

 [HTTP://ORCID.ORG/0000-0002-5883-6666](http://ORCID.ORG/0000-0002-5883-6666)

BERT G. FRAGNER

Vienna, Austria

e-mail: bert.fragner@oeaw.ac.at

## The Mental Mapping of Iran, Identity and Patriotism in Early Modern Iran – The Case of Moḥammad-e Mofīd

### Abstract

Moḥammad-e Mofīd was a 17<sup>th</sup> century *diasporic* Iranian living in Mughal India. In the introduction to his detailed geographic survey of Iran (*Moxtaṣar-e Mofīd*) he offers clear and emphatic proof of his patriotic feelings for a country which he had left decades before. Various scholars have hitherto argued as to whether there was any consciousness of “Iranian identity” among Iranians as early as the 17<sup>th</sup> century or not. Our author would definitely answer in the affirmative.

**Keywords:** Moḥammad-e Mofīd, Persian *diaspora* in Mughal India, Iranian identity

“Mental mapping”, i.e. conceiving awareness of territoriality and/or regionalism in historical perspectives, has been an interesting and sometimes even fascinating concept with reference to historical inquiry over the last twenty-five to thirty years. This concept is closely related a generalised label of a “history of mentalities”. As with many other theoretical and conceptual innovations, we owe this idea to the famous “cultural turn” in the social sciences. Mental mapping also gained some importance in the comparative study of literature. In this field, the quest for the conceptualisation of space, and sometimes of space in time, proved to be particularly fruitful as may be demonstrated by the so-called post-colonial approach to literary criticism.<sup>1</sup> There is no doubt that concepts such as these also deserve to be applied to Iranian Studies, both to literary studies as well as to history. In historical reasoning, “mental mapping” may help to intensify the under-

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<sup>1</sup> J. Le Goff, *Histoire et mémoire*, Paris 1986; J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen*, Munich 1997; B. Ashcroft et al., *The Empire Writes Back. Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, London 1989; Even Edward Said’s *Orientalism* deals with a spatial aspect: Blaming the “orientalists” to have created artificially the “Orient” as an instrument of cultural expropriation Said puts the (mis-)conceptualization of a region, a spatial unit, into the centre of his reasoning thus being closely related to an aspect of “mental mapping.”

standing of spatial and regional perceptions of political and cultural identity at any given period in history.

In this regard, there were, among others, two interesting articles published a couple of years ago, both dealing with the gradual development of Iranian national self-awareness in terms of territory and history during the Qajar period. One was written by Juan R. I. Cole,<sup>2</sup> the other by Firoozeh Kashani Sabet (then a Ph.D. candidate at Yale University).<sup>3</sup> In 1999 Kashani Sabet published her breath-taking Ph.D. dissertation which may at that time have been something of a *locus classicus* on the discussion of the development of the modern imagination of Iran as a nation-state, not only a geographical location on the map but a mental one as well.<sup>4</sup> Both of them tried to trace the early stages of the emergence of nationalist thinking in 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran, and both ascribe the growth of territorial consciousness to the early stages of modernity in Iran or, to put it more precisely, to interpret changes in the “territorialisation” of the concept of “Iran” as indications of changes towards modernity. Kashani Sabet’s main point was to investigate how the Iranians developed their modern awareness of Iran. In her view, Iran had primarily been perceived as the domain of the ruler, “God’s Shadow on Earth” but was then throughout the later 19<sup>th</sup> century perceived to be the homeland of a nation which became unified by a growing awareness of language, culture and history, all these items being visualized through the perception and the awareness of soil. More than Cole, she deals intensely with this specific consciousness of territory. She even blames authors like Benedict Anderson, Ernest Gellner and Eric Hobsbawm for not having taken the problem of territoriality seriously enough in the context of the emergence of nationalist thought.<sup>5</sup> As for the early changes Iranian society took into modernity, both articles contain very important ideas to be taken into consideration.

At any rate, the impression should not arise that the conceptualisation of space was a phenomenon connected entirely to the era of early modernity, and therefore to the Qajar period in Iran. This is not a point of criticism either to Cole nor to Kashani Sabet. Both concentrate explicitly on 19<sup>th</sup> century affairs, and neither of them had in mind to deal with earlier periods. This is precisely what will be done in this article: tracing back the stages of collective consciousness of territory, of space / territory as a means of mental self-location in Iran.

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<sup>2</sup> J.R.I. Cole, *Marking boundaries, Marking Time: The Iranian Past and the Construction of the Self by Qajar Thinkers*, “Iranian Studies” 1996, vol. 29, no. 1–2, pp. 35–56.

<sup>3</sup> F. Kashani Sabet, *Fragile Frontiers: The Diminishing Domains of Qajar Iran*, “International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies” 1997, vol. 29, no. 2, pp. 205–234.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, *Frontier Fictions. Shaping the Iranian Nation 1804–1946*, Princeton 1999.

<sup>5</sup> In this regard she may underestimate the importance of territoriality in earlier nationalist discourses. In the Marxist context, territoriality was rather suppressed by the so-called Austro-Marxists Karl Renner and Otto Bauer but, this principle was reintroduced with specific stress by Joseph Stalin in his refutation of Renner and Bauer, titled *Marxism and National Question*, written in Vienna in the year 1912. The particular importance he paid to the question of territoriality has turned out in due course as a basic element of Soviet national politics, thus also deeply influencing nationalist discourses outside the Soviet Union and even outside Marxist thinking, particularly in the “Third World.”

