

The Relations Between the Safavid and the Adilshahi Dynasties in the 16th Century

Adilşahlar ve Safevi Hanedanlıklarının 16. Yüzyıldaki İlişkileri

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Öz

Bu makale, 16. yüzyılda Safevi ve Adilşahlar hanedanlıkları arasındaki diplomatik, kültürel ve askeri ilişkileri incelemektedir. Safevilerin Şii İslam'ı benimsemesiyle birlikte, Adilşahlar Devleti de bu dinî etkilerden faydalanarak Safevi İran ile güçlü bir bağ kurmuştur. Adilşahlar Devleti'nin, dinî temelli bir devlet olmasa da Safeviler ile kurduğu bu ilişki, sadece dinî değil, aynı zamanda siyasi, ticari ve kültürel bağlar üzerinden de güçlenmiştir. Makalede, diplomatik elçilikler, askeri ittifaklar ve İran'dan Dekken Yarımadası'na yapılan göçlerin etkileri ele alınarak iki devlet arasındaki ilişkiyi pekiştiren faktörler tartışılmaktadır. Adilşahlar Devleti'nin iç siyasi çekişmelerine rağmen Safevi-Adilşahlar ilişkileri, 17. yüzyılın sonlarına kadar devam etmiştir. Adilşahlar Devleti'nin yıkılmasından sonra da İran'dan yapılan göçler ve kültürel etkileşimlerle bu ilişkinin etkileri, bilimsel, kültürel ve mimari alanda günümüze kadar hissedilmektedir. Safevi-Adilşahlar ilişkileri, bölgede ticaret, din ve politika üzerindeki etkisiyle önemli bir rol oynamış ve Hindistan altkıtasının tarihini şekillendiren ana faktörlerden biri olmuştur. Makalemizde bu ilişkilerin derinine inilecek ve bu ilişkilerin gelişmesini sağlayan faktörler derinlemesine irdelenecektir. Hindistan'da o dönem birçok farklı devlet bulunmasına ve bu devletlerin bir kısmının İran ile ticari ilişkilere sahip olmasına rağmen, İran ile ilişkiler konusunda neden Dekken'de bulunan Adilşahlar Devleti ön plana çıkmıştır? Adilşahlar Devleti ve İran'daki Safevi Şahlığı arasında ne gibi benzerlikler ve politikalarında ne tür örtüşmeler mevcuttur? Makalemizde bu soruların yanıtları aranacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Safevi Hanedanı, Adilşahlar Devleti, Şii İslam, Diplomatik İlişkiler, Kültürel Değişim

Abstract

This article explores the relations between the Safavid and Adilshahi dynasties during the 16th century, focusing on their diplomatic, cultural, and military interactions. The connection between the two states was grounded in both religious and political factors, particularly with the rise of Shi'a Islam under the Safavids. Although the Adilshahi Sultanate was not a theocratic state, the adoption of Shi'a Islam and the influence of Safavid Iran in the region led to strong diplomatic ties between the two. The article discusses the diplomatic missions, military alliances, and the significant migration of people from Iran to the Deccan Plateau, which further strengthened cultural and political relations. Despite occasional interruptions, particularly during periods of internal conflict within the Adilshahi Sultanate, the bond between the Safavids and the Adilshahis continued until the late 17th century. The cultural, scientific, and architectural influences that persisted after the fall of the Adilshahi Sultanate attest to the lasting impact of this relationship. The Safavid-Adilshahi connection played a key role in shaping the history of the region, with significant implications for trade, religion, and politics. In this article, we will delve into the depth of these relations and thoroughly examine the factors that contributed to their development. Despite the presence of numerous states in India at that time, some of which had trade relations with Iran, why did the Adilshahi Sultanate, located in the Deccan, stand out in terms of its relations with Iran? What similarities and overlaps can be found between the Adilshahi Sultanate and the Safavid Shahdom in Iran in terms of their policies? The answers to these questions will be sought in this article.

