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# Similar Narration of the Other: Lârî's Narration of the Battle of Çaldıran under Ottoman's Influence (1514)

## Öteki'nin Benzer Anlatımı: Osmanlı Tahakkümünde Lârî'nin Çaldıran Savaşı Anlatısı (1514)

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### Abstract

The Battle of Çaldıran in 1514, which took place between the Ottoman Empire under Sultân Selim (d. 926/1520) and the Safavid Empire under Shâh Ismâ'îl (d. 930/1524), is a key historical moment. Its interpretation, however, differs markedly between Ottoman and Safavid historical accounts. Ottoman narratives herald it as a resounding triumph, while Safavid accounts portray it as Sultân Selim's failed attempt to completely subjugate their empire. This study examines the instrumental role of Lârî, a Safavid expatriate living in the Ottoman Empire, in the production of his historical treatise *'Mir'atü'l-advâr ve Mirkâtü'l-Ahbâr'*. It argues that Lârî, animated by loyalty to the Ottoman perspective and antipathy towards the Safavids, deliberately endorsed the Ottoman version, despite his intimate acquaintance with Safavid sources. His chronicles portray the Safavids as deviating from Islamic principles, thereby sanctioning Sultân Selim's military incursion. This study emphasizes that the sixteenth-century rivalry between the Ottomans and the Safavids gave rise to different paradigms of behavior, shaped by different ambitions such as the pursuit of material gain, social status and prestige. In this context, Lârî serves as a prominent case in point.

**Keywords:** Battle of Çaldıran, Lârî, Sultân Selim, Shâh Ismâ'îl.

### Öz

1514 yılında Osmanlılar tarafından Sultân Selim (ö. 926/1520) ve Safeviler tarafından Şâh Ismâ'îl (ö. 930/1524) arasında gerçekleşen Çaldıran Savaşı, tarihsel açıdan önemli bir olay olmakla birlikte, bu savaşın dönem kaynaklarındaki anlatımı arasında ciddi farklılıklar bulunmaktadır. Bu anlamda Osmanlı kaynakları bu savaşı kesin bir zaferle sonuçlanmış bir hadise olarak anlatırken, Safeviler ise I. Selim'in imparatorluklarını tamamen ortadan kaldırma planının gerçekleşmemesine vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu çalışma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğuna Safevi diyarından göçen Muslihuddin Lârî'nin (ö. 979/1572) bu savaşın Osmanlı cephesindeki algılanışında oynadığı rol, Osmanlılar için kaleme aldığı *Mir'atü'l-advâr ve Mirkâtü'l-Ahbâr* başlıklı tarih eseri üzerinden incelenecektir. Lârî'nin, Safevi anlatısına aşina olmasına rağmen, *Mir'atü'l-advâr ve Mirkâtü'l-Ahbâr*'da bu savaşa dair anlatısını bilinçli bir şekilde dönüştürdüğüne ve bu anlatıyı Osmanlıları destekler bir mahiyete büründürdüğüne

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dikkat çekilmektedir. Ayrıca başka eserlerinde de Safevilerin İslami kaidelerden uzaklaşmış olduğuna işaret eden Lārī'nin, bu açıdan I. Selim'in Safeviler üzerine gerçekleştirdiği seferi meşrulaştırmaya çalıştığı da öne sürülmektedir. Bu anlamda Lārī'nin tarih eserinin Çaldıran Savaşının Osmanlılar tarafından algılanılışını anlamlandırmak açısından literatüre anlamlı bir katkı sunacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Çaldıran Muharebesi, Lārī, Sultān Selim, Şāh Ismā'īl.

## 1. Introduction

Muşlıh Al-Dīn Al-Lārī (d. 979/1572) was a historian on the move. Throughout his life he travelled extensively, in all three of the famous 'Islamic empires'-the Mughal, Safavid and Ottoman. A polymath of extraordinary versatility, Lārī's intellectual pursuits ranged from poetry and commentary to mathematics and astronomy, establishing him as a prominent figure in the intellectual milieu of the 16th-century Islamic world (Quinn, 2021, p. 47). During his stay in Shiraz, he enrolled in the *Manşūriyya Madrasa* (School), where he received a varied education under the guidance of eminent scholars of the time. His mentors at this *madrasa* included Mir Ghiyāth al-Dīn Manşūr Dashtakī (d. 949/1542), Mir Kemal ad-Dīn Hūsain (d.?) and Shams al-Dīn Khafrī (d. 957/1550), who provided instruction in various branches of knowledge (Quinn, 2022, p. 215). Lārī's works reflect his vast knowledge, with a primary scholarly focus evident in his extensive treatises, primarily centered in the realm of the rational sciences. These twenty-one treatises are closely related to each other and underline his deep engagement in this intellectual field (Pourjavady, 2014, p. 311). In a similar vein, when Kātib Çelebi (d. 1067/1657) discusses Lārī, he claims that Lārī's contributions in various fields are second to none, which underlines the exceptional quality of his works (Çelebi, 1941, p. 69).