There is no doubt about the fact that the gradual implementation of modern thought, and of national self-awareness must be mostly connected to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but earlier stages of territorial thinking in conceiving definitions of *Īrān* or *Īrān-zamīn* by authors belonging to pre-modern eras and particularly to the “Middle Period” also deserve respect and analysis. In her introduction, Kashani Sabet refers explicitly to early Islamic geographers, particularly to the anonymous author of *Hodūdo l-‘ālam*, and even to pre-Islamic Sasanian traditions “building on Zoroastrian and Ptolemaic concepts”. She concentrates on the idea of *Īrān-šahr* referring in particular to Abū Eṣḥāq al-Fārisī al-Eṣṭaxrī’s *Masāleko l-mamālek*<sup>6</sup> from which she quotes: “No land (*mulk*) is more prosperous, more complete, or more pleasant than the kingdoms (*mamālik*) of *Īrānshahr*.”<sup>7</sup> Her point is to prove that the notion of *Īrān-šahr* had persisted continuously throughout the Caliphate period, and also later on (obviously until the beginnings of the Qajar period). According to her,

it is therefore unsurprising that years later, Ḥamd Allāh Mustawfī, **even** [emphasis mine] while writing under Mongol rule, would use the term ‘Īrān-zamīn’ to identify a region that not only corresponded roughly to al-Iṣṭakhrī’s vision of ‘Īrān-shahr’ but that was inclusive of the territory of modern Iran.<sup>8</sup>

It goes without saying that these introductory passages of Kashani Sabet’s article serve as rather stylistic and compository purposes; what she really seems to be concerned with is the emergence of modern concepts of frontiers among Iranian thinkers of the Qajar period, and not medievalist speculations on Eṣṭakhrī or Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī, and the aforementioned remarks in her introductory passages in no way diminish the value of her article or her book: it should not be forgotten that she aims not at dealing with medieval matters but with Iran’s path into modernity. Therefore, my remarks should not be misunderstood as any kind of criticism toward her excellent analysis of an Iranian history of mentalities in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as represented in her beautiful book which the author of this current text admires very much.

Only a few years after the debate concerning “mental mapping”, did another and closely related concept gain a lot of attention in the field of Iranian Studies, just as happened in other branches of Cultural Studies, particularly in Social Anthropology: the quest for “Iranian identity”. As potentially the best, most concise and useful conclusive presentation of the “identity-debate” in Iranian Studies, I refer to Ahmad Ashraf’s highly informative contribution “Iranian Identity” (in four parts) to *Encyclopedia Iranica* (originally dated from the year 2006, and updated in following years).<sup>9</sup> One of his main statements refers to the opinion that “Western civic-territorial experiences of nationhood and nationalism” had contributed to

<sup>6</sup> Abū Eṣḥāq Ebrāhīm Eṣṭaxrī, *Masāleko l-mamālek, tarjomeh-ye Moḥammad b. As’ad b. ‘Abdallāh Tostarī*, ed. Ī. Afšār, “Bonyād-e mouqafāt-e Dr. Maḥmūd Afšār”, no. 52, Tehrān 1373 h.š.

<sup>7</sup> F. Kashani Sabet, *Fragile Frontiers...*, p. 205.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 205–206.

<sup>9</sup> A. Ashraf, *Iranian Identity*, [in:] *Encyclopedia Iranica*, vol. 13(5), pp. 501–504, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/iranian-identity-i-perspectives> (access: 23.04.2019). Ashraf writes: “[...] modernist concepts of national identity are based on the ideal types of modern, civic-territorial

Eurocentric notions of national identity. Pre-modern, non-Western nations do not fit easily into this ethnocentric Western paradigm. The idea of nationhood is often derived from fictive genealogical and territorial origins and vernacular culture and religion, whereas Western ideas of nationhood have been historically based on specific boundaries, the development of legal-rational communities, and civic cultures.<sup>10</sup>

Ashraf refers explicitly to Anthony D. Smith's *The Antiquity of Nations*.<sup>11</sup> In various aspects, his model of "Iranian identity" seems to resemble a revised perception of "national identity" containing something like a reconciliation of traditional "nationalism" with concepts of a "history of mentalities". Ashraf adheres to Gherardo Gnoli<sup>12</sup> and it is worth pointing out that Gnoli has picked up, among other things, some concepts of mine which I had presented in an article on aspects of Iranian identity deriving from the period of Mongol domination over Iran.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, in the lines quoted above we find some very typical generalisations made by many scholars who do not deal much with pre-modern, in our case particularly pre-Qajar, affairs. There is a wide-spread tendency to conceive of pre-modernity as a lesser structured and rather erratic block which remained at its base unchanged from antiquity until the dawn of modernity, as if there were some kind of coherent and homogenous continuity from Sasanian times via *Hodūdo l-'ālam*, Eṣṭakhrī, and Ḥamdollāh Mostoufi down to early 19<sup>th</sup> century Iran, continuity which could easily serve as some kind of stagnating contrast to the fast-paced development of modern nationalist concepts of territoriality, evident since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. With my present contribution I try to aim at avoiding such an impression of long-term stagnation in Iranian history and in history in general.

It would be fascinating to shed some light on the development of territoriality and "Iranianness" in the centuries prior to the Qajar period. To this end, I offer a short summary of some observations and statements I have already published elsewhere and to which I shall refer more or less implicitly.<sup>14</sup> My considerations will then concentrate on a Persian geographic text from the 17<sup>th</sup> century: the *Moxtaṣar-e Mofīd*, written by a certain Moḥammad-e Mofīd Mostoufi Yazdī (hereafter named Mofīd in this article). Mofīd, a financial expert by profession, started writing his *Moxtaṣar* in the year 1087 h.q./1676 not in Persia but in the Subcontinent.<sup>15</sup> Mofīd was also the author of a chronicle entitled *Jāme'-e Mofīdī*

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experiences of nationhood of European societies. Pre-modern, non-Western nations do not fit seamlessly into this model. The idea of national identity in societies of Asia is often derived from fictive genealogical and territorial origins and vernacular culture and religion."

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> A.D. Smith, *The Antiquity of Nations*, Cambridge 2004, pp. 132–134.

<sup>12</sup> G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin*, Rome 1989.