Keywords: Safavid Dynasty, Adilshahi Sultanate, Shi'a Islam, Diplomatic Relations, Cultural Exchange

Introduction

The interaction between different cultures is one of the most significant factors shaping history. These interactions, whether religious, commercial, or militaristic, have, at times, profoundly influenced cultures even across geographically distant regions. Although such global interactions and their subsequent influences are commonplace in today's globalized world, they were rare and striking occurrences centuries ago. One such profound interaction occurred between the regions of Iran and South India. Initially driven by trade, these interactions began in ancient times and evolved into a remarkable cultural unison, particularly due to the expansion of Islam into Southern India and the concurrent prevalence of Shi'a belief in both regions.

The relations between Iran and the Deccan predate even the Turkish Delhi Sultanate and the Bahmani Sultanate. The Deccan Plateau, situated in the Central part of South India, extends roughly from the Narmada River Valley in the North to the Krishna River in the South and constitutes a bridge between the Northern and the Southern parts of India. The word 'Deccan' literally means 'south' (Lach, 1965, p. 381). According to an Indian historian, the word 'Deccan' is a corrupted form of a word in the Sanskrit language that means 'south' (Smith, 1904, p. 323). The two most important languages in this region are Marathi and Telugu (Taştan, 2023, p. 9). With the southward expansion of the Delhi Sultanate, both Turk and Afghan administrations were established, allowing Islam to spread in these lands. The loss of Deccan by the Delhi Sultanate ended the idea of governing all of India from a single center (Bayur, 1987, p. 418).

To the west of the Deccan, the Konkan ports of Thana and Chaul held significant positions in the Indian Ocean trade network during the 13th century. While Gujarat to the north and Kerala to the south may have surpassed the trade volume of these ports, the Konkan ports nonetheless played a notable role. The establishment of Muslim trade networks along this coastline can be traced back to the Rashtrakuta dynasty (8th–10th centuries) and later the Yadava dynasty of Devagiri (9th–14th centuries) (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 2020, p. 77). These traders formed hybrid communities, such as the Navayats, who actively engaged in maritime activities as both mariners and merchants.

Arabic traders and geographers, beginning with al-Mas'udi (d. 956) in the 10th century, provide evidence of familiarity with the Konkan coast (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 2020, p. 78). Yemeni, South Arabian, and Persian Gulf merchants frequently visited the region, and merchants from the Iranian port of Siraf and surrounding areas appear to have settled in Chaul. Although the size of these Muslim trading colonies may have been exaggerated in some accounts, there is little doubt that these communities were well established before the arrival of the Delhi Sultanate's armies under the Tughluq dynasty (1320–1413). Additionally, these Muslim traders maintained connections with the emerging sultanates in coastal West Asia during the decline of the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258) (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 2020, p. 78).

1. Establishment of the Bahmani Sultanate

In the 14th century, following a rebellion within the Delhi Sultanate, Hasan Gangu declared himself sultan in Devagiri (later renamed Daulatabad) under the title Alauddin Hasan Shah Bahmani, thus founding the Bahmani Sultanate in 1347 (King, 1900, p. 5). He was also known by the title Zafar Khan (Firishta, 1910, p. 20). Notably, Hasan Gangu claimed descent from the pre-Islamic Sasanian dynasty of Iran, suggesting a cultural and historical connection between the Deccan and Iran during this period. The term "Bahman," chosen for his dynasty, is itself an ancient Iranian name (Konukçu, 1992). Additionally, early structures in the Bahmani capital of Gulbarga feature Sasanian emblems as architectural motifs, further reflecting this linkage (Shokoohy, 1994, p. 55–68).

The establishment of the Bahmani Sultanate significantly reshaped the political landscape of the Deccan. To sustain their military strength, the Bahmanis required access to the western coast, particularly for the strategic horse trade with West Asia. Horses were essential to the Sultanate's cavalry-dependent armies, making control over Konkan ports a key objective. Furthermore, the Bahmanis sought influence over the Coromandel Coast, which was home to several small but powerful states far from their capital. Despite numerous efforts, the Coromandel region retained its autonomy for a considerable time, and existing trade relations in the area were largely unaffected by the Bahmanis' ambitions (Alam and Subrahmanyam, 2020, p. 78).

