



The Role of Influential Dynasties and Local Families in Urban Development and Political Centrality of Shushtar in Khuzestan Province During Safavid Era

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Abstract

Shushtar as one of the most important cities of Khuzestan in safavid era was inhabited by some officials and rulers mostly due to its specific geographical, strategic and military situation during the rule of Safavid dynasty. The establishment of new villages in Shushtar and its surroundings areas by the local rulers caused this city to grow and develop more. In the same regard, due to the entering of many different clans and tribes to Shushtar in the Safavid period, extensive ethnic conflicts emerged in this city. Turk Qizilbash (Shamlus, Rumlus, Afshars, Ustodjlus, Turkmens, and Dulghadirs), Chagatai family, Circassia, Georgians, great religious scholars from Jabal Amel region, Jazayeri and Kalantar Sadats were among the tribes and clans entering Shushtar in the Safavid period. At the end of this period, natural disasters such as flood influenced Shushtar status both socially and politically to a great extent. The current study attempts to describe the political and social conditions of Shushtar during the Safavid period, aiming to answer this question: Why was Shushtar under the spotlight by the Safavid rulers and inhabited by most governmental rulers and authorities? It is hypothesized in this study that due to the geographical and military situation, Shushtar have always been considered as a defensive barrier by the Safavids against Mushashaiyah central bases in the South of Khuzestan, and Ranshis bases in the North of Khuzestan and also against Bakhtiyari Khans. Unquestionably, taking into consideration the topics such as ethnic origin, tribal interests, occupation state, religious and social values, and changing or modification of each case can give provide us with some useful information about the social and political life of Shushtar in the Safavid period.

Keywords: Governmental and administrative positions; Political status; Safavid; Social status; Shushtar.



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1. Introduction

During the Safavid era, many various ethnicity and demographic composition existed in Shushtar. From beginning to end of Safavid dynasty's reign, new travelers exerted political and social impacts upon Shushtar. Under Shah Ismail I (reigned 1486-1509), Shashtar was empowered by local forces of Hoveizeh Mushashaiyyah and Dezful Ranashis. Moreover, according to local information resources, Sadat Marashi clan was in Shushtar during Shah Ismail reign and as a Shia family guided Shushtar in the process of changing religion from Sunni to Shia.

In the reign of Shah Tahmasp I (reigned 1509-1563) and along with the Qizilbash's rising to power, local rulers of Shushtar were elected from Qizilbash tribes, particularly from the Afshars (Arashlus), Shamlus, Rumlus, Ostadjlu, Turkmen, Dulghadir. During the rule of Shah Abbas I (1575-1617) the Circassia forces came to power in Shushtar. By entering Vakhushti khan clan to Shushtar, Georgian forces, Gorgin Beyg and Circassia Eldorom Beyg formed triple power in Shushtar during Shah Safi period (1617-1631). Vakhushti khan clan took political power in shushtar from 1619 to 1623.

In shushtar, Sadats of Taghori, Jazayeri, Marashi, and Kalantar engaged in the religious and Sharia matters. In this regard, some of Sadats (especially Marashis and Talghoris) owned lots of assets and begun to deal with agricultural and economic affairs. Ali al-Najjar, Sharaf al-Din, and Gargari were some of the well-known dynasties that took part in the religious activities during this era. Considering the presence of al-Moshasha and al-Kathir, Bakhtiyaris, new travelers from Dezful and Kalantar clan, in particular, throughout the Safavids Empire rule, as well as the ethnic and demographic conflicts and tensions among the Turk Qizilbash (Shamlus, Rumlus, Afshars, Ostadjlu, Turkmen, Dulghadir), and also the existence of Circassia, Georgians, Sadats (Taghori, Jazayeri, Marashi, and Kalantari), al-Moshasha and al-Kathir, and Bakhtiyari people in Shushtar caused this city to go through ups and downs during the Safavid era.

2. Research Background

Only a few studies have investigated the city of Shushtar. Among them “Biography of Shushtar” written by Abdallah Jazayeri in 1775, and “the presents of the world” by Mir al-Latif Khan Shushtari which was published in 1699, are the most prominent studies in this regard. In addition, Ahmad Kasravi in his book titles “Five-hundred years history of Khuzestan” as well as Seyyed Muhammad Ali Emami Ahvazi in “the History of Khuzestan” addressed Shushtar history, but they did not deal with the Shushtar affairs, instead they investigated the political changes of the entire Khuzestan province.

2.1. The Population and the Influential Dynasties of Shushtar at the Beginning of the Safavid Rule

The foundation of the Safavid Empire in form of a Twelve-Imam Shiism government is one of the most important and lengthy section in the history of Islam and Iran. This period resulted in the emergence of Shia ceaseless battles that lasted for nine centuries until Shia religion was proclaimed as the formal and national religion of Iran. One the important actions of Shah Ismail I (reigned 1486-1509) was communicating with Tajiks (Iranian) and Turkmens (Qizilbash). When he came to power, Shah Ismail I decided to suppress many different uprisings throughout the country. At this time, Mushashaiyyah came to dominate most parts of Khuzestan. Mushashaiyyah government was founded from the middle of 9th century. During the rule of Muhammad Fallah (the founder of Mushashai government) and his son Meula Ali, ghulams (slaves) became prevailed. However, the ruling period of their successor, Sultan Muhammad (1449-1484) was closer to the perspective of the political center (Jazayeri, 2009).