<sup>13</sup> B.G. Fragner, *Iran under Ilkhanid rule in a World History Perspective*, [in:] *L'Iran face à la domination mongole*, ed. D. Aigle, "Bibliothèque iranienne", no. 45, Tehrān 1997, pp. 121–131.

<sup>14</sup> See B.G. Fragner's, *Iran under Ilkhanid rule...*; *idem*, *The Concept of Regionalism in Historical Research on Central Asia and Iran (A Macro-Historical Interpretation)*, [in:] *Studies on Central Asian History in Honor of Yuri Bregel*, ed. D. De Weese, "Indiana University Uralic and Altaic Series", no. 167, Bloomington 2001, pp. 341–354.

<sup>15</sup> Ch.A. Stori, *Persidskaia literatura. Bio-bibliograficheskii obzor; pererabotal i dopolnil Iu. E. Bregel'*, 3 vols, Moscow 1972, vol. 2, pp. 699 *et seq.* and 1023 *et seq.*

large parts of which were published by Iraj Afshar.<sup>16</sup> His geographic treatise (i.e. the *Moxtaṣar-e Mofīd*) was originally intended to be titled *Ouṣāfo l-ašrāf* but, obviously in symmetry to the chronicle it was eventually named *Moxtaṣar-e Mofīd*. There is only one manuscript of the *Moxtaṣar* kept in the British Library (Rieu I, 4276). The text was edited and published in the year 1989 by Seyfeddīn Najmābādī.<sup>17</sup> Before I concentrate further on the *Moxtaṣar* I shall offer some remarks on the problem of the territorial perceptions of political entities in Iranian history.

By analysing and interpreting historical texts with geographic notions, it is necessary to differentiate clearly between two kinds of information the authors of such texts provide for us: Dealing with the shape and structure of the world, they often intend to describe a traditional system or concept of their geographic understanding on a macro-level. The concepts of *haft kešvar* or the Seven Climates should be mentioned in this connection. Despite this, they prove however, to often have a well-developed historical understanding, and they usually do not hesitate to pass on their readers. One should be aware that messages of the first kind (the traditional macro-models) are mainly conceived of as proof of the authors' learnedness. This aspect is completely different from the information they offer on the actual conditions regarding their own life-times' realities. Such reports are obviously less intended to prove their scholarly learnedness than to make the authors appear competent in the eyes of their audience in dealing with affairs of their own.

*Iran*, or maybe more precisely, *Īrān-šahr*, was the proper and "emic" denomination of the Sasanian Empire. After the Muslim conquest of the Sasanians' territory, this term lost its immediate political implications. Both at-Ṭabarī and Ferdousī, two eminent representatives of medieval historical consciousness in the Persian speaking realm of the World of Islam, were quite aware that *Īrān* or *Īrān-šahr* were, in their lifetimes, part of a historical terminology, and that there no longer existed anything in political reality bearing such a name. Eṣṭakhrī, therefore refers to the lands of *Īrān-šahr* in a nostalgic mood.

This situation changed after the collapse of the Caliphate in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. It may seem paradoxical but, it occurred under the rule of the Mongol Īl-Xāns that "Iran" or, then often called *Īrān-zamīn* became reestablished as a denomination of a given political territory which existed no longer merely in historical imagination but in concrete reality. This happened due to the Mongols' particular conceptions of territoriality. It ought to be borne in mind that in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, there was scarcely any civilisation other than the Činggisid Mongols which bore a similarly high degree of an inclination towards a territorial conception of the world, thus having a conception of the world which was defined much more by territorial awareness than other contemporary civilisations. Their concepts of territoriality might have severely differed from modern territorial thinking but there can be no doubt about the fact that the Mongol armies did not aim at conquering points

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, vol. 2, pp. 1023 *et seq.* offers bibliographical details.

<sup>17</sup> Seyfeddin Najmabadi, *Moḥtaṣar-e Mofīd des Moḥammad Mofīd Mostoufī, I. Edition und Einleitung, II. Kommentar und Indices* (Beihefte zum Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients Reihe B – Geisteswissenschaften), no. 97(1–2), Wiesbaden 1989. Subsequently, this book will be referred to as *Moxtaṣar*.

and spots, but spaces. The particular Činggisid feature of conceiving territories was proved by what I call “ulusism”. The partition of Činggis Xān’s Empire into four *uluses* was not only a measure taken in order to manage issues springing from heredity but also a combination of lineage and territory. As the Īl-Xāns belonged to the lineage of Tului, something they had in common with their cousins, the Chinese emperors of the Yuan dynasty, they had to conceive their own territory in clear delimitation against the Čaghatay and Juchi *uluses*. A territorial empire came into existence, and the historical name of this region, *Īrān*, was reanimated as its denomination. I refrain from going deeper into this matter and refer to my articles mentioned in footnotes No. 11 and 12.