During the 14th century, Iran was in turmoil of its own. When the last Ilkhanid ruler Sultan Abu Sa'id died of a plague in 1335 together with his heir, different dynasties claimed different parts of Iran. Only after several decades that Timur united Iran and set up his own authority (Aydoğmuşoğlu, 2017, p. 21-22). After this unification, the relations

between Iran and the Deccan became closer than before, especially after the 1420s. Firishta records that Sultan Firuz Shah Bahmani (r. 1397–1422) initiated the annual dispatch of royal ships to the Persian Gulf, a practice documented as occurring even before 1420 (Firishta, 1910, p. 368). In the time of Firuz Shah's successor, Ahmed Shah I, and his successor, Ahmed Shah II, relations between the Deccan and Iran kept growing. Many learned Iranians migrated to the Deccan and attained prominent positions in the government and society of the Bahmani Sultanate. The active ports of Chaul and Dabhol facilitated numerous voyages between Iran and the Deccan, with Dabhol emerging as particularly significant. The city is also known as Benderabad or Bender Mustafa Abad. Portuguese explorer Duarte Barbosa, who visited Dabhol during the time of the Adilshahi Sultanate described it as a very large city situated along a river. He noted the presence of a fortress equipped with cannons that guarded the city at the river's mouth. He added that this river served as a trade route for various goods brought by ships from different places such as Mecca, Aden, Hormuz, Kambat, Diu, and the Malabar coast. Among these goods, the most notable were the horses imported from Hormuz. Barbosa also remarked on the high customs duties collected from this trade. Additionally, he praised the city's beautiful houses and mosques, the picturesque villages nearby, the fertile land, and the abundant livestock (Barbosa, 1918, p. 164-166). Tome Pires, a Portuguese colonial administrator in the early 16th century, described Dabhol as the most significant port providing access to the Deccan (Pires, 1944, p. 52).

2. Establishment of the Adilshahi Sultanate

At the end of the 15th century, internal turmoil began in the Bahmani Sultanate with the execution of the renowned vizier, Mahmud Gavan Gilani. A statesman of Iranian origin, Mahmud Gavan became the most influential figure in the sultanate during the reign of Sultan Muhammad Shah Bahmani, which began in 1464. Renowned for his extensive knowledge, he was said to have owned a personal library in Bidar containing 3,000 books. He also authored a book titled *Riyaz al-Insha* (Khan, 2008, p. 96) and held the title *Malik'ut-Tujjar*, or "Prince of Merchants," in the Bahmani Sultanate (Sherwani, 1942, p. 21-22). As a vizier, he successfully countered threats from the rulers of Malwa and played a key role in recapturing Balagan and Goa from Vijayanagara. Additionally, he implemented numerous administrative and military reforms. However, as one of the foreign nobles, or "Afaqis," he faced opposition from the indigenous nobles, referred to as "Deccanis." In 1481, Sultan Muhammad Shah Bahmani ordered his execution following a conspiracy orchestrated by the Deccani nobles (Khan, 2008, p. 96).

This internal turmoil was rooted in the division between the Deccani and Afaqi statesmen. The Afaqis were foreigners who migrated to the Deccan, mainly from Iran and Turkey, while the Deccanis included the local population and settlers from Turkic states in the north, as well as Abyssinians (Habeshis) who migrated from modern-day Ethiopia (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973, p. 156). This ongoing power struggle destabilized the Bahmani Sultanate, ultimately leading to its gradual dissolution. Over the next 30 years following Mahmud Gavan's execution, the sultanate fragmented into five de facto independent sultanates.

Upon the death of Sultan Muhammad Shah Bahmani, his son Sultan Mahmud Shah proved incapable of maintaining centralized control, resulting in widespread unrest. Consequently, governors across the sultanate declared their independence. Yusuf Adil Khan, a distinguished general, established the Adilshahi Sultanate in Bijapur, where he had been the governor. Malik Ahmed Nizam-ul-Mulk founded the Nizamshahi Sultanate by establishing the city of Ahmednagar as its capital. Fethullah Imad-ul-Mulk proclaimed the Imadshahi Sultanate, with Burhanpur as its future capital, where he had the *khutbah* (sermon) read in his name. Kulu Kutb-ul-Mulk, the governor of Golconda, declared his independence by forming the Qutbshahi Sultanate. Finally, a Turkish slave, Kasim Berid, took control of Bidar and established the Baridshahi Sultanate (Gribble, 1896, p. 129).