Most of the local historians of Shushtar held a positive view towards Sultan Muhammad, mostly because when he became the caliph, the Islamization of the entire Khuzestan occurred and all of the riots were subsided. Mohseniyeh castle and Hoveyzeh are among his achievements, as a pious and righteous ruler.

During the rule of Ali ibn Mohsen (Fayaz) (from 1484 to 1493), Mushashaiyyah dynasty conducted some actions that caused Shah Ismail I to feel intimidated. Then he set off an expedition in 1493 to Khuzestan to suppress Mushashaiyyahs. After the collapse of Mushashaiyyah dynasty, Shah Ismail I went to Dezful. Continuing his expedition, Shah Ismail reached Dezful in 1493 and according to Abdi Beyg Shirazi, the ruler of Dezful, Qavam al-Din Nami, from Ranashi dynasty and his sons joined Shah Ismail in Dezful. Accordingly, the sons of Meulana Qavam al-Din Ranashi were promoted and Shah Ismail I handed over the ruling of Shushtar to Ranashy. Sheikh Muhammad was posited as the Emir of Dezful in 1493 and Hajji Muhammad was elected as the ruler of Shushtar (1493-1499). Hajji Muhammad was assassinated by his own nephew. Khalilallah and the expansion of his authority posed a threat to Mushashaiyyah. Seyyed Badr Moshashai took power simultaneously with these events (1499 - 1525). There was always hostility between Khalilallah Ranashi and Seyyed Badr al-Din Moshashai.

2.2. Competition Between the Afshars and Rumuls during Shah Tahmasp Rule (1509-1563)

Conflicts between Tajik and Qizilbash agents were an inevitable fact throughout the Safavid Empire. Qizilbash made a significant contribution to the foundation of Safavid dynasty. Educated and scholarly people of Iran were the eminent government officials and enduring representatives of bureaucracy in Iran. The Qizilbash were the militant group that appointed the military commander office as an executive governmental position to their troops. If Iranians posited the office of Qizilbash commanders, it could be an insult to them and vice versa, if the Qizilbash was given a political position, Iranians (Tajiks) would consider it as a humiliating action. After the death of Shah Ismail I, Shah Tahmasp came into the power. When Shah Tahmasp sat on the throne, he aged ten. Trying to take benefit from Shah Tahmasp's “young age”, the Qizilbash leaders struggled to strengthen their own dominance over Tajiks.

Turning back to the political condition of Shushtar during that time, the first person from Afshar clan assigned to Shushtar rule was Mehdi Qoli Sulatan Afshar. He held this position 10 years, from 1511 to 1521. However, Shah Tahmasp I ordered his military to suppress a riot by Mehdi Qoli Afshar in Shushtar after his ten-years rule on Shushtar, whom was killed by Sondar Beyg (1521-1522), the brother of Mehdi Qoli Sultan. Afterwards, Shushtar came under the rule of Sondar Beyg, followed by Kachal Khan Afshar who ruled Shushtar over three years between 1522 and 1524 years and Haydar Qoli Sultan ruled Shushtar three years (1524-1527) (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Qazvini, 2003).

There are some contradictory statements about Seyyed Muhammad Arab (eight-year rule) and Abu al-Fath Sultan (three-year rule) in “the biography of Shaushtar” book. Since considering the state of Muhammad Arab between 1527 and 1535, and Abol-fath Sultan's rule from 1535 to 1538, the order of the next rulers of Shushtar is interrupted; Therefore, in the current study we suppose the ruling period of Muhammad Arab and Abol-fath Sultan was between 1527 and 1536. Another reason is that because “the biography of Shaushtar” reports that Hassan Beyg was the ruler of Shushtar in 1534 and Seyyed Beyg ruled Shushtar from 1535 to 1539.

Rostam Sultan Arashlu Afshar, Seyf Beyg and Amir Khan Turkmens were in power in Shushtar for three years (1539-1542), two years (1542-1544) and one year (1544), respectively. Qasim Ali Sultan was appointed as the ruler of Shushtar from 1544 and 1546, and then Shushtar came under ruler of Mansur Khan Dulkadir (1546-1547) and Muhammad Sultan, the brother of Khalil Khan Afshar (1547-1550). Afterwards, Qoch Beyg Rumlu (1550- 1552) and Muhammad Sultan Rumlu (1552-1554) took this position. Husain Qoli Sultan Shamlu and Seyyed Jamaz Arab ruled Shushtar between 1554- 1555 and 1555-1557, respectively. In 1557 and 1558, Qiyas Sultan Ustodjlu filled ruler position and Isa Khalifa followed him (1558- 1559). Finally, Ighut Sultan from Ustodjlu clan and Mirza Ali Beyg were at the position in the period between 1559-1561, and 1561-1562 (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Vahid Qazvini, 2004).