As a consequence of these considerations it is, according to the wording of Kashani Sabet, in fact unsurprising that Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī would use the term *Īrān-zamīn* frequently, but not as she puts it “**even** while writing under Mongol rule” but **because** he was writing under Mongol rule! Therefore, there was a great difference between the 13<sup>th</sup> century’s Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī on the one side, and the early Islamic Eṣṭakhri or Ferdousī on the other: To Ḥamdollāh *Īrān* or *Īrān-zamīn* was no longer the name of a legendary empire belonging to the past and shedding mythical light on later generations; to him, *Īrān* was the “reanimated” name of the empire he lived in and in whose service he stood, and his ruler was none other than than the *pādesāh-e Īrān va-Eslām*, which was one of the official titles of Ghāzān-Xān and his successors. In the linguistic understanding of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, it might not have been by mere chance that Sasanian *Īrān-šahr* (lit. “Rulership of Iran”, may even have been widely but incorrectly understood to mean “the city of Iran”, as late as the 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> century) was reborn as *Īrān-zamīn* (lit. “the territory of Iran”) under Mongol dominance. It is necessary to bear in mind that from the Mongol period onwards the term “Iran” no longer referred to the splendour of the past but to a tangible, political entity which existed in reality and was to be characterised by two elements: a given territory and a given ruling dynasty. While dynasties were mutable and unstable, the concept of land was one that remained stable in the collective memory. Succeeding dynasties had, from then onwards, to claim their legitimacy by proving that they were the legitimate inheritors of their forerunners and thus tightly bound to a defined territory. Any efforts to change the frontiers and boundaries of *Īrān* were, from the 14<sup>th</sup> century onwards, doomed to revisionist argumentation within the frame of *ulusist*<sup>18</sup> thinking by any rulers who attempted to do so.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> “Ulusism” and “ulusist” are terms coined by myself; the meaning of “ulusism” refers to the conscious awareness of territorial concepts being tightly connected to the four dynastic houses subsequent to Činggis Xān: Juchi, Čaghatay, Ögedey, and Tului. According to my hypothesis, the political partition of the Middle East and Central Asia to rulers belonging to the Činggisid houses of Tului (the Īl-Xāns), Čaghatay (Transoxiana), and Juči (the “Golden Horde”) in the 13<sup>th</sup> century implies divergent concepts of the territorial consistency of the whole region surviving Mongol rule by far. As an example, in the 16<sup>th</sup> century the Safavids perceived Xorāsān as belonging to “*Īrān-zamīn*” according to the model of the Īl-Xāns whilst the Jučid Šaybanids claimed for the Čaghatayid interpretation that Xorāsān should be unified with Transoxiana.

<sup>19</sup> For further details on this subjects discussed at length look for my contribution to the *Festschrift* for Yuri Bregel, *The concept of regionalism in historical research on Central Asia and Iran (a macro-*

Under Ghāzān-Xān and his successors, Īl-Xānid *Īrān* looked as follows: its metropolitan centre was located far to the West: Tabrīz, and, later, Solṭāniyeh. After the fall of Baghdad as *dāro s-salām* or *dāro l-xelāfeh*, Tabriz started its career as *dāro s-saltaneh*,<sup>20</sup> then perceived as the capital of *Īrān* which, in the opinion of Ghāzān-Xān and his vizier Rašidoddin Fazlollāh, by the re-implementation of a concept which resembled what had once been the Sasanian Empire, was obviously conceived as the empire immediately succeeding the Caliphate.

The eastern part of Anatolia, dominated by Diyār Bakr, and former Armenia, parts of Transcaucasia and Mesopotamia shaped the western part of the reemerged *Īrān*. Mesopotamia was important: the centre of the destroyed Caliphate was now conceived of as a poor relation to Tabriz. Āzarbāyjān, the southern Caspian coast, Media (at that time, *‘Erāq-e ‘ajam*, as it had been called for centuries; its earlier toponyms were *Māh*, i.e. “Media” and *Jebāl*), Xūzestān, Kordestān, Lorestān; Fārs, Kermān, and the coastal region of the Persian Gulf and, last but not least, the great eastern province: Xorāsān, from Tūs and Neyšābur to Balx and Badaxšān, from Herāt to the banks of the Oxus. This was the concrete meaning of *Īrān* or *Īrān-zamīn* within *ulusism*, an at that time new discourse on territorial thinking. “*Īrān*” was simply another expression for what was sometimes called the “ulus-i Īl-Xānī”, by some historians.

Within this *ulusist* discourse, Xorāsān remained under dispute for centuries: Whilst the Īl-Xāns claimed Xorāsān to be part of **their** Iran, there were also claims from the side of the neighbouring *ulus* Čaghatai on Xorāsān.<sup>21</sup> The 15<sup>th</sup> century gave space to this concept: Under Timurid rule, Xorāsān, together with Transoxiana, shaped a territorial entity according to these Čaghatai claims. Consequently, a second *dāro s-saltaneh*, parallel to Tabrīz, came into existence: Herāt.

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*-historical interpretation*), mentioned in footnote No. 12 and my already mentioned article *Iran under Ilkhanid Rule in a World History Perspective*. In this context are most of the contributions to the valuable volume *The Mongol Empire and its Legacy*, ed. R. Amitai-Preiss and D.O. Morgan, Leiden & al. 1999, particularly inspiring – at least as inspiring as Dorothea Krawulsky’s study *Iran – Das Reich der Ilhane: eine topographisch-historische Studie*, Wiesbaden 1978.

<sup>20</sup> As to my knowledge, this title for a capital was at that time introduced first time, for Īl-Xānid Tabrīz. It replaced the denomination *dāro l-molk* which was in use during the later ‘Abbāsīd period in order to indicate princely residences and capitals being of lower rank than Baghdad. In Īl-Xānid view, *dāro s-saltaneh* unified aspects of the then extinct *dāro l-xelāfeh* and the concept of *dāro l-molk* being Ghāzān’s residence in the sense of a royal capital of Iran but, also the undoubted successor of Baghdad as the center of “Dāro l-Eslām,” parallel to his title *pādešāh-e Īrān va-Eslām*.

<sup>21</sup> B. Forbes Manz, *The rise and rule of Tamerlane*, Cambridge 1989, p. 24, and *idem*, *Mongol History rewritten and relived*, “Revue des mondes musulmans et de la Méditerranée (REMMM)” 2000, no. 89–90, pp. 129–149. This *ulusist* dispute over Xorāsān resembles deeply the contradictory territorializing perceptions represented by Ḥamdallāh Mostoufī and Ḥāfez-e Abrū, *vice versa*: whilst the first describes Xorāsān as a part of *Īrān-zamīn*, the latter takes it as a separate unit being closely linked to Transoxiana. Mostoufī resembles the Īl-Xānid concept of Iran, and the other one, having been a convinced Timurian and Timurid writer, sees Xorāsān as a part (and at his time, probably the most important part!) of the *ulus* Čaghatai which shaped Timur’s and his successors’ concept of their territorial legitimization. An excellent introduction into and visualization of what I call *ulusism* or *ulusist* thinking can be found in Michal Biran’s fascinating study *Qaidu and the rise of the independent Mongol state in Central Asia*, Richmond (Surrey) 1997.