Among these, the Adilshahi Sultanate emerged as particularly significant, encompassing the western territories of the declining Bahmani Sultanate, including the crucial ports of Goa and Dabhol. Meanwhile, Chaul remained under the control of the Nizamshahi Sultanate. The Bahmani dynasty, on the other hand, continued to exist for a while longer as a puppet administration under the control of the Baridshahis. Although all these newly established sultanates appeared, at least on paper, to remain subordinate to the Bahmanis until the complete demise of the dynasty in 1527, they operated as independent states (Taştan, 2023, p. 29).

3. Religious Aspect of the Adilshahi – Safavid Relations

The origins of Yusuf Adil Khan, the founder of the Adilshahi Dynasty, remain a subject of debate among historians. However, there is a consensus regarding his upbringing. He spent many years of his youth in Iran, where he received

a Shi'a education. He was even known as 'Sawai/Savai,' a title mentioned in both Deccani and Portuguese chronicles, because he spent significant time studying in Sava, Iran (Firishta, 1910, p. 8). Raised under the Safavid Creed, he was a devout follower of its teachings when he arrived in India and enlisted in the service of the Bahmani Sultanate. Upon establishing his own dynasty and ruling as an independent sovereign, he sought to base his administration on the principles of the Safavids. However, this task proved difficult at first, as he was surrounded by Sunni rulers. The challenge stemmed not only from Yusuf Adil Khan's Shi'a faith, in contrast to the Sunni beliefs of Nizam'ul-Mulk Bahri, the sultan of the Nizamshahis, and Qasim Barid, leader of the Baridshahis, but also from the ongoing political turmoil that contributed to the dissolution of the Bahmani Sultanate. Yusuf Adil Khan was one of the prominent Afaqis (foreigners) in the Bahmani court, while Nizam'ul-Mulk Bahri and Qasim Barid were Deccanis (Nayeem, 1974, p. 45). However, with the rise of Shah Ismail I in Iran, Yusuf seized the opportunity and declared Shi'ism the official sect of his lands (Sherwani and Joshi, 1973, p. 298). In doing so, he became the first ruler in India to adopt Shi'a Islam as the official state religion (Taştan, 2023, p. 50). He also relied on his connections with the Safavids for protection.

Although he was a Pioneer of the Shi'a creed in the Deccan against a powerful orthodox opposition, he proceeded with great caution, and by his considerate and impartial attitude towards the followers of other creeds, he maintained an atmosphere of harmony between the followers of various creeds (Devare, 2018, p. 85). He never allowed anyone in his sultanate to curse the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (Sahabah), as was the case in Safavid Iran, where a tradition had been established of cursing Hz. Abu Bakr, Hz. Umar, Hz. Uthman, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids (Gündüz, 2014, p. 68-69). Even his wife, Punci Khanum, was the daughter of a local Marathi leader (Prasad, 1928, p. 406). Despite this, the Safavid Shahdom and the Adilshahi Sultanate, both of which embraced Shi'a Islam almost simultaneously, emerged as the sole proponents of the faith amidst a number of Sunni states. As a result, diplomatic relations were established between the two states. Yusuf Adil Khan, the ruler of the Adilshahi Sultanate, sent Shah Ahmad-e-Harawi, a renowned Shi'a scholar from his court, as an envoy to Shah Ismail's court in Persia. The purpose of this visit was to pay homage and offer congratulations for the proclamation of the Shi'a doctrine (Firishta, 1910, p. 29). Following Firoz Shah Bahmani, who had previously sent an ambassador to Timur's court, Yusuf Adil Khan became the next Deccan ruler to engage in diplomatic relations with Persia (Devare, 2018, p. 85).