Given that Lārī's time at the madrasa coincides with the reign of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I (d. 984/1576) (who ruled until 1576), suggests that he probably did not spend a significant part of his later years in the territories of the Safavid Empire. Lārī himself alludes to the early years of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I's reign in his writings. He specifically mentions that a significant number of Sunnī scholars, including himself, chose to emigrate from the Safavid territories because of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I's harsh and unwavering rule in religious matters (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 901). From the early 16th century, with the establishment of the Safavid dynasty by Shāh Ismā'īl Safavid and the official promotion of *Shī'a* in Safavid territories, the Sunnī community, including the Sunnīs in Lār, where Lārī's family belonged, faced restrictions on their activities. It is plausible that Lārī left his homeland, because of concerns about his family's Sunnī background, which might have made it difficult for him to receive support or patronage from the Safavids, who were a devoted *Shī'a* dynasty (Tezcan, 2016, p. 616). Lārī therefore opted for a move to the Mughal Empire, which was then under Sunnī rule, after the culmination of his studies in Shiraz. Lārī's period of travel to the Mughal Empire coincided with the reign of Humāyūn (d. 963/1556). While Humāyūn may have been perceived as lacking in political acumen, he showed a remarkable interest in cultural pursuits. Apart from his support for a select group of artists he brought from Iran and Kabul, his cultural contributions were remarkable (Moin, 2012, p. 108). Lārī wrote his most famous work while residing in Humāyūn's palace in India. In particular, he wrote a commentary on the "*Risāle dar Hay'a*" of 'Alā' al-Dīn Al-Qūshjī (d. 879/1474). In doing so, Lārī earned himself the distinction of being the first to comment on this particular work (Pourjavady, 2014, p. 299). Lārī dedicated his commentary on the "*Risāle dar Hay'a*" to Shāh Humāyūn, and this work came to be known as the "*Humāyūn-nāme*" (Lārī, n.d., p. 1). Substantively, part of Lārī's "*Humāyūn-nāme*" was devoted to the subject of time measurement. This particular aspect of the work is believed to have had a significant influence on Humāyūn, and it is therefore one of the works that had a major impact on the emperor (Çelik & Demir, 2021,

p. 607). Some sources claim that he was still in Mughal court at the beginning of Shāh Akbar's (r. 1556-1605) reign (Ali Sadeqi, 2018, p. 123).

I argue that Lārī stayed at the court of Humāyūn for a very short period of time due to his background. An examination of the list of nobles who accompanied Humāyūn to India in 1555 reveals that the nobility inherited by Akbar consisted of two distinct racial groups: the Persians and the Turanis. The Turanis predominated, giving the nobility left by Humāyūn a predominantly Turanian character. The Persian nobility were mainly elevated scribes with limited influence in state affairs, with a few exceptions such as Bairam Khān (968/1561). Individuals of Persian origin did not receive significant promotions during this period. After the fall of Bairam Khān, however, the dynamics changed and a new contingent of local origin entered the imperial service between 1560 and 1575 (Alam Khan, 1968, p. 30). It is plausible that Lārī was concerned about his reception in the court of his son, Shāh Akbar an apprehension similar to his experience in the court of Shāh Humāyūn (Çelik & Demir, 2021, p. 617).

Lārī passed through Aleppo and finally arrived in Istanbul after the pilgrimage ceremony (Rieu, 1879, p. 615). According to Ali b. Bālī (d.992/1584) in his account, Lārī went on a journey from one city to another and from one town to another. Finally, he arrived in Istanbul (Manq, 2018, p. 388). Ḥasan-i Rūmlū (d. 985/1577), however, claims that Lārī arrived in Istanbul immediately after an incident during his voyage (Rumlu, 1978, p. 586). On his arrival in Istanbul, Lārī first secured the patronage of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Rüstem Paşa (d. 968/1561), who held office until his death in 1561 (Quinn, 2022, p. 215). It was during this period that Lārī presented a compilation of his treatises to Rüstem Paşa. This was part of his relationship with the Grand Vizier (Tezcan, 2016, p. 617). Lārī met the renowned Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām Ebüssuūd Efendi (d. 982/1574) and became part of his intellectual circle. As a result, he took the opportunity to establish contacts with various Ottoman scholars. Lārī was paid 40 dirhams or 40 *akçe* for his deep knowledge and scholarly abilities as his daily stipend (Pourjavady, 2014, p. 296). Although he did not express his dissatisfaction openly, Lārī seemed to be unhappy with this salary. It may be that his departure from Istanbul was a result of this dissatisfaction.

Lārī then moved to Amed, the center of Diyarbakır, using his wage as an excuse and expressing his frustration with the prominence he had expected (M. al D. Lārī, 2012, p. 140). Lārī received an invitation from the governor of Diyarbakır, İskender Paşa (d.979/1571), and he decided to accept this invitation, which led him to move to Amed (Baysanoğlu, 1996, p. 658). Lārī was warmly and respectfully welcomed by İskender Paşa, also known as Çerkez (Circassian) and Gazi İskender Paşa. After the war with Georgians in Erzurum ended in 1561, İskender Paşa became the Governor of Diyarbakır and he remained there for fourteen consecutive years, faithfully fulfilling his duties (Özcan, 2000, p. 566). According to Nev'izade, Lārī spent the rest of his life in the *madrassa* of Hüsrev Paşa in the town of Amed. During this time, he was a source of solutions to a wide range of problems, both orally and in writing. Nev'izade's (d. 1045/1635) account emphasizes that Lārī fulfilled his responsibilities as both *madrassa* professor and mufti of Diyarbakır. He states that Lārī died in the month of *Dhu l-Hijjah* in the year (979 /1571) (Atāyi, 2017, p. 611).

Lārī's best-known work was *Mir'atü'l-advār ve Mirkātü'l-Ahbār* (The Mirror of Epochs and the Stairways of Historical Reports), a universal history written in Persian, covering the history of mankind from the first human being, Adam, to the enthronement of Sulṭān Selīm II in 1566. The book, consisting of ten chapters, was dedicated to Selīm II (d. 982/1574), as Lārī sought his patronage. Lārī's comprehensive historical work, *Mir'atü'l-advār* occupies an important place in Ottoman world historiography. The fact

that there are a number of surviving manuscripts of the original Persian text, some in the Süleymāniye Manuscript Library, two in the Paris Library, one in British library, one in Vienna national library and five in Iran, attests to its small readership and influence. The copy in Konya Karatay Yusufaga Library contains a fascinating annotation on the first pages of the manuscript. While numerous individuals who handled this copy made marginalia, it is noteworthy that not all of these annotators were scribes. One such annotation, written by an unidentified person, mentions the transmission of the book by stating: *'The light of my eyes, my dear son Sādullah Efendi (probably Sādullah Enverī, d. 1209/1794), sent us this book from Enderun (The Imperial School). The book is the History of Lārī, which has been meticulously preserved and is a finely crafted historical account'* (M. al-Din Lārī, n.d.). This comment itself implies that the History of Lārī was housed in the Enderun. Enderun, as the palace school established to educate the administrative and military elite of the Ottoman Empire, suggests the importance of Lārī's work within the educational milieu of the time. Although the specific use of Lārī's book within the Imperial School remains uncertain, it is clear that the manuscript was kept within its premises.