The so-called Turkoman, i.e. Qara-Qoyunlu (Bahārlu) and Aq-Qoyunlu (Bāyandurī) rulers in the West of Iran started their careers in struggle for Tabrīz: When they succeeded in taking over this *dāro s-saltaneh*, they immediately proclaimed themselves *pādešāhān-e Īrān* or *kesravān-e Īrān*, thus clearly following the *ulusist* pattern of “Iran” as created by the Īl-Xāns.

It is against this background that I intend to contrast Mofīd’s concepts as found in his *Moxtaṣar*. According to Mofīd, his intention to write the *Moxtaṣar* originated in some discussions with notables and dignitaries of Dekkan (India) in the year 1082 h.q. (1671).<sup>22</sup> At first glance, this seems to be nothing other than the usual rhetorical figure to begin a chronicle or any other type of report. For our purposes however, this passage contains important information: it proves that our author by no means wrote his compendium by royal Safavid decree (in his life-time: Šāh Soleymān) but rather out of a desire to testify his personal and individual patriotism regarding “Iran” in confrontation with strangers and to make them aware of the general conditions of his home-country since he complains about the fact that in his then contemporary India, his companions were (according to him) much better informed about the Ottoman Sultan or the Chinese Emperor than about the King of Iran and his home-country. He then sets about immediately lavishing praise on the Safavid dynasty, and especially Šāh Soleymān (1666–1694). This passage concludes with a laudation on Šāh Esmā’īl, the founding ruler of the dynasty, in which he stresses the great services this ruler had rendered to the historical task of “reunifying Iran”. Mofīd scrutinises the historical situation prior to the Safavid grip on power in detail: According to him, until the year 906 h.q. (1500/01), the most outstanding rulers were the Aq-Qoyunlu (Bāyandurī) kings and their relatives, specifically Solṭān Morād b. Solṭān Ya’qūb b. Amīr Ḥasan Bēg (“Uzun Ḥasan”) who had ruled in ‘Erāq-e ‘ajam, Āzarbāyjān, Fārs and Yazd; in addition, he mentions Pīrī Bēg Pornāk in ‘Erāq-e ‘arab, Abo l-Faṭḥ Bēg Bāyandurī in Kermān, and another Aq-Qoyunlu ruler, Qāsem Bēg. b. Jahāngīr Bēg, who was a nephew of Amīr Ḥasan Bēg in Diyār Bakr; then he gives the following local rulers: Ra’īs-e Karā’ī in Abarqūh, Ḥoseyn-e Kiyā-Čelavī in Semnān, Fīrūzkūh and in the Rūdbār mountains; Kār-Kiyā Mīrzā ‘Alī in the Gilan provinces; Āqā Rostam-e Rūzafzūn in Māzandarān; Malek Bahman in Rostamdār; Qāzī Moḥammad together with Moulānā Mas’ūd Bīdgolī in Kāšān; the king (*pādešāh*) Ḥoseyn Mīrzā Bāyqarā (the famous Timurid prince!) in the provinces of Xorāsān and Astarābād, his son Solṭān Badī’ o z-zamān Mīrzā in Balx; Amīr Zu n-Nūn Ārghūn in Qandahār; the Moša’ša’ Seyyeds in “*Xūzestān*” (sic! Not *‘Arabestān*), Hoveyzeh and Dezfūl; Šāh Rostam in Lorestān; Sāber-e Kord in Kordestān; the “Oulād-e Gorgīn-e Mīlād” (?) in Lār<sup>23</sup>; the kings of Hormuz together with the “Europeans” (*farangi-yeh*, i.e. the Portuguese) in Hormuz and along the coasts of ‘Omman; the Georgian viceroys in Georgia; the Šīrvānšāhs in Šīrvān; the fighters of Tabarsarān in Dāghestān; and eventually local Kurdish rulers in Marand and Naxjavān.

<sup>22</sup> *Moxtaṣar*, p. 2.

<sup>23</sup> Might this be a confusion of the Portuguese in the Persian Gulf with the Georgian kings both being mentioned immediately hereafter?



After stressing that all these rulers had struck their own coins and had the *xotba* held in their names, and were thus independent rulers, Mofīd introduces Šāh Esmā‘īl I on the throne of Iran; according to Mofīd, Esmā‘īl set in place the first measures to reunite all these territories which had been well understood as belonging to “Iran” in retrospective, by conquering the *dāro s-saltaneh* Tabrīz in the year 906 h.q. (1500/01). After Esmā‘īl became the lord of “Iran”, Mofīd even conceives of him as the legitimate ruler over *Īrān-o Tūrān*, i.e. the one who united the territories of the Hulaguīds (Īl-Xāns, “Iran” proper) with those having been ruled by the Timurīds (the Čaghatai lands in an *ulusist* sense).<sup>24</sup> This passage asserts Mofīd’s concept as inverse to the Timurīds’ but, still tightly bound to an *ulusist* territorial view framework.

