



Explaining the Political and Religious Causes of the Battle of Chaldiran

Mazaher Ahmadian Chaharborj¹; Amir Hossein Pashayi²; Ali Jabbari Chaharborj³

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Studies, Urmia University, Urmia, Iran

²Graduate of Level 2, Islamic Seminary, Urmia, Iran

³Graduate of Level 3, Islamic Seminary. Deputy of Education, Imam Khamenei Islamic Seminary of Urmia, Urmia, Iran

E-mail: ma.ahmadian@urmia.ac.ir, amir79urmia@gmail.com, jabari1388@gmail.com

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Abstract

Throughout history, various factors have contributed to the formation of disagreements and conflicts between rulers of different nations. Ancient Iranian history has witnessed numerous events and wars. With the establishment of the Safavid government by Shah Ismail in the early 10th century AH in Iran, widespread changes occurred in the political and religious landscape of Southwest Asia. This led to multiple conflicts between the Ottoman government and the nascent Safavid government. Among these conflicts was the significant Battle of Chaldiran, which has attracted the attention of historians and researchers due to its profound effects and consequences. There are various differing opinions regarding the causes of this war. This descriptive-analytical research attempts to elucidate the political and religious factors involved in the occurrence of the Battle of Chaldiran. The results of the research indicate that multiple factors contributed to this war, including political causes such as the display of power, humiliation of the opposing side, showcasing conquests, and religious causes such as the rise to power of a Shi'ite government, and economic causes such as reaching China and India for trade. However, it should be noted that political causes played a more fundamental role in the outbreak of this war compared to religious causes, with religious affiliations merely serving as a pretext for its commencement.

Keywords: *Battle of Chaldiran; Shah Ismail; Ottoman Government; Safavids, Religious Factors; Political Factors*

Introduction

The rise of the Safavid government in the early 10th century AH (907 AH) brought about widespread changes in the Southwest Asian region. Among the most significant of these changes were the formation of a unified government on the Iranian plateau after several centuries of chaos and the widespread adoption of Shi'ism. Shah Ismail, nine centuries after the advent of Islam in Iran, successfully established the first centralized Iranian government, relying on both religious and ancient roots, and

declared Twelver Shi'ism as the official religion of Iran (Savory, 1993, p. 25). With the advent of the Safavid government and the establishment of a powerful central government in the country, the internal fabric of Iranian society shifted from Sunni to Shi'i Islam. However, on the international stage, it left deeper imprints, the most important of which was the emergence of a Shi'i power and government amidst neighboring Sunni-majority states. Concurrently with the formation of the Safavid government in Iran, Sultan Bayezid II (881-918 AH) ruled the Ottoman Empire. Initially, Bayezid attempted to overthrow the Safavid government by assisting the Aq Qoyunlu (1378-1508 AD), who were opponents of Shah Ismail. However, with the consolidation of Shah Ismail's power and the elimination of internal opposition, Bayezid changed his approach and established friendly relations (Farrokh, 2020, pp. 26, 27, 33). Nevertheless, the subsequent death of Bayezid II and the ascension of his successor, Yavuz Sultan Selim I (1512-1520), led to a complete shift in the relations between the two sides (from friendly to hostile). These changes in the political relations of the Ottoman government marked the beginning of tensions that ultimately led to the Battle of Chaldiran. This war was rooted in political, religious, military, and ideological differences between the two parties.

Literature Review

The Battle of Chaldiran, as one of the most important events in Iranian history at the beginning of the Safavid period, has always been a subject of interest for both domestic and international historians and researchers. This event had widespread consequences for Iran and the Southwest Asian region, not only from a military perspective but also from political, religious, social, and cultural viewpoints.

Numerous studies have examined this battle. Some works, such as Roger Savory's "Iran Under the Safavids" and Stanford J. Shaw's "History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey," have explored the background of the formation of the Safavid and Ottoman powers and the ideological and religious conflicts between them. Furthermore, books like "The Role of Anatolian Turks in the Formation of the Safavid State" (Sumer) and "The National War of Iranians in Chaldiran" (Falsafi) have analyzed the military and ethnic aspects of the war.

