors (pp. 207, 208: 696/1154, for 569/1154?). In the transliterations, one discovers here and there some missing or misplaced dots and macrons, as well as occasional inconsistencies in proper names (which appear mostly among lowercase letters, but sometimes in capital letters as well – the name Ṭughtekīn [p. 93], for example, is spelled Ṭughtakīn elsewhere throughout). There are also a few terms and phrases I would have transcribed differently: p. 251, n. 43, *lamman* > *lammā*, *yudūrū* > *yudīrū* or *yadūrū*; p. 256, n. 20: *ihtudama* > *ihtadama* or *uhtudima*; p. 264, n. 80, *binā’hu* > *binā’ihī*; p. 280, n. 50, *inna* > *in*; n. 51, *an* > *anna*.

Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire.

By Andrew J. Newman. London and New York: I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2006. Pp. 281.

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Research produced over the past two decades has greatly advanced our knowledge about the political, religious, socio-economic and cultural aspects of Safavid Iran. The frequency in recent years of international conferences concerned with the Safavid dynasty attests to the high level of interest among scholars. Most historians, however, have concentrated on the study of the evolution of the Safavid order to a polity, or to the glorious achievements of Abbas I. Because of the general perception that upon his death the dynasty entered into a stage of decline (ultimately leading to the fall of Isfahan to the Afghans in 1722), study of the post-Abbas era, in contrast, has long been underdeveloped, even neglected. If concerned at all, research has paid much more attention to the reasons of dynastic weakening. And despite the recent publication of numerous works dealing with specific

aspects of Safavid Iran, no attempt has been made to place these findings into a larger Safavid historical context and to write a general history of the Safavid period.

It is these lacunae that Andrew J. Newman seeks to fill in the monograph on Safavid Iran under review here. The author's primary interest is clear: why the Safavids were able to endure more than two centuries, an exceptionally long span of Iran's Islamic history. Needless to say, the question is intended to refute the stereotypical view that the late Safavid period was chiefly a stage of dynastic decline. More precisely, the author tries to challenge "the suggestion that the end of Safavid dynasty was the inevitable result of an increasingly dysfunctional society's inability to respond to an increasingly severe series of internal and external challenges" (p. 7).

According to Newman, a clue for answering the above question resides in, among other things, the all-embracing and transcendent nature of Iranian kingship. When the Safavids took power, different ethnic groups, in particular the two principal ethnic elements, Tajiks and Turks, inhabited its territory. In religious terms, at least at the outset of the dynasty the Sunnis predominated, in particular among Tajik notables; different messianic movements also rallied supporters among the populace in towns and villages. In addition to Muslims, Christians and Jews lived throughout the country, mainly in urban settlements. In order to hold a durable political power in a country with such diverse groupings, the Safavid rulers had to be sufficiently flexible and practical. The main message of the present work is that it was this flexibility that permitted the Safavids to rule the heterogeneous society for 220 years, even in the face of recurrent internal and external challenges. The subtitle of the book, *Rebirth of a Persian Empire*, expresses the author's argument that Safavid rulers' discourses and behaviours can be well understood only in light of the region's centuries-old tradition of all-embracing kingship.

If the Safavid polity had such a pliable ruling system, the author argues, it should not be described as "state", given the term's associations with the notion of a sovereign state with a given frontier, population, and administrative apparatus. Instead, the author proposes here to employ the term "project", which is "intended to underline the manner in which from the very first different, and potentially mutually conflicting, interests and agendas were intertwined with each other and with the fortunes of the Safavid house, itself embodied in, and led by, the shah" (p. 8).