This panorama of history deserves some evaluation: We have to take into consideration that Mofīd saw himself as a loyal subject of the Safavid Empire, with specific devotion towards Šāh Soleymān; this empire was “Iran”, and in this sense he was clearly an Iranian by his own understanding. His “Iran” was largely the same as that of the Īl-Xānid geographer, Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī Qazvīnī (early 14<sup>th</sup> century). In Mofīd’s mind, in the 15<sup>th</sup> century this basic model of Iran was divided among the Aq-Qoyunlu rulers in the West and the Timurīds in the East and some minor and local princes in between. He makes it clear that he preferred the Aq-Qoyunlus claim to the whole of Iran to the Timurid concept, according to which Xorāsān should be joined to Transoxiana. As a side-remark: this Čaghataiyid/Timurid model followed the administrative patterns that had already developed in the times of the Caliphate, when Xorāsān and Māvarā-an-nahr were supposed to shape a greater entity in the Islamic East – *Xorāsān-e bozorg*, the revitalisation of which has been intensively discussed for roughly the last decade in Central Asia and Iran! I confine myself to mentioning that Ḥāfez-e Abrū may have functioned as a geographic propagator of this Timurid/Čaghataiyid concept, whilst Ḥamdollāh clearly preferred the Īl-Xānid idea of reanimating the vanished Sasanian concept of what *Ērān-šahr* once had been. Therefore, according to Mofīd, Šāh Esmā‘īl I appears as Solṭān Morād Bēg Aq-Qoyunlu’s immediate successor at the *dāro s-saltaneh* Tabrīz, and in this sense, as the legitimate heir of “Iran” in the sense the Hulaguīd Mongols had conceived it, and as Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī had described it. Numerous references to the latter’s *Nozhato l-qolūb* to be found in Mofīd’s *Moxtašar*, testify to the close relationship between the two authors’ ideas of how “Iran” was to be understood.

As I postulated above, Mofīd’s discourse on “Iran” and the “Iranianness” of Safavid rule, proves furthest his practical knowledge concerning the actual

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6. As for this expression, one has to take into consideration that this is not merely a nostalgic quotation of a Ferdousian concept. Throughout the 15<sup>th</sup> century, “*Īrān-o Tūrān*” is widely used by Timurid historiographers like Ḥāfez-e Abrū, ‘Abdo r-Razzāq Samarqandī, Mīrxānd, and others as the immediate denomination of the Timurid realm, including territories reigned in reality and also those claimed, by the Gūrkanī (Timurid) rulers, who understood themselves as the heirs of the *ulus* Čaghatai, but also of “Iran” (i.e. the Īl-Xānid heritage) and X‘ārazm which, in an *ulusist* model was also claimed by the “Golden Horde” (the “*ulus* Jučī”). In this sense, by virtue of the Timurīds, *Īrān-o Tūrān* had become a political concept of quite a specific notion.

political geography of his times. For this purpose he relied heavily on Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī as his precursor. But, for the purposes of testifying his knowledge in the field of traditional, one may say “theoretical” or “systemic” geography, he relies on no one asides from the previously mentioned medieval author Eṣṭakhrī (*Masāleko l-mamālek*): Having confined himself to the definition of the *rob`-e maskūn*, the “inhabited quarter of the world”, he tells us that he follows the “*Ketāb sovaro l-aqālīm* and the *Ketāb Masāleko l-mamālek*”<sup>25</sup> in referring to the traditional *haft eqlīm* system which he then describes in detail. But the distribution of various regions within the *haft eqlīm* system makes it clear that there was no factual overlapping of his concept of “Iran” and the classical *haft eqlīm* system which Mofīd ascribes to Alexander and his wise teacher Aristotle.<sup>26</sup>

Now, we ought to pay attention to some specific aspects of the *Moxtaṣar*, in order to draw some conclusions concerning particular Safavid concepts of “Iran” and “Iranianess”. Let us recall Mofīd’s individual circumstances at the time he wrote his *Moxtaṣar*: His appointment as a financial comptroller (*mostoufī*; a remarkable biographical analogy to Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī!) within the administration of several *ouqāf* in Yazd dates back to the year 1077 h.q. (1666/1667). In the month *Rajab* 1081 h.q. (November/December 1670) he left Yazd for Eṣṭahān, and then went via Hoveyzeḥ, Najaf and Karbala to Baṣra.<sup>27</sup> In the following year, he left Baṣra by ship for India. After landing in Surat, he travelled throughout Mughal India, and spent the year 1086 h.q. (1675/1676) mainly in Delhi. It must have been during this year while on a trip to Golconda (Dekkan) that he started writing his *Moxtaṣar*,<sup>28</sup> stimulated by some Indian local Honourables and notables who, as the author suggested, underestimated or even ignored the importance of the Safavid dynasty and their Iranian empire ([*Mohammad-e Mofīd*] *vāred-e Dekkān šodeh, raḥl-e eqāmat gostar-deh būd. Rūzi bā majles-ī ke mašhūn bā vojūd-e ašrāf va a`yān-e har velāyat būd rasīd. Dar hangām-e ṣoḥbat soxan bā zekr-e salāfīn va pādešāhān va vofūr-e jāh va meknaṭ-e iṣān gostareš yāft. Zomreh-ī az bā-xeradān-e*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 10.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11. Mofīd’s distribution of various lands to the Seven Climates is as follows (*Moxtaṣar*, pp. 11 *et seq.*): (First Climate:) China, India, Sind, the Hijaz, Aden, Yemen, “Zanj”, and Abyssinia etc. (Second Climate:) Mekkah (*Makkeh-ye moharrameh*), Madina, Ta`īf (*Tā`īf*), the Makran (*Makrān*) ranges, Hormuz, and North Africa from the river Nile until the Maghreb. (Third Climate:) Qandahar (*Qandahār*), Multan (*Multān*), Sistan (*Sīstān*), Kerman (*Kermān*), Darabjerd, Yazd, Abarquh, Šīraz (*Šīrāz*), Basrah (Baṣrah), Baghdad, Wasit (Wāseṭ), Kufa and Syria (*Šām*). (Fourth Climate:) Turkestan, X`ojand, Xorāsān, Transoxiana, Balx, Marv, Tus, Saraxs, Neyšābur, and according to some authors also: Gilan, Rey, Esfahan, Hamadan, Tabriz, Azarbayjan (*Āzarbāyjān*), Mazandaran, Tabarestan, Qazvin, Saveh, Qom, Kašan, Mossul, Aleppo, Astarabad, Damghan, Semnan, Kabul, Kašmir, and the greater parts of the Ottoman Empire (*aksar-e belād-e Rūm*). (Fifth Climate:) Kašghar, Xotan, Samarqand, Boxara, X`arazm, Armenia, “Rum”, Russia, Farghana, and Barda`, Baku, and Šemaxi in Caucasia. (Sixth Climate:) The lands of Gog and Magog down to the *bahr-e faḡhfur* (the Pacific), the lands beyond Turkestan (*aḡrāf-e Torkestān*), Circassia, and the north of *Arzan ar-Rum* and Constantinople. (Seventh Climate:) The lands of Bolghar (along the Volga river) and the Slavs, and *aqšā-ye Rum* (the “remotest parts of Rum”), and an area covering the lands between the Northern and the Western Seas (i.e. Europe).