In some research, emphasis has been placed on the religious aspect of the battle, particularly the role of the confrontation between Safavid Shi'ism and Ottoman Sunnism. However, another category of studies, such as the works of Kaveh Farrokh, Navai, and Ghaffarifar, believe that political differences and power struggles played a more prominent role in the outbreak of the war, and that religious differences were primarily used as a tool to legitimize the conflict.

Nevertheless, there is a scarcity of independent research that specifically and comparatively analyzes the contribution of each of the political and religious factors to the Battle of Chaldiran. This battle not only initiated long-term conflicts between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires but also played a key role in shaping the political, identity, and religious boundaries of the West Asian region. For this reason, research into the causes of this war has long been at the center of historical studies.

Some classic works in the field of Safavid history, such as Roger Savory's "Iran Under the Safavids," have examined the religious and ethnic backgrounds of the rise of the Safavid state and its confrontation with Sunni powers. In these works, Shah Ismail's religious motivations in promoting Shi'ism and its consequences for relations with the Ottomans are considered central to the analysis.

On the other hand, authors such as Abdolhossein Navai in "Shah Ismail Safavi" and "History of Political, Social, Economic, and Cultural Developments in Iran During the Safavid Period" have attempted to highlight not only the religious dimension but also the political and geopolitical factors influencing this battle. They believe that competition for influence in border regions, control over Eastern Anatolia and Diyarbakir, and mutual threats arising from the expansion of influence by either side were among the most important reasons for the outbreak of the war.

Researchers such as Hashem Hejazi Far in "Shah Ismail I and the Battle of Chaldiran" and Nasrollah Falsafi in "The National War of Iranians in Chaldiran" have also utilized historical documents to provide narratives of the antecedents of this battle and, in some cases, have sought to incorporate the personal temperaments of the monarchs, the Qizilbash power structures, and the military conditions of the two empires into their analysis.

In addition, some analysts, such as Kaveh Farrokh in his book "Iran at War," have attempted to interpret this war within the broader context of inter-civilizational rivalries within the Islamic world, with a comparative and meta-analytical approach; where the Safavids are presented as representatives of Iranian Shi'i identity and the Ottomans as representatives of the Turkish-Sunni world of Sunnism.

However, despite the richness of existing research, less research has directly addressed a comparative and analytical examination of the contribution of religious causes versus political-military causes in the Battle of Chaldiran. Most studies have highlighted one of these two dimensions and have paid less attention to elucidating the extent and type of influence of each of these factors in conjunction with each other. The present research is structured with the aim of addressing this gap, based on original historical sources, and clarifying the extent of each factor's contribution to the process leading to the Battle of Chaldiran.

One of the main merits of this research lies in providing an analytical, fair, and comparative perspective on the religious and political causes of the Battle of Chaldiran. Unlike many previous studies that have focused solely on one of these two dimensions or have been biased by religious or nationalistic views, this research has attempted, by relying on diverse and original historical sources, to determine the real and comparable contribution of each factor to the outbreak of this war.

Other innovations of this research include:

First. Integrated and Comparative Approach: The current research, by combining historical, political, and religious analyses, provides a more comprehensive explanation of the background of the Battle of Chaldiran.

Second. Extensive Use of Historical Correspondence between the Parties: By citing the reciprocal letters of Shah Ismail and Sultan Selim, the research has been able to get closer to the real motivations of each party.

Third. Leader-Centric Analysis Alongside Structural Factors: Unlike many studies that focus solely on power structures or ideology, this study also examines the influence of the personality, beliefs, and temperaments of the monarchs as effective factors in escalating tensions.

Fourth. Re-evaluation of the Common View Regarding the Role of Religion: One of the most important results of this research is highlighting the role of political and military factors as the main drivers of the war, and presenting the religious factor merely as a tool for legitimation or a pretext for its justification; which can provide the basis for re-examining some common historical narratives.

Therefore, this research, in terms of its scientific approach, content analysis, and methodological objective, makes a significant contribution to deepening the historical understanding of the Battle of Chaldiran and its complexities.