4. Political and Cultural Aspects of the Adilshahi - Safavid Relations

In another instance, Shah Ismail sought the support of Yusuf Adil Khan. In the late 15th century, the Portuguese, who had discovered the sea route to India, aimed to establish dominance in the Indian Ocean. They encountered several Muslim states, including the Safavid Empire and the Adilshahi Sultanate, which were engaged in commercial activities. In 1506, the Sultanate of Hormuz, under Safavid rule, was captured by Portuguese Governor Afonso de Albuquerque (Önalp, 2010, p. 33). In 1510, Shah Ismail, unable to expel the Portuguese from Hormuz, attempted to form an alliance against them by sending an envoy to Yusuf Adil Khan, who was also in conflict with the Portuguese. However, when the envoy reached Goa, he discovered that the city had already been captured by Afonso de Albuquerque in the fall of 1510 (Osorio, 1752, p. 4), preventing the envoy from meeting with the Adilshahis (Stephens, 1897, p. 77). Nevertheless, these efforts demonstrate that the Adilshahi Sultanate's mutual regard for Safavid Iran was reciprocated. The envoy also requested that Muslims in Goa be allowed to live according to Shah Ismail's laws, worship in his sect, and use his coins in the city. However, Afonso de Albuquerque responded that he would not impose any obligations on the people of Goa. Regarding the issue of coins, he argued that it was not feasible for one ruler to allow the minting and use of another ruler's coins in his own domain (Albuquerque, 1875, p. 109). This situation indicates that Shah Ismail had a vested interest in the people of these lands, considering them his subjects.

Although Yusuf's origin and mother tongue were Turkish, his upbringing in Iran made a serious impact on his character and outlook (Devare, 2018, p. 86). Thus, he may have felt closer to Safavid Iran than his Turkish origin and religion may not be the only reason he tried to establish strong ties with the Safavids, instead of the Ottomans. Yet, it was the biggest reason and even if he claimed to be a descendant of the Ottoman Dynasty, his dynasty felt closer to Iran and the Safavid Dynasty (Taştan, 2023, p. 57). The official language of his court was also Persian, but this was a custom in many other Turkish courts throughout history.

It was during the reign of his son, Ismail Adil Khan, that relations between the Safavids and the Adilshahis reached their peak. This series of events began with an incident involving the Safavid envoy in Bidar. In the mid-1510s, Shah

Ismail of the Safavid Empire sent envoys to several states in the Deccan region. These envoys were respectfully received by the rulers of the Adilshahi Sultanate, the Vijayanagara Empire, and Gujarat. Sultan Mahmud Shah II of the Bahmani Sultanate also welcomed the Safavid envoy and expressed his intention to bid farewell with gifts (Gribble, 1896, p. 162)¹. However, Amir Berid, a Sunni leader, opposed this and prevented the envoy from leaving. As a result, the envoy was detained in Bidar for about two years (Firishta, 1910, p. 48). In response, the envoy sent a letter to Ismail Adil Khan, informing him of his captivity. Upon hearing the news, Ismail Adil Khan demanded the immediate release of the envoy. With Ismail Adil Khan's permission, the envoy was allowed to leave Bidar and proceeded directly to the Adilshahi Sultanate. Ismail Adil Khan welcomed the envoy in Allahpur, offered him expensive gifts, and provided a guard unit of trained soldiers to accompany him to Dabhol on his return to Iran. In 1519, Shah Ismail highly honored Ismail Adil Khan for his efforts in securing the release of the envoy who had been unjustly detained by Amir Berid (Gribble, 1896, p. 162). Shah Ismail sent a letter along with costly gifts to Ismail Adil Khan through his envoy, Ibrahim Bey Turkmen, including a magnificent sword adorned with jewels. In the letter, Shah Ismail addressed Ismail Adil Khan as "shah," making him the first foreign ruler among the five new states in the Deccan to be honored with this title. Ismail Adil Khan, traveling about 18 km to greet Ibrahim Bey, hosted the Safavid envoy in an extraordinary manner, as he was now addressed as an independent and equal sovereign by a great ruler, in Bijapur (Firishta, 1910, p. 48). Shah Ismail also praised Ismail Adil Khan for his religious leadership in sponsoring the Shi'a doctrine (Devare, 2018, p. 87). Delighted by being addressed as "Shah," Ismail Adil Khan expressed his happiness with the following statement: *My dynasty was given the title of shah today* (Ertaylan, 1953, p. 21)².