For the success of the project, the shahs' discourses were crucial: they had to be heterogeneous and sufficiently inclusive to have reflected and legitimated "the individual discourses of each of the polity's constituent elements and facilitated both the recognition and incorporation of 'new' constituencies into the project, even as extant 'members' retained prominence therein, and the transcendence and thus the subordination" (*ibid*). Thus, the history of Safavid Iran is told here as "the growth of its composite constituencies: where from well prior to the capture of Tabriz throughout most of the sixteenth century allied Turk political-military and Tajik administrative interests dominated the project's political centre," while "Sultan Husayn [the last shah] commanded the recognition of an array of foreign commercial, political and religious interests as well as Turk and non-Turk tribal, Tajik, and *ghulam* military, political and administrative and other court elements, and indigenous Muslim, Christian and foreign artisanal and commercial-political classes" (*ibid*).

The main section of this volume is composed of an Introduction, eight chapters and an Epilogue. Each chapter treats the reign of successive Safavid rulers. The author clarifies how each ruler responded, with a broad range of discourses and practices, to those internal and external challenges that the Safavid project faced during his reign, and how the configuration of components supporting the project transformed and developed through the dynasty's history. The epilogue is a good summation of the author's overall argument. The back matter includes a chronology, a list of key chronicles and travellers, detailed notes and a bibliography, making this book an extremely useful research tool. In the list of chronicles and travellers, Persian and Western-language sources are presented chronologically with a bibliographical note. The notes, which occupy nearly half of the volume, furnish readers with valuable clues and references for future research.

This book makes a number of important contributions to our understanding of Safavid Iran. First, the author tries to synthesize from his own perspective recent works dealing with various aspects of the Safavid period. Different realms of events and trends – political, economic, social, religious, and cultural – thus are construed and reconfigured around the main theme of the evolution of the Safavid project. In line with the author's conviction that “the pre-modern period, whatever the geography, was not, perhaps by definition, afflicted by the ‘division of knowledge’ as we are” (p. 128), this fresh approach provides the argument with consistency and clarity, despite the diversity of topics discussed in the book. It also encourages historians of Safavid Iran to contextualize their specific interests in a larger whole of the Safavid period.

Second, Newman modifies the assumption that from the very beginning of the dynasty the Safavids introduced and imposed Twelver Shiism on the largely Sunni population. It is true that the faith was, through the Safavid period, one of the most important factors binding the society as a whole, and successive rulers sometimes adopted radical measures in order that Shiite belief would permeate the realm. At the same time, they were prudent enough to condone tacitly the Sunni tendency of Tajik notables, whose cooperation was essential to the administrative working of the Safavid project. Furthermore, while brutally suppressing those messianic movements that sought to challenge their legitimacy, Safavid rulers were rather pliant toward Sufi tendencies, and did not fail to act as leaders of the Safavid order. Especially important to the Safavid shahs was to present themselves as transcendent rulers balancing different religious elements.

Of particular interest to scholars of the transformation of the political and military system after Abbas' reforms is the author's emphasis on “the gradual incorporation into the Qizilbash confederation of a number of previously non-Qizilbash tribal elements” such as “Kurdish, Luri and Chagatai” (p. 53). Moreover, he argues that despite the ascendancy of *ghulams* in Abbas' reign, “the balance of military and, hence, political power over Abbas' reign remained with tribal forces”, which retained “the key posts at the centre and key provincial governorships” (*ibid*). Given historians' major concern about the promotion of *ghulams* by Abbas to important military and administrative ranks, this is an interesting observation, although the incorporation of Kurdish and Lur tribes into the Safavid political and military system had begun, albeit on a much smaller scale, in the reign of Tahmasp at the latest, and probably at the outset of the dynasty.

Finally, the book draws attention to the importance and relevance of regarding Safavid Iran as an empire integrating different ethnic and religious groups into its political sphere. In Safavid studies few studies from such a point of view have been carried out, but for understanding the exceptional longevity of the Safavid dynasty in Iran's Islamic history it is quite vital to elucidate how the Safavids tried to incorporate into their polity diverse elements, in particular, minority groups. Furthermore, comparing the Safavid experience with those of other contemporary empires such as the Ottoman Empire, the Mughal Empire, the Ming and Qing Empires, and the Habsburg Empire will give us new perspectives from which to shed light on distinctive characteristics of the Safavid “project”.