Conceptualization

The Word Chaldiran: Apparently, Chaldiran is a transformed form of "Chahar Deiran," meaning "four monasteries/temples," due to the presence of four churches in this region (Sasanpour,

2007, p. 663). Another etymological possibility in Turkish, considering the intense cold of this region, especially in winter, could be a transformed form of "Çal Öldüren" (Chal Olduren), meaning "mountain goat killer" or "player."

The Battle of Chaldiran: The Battle of Chaldiran was one of the most significant events in Iranian history, which has etched the name "Chaldiran" into Iran's political history. This event occurred between Shah Ismail Safavi and Sultan Selim, the Ottoman monarch, in this location. Professor Edward Browne referred to this battle, writing: "In early Rajab 920 AH (August 23, 1514 AD), a great war took place between the Ottomans and the Iranians in Chaldiran. In this location, which is approximately twenty farsakhs from Tabriz, three thousand Ottomans and two thousand Iranians were killed. However, the Ottoman artillery concluded the war in favor of the Turks, and Shah Ismail, despite the bravery he and his companions displayed, was forced to turn back from the field and retreat, even abandoning Tabriz" (Browne, 1937, pp. 60-65). Similarly, the author of *Mir'at al-Buldan* wrote about this: "Sultan Selim, in the year 918 AH, advanced towards Azerbaijan with a vast army. Shah Ismail, who was not expecting such a war, departed from Hamadan with the limited number of troops he had in the first ten days of Rajab, and confronted the Ottoman army with twenty thousand troops in the plain of Chaldiran... In that battle, Shah Ismail himself displayed complete valor and fought... Many of Shah Ismail's commanders were killed or captured in that war, and although Shah Ismail's army suffered a defeat, the courage and bravery personally displayed by him in this battle led to his widespread fame" (Khan E'temad al-Saltaneh, 1988, Vol. 4, pp. 74-78). The author of *Mir'at al-Buldan* then elaborates on Shah Ismail's defeat, the conquest of Tabriz by Sultan Selim, and the events that transpired after the Battle of Chaldiran, specifically quoting the *Fathnameh* (victory letter) that Sultan Selim Khan wrote to the governor of Edirne regarding the "Conquest of Chaldiran" (Ibid.).

Significance of the Battle of Chaldiran: This battle is a very important event in the history of Iran after Islam because if Shah Ismail could not have resisted the Ottoman Empire in this war, this country, which had become a realm of petty states after the advent of Islam, and which Shah Ismail had united and integrated by establishing the Safavid state, would surely have fragmented again. It can be said that in that scenario, there would have been no country named Iran left, and only a name of Iran would have remained in history.

The Word Qizilbash: "Qizil" in Turkish means red and golden (Amid, 2010, entry: Qizil). Analogous uses of this word include *Qizil Aala* (trout), *Qizil Uzen* (a river), *Qizil Imam* (referring to the golden dome of Imam Reza's shrine), *Qizil Gul* (red rose), and the city of Qiziljeh, which are used in Turkish. The word "Bash" also means "head" (Arabic: *ra's*) (Dehkhoda, 2006, entry: Bash). Qizilbash became famous and was used to identify and name individuals who wore a specific helmet or cap, most likely red or golden in color (Ibid., entry: Qizilbash).

The Qizilbash were tribes from the Mongol lands and the "Oghuz" clan (Faruk Sümer, *The Role of Anatolian Turks in the Formation and Development of the Safavid State*, 1992, pp. 12, 90, 209) who, at various times, migrated to western Iran and Anatolia and were employed by monarchs for warfare. These Turkmen and Mongol tribes later, with shared religious tendencies and an affinity for the Safavid Sufi order, formed a large army called the Qizilbash. The major Qizilbash tribes are known as Ustajlu, Baharlu, Takallu, Rumlu, Shamlu, Afshar (Usharilar), and Qajar (Ibid.).

Major Qizilbash Tribes:

The Qizilbash were divided into five major tribes that played a vital role in the formation of the Safavid state during the time of Shah Ismail, and they are, in order:

1. **Rumlu:** This tribe was initially comprised of Qizilbash inhabitants of Qoyulhisar and Qarahisar, part of Sivas, and other associated regions, as well as Tokat and Amasya (Sumer, 1992, p. 55).