In gratitude and loyalty, Ismail Adil Khan had the officers of the Adilshahi army wear red-colored, twelve-pointed headgear as a symbol of their allegiance. This headgear was a garment worn by the followers of the Iranian Safavid Dynasty. The wearing of this headgear, known as the 12-pointed turban, was a style created by the first Safavid Shah, Shah Ismail. According to this style, supporters of the Safavid dynasty would place the 12-pointed turban on their heads like a cap. In Persian, this cap was referred to as "taj" or "tac," meaning crown (Oruç Bey (Don Juan), 2014, p. 71). Ismail Adil Khan demonstrated his strictness on this matter by implementing specific laws. According to these laws, *those wearing these headgear would be greeted, and those who did not would be penalized by having twelve sheep confiscated. If the same individual repeated the offense, their headgear would be removed in the middle of the marketplace and they would be subjected to insults. Furthermore, none of the cavalry members were allowed to travel without the twelve-pointed headgear* (Ertaylan, 1953, p. 21). Ismail Adil Khan's military policy significantly reduced the Deccani element in the army, which came to consist predominantly of fair-skinned Turks and Persians (Devare, 2018, p. 87). Furthermore, he ordered prayers to be offered for the Safavid dynasty during Friday sermons and on holy days in mosques (Firishta, 1910, p. 48). To further strengthen ties between the Adilshahi Sultanate and the Safavids, he sent Shah Ahmad-e-Harawi as an envoy to Iran (Nayeem, 2008, p. 27).

During this period, Shah Ismail sought to strengthen the position of his kingdom by establishing good relations with rulers in India. Convincing these rulers to convert to his sect of Islam was also among his objectives. To achieve this, he sent ambassadors to regions such as Gujarat, Hormuz, and the Adilshahi Sultanate. Meanwhile, the Portuguese, striving to establish an empire in India—particularly under the governorship of Afonso de Albuquerque—attempted to form an alliance with Iran, primarily against the Ottoman Empire. This development significantly influenced Adilshahi-Portuguese relations (Taştan, 2023, p. 262). This interaction illustrates the profound impact of Safavid political maneuvers on the foreign policy of the Adilshahi Sultanate.

Furthermore, the account of the Portuguese chronicler Osorio, who describes the Portuguese envoy Fernando Gomes Lemos meeting with Shah Ismail in Iran and encountering the envoys of the Adilshahis and Bahmanis, further illustrates the depth of these relationships (Osorio, 1752, p. 219). This narrative highlights the interconnectedness of these diplomatic networks and emphasizes the extent of Shah Ismail's efforts to engage with various rulers, including those in the Indian subcontinent. The encounter between the Portuguese envoy and the envoys of the Adilshahis and the Bahmanis serves as a testament to the intricate web of diplomatic exchanges and interactions that characterized this period, showcasing the multifaceted nature of Shah Ismail's foreign policy pursuits.

After Ismail Adil Khan, Mallu Adil Khan briefly ascended to the throne but seven months later, his brother Ibrahim

1 In the book *Burhan-i Ma'asir*, it is stated that the envoy from the Safavid Shahdom was not taken seriously by Sultan Mahmud II, who was Sunni, and that the envoy was sent back from the capital within a short period. However, the likelihood of these lines reflecting the truth is quite low (King, 1900, p. 144).

2 The rulers of the Adilshahi dynasty continued to use the title "Adil Khan" until the reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah I. Historian Nayeem interprets this as an indication that they still regarded themselves as being under the authority of the Bahmani Sultanate. According to Nayeem's research, it was only after the death of the last Bahmani Sultan in 1539 that Ibrahim Adil Shah I adopted the title of "shah" (Nayeem, 2008, p. 29).