2.3. The Competition Between Marashi and Talghori Sadat for Power and Local Offices in Shushtar During the Reign of Shah Tahmasp I

It is mentioned that Talghor Sadats are the descendants of Abdallah, the son of Musa al-Kadhim. Seyyed Ahmad was one of the first Talghori Sadats who came to Shushtar from Najaf and purchased Aqili lands from their owners in 1278. But in the reign of Shah Tahmasp, Mir Asadallah Sadr Marashi bought the assets and lands belonged to Talghori dynasty and then all of the lands and assets were transferred to Marashi Sadats. However, in 1531, Tar springs of Larestan were given to Seyyed Muhammad Talghori by Shah Tahmasp I. It is also worth noting that this dynasty owned Tar springs (Tar wells) in Khuzestan province until the present time. Some of the current regions including Masjed Soleiman, Lali, Andika, and Haft Shahidan have been Talghori dynasty's possessions (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

2.4. Reappearance of the Afshars in the Local Government of Shushtar and Their Collapse by Circassia and Chagatai Dynasties

Amir Arsalan Arashlu was one of the most powerful members of Afshar dynasty. He was considered lillah, the ninth child of Shah Tahmasp and called Ahmad Mirza Safavi who assassinated the child of Shah Tahmasp in 1564. Khalil Khan Afshar was another member of Afshar dynasty that killed Pari, the sister of Shah Ismail II in 1564. In 1564, Mir Rashid al-Din, the son of Mir Abdel Wahab Marashi was put in charge of Shushtar. He took this position (Shushtar ruler) one year. This position was then filled by Dehdar Sultan merely for a few days. Afterwards, Shahverdi Sultan Afshar Gunduzlu was assigned to Shushtar ruling which lasted one year, from 1565 to 1566. After him, Ali Sultan Afshar Gunduzlu was elected as the local ruler. He governed Shushtar in 1566-1569, and then Ahmad Sultan Afshar (1569-1571) and Khsro Sultan Afshar (1571-1573) were charged with this position, respectively (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

Shahverdi Sultan Afshar Gunduzlu seized the control of Shushtar for the second time. This time he ruled Shushtar for eight years (1573-1580) until Morad Aqa Jolodar Bashi killed him. Morad Aqa Jolodar Bashi and Giyath al-Din Beyg, the representative of Farhad Khan became the ruler of Shushtar for a few days. Khuzestan Province and its capital, the city of Shushtar, had never been protected from Arab and Turk Tazis (Lurs). Mehdi Qoli Khan Shamlu in the period between 1581 and 1587 was the ruler of Shushtar. He established Mehdi Abad village near Shushtar and got the structure of Imamzadeh Abdallad and Barae ibn Malek Ansari repaired in Shushtar. He also established Mosque, Women bath, and the color shops that were located a short distance away from Seyyed Muhammad Bazaar. The plan of Shushtar Bazaar in the new form and new shops were constructed by Mehdi Qoli Khan. Shushtar Bazaar, also known as Qeysarie Bazaar, had existed from Shah Abbas I until Pahlavi reign. It was demolished by Shushtar municipality for a number of reasons. Additionally, Mehdi Qoil khan had a qanat (water well) constructed which stretched from Mizan Dam to end of the Bazaar. However, during Vakhushti Khan period (1621- 1657) the qanat was blocked, because a huge stake got stuck into it (Imam Ahvazi, 2000; Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

Shah Tahmasp I set off four expeditions to Caucasus in 1540-1554 and 1539. The majority of people who were captured slaves were women and children. Shah organized and formed a "third force" from these newly introduced slaves, the children, women and their off springs. In order to reduce the conflicts between Tajiks and Qizilbash and to weaken the increasing power of the Qizilbash in the city, Shah Abbas I came up with a solution and formed the "third force" under his own leadership. This newly formed force was comprised of Circassia, Georgians, and Armenians that initially were put in place by Shah Abbas I to join the civil administration and military. Later on they were called Shah's ghulams (literally a word meaning "slaves"). Brought into Iran, ghulams converted or were forced to convert to Islam. Using new slaves coming from Armenia, Georgia, and Circassia Shah Abbas established his permanent armed forces that were Shah's servants, the backbone of the military and were only loyal to Shah. The new army reaching numbers over 10000-15000 soldiers, consisted of high trained cavalry or squires armed with muskets or other weapons. Shah Abbas organized a musketeer corps (or tufangchiyan), and an artillery corps (called tupchiyan). Shah Abbas raised the number of royal Qarawols (soldiers) up to 3000 who were exclusively elected among the ghulams (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

During 1589-1617, Chagatai dynasty governed Shushtar. The first person of this dynasty who put in charge was Muhammad Sultan Chagatai. His rule lasted 12 years (from 1589 to 1599). After Muhammad Sultan, Ali Sultan Chagatai, the brother of Muhammad Sultan came to power. One of his achievements was the construction of Khwaja Shah Ali bridge near Imamzadeh Abdallad. Tahmasp Sultan, the son of Muhammad Sultan Chagatai was the next ruler of Shushtar. At the time of his rule, Gargar bridge construction was completed. In 1617, Circassia Shabli Sultan was appointed as the ruler of Shushtar, but he died of an illness six months later and Circassia Allah Virdi Sultan, the son of Shabli Sultan Circassia became the ruler of Shushtar. Since he was a child, his uncle, Circassia Behrooz Beyg, took power on behalf of Allah Virdi Sultan and Baba Sultan was appointed as the deputy attorney for five months (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Seyouri, 2007).