2. **Ustajlu:** The Ustajlu were originally tribes residing in Sivas, Amasya, and Tokat, and belonged to the large nomadic groups of Ulu Yörük (who had spread as far as Qırşehir). A significant portion of Sheikh Junayd's and Sheikh Haydar's disciples were from this tribe (Ibid., p. 56).
3. **Takallu:** The Takallu were from the province of Teke, or more simply, from the Teke Turks residing in the Antalya region. Among them were individuals from the province of Hamid (the region of Isparta, Burdur) and also from the province of Monteshe (prominently, individuals from the province of Muğla) (Ibid., p. 58).
4. **Shamlu:** During the Ottoman period, the general name for the Turkmen tribes of Aleppo was Shamlu. They spent summers in Uzun Yayla, located south of Sivas, and winters in the areas between Aleppo and Gaziantep (Ibid., p. 59).
5. **Dulkadir:** In Safavid sources, the population of this tribe is mentioned as eighty thousand families, originating from the tribes in the regions of Maraş and Bozok (Yozgat) (Ibid., p. 60).

Descendants of the Ottomans: The Ottomans were descendants of a group of nomadic peoples who inhabited the Altai mountainous region, located east of the European-Asian (Eurasian) steppes and south of the Yenisei River and Lake Baikal in lands that are now part of Outer Mongolia (G. Shaw, 1991, p. 21).

Causes of the Battle of Chaldiran

One of the important wars recorded in Iranian history is the Battle of Chaldiran, in which various causes and factors were involved. However, the fundamental causes of this war can be divided into two sections: religious causes, and political-military causes.

Religious Causes of the Battle of Chaldiran

Religious differences have historically led to tensions and disputes between various religions. Indeed, one of the factors leading to the Battle of Chaldiran was the religious differences between the two warring parties, which caused tension and ultimately led to war.

The formation of a Shi'i government on the eastern front was a serious and fundamental threat to the Ottoman Empire, which was constantly at war with Christians in the west. This was especially true because a large number of Turkmens living in the Ottoman Anatolian region supported Shah Ismail's claims that he was a descendant of Imam Musa al-Kadhim (AS), the seventh Shi'a Imam, and therefore considered governance his usurped right. These Turkmens established a spy network within Ottoman territory. Since the Ottoman sultans had come to power with the support of Sufis (Sufism), they knew the severe consequences for their rule if the Turkmens believed Shah Ismail's claims (Savory, 1993, p. 37). Furthermore, the adoption of Shi'ism as the official religion of the country led to further disputes between the parties. The Ottoman sultans, in their serious and fervent Sunni stance, presented themselves as the center of Islam, while the Shi'i Iranians were considered to have deviated from the faith by the prejudiced Sunni scholars of Istanbul (Rafizi). At the beginning of Shah Ismail's reign, which coincided with the rule of Sultan Bayezid II, the Sultan, upon witnessing the harsh behavior and oppression of the Qizilbash towards Sunnis (actions such as destroying graves and shrines, killing Sunnis, etc.) (Farrokh, 2020, p. 33), ordered the governors of Anatolian provinces to prevent Ottoman subjects from traveling to Iran and to welcome Iranians coming to the Ottoman Empire, returning their confiscated homes and properties (Falsafi, 2012, pp. 23-24). For this reason, Shah Ismail, in his first letter to the Ottoman Sultan, while mentioning the support and affection of Ottoman subjects towards him and his family (Shi'a Imams), requested the Sultan to allow them free movement to and from Iran (Navai, 1968, pp. 55-56). In response, the Ottoman Sultan, while mentioning the economic and political effects (agricultural stagnation and

shortage of manpower) of the Sufi migration, warned Shah Ismail about it but granted permission (for movement) on the condition of the Sufis' return (Navai, 1968, pp. 57-58).