Adil Shah I took the throne and Mallu Adil Khan was blinded by the orders of his grandmother, Punci Khanum (Firishta, 1910, p. 77). The foreign policy of the Adilshahi Sultanate underwent a significant transformation with the ascension of Ibrahim Adil Shah I to the throne. Despite ascending to the throne due to the scheming of the Afaqi faction, Ibrahim Adil Shah I proved to be an ungrateful master by effectively eradicating Afaqi influence within his court. Departing from the established traditions of his predecessors, Ibrahim introduced significant changes in his political and religious policies. The Shi'a doctrine, which had served as a crucial connection between Persia and the Adilshahis, was officially abandoned, and the Sunni creed was declared as the state religion (Firishta, 1910, p. 78). A campaign was launched to expel foreigners, resulting in the confiscation of the Afaqis' fiefs and mansibs, and a thorough purge of the Persian and Turk elements from the standing army. Out of the royal bodyguard consisting of over six thousand Turks, only four hundred were retained, while the rest were summarily dismissed. The distinctive military uniform, characterized by the twelve-pointed scarlet cap, was also forbidden (Firishta, 1910, p. 78). Except for a few trusted individuals such as Asad Khan Lari Turk, Yusuf Turk, and Khush Kaladi Rumi, who had long served the state faithfully, all foreigners were discharged from state service, and individuals from the Deccani, Abyssinian, and Brahmin communities were recruited to fill the resulting vacancies (Firishta, 1910, p. 79).

Ibrahim's animosity towards the Afaqis was so strong that he not only expelled them from the civil and military service of the Adilshahi Sultanate but also sought to permanently exclude them. As part of this effort, he replaced Persian with an Indian vernacular, likely Deccani or Marathi, as the official language of the court (Devare, 2018, p. 91). Deccani, a dialect that gained prominence during the Bahmani period, or Marathi, the regional language of Maharashtra, are plausible candidates for the language used during this time. The precise motives behind Ibrahim Adil Shah I's implementation of these administrative and military reforms remain unclear. However, it is evident that his actions aimed to dismantle the Afaqi oligarchy, which had reduced the authority of the monarchy to a powerless and illusory state. While this anti-Afaqi policy weakened the Adilshahi Sultanate considerably, leaving it vulnerable to invasions from neighboring states, Ibrahim, despite being a formidable warrior, demonstrated a limited understanding of diplomatic strategy.

Asad Khan Lari Turk, a veteran Afaqi nobleman from Ismail Adil Khan's court and a loyal servant of the throne, acted as a diplomatic advisor to Ibrahim and saved the kingdom during times of crisis. Despite experiencing the whims of a capricious ruler like Ibrahim, Asad Khan remained devoted to his master until the end. Ibrahim drew much of his strength from Asad Khan, whose influence on the Imadshahi and Nizamshahi rulers, as well as his strategic tactics, prevented the Adilshahi Sultanate from succumbing to the attacks of Burhan Nizam Shah (Firishta, 1910, p. 89–95). Although Asad Khan's loyalty to Ibrahim helped stabilize the kingdom during a turbulent time, the Afaqis only regained their former glory during the reigns of Ali I and Ibrahim II. Ibrahim's actions had a profound impact on the Adilshahi-Safavid relationship, and relations only improved when Ali Adil Shah I ascended the throne and reversed many of his father's reforms.

The reign of Ibrahim Adil Shah I demonstrated that the Adilshahi Sultanate possessed a well-established cultural and religious structure, and attempts to alter it severely undermined the foundations of the state. When Ibrahim, an authoritarian ruler, passed away and his son Ali Adil Shah I ascended to the throne, the adverse effects of Ibrahim's policies became even more evident. The effort to eliminate Afaqi influence within the state had significantly weakened it, and the saviors of the state were once again the loyal Afaqi statesmen, notably Asad Khan Lari Turk. Despite Ibrahim's attempts to obstruct their influence, Ali Adil Shah I, who was deeply committed to Shi'a beliefs and had been educated by Afaqi Shi'a scholars, promptly reversed these policies upon assuming power (Devare, 2018, p. 92).