2.5. Stabilized Power of Georgians as the Alternative Force of "the Third Power" in Shushtar as a Local Government

During the years of Shah Abbas' rule, the third force was empowered gradually and was not only held in high esteem during Shah Abbas era, but also their role was dominant throughout the successors of Shah Abbas. After Shah Abbas, his grandchild, Sam Mirza, whose elder son was Muhammad Baqir (also known as Safi) succeeded Abbas. When Sam Mirza sat on the throne, he named himself after his father, Safi. Some well-known, influential

dynasties were killed in Shah Safi time such as the Georgian dynasty, Imam Qoli Khan and his sons. Imam Qoli Khan, the son of Allahverdi Khan held the position of commander-in-chief (sepahsalar) under Shah Abbas' rule. His assassination indicates a highly influential ranking of Georgians, in particular, Imam Qoli Khan at the time of Safavid reign. Therefore, Imam Qoli Khan was killed by the order of Shah Safi.

One of the most distinguished Georgians of Shushtar was Vakhushti Khan Dynasty. They were considered as the special royal ghulams (slaves) of Shah and were granted to the rank of biglarbeyg. In popular culture, Vakhushti Khan Dynasty were famous for their beauty. They were living near Salasel Castle in Shushtar (Al-Hosseini, 2004; Vahid Qazvini, 2004).

2.6. Vakhushti Khan Clan (1621- 1657)

Vakhushti Khan Dynasty served as the ruler of Shushtar between 1621 and 1723. When Vakhushti Khan entered Shushtar, he was holding "Qurchi of bludgeon" position. He was warmly welcomed by heads of Chagatai Dynasty including Norouz Beyg, Hajji Mirza Qoli Beyg Chagatai and Sadah (Marashi, Talghori), and the religious scholar of Shushtar. At the time of Vakhushti Khan, his adherents and followers increased considerably in number, for example Georgian Gorgin Beyg and Circassia Ildrom Beyg, Vakhushti Khan's brothers including Mansour Khan and Zul al-Faqar Khan. The latter held the position of beylerbeygi in Qandahar. From the literature of Safavid era, it can be inferred that Vakhushti Khan was famous for his activities including giving full attention to prosperity and growth of Shushtar, agriculture and land affairs, horticulture, and peasantry honoring. To flourish Shushtar, he had trees planted and paid specific attention to agricultural products increase. Vakhushti Khan's appealing achievements in Shushtar made Shah Safi promote him while Vakhushti Khan was returning from Qandahar to Isfahan. In addition to Vakhushti Khan, his associates like his deputy, Hajji Muhammad Sharif, the son of Khwaja Qassem also showed serious consideration for Shushtar prosperity (Al-Hosseini, 2004; Monshi, 2008).

Khwaja Muhammad Taqi Kalantar established Najaf Abad village with the help of Vakhushti Khan. He also constructed Papi, Feyli, and Afzooni castles, made attempts to settle down vassal and peasantry, and provided them with seeds and agricultural machinery and tools. The writer of "the biography of Shushtar" book, referred to a poet named Mulla Kasebi. He was a contemporary poet with Vakhushti Khan era in Shushtar and made a note about the date of Najaf Abad village establishment (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

3. The Successors of Vakhushti Khan

3.1. Fath Ali Khan (1657- 1685)

The rule of Vakhushti Khan lasted 37 years. Vakhushti Khan had five sons: Fath Ali Beyg, Aslamas Beyg (Aslan Khan), Kalb Ali Beyg, Badade Beyg, and Abbas Beyg. After Vakhushti Khan's death, the ruling of Shushtar was handed over to Fath Ali Khan. He served as the governor (hakem) of Shushtar between 1657 and 1684. Similar to his father, Fath Ali Khan treated sadats, ulama and religious scholars with deep respect and admiration. Aslamas Beyg who was appointed as the governor of Shushtar by Fath Ali Khan, greeted Seyyed Nematallah Jazayeri warmly and attempted to bring him comfort and facility like the deserved masters. Seyyed Nematallah Jazayeri was accommodated near the Jama Mosque of Shushtar. Fath Ali Khan followed the manner of his father and devoted himself to the prosperity of Shushtar. He got many buildings and structures built such as Shah Abad, Ali Abad and Dowlat Abad neighborhoods (quarters), Aqili Garden, Mahi Bazan Dam, Hesam Abad Palace, and Khan Bath. Most of the damaged monuments including Salasel Castle and Kaiser Bridge of Shadrawan were repaired by the order of Fath Ali Khan. During his rule, Fath Ali Khan tried to clean Galu Gerd Qanat and Choobband land off mud. But his attempts proved useless. The families of Sadats, Marashi and Jazayeri were highly praised and respected by Fath Ali Khan (Imam Ahvazi, 2000; Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Shushtari, 1984).