*Mir'atü'l-advār*, comprises ten chapters and covers the history of a wide range of empires, dynasties and kingdoms (Rieu, 1879, p. 116). Lārī devoted the final part of *Mir'atü'l-advār* to the history of the Ottoman Empire, honoring Selīm II (d. 982/1574) when he ascended the Ottoman throne. In *Mir'atü'l-advār*, the section on the Ottoman Empire is not the longest. Historical works devoted to a particular Sultānate or empire usually focus on the history of that dynasty. Under Ottoman rule, historians have focused extensively on Ottoman history, but have also produced narratives that cover a wider range of topics, from the creation of the world to regional events, and present a variety of historical perspectives. Mustafa Ālī's (d.1008/1600) *Künhü'l-ahbār*, for example, runs to over 1000 pages in four volumes. The last volume is devoted exclusively to Ottoman history. Likewise, Ramazanzāde Meḥmed Çelebi's (d. 979/1571) *Tārīh-i Nişancı* devotes its last volume to Ottoman history and presents it as the most detailed and comprehensive of all the volumes (Özcan, 2020, p. 48). This is not the case with Lārī's work.

The section on Ottoman history in the *Mir'atü'l-advār* is not only relatively short, but also lacks detailed elaboration compared to other sections. The section on the Safavids, while similarly short, provides a more thorough examination of context and detail. Thus, one could argue that the treatment of Ottoman history in *'Mir'atü'l-advār'* represents the weakest aspect of Lārī's historiographical effort. This view is shared by Hoca Sādeddin Efendi (d. 1008/1599) in the introduction to his work *'Tācü't-tevārīh'*, where he accuses Lārī of offering an inadequately detailed and concise summary of Ottoman history that neglects many important issues (Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, 1979, p. 265).

In this paper we will examine the ninth and tenth chapters of *'Mir'atü'l-advār'*, in which Lārī addresses the Safavids and Ottomans respectively, focusing on the Battle of Çaldıran. In the chapter devoted to the Safavids, Lārī's account is relatively brief, comprising a straightforward description of Shāh Ismā'il's birth and death dates, a chronology of his military campaigns, and the territories he conquered. Lārī concludes this section by referring to Shāh Ismā'il's defeat in the decisive battle of Çaldıran in 1514. Conversely, in the chapter centred on the Ottomans, Lārī offers a more detailed account of the Battle of Çaldıran. He's openly critical of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I on several occasions, pointing out that a significant number of Sunni scholars, including himself, chose to emigrate from Safavid territories because of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I's strict and unwavering rule in religious matters.

Although Lārī refrains from commenting extensively on Shāh Ismā'īl's religious practices, he makes clear that Shāh Ṭahmāsp actively promoted Twelver Shi'ism from the beginning of his reign and suppressed Sunni expressions within his dominions (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 901). According to Lārī, Shāh Ṭahmāsp's anti-Sunni policies and attitudes led to a mass exodus of Sunnis, including scholars, poets and artists, from Safavid territories. Lārī further criticises Shāh Ṭahmāsp's governmental strategies, claiming that many were orchestrated to undermine Sunni 'Ulamā (religious scholars) (Pourjavady, 2014, p. 295). In Lārī's view, Shāh Ṭahmāsp blurred the distinction between the learned and the unlearned, marginalizing the learned while falsely elevating the unlearned. (Quinn, 2021, p. 186). Consequently, Lārī contends that Shāh Ṭahmāsp's rule was characterised by the dominance of individuals who lacked faḍl (virtue) and 'ilm (knowledge), relegating the truly knowledgeable to the periphery. However, when Lārī recounts the Battle of Çaldıran in the tenth chapter, focusing on the Ottomans, he attributes the Safavids' predicament to Shāh Ismā'īl's misguided policies and beliefs, which he claims led the Safavids to deviate from the true faith, thereby branding them as heretics.

Consequently, Lārī argues that the Ottomans had a legitimate and lawful justification for their attack on the Safavids. Furthermore, the conflict between the Ottomans and the Safavids in the 16th century influenced the goals and behavior of many individuals, motivating them to seek benefits, recognition and higher status. Lārī emerges as a prominent example of this trend.

Ottoman historiography tends to present the battle of Çaldıran from a singular perspective. Ottoman historians portray the battle as a decisive victory for Sulṭān Selīm and a resounding defeat for the Safavids. Erdem Çıpa, in his scholarly examination of Selīm's reign, underlines the importance of the Battle of Çaldıran in shaping Selīm's public image. Selīm's accession to the throne, following that of his father Bayezid II, was contested by various factions. As a result, victory over the Safavids in this battle was essential to Selīm's legitimacy. Furthermore, by denouncing the Safavids as heretics and positioning himself as the true defender of the faith, Selīm's reputation was greatly enhanced by this military triumph. It is worth noting that most Ottoman studies of the Battle of Çaldıran have relied exclusively on Ottoman sources.

Vural Genç, however, made a pioneering effort to explore the alternative Safavid perspective on the battle. Drawing on Safavid chronicles to offer a contrasting interpretation, Genç argues that, according to these sources, the Battle of Çaldıran was not a clear defeat for the Safavids, but rather a calculated tactical and strategic maneuver. He argues that the Ottomans failed to capture the Safavid capital or its Shāh, challenging the dominant Ottoman narrative.