<sup>27</sup> Ch.A. Stori, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 1023.

<sup>28</sup> *Moxtaṣar*, p. 252.

*zāher-bin va ferqeh-ī az nādān-e hemāqat-āyīn farā-xor-e ‘aql-o dāneš-e xod motakallem šodeh, šammeh-ī az ‘azāmāt-e pādešāh-e Xetā va Ćin va kesrat-e ‘asāker-e Tork va vos ‘at-e mamlakat-e Rūm-o Māčīn bayān kardand. Ćūn bar kaffeh-ye arbāb-e feṣrat va zokā’ va ‘āmmeh-ye ašḥāb-e bašīrat va eṭṭelā’ zāher va hoveydā ast ke adā-ye šokr-e ne ‘mat-e selseleh-ye ‘aliyyeh-ye ṣafīyeh-ye Ṣafaviyeh... Here follows an elongated eulogy on the Safavid kings).<sup>29</sup>*

In the following years, he remained in India: In 1091 h.q. (1680) he was in Lahore. The date of his death is unknown, and I also have no information about whether he remained in India or eventually returned to Iran.

The above elucidates that this person was not personally dependent on the administrative, military or cliental system of the Safavid Šāh Soleymān. In his early years, he worked as a provincial *vaqf* employee. Later on, he made his living abroad, in Mughal India. There is much indication of his having been home-sick and of being possessed of a clearly Iranian identity when confronted by his Indian contemporaries. His geographic report was certainly not written by princely or royal decree from within “Iran” but out of personal conviction. Insofar as he might not have been a typical example of an Iranian of the late Safavid period in his choice of career, his text offers an excellent insight into a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Iranian individual’s spontaneous self-identification with his country and is an early example of a diaspora-minded Iranian!

What was the source of this self-identification? Mofīd was socialised and acculturated within an intellectual environment in which “Iran” appeared as quasi-naturally connected to the realm of the Safavid dynasty which had at that time (late 17<sup>th</sup> century!) ruled over Iran for more than 150 years, longer than any other ruling house since the Sasanians (and also longer than any other proceeding dynasty). There were significant changes to be witnessed in the content of the concept of “Iran”, since Ḥamdollāh Mostoufī’s *Nozhato l-qolūb*: Tabrīz ceased to be the capital of Iran. It remained *dāro s-salṭaneh* by title but, shared this epithet with Herāt (after the Safavid take-over of the Timurid capital) which meant nothing less than the return of Xorāsān into “Iran” proper but, also with Qazvīn and Ešfahān. Subsequently, his description of Iran starts with ‘*Erāq-e ‘ajam*, the province in which the later Safavids capital was situated, only preceded by ‘*Eraq-e ‘arab*, a land at that time no longer under Safavid rule since Šāh Safī I but still claimed as belonging to “Iran” not only by political tradition but also by the conviction that the Safavid kings were the legitimate overlords of the ‘*atabāt*, a claim if not maintained explicitly by the Shahs themselves, at least believed in by their average subjects!

The next region under discussion is *Āzarbāyjān*, obviously of secondary importance when compared to the central region. The northern frontiers of *Āzarbāyjān* roughly follow the Araxes river with one exception – the district of Naxčevān (*tōmān-e Naxčevān*). Disregarding this territory, the area of the current Republic of Azarbayjan was, in Safavid times, clearly outside of *Āzarbāyjān*; it was registered as *Arrān-o Mūghān*, *Šīrvān*, and *Tabarsarān*. According to Mofīd, the province of Yerevan bore the name *Ķoxūr-e sa’d* (as it did until the treaty of Turkmanchay, 1828).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 2.

Another political claim for lost territories on the western frontiers refers to *Diyār Bakr-o Diyār Rabī'eh*. It may be of some interest that whilst discussing these provinces as existing in contemporary reality, he also deals with two clearly historical regions about which no doubt can remain that he was aware of their extinction in history: Armenia and Parthia (*Belādo l-Bahlaviyeh*) which he obviously copied erratically from his ancient sources. There are some more northwestern provinces claimed for the Safavid empire: Georgia and Daghestan. In contrast to his almost stubborn claims at the expense of the Ottomans in the West, he seems to have turned a blind eye to the East as far as Qandahar is concerned, for quite obvious reasons: Sitting in the heart of Mughal India it might not have been well perceived to raise Safavid claims to this fortress, which had been constantly under dispute between Mughals and Safavids.

In comparison to Īl-Xānid "Iran", as it was defined in Ḥamdollāh's *Nozhato l-qolūb*, Mofīd pays much more attention to the maritime dimensions of the Safavid Empire. This may partly have had its reason in Mofīd's individual experiences when he travelled from Basra to Surat. But there also may well be more to it than this: Under 'Abbās I, the semi-independent *Lārestān*, and eventually Hormuz were incorporated into "Iran", and the Safavid Empire became a maritime power in due course. This fact insinuates the assumption that among Mofīd's compatriots their consciousness of their country's naval status may have been much deeper than three hundred years earlier, when under Mongol dominance. In his last chapter *Savāhel-e daryā-ye 'Ommān*, he scrutinises the ports (*banāder*) along the Persian Gulf's coast, and deals then in detail with the Gulf's islands, discussing also the nautical capacities of all these ports and islands.