Ali, who valued learning and science under the guidance of these scholars, reinstated the reputation of Afaqi statesmen and restored the foreign policy of the Adilshahi Sultanate to its previous state. He welcomed well-educated foreign scholars and statesmen, particularly those proficient in Persian and Turkish, encouraging their migration to the country (Firishta, 1910, p. 117). With the re-establishment of Shi'a doctrine as the official state religion, Persian inhabitants were able to resume their religious practices and received financial support from the state budget to propagate this faith (Devare, 2018, p. 93).

In terms of foreign policy, cordial relations were re-established with the Safavid Empire. Through the efforts of Afaqi statesmen, particularly those of Iranian origin, the Vijayanagara Empire—posing a significant threat to the Deccan sultanates—was dismantled in the Battle of Talikota in January 1565, solidifying Islamic dominance in the region (Taştan, 2023, p. 379-384). Under Ali Adil Shah I, the Adilshahi Sultanate implemented reforms aimed at restoring

its former strength both domestically and externally, reaching the pinnacle of its power. The sultanate expanded its territory significantly, became prosperous, and once again perceived itself as closely affiliated with the Safavid Empire. This period emphasized the enduring nature of the Adilshahi Sultanate and highlighted the importance of its diplomatic and cultural ties with Iran in shaping its identity.

The relationship between the Safavid Empire and the Adilshahi Sultanate, which lasted until the late 17th century when the Adilshahi Sultanate was overthrown, demonstrated a growing bond, though with occasional interruptions. The Adilshahi Dynasty and its subjects considered themselves affiliated with the Safavid Empire, and this cultural connection was reinforced through the migration of people from Iran to the Deccan region. This situation can be compared to the relationship between European states and the Pope, where religious affiliation played a significant role. Initially founded on religious grounds, this bond expanded into various realms, including trade, education, and military cooperation, significantly influencing the history of the Indian Ocean due to the interconnected foreign policies of these two states. The architectural remnants that endure in the territories once ruled by the Adilshahi Sultanate today vividly exemplify the tangible existence of this cultural connection. When exploring Indian history, it is impossible to overlook the profound influence of Iran, both culturally and through migrations, alongside the significant impact of Turkic tribes entering India from the north.

Conclusion

As observed, the relationship between the Deccan and Iran began when Islam first entered the Deccan region. The founder of the Bahmani Sultanate, established in the Deccan, tracing his lineage to Iran, further demonstrates the strength of this bond during that period. In both commercial and cultural terms, this connection was strengthened over time through migrations from Iran to the Deccan and maritime trade routes linking the two regions. The peak of this relationship occurred following the establishment of the Adilshahi Sultanate in the Deccan. In parallel, the rise of the Safavid dynasty in Iran and the shared Shi'a identity of both the Safavids and the Adilshahi rulers in the 16th century not only solidified their ties but also added a new dimension to their relationship. The Adilshahis, viewing themselves as protégés of the Safavid Shahs, established a relationship akin to the papal system in Europe. While this connection experienced occasional interruptions due to religious upheavals within the Adilshahi state, it remained intact and continued to evolve. Additionally, in the 16th century, trade between Iran and the Deccan and the migration of Iranians to the Deccan continued to flourish, further strengthening these bonds.

With the arrival of the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean, the political aspect of the Safavid-Adilshahi relations expanded. This relationship continued robustly until the fall of the Adilshahi Sultanate in the 17th century. Despite the political collapse of these relations with the downfall of the Adilshahi Sultanate, their cultural, scientific, and architectural legacies endured, largely due to the migration of skilled individuals from Iran to the Deccan. These influences are still felt today, illustrating the lasting impact of this unique historical relationship between Iran and the Deccan.

This enduring bond highlights the importance of religious, political, and cultural ties in shaping the history of both regions. The Safavid-Adilshahi connection not only influenced the political landscape of the Indian subcontinent but also enriched its cultural and intellectual heritage, creating a lasting legacy that resonates in the Deccan's architecture, scholarship, and social fabric. The shared Shi'a identity, the trade and intellectual exchanges, and the migrations from Iran to the Deccan were central to the formation of a unique and enduring cultural relationship, which remained influential even after the political dissolution of the Adilshahi Sultanate.

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