Sultan Selim's letters to Shah Ismail on the eve of the war indicate that religion was one of the causes of the war. These letters refer to the activities and strictness of Shi'ites against Sunnis and claim that he came to war based on the fatwa of Sunni scholars. In these letters, Sultan Selim accused Shah Ismail of apostasy and heresy (Navai, 1968, pp. 114-117). The importance of this discussion becomes clear here when the Ottoman Sultan claimed that if the Shah repented and returned from the Shi'a faith, he would withdraw from attacking Iran. And again, in subsequent letters, he considered the Shah's actions in misleading the Prophet's Ummah (PBUH) and disrespecting Islam and Sunni scholars as one of the main reasons for attacking Iran (Navai, 1968, pp. 157-161, 165-167). On the other hand, Shah Ismail's devotion to his disciples and vice versa was entirely clear. In the letters he sent to Sultan Bayezid and Selim, he also referred to his support for his followers in Anatolia. He even used this same reason to justify his attack on Ala al-Dawla Dulkadir's territory (Navai, 1968, pp. 167-169).

Studying the letters of both sides indicates that Shah Safavi being Shi'a and Sultan Ottoman being Sunni, and the actions of each in supporting their followers in the opposing territory, led to disagreements and provocations. Moreover, Shah Ismail's misguided policies also exacerbated this situation. One of these wrong policies was that after defeating Shibak Khan Uzbek in the Battle of Merv (916 AH), Shah Safavi had his skull filled with straw and sent it to the Ottoman Sultan. Both the Ottoman Sultan and the Uzbek Khan were Sunnis and had friendly correspondence. The Ottoman Sultan considered this act of the Shah as a sign of his underlying hostility and was enraged by it (Mostowfi, 1996, p. 52; Falsafi, 2002, pp. 26-27; Navai and Ghaffarifar, 2013, p. 97). In fact, sending the head of the Sunni Uzbek Shah to the Ottoman Shah was a kind of religious provocation by Shah Ismail that severely amplified the differences, and these differences, to some extent, fueled the fire of war.

Despite the fact that Sheikh Safi al-Din Ardabili, the great ancestor of the Safavid dynasty, was a Sunni (Shafi'i), Shah Ismail held extreme fanaticism for the Shi'a faith and made great efforts to impose it on his Sunni subjects. He even did not hesitate to persecute Sunnis in this regard, and this was enough to drive the Sunni scholars of Istanbul towards enmity with the Safavid state (Riahi, 1994, p. 285; Farrokh, 2020, pp. 16-17). Sultan Selim himself, like the Safavid Shah, had intense religious fanaticism (Falsafi, 2001, p. 37). These religious fanaticisms on both sides continued into later periods, and despite the efforts of individuals like Nader Shah, who sought to reconcile by making adjustments to the Shi'a faith (such as removing the curses against the Caliphs, etc.) and thus satisfy the Ottoman Turks to officially recognize the Ja'fari school as one of the four Sunni schools and eliminate differences, he ultimately faced strong opposition from the Ottomans, and the Ottomans themselves made no effort to resolve these differences (Sha'bani, 1992, pp. 38-39).

The Ottoman Sultan feared the power of the Qizilbash in his territory so much that before attacking Iran, he ordered all these individuals to be found and registered (approximately 40,000 people). Then, some of these individuals were killed, and the rest were exiled to the western (European) parts of the Empire. Of course, the claims made by some historians regarding the massacre of all these individuals are incorrect or exaggerated, because such an event, being very significant at the time, would inevitably have left traces in the documents remaining from that era or in documents from later periods, which is not the case (Savory, 1993, p. 38).

In any case, the emergence and escalation of religious differences between the parties fueled the fire of conflicts even more, leading to numerous disputes. Ultimately, these very differences served as a pretext for the Battle of Chaldiran.

However, according to some researchers and writers, religious differences were merely a pretext for war, and political and military causes, which were more important than the religious cause, existed behind the scenes. To prove this claim, one should refer to the 700-year wars between Iran and Rome, as

these wars also occurred for reasons similar to the Battle of Chaldiran. The Roman government, which was Christian, constantly attacked Sasanian or Parthian Iran under the pretext of supporting Christians against Zoroastrians, while their main goal in these attacks was to overthrow the Iranian government and reach China and India (Chinese silk and Indian spices), thus relieving themselves of the powerful eastern adversary so they could comfortably pursue their European conquests. Exactly the same reasons apply to the Ottoman government. This claim can be substantiated by referring to the Ottoman government's wars with other Sunni governments (the Battle of Oltu Beli against Uzun Hasan in 877 AH, the Battle of Angora with Timur Gurkani in 804 AH, or the overthrow of other Turkish emirates in Anatolia, or after the Battle of Chaldiran, the overthrow of the Mamluk government of Egypt by Sultan Selim). Although some of these wars had a defensive aspect for the Ottomans, it shows that religion played a less significant role in the outbreak of this war and was, in fact, merely a pretext for it.