Moreover, it ought to be stressed that the author of the *Moxtaṣar* presents himself towards his predominantly Indian audience of Sunni faith as a convinced and proud Emami Shiite. I refrain from going into details on this point, but the editor of the *Moxtaṣar*, Seyfeddīn Najmābādī, has registered evidence of this attitude, which may easily be consulted.

To summarise my main points, we may assume that an average learned and intellectual Iranian of the late 17<sup>th</sup> century had a clear proto-nationalist Iranian identity. In terms of territory, this identity was shaped according to the Īl-Xānid concept of Iran, as created under Mongol rule after the end of the Caliphate. This territory was mentally bound up with the political capacity of the Safavid dynasty to which the reassembling of the whole territory was ascribed. The Safavid rule was perceived as long-lasting and stable and, as I mentioned above, during the Islamic history of Iran no other dynasty reigned for so long a period as the Safavids did. The Safavids were perceived as the exclusive, ruling and powerful protectors of the pure faith of the *Iṭnā 'aṣarīyya* Shiites and, to the same degree, the protectors of their beloved country of "Iran". The concrete conception of a territory bearing the name "Iran", ruled by a strong and stable, long-lasting royal house, the Safavids, the most important stronghold of Imami Shiism in the whole world, was even strong enough to furnish a late 17<sup>th</sup> century Iranian subject who had lived abroad year after year without any immediate physical contacts to his homeland, with strong emotions towards his "Iran". His defence of his "Iranianness" in confrontation with his Indian discussants, who may even have ignored the existence of this country, possibly evoked

these deep feelings of love for his home-country. This concept obviously reinforced his belief in belonging to “his Iran” wherever in the world he might be.

Some fifty years later, after the destruction of the Safavid power, another Iranian who went into exile in India after the disastrous events in Esfahan 1722, returned to his home-country after more than ten years absence. When this man, the famous Šeyx Hazīn, arrived in post-Safavid Iran and especially in Ešfahān, he was struck by a deep feeling of grief: With the passing of the dynasty, his whole home-country appeared to him lost, and with a profound sense of a loss of identity, he went back into exile.<sup>30</sup> Throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century, almost all rulers claiming power in Iran therefore also claimed to represent the continuity of Safavid power, with the exception of Nāder Šāh (after having deposed the late, or better “post-” Safavids’ ʿAḥmād II and ‘Abbās III) and his followers who, nevertheless, aimed at presenting himself as the legitimate, unconditional successor of the Safavids but, not as their continuer. Even under the Qajars there were, in terms of ideology, visibly strong intentions to establish Qajar legitimacy on the ground of a specific feature of Qajar-Safavid kinship. This tradition is already to be found in the case of the rather private author Moḥammad Hāšem “Rostamo-l-Ḥokamā” (who even tries to conjure a Timurid-Safavid-Qajar continuity in legitimation of Qajar royal power, thus immediately extending Mofīd’s concept of Timurid-Safavid analogies toward the Qajars) at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>31</sup> and also in the writings of the statesman E‘temādo s-Salṭaneh in the times of Nāsero d-Dīn Šāh (on whom, e.g., Kashani Sabet relies heavily).

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In the light of these considerations, the rising nationalism under the Qajars should not only be seen as indication for intellectual Iranians’ growing inclination towards modernity. Such ideas and concepts should not merely be conceived as shooting stars in the skies of the Enlightenment. They were also creative continuations and transformations of concepts that were developed gradually throughout the centuries.

Since the period of Mongol rule, 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries, there are lots of visible indications in our sources proving that regionalist thinking and the imagined territoriality of “Iran” was substantially and constantly developing throughout a period of at least some four centuries, and was then much less connected to historicist reflection concerning the glorious past of “Iran” than some modern Iranian nationalists would like to have us believe! It seems that, beyond a rising nationalist consciousness there is also another motive for regionalist thinking in Qajar times, quite different from, and distinct to the modernist discourse, as convincingly analysed by the two authors mentioned at the beginning of this article: Did not the early Qajars need to solve the problem of disconnecting “Iranianness”

<sup>30</sup> See F. Tauer, *Persian Learned Literature*, [in:] *History of Iranian Literature*, ed. J. Rypka, Dordrecht 1968, pp. 451 *et seq.*; B.G. Fagner, *Persische Memoirenliteratur als Quelle zur neueren Geschichte Irans*, Wiesbaden 1979.

<sup>31</sup> M. Hāšem, “Rostamo-l-Ḥokamā”: *Rostamo-t-tavārīx*, ed. M. Mošīrī, Tehrān 1348 h.š., pp. 145, 163, 269, 456.

from its Safavid and post-Safavid connotations, and to connect it to their own dynasty in order to firmly establish their rule in “Iran”? In this light, many of the intellectual activities in 19<sup>th</sup> century “Iran” may not only indicate a discourse of rising modernity but, also creative and discontinuous dealing with a long-scale historical pattern that had come into existence after the destruction of the ‘Abbasid Caliphate under the Mongols.

There remains the question whether the idea of “Iran” might have been exclusively or predominantly bound to the power of the absolute ruler, “God’s Shadow on Earth”, in pre-modern times? It goes without saying that the process of the gradual conscious take-over of the mental property of “Iran” from the ruling class by virtue of the “nation” has to be perceived as being mainly bound to the Qajar period. Moḥammad-e Mofid offers some reason for slight revisionism on this issue: Certainly, he describes “his” Iran as the land possessed by the “great” dynasty of his contemporary ruler. But ruler and dynasty are not really his emotional theme; they offer him rather the vocabulary to express his love and his pride for “his” Iran, and, above all, the home-sickness of an Iranian subject forced by mundane circumstances to live abroad.

Whatever the tortuous paths there may have been in the course of which Iranian modernity emerged during the last two centuries, they seem to be deeply-embedded in an intra-Iranian discourse of some six centuries of continuity.

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