3.2. Kalb Ali Khan (1685-1690)

At the time of Kalb Ali Khan's rule, Shushtar was badly hit by flood which devastated agricultural and horticultural products. This flood triggered more destruction in Shushtar, for example many parts of Mizan and Maqam Ali Dams suffered severe damages. Little information is available about Aslan Khan's appointment as Qandahar vali (governor). His appointment to govern Qandahar province was in 1685. He was given the position of Kuhgiluya ruler in 1693. Aslan Khan came to Shushtar to go to Kuhgiluya and stayed in Khaje Garden.

Although Abdullah, the son of Aslan Khan was a generous and epicurean man, he totally stood in the awe of his father. Hence, he made a journey to Kuhgiluya to visit his father. When Aslan Khan took the power and became the ruler of Astarabad, his son met him and another son of Aslan Khan, Muhammad Ali Beyg (Khan), was the deputy governor in Shushtar. Aslan Khan died in 1700 in Asrarabad (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Kasrawi, 2010).

3.3. Isa Khan and Abdallah Khan (1690-1703)

From 1690 to 1692, Shushtar was ruled by Isa Khan, the son of Zulfaqar Khan (Vakhushti Khan's brother). He was very attentive to peasantries who were living in Shushtar. Isa Khan's ruling was short and in 1692, Abdallah Khan, the son of Aslan Khan (Vakhushti Khan's son) became the ruler of Shushtar and were in power about 11 years (1692 -1703).

3.4. Bijan Khan and Mehr Ali Khan (1703-1711)

Bijan Khan, the son of Fazl Ali Beyg seized power in 1703, but he was discharged two years later in 1705. After him, Mehr Ali Khan, the son of Kalb Ali Khan was appointed as the ruler of Shushtar in 1708. Hajji Muhammad

khan, the brother of Kalb Ali Khan was charged as the deputy governor for a very short time. Then, Abdallah Khan retook the office and became ruler. Such changes indicate the inefficiency of the governmental system of Shushtar Georgians and particularly, Abdallah Khan (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

In 1713, Gulnabad battle happened between the military forces from Hotaki clan and the army of the Safavid Empire. It further paved the way for the eventual fall of the Safavid Dynasty. After the wining the war, Mahmud Hotaki began to set off his army deeper into Isfahan, the capital of the Safavid Empire. Finally, Isfahan was besieged by Afghan forces in 1714. During the siege of Isfahan, Mehr Ali Khan, the son of Kalb Ali Khan was appointed as the ruler of Shushtar. After Mahmud Hotaki's decisive victory over the Safavid army in 1714, Afghans blockaded Isfahan and in 1724 Shah Tahmap II, the son of Shah Sultan Husain was discharged from power, and then he fled away along with his soldiers out of the city, but was killed (Navaei and Ghaffari Fard, 2007a).

A detailed description of Vakhushti Khan Dynasty with which Georgian Gorgin Beyg and Circassia Ildrom Beyg had formed triple power in Shushtar is described in the current study. From the very beginning of Vakhushti Khan presence in Shushtar, Gorgin Beyg came to this city and was granted the office of Mirshekar by Vakhushti Khan (1621). Gorgin Beyg held this position until the end of the Safavid era.

Ildrom Beyg was the relative of Vakhushti Khan that came into Shushtar with him in 1622. The family tree of Ildrom Beyg Dynasty is as the following, respectively: Ildrom Beyg, his son Abbad Qoli Beyg I, Morteza Qoli Beyg, Abbas Qoli Beyg II. In the last years of the Safavid Empire and the early years of Afsharid Dynasty foundation, Abbas Qoli Beyg was tax officer.

Bloody battles happened among three calns of Georgian Vakhushti Khan, Georgian Gorgin Beyg and Circassia Ildrom Beyg in Shushtar and in Dezful in the late years of the Safavid Empire and in the beginning of Afsharid reign (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

4. Social and Administrative Status of Shushtar During the Safavid Reign

4.1. Khan and Sultan Office

“Khan” was considered as a senior title for somebody who was appointed by Shah to govern a distinct area. Khan was kept under the observation of Shah and was only responsible to him. He also performed his tasks only with the approval of Shah. The district ruled by a Khan was divided into several areas that in turn were ruled by several individuals owned “Sultan” title. In fact, Sultan referred to subordinate vali (governor- general or the local ruler of an important province). The next office among governor-generals was “Beylerbey” or “Beylerbeyi”. Khans spent the major part of the income of their district on internal and personal affairs, as well as salary payments to fulfill his commitment. A small amount of income was given to the court. Khan was also responsible to protect the governed area against external pressures and threats (Najafi Barzegar, 2014).