Political Causes of the Battle of Chaldiran

The emergence of political differences has been and continues to be one of the most important factors in the formation of conflicts between various nations and countries. In the Battle of Chaldiran, political and military causes and the efforts of both the Safavid and Ottoman sides to gain influence and conquer more territories played a more prominent role in setting the stage for the conflict. In other words, the Safavids wanted to capture Anatolia and Diyarbakir, which were the original homelands of their supporters, and on the other hand, the Ottoman Empire wanted to annex Iran to its territory, an ambition for which many wars took place, and Chaldiran was merely a prelude to it.

Historians consider the efforts and actions of individuals like Mohammad Ustajlu and Nurali Khalifa, both great commanders of Shah Ismail in Anatolia and Diyarbakir, as among the most important reasons for Selim's attack on Iran. For example, Mohammad Ustajlu, after his victories in Diyarbakir, became so arrogant that he sent a woman's dress to the Ottoman Sultan and dispatched provocative letters to him, as recorded in historical sources. Or Nurali Khalifa, in Anatolia, which was under Ottoman control, began to gather forces and fight against the governors of Ottoman provinces.

Rumlu writes in this regard: "Khan Mohammad Ustajlu conquered Diyarbakir and repeatedly defeated the Dulkadir army with few men, and his attendant, Delu Duras, with 70 horsemen, defeated 300 Mamluks of Qansuh, the Sultan of Egypt, who were renowned for their bravery. From this bravery, his wonder, greatness, majesty, and pomp exceeded limits, and he sent threatening and intimidating letters to Sultan Selim, provoking him to confrontation and battle, and Nurali Khalifa caused much destruction in that land and burned the city of Tokat" (Rumlu, 2005, Vol. 3, pp. 187-190; *Jahangoshay-e Khaqan*, 1985, p. 489; Qomi, 1980, pp. 129-130). These individuals were doing these things while Shah Ismail was fully aware of them and the consequences of their actions, and he feared the reaction of the Ottoman Sultan (Sumer, 1992, p. 44).

The efforts of both sides to conquer the Dulkadir territory were also among the factors that greatly influenced the deterioration of relations between the two parties. Although Shah Ismail, in his second letter to Sultan Bayezid, wrote: "In these auspicious days, when we had planned the passage through the provinces of Dar al-Salam of Rum, we had absolutely ensured that the Ghazis and victorious armies would not approach the subjects of those lands and would not cause any interference. We had appeased and brought back to their homes and places the groups who had been displaced by the passage of our victorious camp" (Navai, 1968, pp. 61-62), it was clear that the Ottoman government was dissatisfied with this military expedition, and Sultan Selim's protest against Safavid military activities in Anatolia and Diyarbakir, and generally against the expansion of the Safavid state, is evident in the letters he sent to Shah Ismail. In his first letter to Shah Ismail, he states: "You have taken possession of the eastern provinces through aggression... If... those fortresses and places whose land our army's horses trampled in earlier times are considered part of the Ottoman territories... it is more fortunate. Otherwise... if you persist in these vile actions... the territory of that land, which has fallen into your hands through

deception, will soon become the encampment of our victorious army" (Navai, 1968, pp. 144-147). Sultan Selim's intention was that if the Safavid Shah desired friendly relations between the two sides, he should return the territories that previously belonged to the Ottomans (Qazvini, 1999, p. 363). These disagreements also existed during the time of Sultan Bayezid, who was a contemporary of Shah Ismail for 11 years.

It should be noted that the Ottoman Sultan had a dual policy at this time. Initially, when Shah Ismail's power was not yet consolidated, he supported his enemies, such as the Aq Qoyunlu. However, with Shah Ismail's victory and the stabilization of his power base, the Ottoman Sultan sought to improve his relations with the Safavid Shah (Navai and Ghaffarifar, 2013, pp. 93-34). But with Selim's coup against his father and his rise to power, all calculations were disrupted, and any possibility of compromise was lost, because Selim had no doubt that the presence of the Qizilbash in Anatolia posed a serious threat to the survival of the Ottoman state (Roemer, 2001, p. 39).