This paper builds on Genç's research by incorporating the account of Muşliḥ Al-Dīn Al-Lārī, a Persian historian who emigrated from Safavid territories to the Ottoman Empire. Lārī's narrative of the battle offers an Ottoman-centric perspective that is understandable within the broader context of Ottoman historiography. However, I argue that Lārī's account is not only an Ottoman perspective but also reflects his personal animosity towards the Safavids. Apparently, Lārī's portrayal of Shāh Ismā'īl undergoes a transformation over the course of his narrative, shifting from hostility towards Shāh Ṭahmāsp to contempt for Shāh Ismā'īl as he recounts the battle. This account serves as evidence of how historians, especially those from foreign countries seeking patronage, have manipulated historical narratives to further their own interests. This article contrasts the Ottoman and Safavid interpretations of the Battle of Çaldıran (1514) between Sulṭān Selīm and Shāh Ismā'īl. Lārī, in line with the Ottoman perspective, rationalizes Selīm's

military expedition through his pronounced hostility towards the Safavids. He portrays the Safavids as deviating from orthodox Islamic beliefs.

Lārī's *Mir'atü'l-advār* remains largely untapped in studies of the Battle of Çaldıran and is presented for the first time in this study. A modern edition of *Mir'atü'l-advār* was edited and published by Jalil Sagharvanyan in Iran in 2012. For his edition, Sagharvanyan used five copies of *Mir'atü'l-advār* from libraries across Iran. In the present study, I have relied primarily on Sagharvanyan's modern edition. However, I have also taken into account copies from the Süleymaniye Library, the Austrian National Library and the Bibliothèque Nationale de Paris. These copies have minor discrepancies, mainly in spelling and alphabetical errors, but on the whole they are consistent in chronology and content.

## 2. Disclosing Hostility:

The Battle of Çaldıran in the history of the Ottoman Empire marks a decisive victory. By this time, the Safavid Empire, led by Shāh Ismā'īl (r.1501-1524) had established a Shia-centric empire and was spreading its ideology beyond its borders, including into Ottoman territories. A thorough analysis of Safavid chronicles reveals a different viewpoint on the Battle of Çaldıran in comparison to Ottoman sources (Genç, n.d., p. 43). Khvādamīr's (d. 942/1535-36) *Ḥabīb al-siyar fī akhbār afrād al-bashar* (*Ḥabīb al-siyar*) is used as a source for comparative analysis with Lārī's narrative here. *Ḥabīb al-siyar* provides an important Safavid perspective on historical events, including the Battle of Çaldıran, offering insights into Safavid strategies, motivations and interpretations of key events such as military engagements. It is indeed remarkable that Lārī, although he must have been aware of Khvādamīr and his *Ḥabīb al-siyar*, does not cite this work among his sources. Khvādamīr, a prominent historian of the Safavids and Mughals, wrote the latter part of his history under the patronage of the Mughal emperor Zāhir al-Dīn Muḥammad Bābur (d. 937/1530) (Bockholt, 2022, p. 77).

Although Lārī entered the Mughal Court shortly after Khvādamīr's death, it is plausible that he was able to access his work but chose not to incorporate it into his own writings. One possible reason for this omission is Lārī's preference for Mīrkhvānd (d. 903/1498), Khvādamīr's maternal grandfather, and his *Rawzat aş-şafā'*, considered one of the greatest Persian general histories of the Islamic world. Furthermore, *Rawzat aş-şafā'* was widely read in Mughal India (Alam, 2003, p. 163). Lārī was confident that the Ottoman intellectual elite would be primarily interested in the Ottoman section of his work.

Our author anticipated that his readership would primarily engage with and critique his account of Ottoman history, recognizing that they were less likely to scrutinize his knowledge of earlier Islamic empires. In the case of the Battle of Çaldıran, however, Lārī realized that he needed to present a comprehensive Ottoman viewpoint to meet the potential scrutiny and expectations of an Ottoman audience. I suggest that Lārī's account not only reflects an Ottoman perspective, but also embodies feelings of animosity and resentment towards the Safavids. In Ottoman historiography, Sulṭān Selīm is variously portrayed as a hero or a villain. His epithet "the Cruel" stems from his controversial accession to the throne and his authoritarian rule (Çıpa, 2017, p. 2). However, the modern historiography of the Ottoman Empire portrays Selīm as the most important defender of the Sunnī faith from a religious point of view. Many chronicles praise his efforts during his reign against the Georgian infidels and the heretic Kızılbaş (Çıpa, 2017, p. 10).

In the context of the Battle of Çaldıran, however, Selīm is not praised out of genuine admiration. Rather, it is a manifestation of Lārī's antipathy towards Ismā'īl and Safavid ideology. Lārī's narrative of the Battle of Çaldıran and other Safavid events is constructed solely from an Ottoman perspective. In this study, we will analyse Lārī's representation of the Çaldıran through one of his poems. We will also examine a poem from Khvāndamīr's Ḥabīb al-siyar. This approach allows for a comparative examination of the different viewpoints presented in the two narratives.

*The air was filled with the smoke of guns, full of sparks that shone like swords,  
Or the sky turned to clouds that resembled a veil,  
Planets fell from their orbits,  
In that smoky cloud, the sea fought a battle,  
Fragments of love scattered like arrows in every direction,  
For a moment the cannon became the sign of the end,  
Smoke rose from the earth and time,  
What cannons they became, like visible dragons,  
Filled with love inside and mouths filled with fire<sup>1</sup>*

The poem narrated by Lārī emphasizes conflict, chaos, and destruction during the war. It portrays a world in turmoil, where even the elements are swept up in the violence. According to Lārī's account, the war caused the Safavids to suffer a great defeat. Suggesting that the effects of conflict go beyond the physical, this poem illustrates the chaos and turmoil on the battlefield. However, a contrasting account of the battle is presented by another poem when we examine Khvāndamīr's narrative.