As with any excellent work, reading of this book raises a set of questions. For example, why was the Safavid project successful enough to survive more than two centuries, while preceding dynasties with similar compositions of Turkish military and Tajik bureaucratic elements were unable to establish such long-lasting power? If, as the author points out, the notion of “universal leadership” was not unfamiliar to Uzun Hasan, what factors decided the fortunes of the Aqquyunlu and the Safavids? It is a minor disappointment that such a comparative consideration, which seems to be essential for identifying the salient features of the Safavid rule, is not fully worked on in the book, particularly in the first chapter.

Second, if the Safavid project kept demonstrating sufficient stability and efficiency to enable it to respond to political and economic troubles until the end of the dynasty, what causes lie in its rather

sudden demise? If the post-Abbas Safavid project had included a greater variety of components, and their interests were closely intertwined each other, why could it not effectively react to the challenges of the Afghan invasion? Certainly we should not easily combine various events and trends seen in the late Safavid era with the fall of Isfahan. Nevertheless the question is still relevant in order for us to have a clearer picture of the transformation process of the project over the post-Abbas period. It is regrettable that the author's emphasis on the continuity of the Safavid project tends to obscure profound changes occurring in the project and eventually leading to the fall of the dynasty.

Safavid Iran is essential reading for all historians of pre-modern Iran and will be a useful work of reference for students of Safavid Iran. It should be of interest as well to all scholars working on imperial integration of different ethnic and religious elements, whatever region or period is concerned.

Delivering Justice in Qing China: Civil Trials in the Magistrate's Court.

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Delivering Justice in Qing China provides an account of the features of civil judicial administration in Qing China based on a meticulous empirical study of magisterial archives. Because the author makes a general statement of the structure and principal arguments of the book in the introductory chapter (pp. 10–11), this review will dispense with an introduction of contents, and instead place emphasis upon the book's substantial contributions and controversial points.

Foremost, this book represents a substantial and productive use of local archives in the study of Chinese legal history. Efforts of this sort can be traced back to the path-breaker Dai Yanhui, who during 1970s edited the Dan-Xin archives and offered depictions of the local administration of Taiwan in imperial China.¹ Since then, David Buxbaum, Mark A. Allee, Madeleine Zelin, Philip C. C. Huang, Matthew Sommer, Malissa Macauley, Shiga Shūzō, Terada Hiroaki, Deng Jianpeng, and Wu Peilin, *inter alios* have carried out research about imperial Chinese law by utilizing legal archives in various counties such as Dan-Xin, Baodi, Ba, Zigong, Huangyan and Nanbu. The book under review here does much to reinforce this trend, in that it illustrates local civil justice by way of a maximized use of local case records, especially those of Baodi.

The author's contribution lies in both empirical research and constructive analysis. By examining the details of the civil lawsuit process, furnishing an array of case categories concerning land, debts and marriage, and explaining the bases of decision-making, she has taken up issues neglected by prior works. Her study demonstrates that civil transactions and affairs drew greater attention in the legislative and judicial processes of imperial government than had otherwise been recognized. It also does much to end the obsolete conception that civil disputes in imperial China were settled mostly through mediation in which a small number of civil rules played only a minor part.

The book also argues conclusively that Qing officials considered the absence of litigation to be ideal, anti-litigation to be educational, and lawsuits judicial. Liang's explanation of the consistency of the configuration of non-litigation, anti-litigation and final litigation is based upon a comprehensive account of legal thought and practice in traditional China. As such, it is a meaningful reply to

¹ Dai Yanhui 戴炎輝, *Qing dai Taiwan zhi xiang zhi* 清代臺灣之鄉治 [Rural Administration in Taiwan in the Qing], Taipei: Lianjing Press 聯經出版事業公司, 1979.