Upon his ascension to the throne, Selim gathered the Janissary elders and emphasized that Shah Ismail posed a serious threat to the Ottoman government, stating that no negligence or weakness was permissible in this regard (Uzunçarşılı, 1990, p. 279). Furthermore, Selim intended to annex Iran to his territory. Amir Mahmud writes in this regard: "Since Sultan Selim coveted the provinces of Iraq and Azerbaijan, he sent envoys to Shah Ismail for this purpose, and Shah Ismail also replied that 'we too are intent on conquering your territories'" (Khandamir, 1996, p. 85). This indicates the intention of both sides to conquer more territories.

Another factor was Shah Ismail's support for other Ottoman princes against Selim in their bid for power after Bayezid's dethronement. After Selim's succession to Bayezid, Bayezid's eldest son, Ahmad, contended with Selim but was killed. Subsequently, his son Murad also claimed the sultanate but, after his defeat against Selim, sought refuge in Iran, and Shah Ismail immediately supported him to exploit the internal problems of the Ottomans for his own benefit (Sarvar, 1995, pp. 91-92; Khandamir, 1983, pp. 523-524; Navai and Ghaffarifar, 2013, p. 96; Savory, 2003, p. 96). In addition, Shah Ismail did not recognize Selim's government, did not send an envoy to congratulate him, and sent trade delegations to Egypt and Austria (Sykes, 1991, p. 249; Navai and Ghaffarifar, 2013, p. 97). And since the kings of Hungary and Egypt did not have very good relations with the Ottomans, Shah Ismail incited them to further opposition against the Ottomans (Iqbal Ashtiani, p. 666).

The political actions of the Ottoman monarch and Shah Ismail Safavi were undeniable factors in the outbreak of the Battle of Chaldiran, actions in which neither side sought to resolve problems; instead, they increasingly fanned the flames of discord and even exploited the opponents of the other side for their own benefit, provoking them to confront the opposing party. These factors led to the fierce Battle of Chaldiran, which resulted in many casualties on both sides.

Impact of Sultan Selim's Character on the Outbreak of War

Some historians consider the temperaments of Shah Ismail and Sultan Selim to be influential in the formation of the Battle of Chaldiran. Considering the temperaments of both sides, it can be understood that neither was willing to accept the obedience or servitude of the other, and for this very reason, they did not send envoys to each other's courts (Shaybani, 1970, p. 214). Sultan Selim ascended to the throne with the ambition of reviving Mehmed II's active policies in acquiring new conquests and, in fact, fulfilling his desire for the establishment of a global empire (G. Shaw, 1991). Turkish historians have given Selim the epithet "Yavuz" (resolute and decisive), and European historians have portrayed him as a cruel and bloodthirsty individual. Yet, at the same time, he possessed knowledge and literature and composed poems in Turkish and Persian. Nevertheless, in politics, he was strict and quick to execute. The pillars of his state were never safe or secure from his life; during his approximately 8-year reign, he beheaded 7 Ottoman Grand Viziers (Falsafi, 2002, p. 37). Mirza Beg Janabadi writes about Selim: "After Bayezid, his son Selim ascended the throne of world rule and, contrary to his ancestors, deviated from the

straight path of integrity and entered into opposition and enmity with the servants of the heaven-based Murtazavi order" (Janabadi, 1999, p. 285). Selim's personality and temperament are easily discernible from his letters to Shah Ismail. For instance, in his fourth letter to Shah Ismail, he wrote: "Ismail Bahadur Khan... in the religion of the world's kings, the realm is like a king's fourth legitimate wife, and certainly no one who has a sign of masculinity will tolerate another interfering with his wife" (Navai, 1968, p. 173). Or, in his first letter, by introducing himself with appropriate titles such as "Faridun-like in glory and inheritor of the Caliphate," he addresses Shah Ismail with titles such as "Commander of the Ajam" or "Zahhak of the age" (Navai, 1968, p. 144). In reality, this sense of superiority in Selim and, in a way, his humiliation of Shah Ismail in his sent letters were not without impact on the outbreak and escalation of the conflicts.