*Turn, face the enemy, and declare boldly,  
O matchless warrior in the fierce air of the field,  
Here I stand bold on this battlefield,  
With the strength of a lion and the grip of a leopard.  
I'll wield my sword sharply against the Rūm fight,  
And lead them through the way of conflict.  
From the blood of brave hearts I'll seek my prey,  
Turning fields into tulips, so unique.  
With joy's edge I'll charge, fierce and free,  
To purge the world of Rūm's tyranny<sup>2</sup>*

هوا شد ز دود تفنگ برز میغ<sup>1</sup>  
درو برق روشن درخشنده تیغ  
و یا آسمان شد مثال سحاب  
فروریخت از چشمن سیاره آب  
در آن دودناک ابر دریا ستیز  
تفک مهرها هر طرف زاله ریز  
به یک لحظه توپ قیامت نشان  
برآورد دود از زمین و زمان  
چه توپ ازدهایی شده آشکار

به پیش عدو بازگرد و بگوی<sup>2</sup>  
که ای ناگشته با سروران رزم جوی

Khvāndamīr's poem, however, presents a very different perspective. Through the voice of Ismā'īl, it exudes bravery and determination in the face of the Ottomans. As Shāh Ismā'īl rallies his army to boldly face the enemy, the tone is one of courage and readiness for battle. According to the Safavid chronicles, the Ottomans and Sultān Selīm were aware of the emergence in Persia of a powerful Shāh, known for his conquests of various territories and with intentions of annexing Ottoman lands (Genç, n.d., p. 44). As a demonstration of their strength, the Safavids are portrayed as formidable warriors, with comparisons to lions and leopards.

The poem emphasizes the commitment and joy of confronting the Ottomans, and describes the Safavid army under Shāh Ismā'īl's eagerness for battle. Safavid sources, contrasting the Ottoman emphasis on religious threat with the Safavid focus on political sovereignty, emphasize the goal of the battle: liberation from Ottoman oppression. (Genç, n.d., p. 45). In the early sixteenth century, the Ottoman subjects who sided with the Safavid faction included not only nomads, tribesmen and urban dwellers, but also disaffected timār holders, at a time when the influence of Ismā'īl's politico-religious movement was spreading throughout Anatolia (Çıpa, 2017, p. 7). Seven thousand Turkmen from the Rumlu, Şamlı, Ustaclu, Tekeli, Dulkadirli, Kaçarlı and Varsaklı tribes responded to his call. Their gradual migration to the Persian lands was certainly not without reason (Alandağlı, 2021, p. 1605). They had lost all their privileges under the central administration of the Ottoman Empire. Now they had another ruler who promised them governorships, commanderships and other positions in the Anatolian region. The best way to address the political, social and cultural vulnerability of these groups was to appeal to their religious sentiments.

In 1511, an uprising led by Sāhķulu (d. 917/1511) took place in the territories of Karaman, Sivas, and Teke. This was followed by Nur-Ali Khalifa's insurgency in the regions of Tokat and Erzincan in 1512. The governor of Konya, Prince Şehinşāh, together with Prince Murād Çelebi, who supported Şāhķulu, set fire to Tokat, which was to ally itself with Nur-Ali Khalifa, and Prince Ahmed, his father, sought refuge with Ismā'īl (Tekindağ, 1978, p. 52). These events were perceived as a direct challenge to the authority of the Ottoman Selīm by Ismā'īl (Genç, n.d., p. 45). Beyond its geopolitical ramifications, however, the significance of the Battle of Çaldıran is profound. It has a deep significance in Ottoman relations, not only in military terms, but also in social and religious terms (Genç, n.d., p. 43). It took more than military might to consolidate Ottoman supremacy in the Islamic world. The political and ideological challenges posed by the Safavids and Mamluks also required Selīm to develop a unified theological response (Çıpa, 2017, p. 6). According to Ottoman sources, for Selīm and the victorious governor Hadım Sinan Paşa (d. 922/1517), the imperative of eliminating the oppressive Safavid faction and eradicating the heretical, idolatrous influence outweighed the urgency of fighting external adversaries such as the Franks and the Tatars (Kırlangıç, 1995, p. 135).

Scholars argue that Selīm had been considering a shift towards engaging with Safavid Iran since his time as a prince (Genç, n.d., p. 44). And he made the Safavid threat a

من اینک رسیدم به میدان جنگ  
به نیروی شیر و بخشم بلنگ  
کشم به سر رومیان تنغ تیز  
بدیشان نمایم طریق ستیز  
ز خون دلبران مردم شکار  
همه دشت هامون کنم لاله زار  
بنوک سنان سعادت هجوم  
جهان راکنم پاک از خیل روم

priority during his reign after ascending the throne. Before his father's death, Selīm tried to prevent the involvement of certain soldiers in Persia by launching the Georgian campaign and instigating a confrontation with the Shiites. His aim was to deal a decisive blow to the Anatolian Kızılbaş and to suppress the growing links between the Kızılbaş and the Safavids (Tekindağ, 1978, p. 53).

Events after Selīm's accession on 24 April 1513 are further evidence of his intentions. In pursuit of this goal, Selīm sought the issuance of religious edicts in support of his cause. The importance of this issue for Selīm is highlighted by the numerous *fatwas* and treatises written by Sunnī scholars (Tekindağ, 1978, p. 33). With the approval of these decrees, Selīm orchestrated the methodical slaughter of tens of thousands of Ismā'il's Anatolian supporters before launching the Çaldıran campaign (Çıpa, 2017, p. 5).