The most distinguished Khans of Shushtar were: Amir Khan Turkmen (1544-1545), Mehdi Qoli Khan Shamlu (1581-1587), Georgian Vakhushti Khan (1621-1657), Fath Ali Khan, the son of Vakhushti Khan (1657-1684), Kalb Ali Khan, the son of Vakhushti Khan (1685-1690), Isa Khan (1690-1692), Abdallah Khan (1692-1704), Bijan Khan (Beyjan Khan), the son of Fazl Ali Beyg who was the son of Fath Ali Khan. Fath Ali Khan was the son of Vakhushti Khan that was from a prominent Georgian clan in Shushtar. From the ruling period of Shah Tahmasp I until the end of Shah Abbas I (reigned 1511-1617) , about 40 people served as the local ruler of Shushtar, and most of them gained “Sultan” position (Navaei and Ghaffari Fard, 2007b).

4.2. The Office of Qurchi- Bashi

Qurchi-bashi (also spelled Qorchibashi) was the head of qurchis. The qurchis or qorchis were theoretically enlisted from the Qizilbash tribes and were Turkmen cavalymen. Since there was a close link between qurchi-bashi post and Amir al-umara (commander in chief) during the reign of Shah Ismail I (1486-1509), the position of qorchibashi was less important than Amir al-umara. After the years of 1509 and 1519 that was the zenith of Umaras' power, qurchi- bashi was again of paramount importance in the Safavid period and even in late years of Shah Abbas' reign they held the most powerful office in political and military affairs. The zenith of qurchi-bashi's power in the Safavid period was from 1534 to 1574. Throughout this period, the majority of qurchi-bashis were certainly from Afsharid Dynasty (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Najafi Barzegar, 2014).

4.3. The Office of Qollar-Aqasi (the Head of Special Salves)

Shah Suleiman, the Shah of Persia, died in 1684 and his elder son, Shah Sultan Husain seized the throne in 1685. Aslamas Beyg (also known as Aslan Khan), the son of Vakhushti Khan, that was in charge of Qollar-Aqasi office (the head of special ghulams (salves)) was sent to Qandahar and summoned on Fath Ali Khan to the capital of Safavid Dynasty. Kalb Ali Khan, the other brother of Fath Ali Khan, was appointed as the ruler of Shushtar. Kalb Ali Khan came to Shushtar in 1685.

Qollar forces which were consisted of Georgians, Circassia, Armenians, Caucasians', served as cavalymen and carried musket instead of spear. They were militant audacious groups that gained the praise and approval of the Safavid monarchs. The qullars numbered 12000 and their head called Qollar-Aqasi. Qollar- Aqasi constituted major Umara and the backbone of the Safavid Empire after qurchi-bashi. The payment and annual salary of ghulams were paid after Qollar-Aqasi's approval. They also had the responsibility for promotion of the military ranks including Yuz-bashi (the commander of a 100- troop group) and Min-bashi (the commander of a 1000- troop group).

4.4. The Office of Kalantar (Sheriff)

During the ruling period of Mehdi Qoli Khan on Shushtar (1581-1587), the office of Kalantar was appointed to Khwaja Aziz and thereafter Khwaja Muhammad Taqi ibn Shams al-Din. The head of sheriff (Kalantar-bashi) in Vakhushti Khan's time was Hajji Muhammad Taqi Kalantar who was very generous, noble and good-natured, who was a calligrapher as well. In Vakhushti Khan Era, Seyyed Rashid al-Din Dezfuli went to Shushtar and started to build various structures and buildings. The son of Seyyed Rashid al-Din Dezfuli, Seyyed Khalf became Hajji Muhammad Kalantar's son-in-law; accordingly the hereditary post of Kalantar esd passed to Seyyed Sadiq, the son of Seyyed Khalf. This office passed in turn to Seyyed Nematallah, the son of Seyyed Muhammad Sadiq, and finally to Seyyed Muhammad Husain. Sheriff or Kalantar was a local official with the responsibility of linking up Basqaq or Daroughachi with high-ranking officials on charge and the ordinary people as well. Besides, Kalantar was in charge of defending people's rights against authorities, spreading undertaken tasks from officials among people in a fair way, and tax collection (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Najafi Barzegar, 2014).

4.5. The Office of Kadkhoda

Kadkhoda was the representative of the villagers, the village land lords, and the government. Tax determination and business-related affairs were considered as the specific tasks of Kadkhoda. During the rule of Mehdi Qoli Khan Shamlu (1581-1587), Kadkhoda position was filled by Khwaja Najm al-Din. In Georgian Fath Ali Khan time (1685-1657), Kadkhodas of Shushtar were Hajji Zaman, Hajji Enayatallah and Haji Reza, the son of Hajji Enayatallah, respectively. Abdullah Banou Mosque is one of Haji Reza's actions. Hajji Abd al-Nabi, the son of Khwaja Kalantar Aziz, Hajji Saleh Iraqi and Hajji Abdallah Qopanchi were the other Kadkhodas of Shushtar during this period. The mill of Mahi Bazan Dam (Barrage) was endowed by Hajji Abdullah Qopanchi (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Navaei and Ghaffari Fard, 2007b).