Impact of Shah Ismail's Character on the Outbreak of War

A European portrait of Shah Ismail depicted him with red hair and Indo-European features, indicating his semi-Kurdish ancestry. Shah Ismail also had Greek, Turkmen, and Georgian ancestry, and many efforts were made to conceal Ismail's Kurdish origins to portray him as being from the Prophet's family. Shah Ismail, like today's Azeris, was bilingual and spoke Azeri Turkish and Persian. He composed many poems in Azeri Turkish, and his writings in his mother tongue greatly contributed to the advancement of the Azeri Turkish language. Despite all this, Shah Ismail clearly recalled his ties to ancient Iran in his poems. In general, Shah Ismail appears to have been very intelligent, generous, a devout Shi'a, and morally concerned with providing welfare and comfort for his people. Shah Ismail often renounced a significant portion of his share of the spoils to distribute them equally among his soldiers, and it was due to this generosity that his soldiers were extremely loyal to him. Shah Ismail was a strong, formidable, and brave warrior and possessed great skill in archery. On the other hand, he was very cruel, showing little mercy or compassion towards his opponents and his Sunni compatriots (Farrokh, 2nd ed., 2020).

Shah Ismail was a patient and resilient individual in the face of hardships, possessing an unwavering determination in making decisions, and great courage and brutality (Hejazi Far, 1993, p. 55). All these factors combined made Shah Ismail a person for whom belligerence was part of his nature and blood, and he had a great desire for conquests.

In the author's opinion, all these points can be considered among the apparent causes of the war. However, it should be noted that even without these factors, the war would still have occurred. In fact, it can be said that the main cause of the war was the establishment of the Safavid government in 907 AH (Savory, 2001, pp. 54-55). These two states never accepted each other and, in practice, sought to negate and reject each other's existence. These factors caused the two countries to confront each other for 3 centuries and create problems for each other.

The Shi'i Iranian identity was shaped by the 230-year rule of the Safavids over Iranians and stood against the Sunni world. During this period, the relations between the two states were almost always in a state of war. The Ottoman sultans tried to annex Iran to their vast territory across three continents, and in achieving this goal, 30 full-scale wars took place between them. In the end, the Ottomans failed to assimilate the Shi'i Iranians into the Sunni world, and the structure of Iranian identity was consolidated in later periods (Afshar, Zand, Qajar) (Dehghani, 2009, p. 88).

More clearly, the Ottomans did not want Iran to become a unified and integrated country because in that case, they could not easily conquer Iran. They wanted a fragmented and decentralized Iran, like Anatolia, so they could easily conquer it (Falsafi, 2010, p. 33; Hejazi Far, 1995, p. 85).

By carefully examining the temperaments of Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail Safavi, it can be acknowledged that the Ottoman Shah's sense of superiority and humiliation of the opposing side in his letters, as well as Shah Safavi's belligerent spirit and particular fanaticism towards his own religion, are

undeniable factors in the Battle of Chaldiran. Of course, one should not overlook the greed of both sides for seizing parts of the other country's territory and displaying power in the region, as one of the causes of war is the political and military display of power by the parties.

Conclusion

The Battle of Chaldiran is considered one of the important events in Iranian history, and various factors were involved in its occurrence. Military and political conflicts, religious differences, ideological differences, and the influence of the temperaments and personal characteristics of Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail are among the factors that led to this war.

However, it should be noted that political-military differences played a more significant role than other factors, because on the one hand, both sides intended to seize parts of each other's territory, and on the other hand, they aimed to display power and showcase their conquests to each other. Furthermore, the provocation of opponents to strike at the opposing side and the emergence of a country with Shi'a beliefs opposite the Ottoman government had overshadowed the political situation of the region.

The Battle of Chaldiran was considered a religious war, but in reality, nothing but political and military objectives were of concern to the parties, and religion was used as a pretext to start the war, while factors such as political and military objectives, the temperaments of Sultan Selim and Shah Ismail, and their sense of superiority and display of power against each other played a much greater role in the formation of this war.

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