The reason for this hostility towards the Safavids is also explained 'n the Safavid chronicles. According to available sources, Ismā'il did not congratulate Selīm on his accession because of his violent seizure of the throne from his father, and for this reason he did not send an envoy (Genç, n.d., p. 48). Khvāndamīr's narrative suggests that the taste of power often leads individuals to become insatiable in wanting more. According to him, Sultān Selīm became arrogant and harbored ambitions of becoming a world conqueror after ascending the throne. Sultān Selīm forced his army to march on Tabriz because of his newfound arrogance (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544). "*Selīm's ambition was captured by the pull of power and wealth, anissary by a magnificent feast. Driven by a desire for dominance and expansion, this intoxicating blend of sovereignty and wealth fuelled his determination to conquer Tabriz*" (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544). He notes Selīm's departure from tradition upon assumption of the throne, and seizure of courtly authority in the 'Refuge of the Universe'. Leaving a legacy of death and infamy on the battlefield, he initiated conflict by assembling a formidable army that pierced the earth's core with the arrowheads of fate (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544).

Building on this perspective, Idrīs-i Bidlīsī (d. 926/1520) argues that the Safavids' rise to power was facilitated by capitalizing on the vulnerabilities of the Persian monarchy and elite classes. This further emphasizes the multiple dynamics and strategies employed during this pivotal period of Safavid history. Currently, they encourage dissent, neglect religious duties, and foment rebellion and corruption for personal gain in order to expand royal authority and the Sultānates. (Kırlangıç, 1995, p. 131). In accordance to other Ottoman sources in order to curb the spread of Shiite sympathies among his janissaries and other factions within the Ottoman Empire, Selīm launched a campaign to confront Ismā'il. After the victory at Çaldıran, he assumed the title of 'Shāh'. This was to symbolize the Ottoman triumph over the Safavid Shāhs. Victory at Çaldıran served to validate Selīm, who had recently succeeded his father Bayezid II (d. 918/1512), as Sultān.

Lārī delves into the battle of Çaldıran and the spread of Ismā'il's image through Ottoman eyes. He highlights the intellectual richness of Persia and quotes a hadith to shed light on Ottoman views."<sup>3</sup> The hadith highlights Salmān al-Fārisī's piety, stressing his unwavering faith and resilience in the face of difficulties that originated in Persia. (Alsaggaf, n.d.) Lārī notes that during the reign of Shāh Ismā'il, there was a change in beliefs and attitudes. He reports: "*During the reign of Shāh Ismā'il, the court of Sultān Selīm received reports of a deteriorating situation for the people of Persia*" (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 939). Perhaps reflecting his own circumstances, Lārī claims a decline in scholarly brilliance under Shāh Ismā'il's political rule. While he does echo earlier criticisms of the Safavids, he

<sup>3</sup> "لَوْ كَانَ الدِّيْنُ عِنْدَ الثَّرِيَاءِ، لَذَهَبَ بِهِ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ فَارِسٍ" "A man from Persia would reach religion even if he were in the Pleiades".

reserves explicit criticism for Shāh Ṭahmāsp and contrasts his views on the reigns of the two rulers (M. al D. Lāri, 2018, p. 899).

Lāri strategically shifts his narrative in order to criticize Shāh Ismā‘īl, possibly in order to gain favour within the Ottoman court. Lāri’s portrayal of Ismā‘īl in a negative light is an attempt by Lāri to legitimize his own struggles as a scholar and to enhance his position. Restrictions on the Sunni community increased in the early 16th century with the rise of the Safavid dynasty under Shāh Ismā‘īl Safavid and the official adoption of Shī‘a Islam in Safavid territories. This included Sunnis in Lār, the hometown of Lāri’s family. Lāri probably left his homeland because of concerns about his family’s Sunni background. This might have hindered his chances of receiving support or patronage from the Safavids, who were staunch adherents of Shī‘a Islam. Having studied in Shiraz, Lāri made the strategic decision to move to the Mughal Empire, which was then ruled by Sunnis. This move allowed him to avoid potential religious and political challenges associated with his Sunni lineage. As a result, Lāri’s writings are marked by critical evaluations of Shāh Ṭahmāsp I’s reign, offering a unique and alternative account of his rule. Moreover, Lāri’s subsequent move to Diyarbakır was prompted by his failure, as a Persian émigré from the Safavid regime, to secure the respect and position he sought at the Ottoman court in Istanbul. It was in Diyarbakır that Lāri found the opportunity to tell his personal story, shedding light on the difficulties faced by Sunni scholars during the era of Shāh Ismā‘īl. The rivalry between the Ottomans and the Safavids in the 16th century shaped the ambitions and actions of many tribes, communities and individuals, driving them to seek advantage, recognition and elevated status. Lāri stands out as a prime example of this phenomenon.

He accuses Ismā‘īl of deviation from Islamic ideals, citing a decline in reverence for prophetic traditions and esteemed predecessors (M. al D. Lāri, 2018, p. 939). He claims that the Safavids and their successors may claim that they are the descendants of Salmān al-Fārisī and ask for forgiveness. However, Lāri believes that their hearts are corrupt and their minds are filled with disbelief, making them unworthy of forgiveness (M. al D. Lāri, 2018, p. 939). Lāri is in favor of conflict with the Safavids and is of the opinion that they should not be absolved of their wrongdoings at all. He also believes that the Safavids can no longer be considered believers, as the essence of faith has left their hearts.

In Lāri’s view, the Safavids are unaware of their true situation and are convinced of their own righteousness and justice. He claims that Sulṭān Selīm and the Ottomans would engage them in battle and force them to face the consequences of their actions. Lāri, comparing their awakening to turning away from one’s own reflection in disgust, suggests that the Safavids will seek forgiveness when they realize their mistakes (M. al D. Lāri, 2018, p. 939). Lāri’s focus on the reflection of one’s inner character in one’s face implies that confronting one’s own unattractive mirror image motivates the Safavids to seek salvation. His critique of the Safavids echoes a widespread Ottoman intellectual discourse that branded them as heretics, a sentiment that was shared by Ottoman scholars in the sixteenth century. The campaign against the Safavids was supported by the *fatwā* of two religious’ scholars, Mevlānā Nūreddīn Sarıgörez (d. 928/1522) and Kemālpaşazāde. They claimed that Shāh Ismā‘īl and his followers were *kāfir ve mülhid* (unbelievers and heretics) and it was the responsibility of the Sulṭān of Islam to eradicate them (Çıpa, 2017, p. 6).