4.6. The Office of Mirshekar

Tahmasp Beyg was charged with the position of Mir Shekar-bashi for a while, and then this office was assigned to Gorgin Beyg. From the very beginning of Vakhushti Khan presence in Shushtar, Gorgin Beyg came to this city and was named as Mirshekar by Vakhushti Khan (in 1621). Gorgin Beyg held this position until the end of the Safavid era, around 1623. The family tree of Georgian Gorgin Beyg is as the following, respectively: Gorgin Beyg, his son Zal Beyg, which one of actions is Qelalak Garden; Rostam Beyg; Esfandiar Beyg, who donated Mirshekar Mosque and Mirshekar School; Muhammad Reza Beyg, the son of Esfandiar Beyg Mirshekar. Esfandiar Beyg ruled Shushtar for a while and passed away in 1622.

Mirshekar position was ranked as a subordinate job in the Safavid era. Mirshekar was charged with watching hunting affairs, controlling court hunters, and taking very good care of hawks (a group of medium-sized diurnal birds of prey). Mirshekar office consisted of more than 200 members. Hawks were used to falconry of crane, goose and duck. Mir Shekar-bashi (the head of Mirshekar) was another important post in the Safavid reign. All officials who engaged in hunting affairs had to obey Mir Shekar. Salary payments of other junior officials involved in hunting were also made after the approval of Amir Shekar-bashi and the premiere (Imam Ahvazi, 2000; Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009).

4.7. The Office of Faqih

When Mir Nuaallah, the son of Seyyed Muhammad Shah Marashi, went to Shiraz to move to India some unpleasant events happened in Shushtar which was mostly because Mushashaiyyah clan dominated much of western Khuzestan province. Mir Nuaallah went to school in Shiraz. He married the daughter of Khwaja Husain Shushtari and stayed in Shushtar. Khwaja Husain Shushtari belonged to a well-known family named Ezzat clan. Mir Nuaallah paved the way for the greater development of Shia and most people proclaimed themselves as his adherents; therefore, Sultan Mohsen Marashi's attention was grabbed by Mir Nuaallah. At that time, Sultan Mohsen Marashi was the governor of Khuzestan. During Sultan Ali period, Mir Nuaallah was offered chancellor (Sadr) position, but he refused the suggestion and gave the office to his brother-in-law, Qazi Abdallah. Qazi Abdallah was Mir Nurallah's pupil.

In 1493 and following the capture of Baghdad, Shah Ismail I went to Khuzestan to suppress Mushashaiyyah clan. After he stopped the apposition, he turned his attention to Shushtar. Shah Ismail I were made aware of Mir Nurallah attempts at developing Imamiyyah Shia practice in Shushtar, so he showed a considerable and admiration to Mir Nurallah and handed old lands back to him and supplied him with new lands. Mir Nurallah died in 1494 leaving behind two sons named Mir Sharif and Mir Habibahha (Marashi, 1986).

4.8. The Position of Sadr

During the Safavid Era, "sadr" was the head of religious organizations and indeed was empowered by the political organization. The main responsibility of Sadr was to create and reinforce the principled unity of the whole nation through developing Shia Islam. Sadr was also taken responsibility for eradicating of any heresy which opposed basic beliefs and principles of Islam. Sadr's religious tasks that exceeded their administrative duty at first were mainly considered as Waqf (endowment) and established the administrative firm foothold (Navaei and Ghaffari Fard, 2007b).

Mir Shams al-Din Asadallah al-Husayni Marashi, also known as Sadr ul-Ulama or Mir Shah Mir, took the position of Sadr-e-Azam (chancellor) in 1522. Al-muhaqqiq al-Thani, Shaykh Abd al-Ali gave permission to Shams

al-Din indicating his skill in both Aqli (reason or intellect) and Naqli (principles of Islamic jurisprudence) sciences. That was the reason that Shams al-Din been was bestowed on the title of Sadr. Mir Shams al-Din Asadallah al-Husayni Marashi was summoned to Qazvin, the capital of Shah Tahmasp, and there passed away because of old age.

Seyyed Ali, the son of Mir Shams al-Din Asadallah al-Husayni Marashi was a scholar, high-educated man in science and mysticism. He was granted the rank of chancellor for a relatively long time on behalf of his father. Mir Seyyed Ali was controlling hukm Shari (Islamic laws) and more affairs in matters. He always took a keen interest in Shushtar prosperity and did lots of services- making many streams in Jannat Makan, Aqili, and Shah Vali in Khuzestan districts. Thereby, Shushtar grew and progressed to a great degree. Shah Tahmasp named Mir Seyyed Ali to chancellor in 1549. Shah Tahmasp respected Sadats such as Mir Seyyed Ali asking him to take responsibility and accept to manage the affairs of Astan Quds Razavi. Mir Seyyed Ali died in Mashhad, where he was living for years in the proximity of the shrine of Imam Rezac (Jazayeri Shushtari, 2009; Monshi, 2008).