After discussing the actions and misdeeds of the Safavids and the need to teach them a lesson, Lārī recounts that in (921)1515-16<sup>4</sup> the Ottoman Sultān Selīm decided to eliminate them. Rooting out corruption was the aim of Selīm's campaign. Lārī notes the Safavids' chaotic scattering in the face of the Ottoman advance and labels them 'vile', implying moral corruption. In addition, Lārī's language conveys a clear sense of hostility and animosity towards the Safavids. Upon reaching Erzincan, the Ottoman army was informed by certain Kızılbaş individuals that their leader was located in Çaldıran. In response, Selīm mobilized his forces and proceeded towards Çaldıran, where the ensuing battle took place.

According to Khvāndamīr, Ismā'īl was in Hamadan when he received the news of Selīm's imminent arrival. Khvāndamīr suggests that Ismā'īl interpreted the arrival of Selīm as being motivated by intentions of murder, conflict, and tyranny (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544). According to Khvāndamīr, Ismā'īl, who was in Hamadan at the time, declared his willingness to fight his adversary when he heard of Sultān Selīm's arrival (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544). Shāh Ismā'īl did not participate in the army assembly. Instead, he led a group of ten thousand mounted warriors who were accompanying the expeditionary forces towards the adversary (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 545). Shāh Ismā'īl formed an army of 80,000 cavalry archers, many of whom were recruited from tribes that Selīm wanted to subjugate, such as those of Dulkadir and Karaman (Finkel, 2005, p. 155). In 1507, Shāh Ismā'īl invaded the Emirate of Dulkadir and recruited Turkomans into his army. These Turkomans were subjects of the Ottoman Empire and their lands were under Ottoman control (Çıpa, 2017, p. 34). According to Safavid sources, Shāh Ismā'īl's string of victories in earlier conflicts was evidence of his self-confidence and composure in the face of a formidable opponent. These victories may have been a source of pride for him, and he was openly proud of his achievements (Genç, n.d., p. 45). Khvāndamīr on the size of the army of Selīm writes that the force from the Caspian Sea is beyond the comprehension of even the most diligent observer, and the sheer numbers of these misguided troops make containment impossible and defy rational estimation (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 544). During the battle of Çaldıran, Selīm used a force of five hundred field cannons and twelve thousand janissary musketeers, while Shāh Ismā'īl's army lacked both muskets and cannons (Çıpa, 2017, p. 5).

Lārī and Ottoman sources present Selīm's expedition to Persia as a mission to end tyranny. Lārī depicts the battle scene vividly, clearly and objectively, using his advanced knowledge of the Persian script. Lārī recounts that on the battlefield, Sultān Selīm rallied his troops, urging them to defeat the forces of Shāh Ismā'īl (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 939).

*"The gleaming of swords outshone the sun, while the fiery tumult of battle hurled thunderbolts into the sky. Amidst the tempest of conflict, the warriors clad in iron were swallowed whole by the whale of fate, with jaws agape"* (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 940).

Khvāndamīr says that when Selīm's army saw the bravery of Shāh Ismā'īl's forces, they became uncontrollable. When they attacked, they inflicted considerable damage on Shāh Ismā'īl's army. Although weakened by the heavy losses, the remaining Safavid forces managed to secure the area. Their musketeers effectively kept the enemy at a distance and fought back. (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 547). In his account, Lārī

<sup>4</sup> There is an error in Lārī's dating of the battle of Çaldıran. The battle took place on 23 August 1514. This corresponds to the 2nd of Rajab in the year 920 of the Islamic calendar. This error was not introduced by the editors, but rather by Lārī himself, as it is found in several manuscripts. Lārī's oversight may have been due to a lack of meticulousness, Hoca Sādeddin suggests. Furthermore, rushing to complete the work without carefully checking the manuscript, as mentioned above, may have compounded the error.

explicitly states that, in his view, the Safavids were undeserving of forgiveness and had strayed from the path of faith, and therefore deserving of hellfire. He notes that after the Ottoman attack, Shāh Ismā‘īl’s army began to disperse, although he himself managed to escape with a small retinue. The property and belongings of the Kızılbaş group were confiscated by the forces of Sultān Selīm. Lārī commemorates the triumph of Sultān Selīm at *Çaldıran* and the defeat of Shāh Ismā‘īl. The next day, Sultān Selīm left for Tabriz. A number of prisoners were escorted to the Ottoman court in Istanbul, including respected figures and scholars. The Ottoman forces also took control of the fortress of Kamakh (Kemah), which had previously been held by the Kızılbaş. However, Shāh Ismā‘īl managed to evade capture (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 940).

Based on Khvāndamīr’s account, while in Tabriz, Sultān Selīm received intelligence that Shāh Ismā‘īl had assembled a large army and was preparing to launch an attack on the Ottoman forces imminently. According to him, upon learning this, Sultān Selīm became apprehensive and decided to leave Tabriz, returning to his own court. He notes that Sultān Selīm stayed in Tabriz for eight days but did not achieve any significant success during this time (Khvānd Mīr & Dabīr Siyāqī, 2001, p. 548). According to Safavid historians, Shāh Ismā‘īl would have fought Selīm and sought revenge if he had returned. However, Selīm was too afraid to return to Persia (Genç, n.d., p. 47). It is said that Selīm refrained from advancing beyond Tabriz and experienced apprehension upon learning of the Shāh’s approach with his recently organized military forces. As a result, Selīm deemed it prudent for the protection of both himself and his troops to initiate a retreat. According to Giovan Maria Angolello, a Venetian, Selīm spent three days in Tabriz before leaving due to a shortage of animals and food, as well as the fear of a potential Safavid attack (Genç, n.d., p. 48). After his defeat at *Çaldıran*, it is reported that Shāh Ismā‘īl expected Sultān Selīm to return the following spring to resume his campaign, according to Ottoman sources. (Finkel, 2005, p. 157).