4.9. The Office of Kazasker

In 1549, Shah Tahmaspe charged Mir Ala al-Molk Marashi with kazasker office. His brother, Abdel Wahab, who was serving in Shah Tahmasp court, was assigned to kazasker office on behalf of Mir Ala al-Molk Marashi. At first, kazaskers served in workplace of Beygs' Diwan¹. However, after the office of "sadr" was designated in the Safavid capital, and Beygs' Diwan owned jurisdiction over Sharia lawsuits in presence of Sadr, kazaskers were inhibited from being present in Beygs' Diwan workplace. Kazasker or kaziasker literally means "military judge or chief judge". The terms refer to judges who presides over military matters.

4.10. The Office of Sheikh al-Islam

Sheikh al-Islam was the highest ranking Shiite position assigned by the chancellor (Sadr) and the approval of Shah (King). Sheikh al-Islam was in charge of the religious affairs. He was also qualified to issue judicial opinions base on Jafari jurisprudence. The school of jurisprudence is followed by Twelve-Imam Shia in general. The Sheikh al-Islam of capital reportedly chose Sheikh al-Islam for others cities. "Enjoying what is right and forbidding what is wrong" was a crucially important duty of Sheikh al-Islam. Shaykh Abd al- Latif Jamei Ameli filled the office of Sheikh al-Islam during Vakhushti Khan period. Shaykh Abd al- Latif Jamei Ameli died in 1629 and the same year Sheikh al- Javad Kazemi came to Shushtar and took this office in 1658.

The term "Waqf" literally means 'confinement and prohibit' of 'causing a thing to stop or stand still'. The legal meaning of Waqf is the detention of a specific thing in the ownership of Waqf and devoting of its profit or products 'in charity of the poor and needy or the good object that benefits public'. Waqf affected profusely the economic history of Iran and economical formation of religious organizations. During the Safavid era, Shia practice reached its greatest influence and became widespread as the official religion of the Empire. The importance of Waqf was such that Engelbert Kaempfer, the German naturalist and explorer, issued a statement about it. In his opinion, Waqf in Persia has been rivalry and emulation among the noble and grandees. Throughout the Safavid reign, Waqf extended progressively based on the religious policies, foreign affairs policy and domestic management styles, and this was the most obvious difference of Waqf in the Safavid reign compared with that of the former reigns. Like his brother, Mir Seyyed Ali, founded a large library in Shushtar that was of magnificent services of Seyyed Abdel Wahab. By this way, Shsushtar and residents in the neighboring cities gained many advantages.

5. Conclusion

During the Safavid Empire, Shushtar passed a "golden era", as the local rulers appointed gave more attention to the prosperity of Shushtar. The structure of this city strongly resembled the capital of Safavid dynasty, but was portrayed in small dimensions. At that time, the damaged monuments like Khaje Shah Ali and Gargar bridges, Mizan, Shadravan and Mahibazan Dams were repaired. A large number of new villages were created, for example Mehdi Abad, Najaf Abad, Shah Abad, Fath Abad, Dowlat Abad, Khalf Abad. New mosques, schools, and libraries were also constructed and a number of gardens were built. Most grandees' resting place such as Barae ibn Malek Ansar and Imamzadeh Abdallad were fixed.

In the Safavid period, both politically and militarily influential powers were comprised of Afsharid Qizilbash (Arashlus, Qondazlus), Shamlus, Rumlus, Ostadjlus, Turkmens, Dulghadirs. Under the reign of Shah Abbas I, Chagatai clan and in the end of Shah Abbas I period and at the beginning of the reign of Shah Safi, Vakhushti clan were elected as the local rulers of Shushtar. Entering Shushtar during the Shah Safi's rule, the Georgian clan of Vakhushti Khan took political control of this city over 102 years, from 1621 to 1723. Throughout Vakhushti Khan (1621-1657) and Fath Ali Khan (1657-1685) periods, many poets were fostered through the supports of this Georgian clan.

Regarding religion, Marashi Dynasty had a profound effect upon Shushtar, as their actions resulted in the religious transformation of Shushtar that converted from Sunni to Shia. This happened earlier than the introduction of Islam in Shushtar. Marashi clan filled positions of Kazasker and sadr during the period of Shah Tahmasp I reign. In 1564, they took political and militarily power of Shushtar as well. Later on, this clan turned to a local power and settled in Abdallah Bayouneh and Eshkaftey mahalehs, and was considered as to be one of the Khans in Haidar House of Shushtar. Having entered Shushtar, Jazayeri and Kalantar Sadats were given the responsibility of religious matters during Vakhushti Khan and Fath Ali Khan periods. Thereafter, Kalantar family seized local power and settled

¹ - Justice court of the city

down in Moqehi quarter. They were addressed as one of the Khans of Nemat House in Shushtar. Talghori Sadats began initially engaging in the religious matters. However, the cession of Ghilarestan spring to Talghoris by Shah Tahmasp I in 1531 caused them to be absorbed in the economic affairs. Seyyehd Husain in Imamzadeh Abdallah region and Seyyed Qutb al-Din in Abdallah Banouyeh mahaleh were the most prominent men of Talghoris Sadat clan.

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