Lārī highlights the defeat of the Safavids and calls for the punishment of their supporters, whom he considers to be supporters of infidels. He reports that after the battle, Sultān Selīm ordered his Governor-General, Hadım Sinan Paşa, to launch a surprise attack on Dulkadirid ruler ‘Alā’ al-Dawla Zu ‘l-Ḳadr (d.921/1515), who had rebelled against certain aspects of Sultān Selīm’s campaign against Shāh Ismā‘īl. Under the leadership of Hadım Sinan Paşa, a force of 10,000 soldiers successfully launched a surprise attack that resulted in the capture of ‘Alā’ al-Dawla. His head was presented to the Mamlūk court, serving as a warning to anyone who aligns with the Safavids (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 940). This outcome suggests that they would face similar consequences under Ottoman rule, as suggested by Lārī. Safavid court historians often show respect when referring to powerful opponents, in contrast to the insulting language used by the Ottomans to describe Shāh Ismā‘īl and his followers (Genç, n.d., p. 48). This observation indicates that Lārī followed the Ottoman approach rather than the Safavid tradition and style of writing. His tone is severe and hostile towards the Safavids.

Lārī’s account of the battle of *Çaldıran* is written in refined Persian prose. However, his portrayal of the Safavids is often biased and occasionally even demeaning. However, it also contains a strong condemnation of Safavid rule in Persia. Lārī portrays the Safavids and their followers as unworthy of life and doomed to damnation because of their perceived lack of faith and moral degradation. He depicts the oppression and cruelty of Safavid rule, with a particular focus on intellectuals and artists, and the text highlights Persia’s historical significance as a land of intellectual and artistic brilliance, which was obscured under Safavid rule. The depiction of the battlefield emphasizes the scale and importance of the confrontation. Sultān Selīm secures a victory as depicted by Lārī,

emphasizing it as a personal triumph for Sultān Selīm. This portrayal is in line with Lārī's wish for the downfall of the Safavids. The text conveys a strong sense of hostility towards the Safavids and pride in the Ottomans' victory over the enemy.

As discussed earlier in this paper, Lārī's personal experiences and interactions with the Safavids contributed greatly to his hostility towards them. He uses the battle of Çaldıran as a means of articulating this sentiment. In line with Ottoman perspectives, Lārī labels the Safavids as heretics. Along with many other Sunni scholars, he was forced to leave the Safavid Empire and seek refuge and opportunity in the Mughal and Ottoman Empires. Lārī viewed this forced migration as unjust and intolerable. He claims that the anti-Sunni policies and attitudes of Shāh Ṭahmāsp led to the exodus of many Sunnis, including scholars, poets and artists, from their homeland (M. al D. Lārī, 2018, p. 901).

Both Selīm and Lārī had a mutual enmity towards Shāh Ismā'īl. Selīm sought the renewal of legal opinions authorizing conflict against the Safavids, indicating that he specifically targeted Shāh Ismā'īl as his primary adversary (Çıpa, 2017, p. 6). Adding to that Hoca Sādeddin draws a parallel between the historical conflict between the caliph of Islam, Abū Bakr al-Şiddīq, and Musaylima al-Kadhdhāb (The Liar), who falsely claimed prophethood, and the confrontation between Sultān Selīm and Shāh Ismā'īl. He suggests that Selīm's campaign against the Safavids was justified on the grounds of their alleged deviation from the Islamic faith and propagation of deceit, just as Abū Bakr had taken decisive action against Musaylima for spreading falsehood and corruption. Hoca Sādeddin goes on to compare the Ottomans, and Sultān Selīm in particular, to the just legacy of Abū Bakr al-Şiddīq, implying that they were destined by God and deserving of victory, similar to the revered status of the early Islamic caliph (Hoca Sadeddin Efendi, 1979, p. 172-173).

### Conclusion

The Battle of Çaldıran is described consistently across early Safavid sources, with only minor discrepancies. Unlike Ottoman perspectives, Safavid accounts do not portray this event as a defeat. Instead, Safavid narratives often present it as a strategic withdrawal, providing various justifications for this interpretation. However by drawing exclusively from Ottoman sources and ignoring alternative viewpoints, Lārī's narrative adopts an Ottoman-centric perspective. This choice is a reflection of Lārī's loyalty to the Ottoman position and his disregard for the Safavid narrative. In this narrative, Lārī emerges as a prime example of a typology that sought refuge from the Safavids with the Ottomans and sought to capitalize on the situation for his own benefit. First, his personal experiences and conflicts with the Safavids had already fostered a hostile sentiment towards them, which is clearly reflected in his writings. Secondly, he had aspirations for a prominent position at the Ottoman court and skillfully used his historical narrative to appeal to an Ottoman audience. He tailored his narrative to fit precisely with Ottoman beliefs. Furthermore, Lārī's ability to thoroughly review and correct his work was limited, and the errors in the dating towards the end of the *Mir'atü'l-advār* suggest that Lārī's writing process was rushed. In other words, while Safavid sources may interpret the battle of Çaldıran differently, Ottoman historians, including Lārī, clearly perceive it as a decisive victory for the Ottomans and a symbol of the triumph of enlightenment over darkness. Before entering the Ottoman chapter, Lārī criticizes the Safavids and their policies, but does not question their faith. Only in his account of the Battle of Çaldıran does he denounce the Safavids as heretics, accusing them of deviating from the true path of faith. Overall, Lārī's writings serve as a compelling illustration of the complexities and intricacies of religious and political loyalties during this tumultuous period.

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